Final Evaluation of
the Republic of North Macedonia and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021–2025

Evaluation Report

Prepared by the Evaluation Team:

Ms. Elizabeta Markovska Spasenoska, Evaluation Expert

Mr. Tomislav Novovic, Team Leader, Evaluation Expert

Skopje, October 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCA	Common Country Analysis
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
DV	Domestic Violence
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme – ILO's country programme for North Macedonia
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
GoM	Government of North Macedonia
HDI	Human Development Index
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPA	The EU's Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPARD	The EU's Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for the Rural Development Programme
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JSC	Joint Steering Committee
JWP	Joint Work Plans
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bi, trans, intersex
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCSD	National Council for Sustainable Development
NDS	National Development Strategy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OG	Outcome Group
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PSD	Partnership for Sustainable Development
RC	UN Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SPO	Special Public Prosecutor's Office
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UN SWAP	UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
Cooperation Framework	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEG	UN Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNSDS	United Nations Sustainable Development System
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNR	Voluntary National Report
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021–2025) is the guiding document for all UN agencies in North Macedonia, aligned with national priorities, international human rights standards, gender equality commitments, and Agenda 2030. This framework supports North Macedonia's EU accession goals through strategic priorities in economic and social development, climate action, and democratic governance.

The evaluation aimed to assess the effectiveness of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in contributing to North Macedonia's development by prioritizing equality and inclusivity. The ***main objectives*** included evaluating the Cooperation Framework's contribution to national development outcomes, identifying factors influencing this contribution, and assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of UNCT support. The recommendations aim to strengthen alignment with SDG targets, providing actionable insights to enhance future impact.

Covering the period from January 2021 to June 2024, the evaluation focused on all Cooperation Framework outcomes, emerging issues, and the UNCT's responsiveness and inclusivity. A ***theory-based approach*** centered on the UNSDCF Theory of Change was used, integrating *contribution analysis, gender-responsiveness, and a human-rights perspective*.

The evaluation process included an ***inception phase*** with a comprehensive desk review, an evaluation matrix to outline key questions, indicators, and data collection methods, and a stakeholder analysis to ensure inclusivity. Primary ***data collection*** involved 109 stakeholders through interviews and focus groups, complemented by online surveys with 112 responses to enhance triangulation. The collected data was synthesised into findings, conclusions, and recommendations, with cross-validation to ensure accuracy. A draft report was shared for review, and feedback was incorporated through a validation workshop before final submission.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Relevance and Adaptability: The Cooperation Framework's strategic priorities align closely with North Macedonia's national development needs, emphasizing economic resilience, social inclusion, climate action, and governance. Supported by the annually updated Common Country Analysis, the Framework has made significant contributions to regional and international commitments, including human rights, and has supported North Macedonia's progress towards EU accession.

Anchored in the *Leave No One Behind* principle, the UN's work in North Macedonia prioritises marginalised groups, including Roma, youth, and women. Gender equality is central, with targeted efforts to combat gender-based violence and trafficking and to improve access to sexual and reproductive health services. The Framework also incorporates gender-responsive budgeting and disaggregated data in its monitoring.

Focused on climate action and sustainable development, the Cooperation Framework promotes green energy investments, air quality improvements, and resilience-building against climate challenges. However, the evaluation highlighted the need for stronger links between Framework activities and EU accession priorities for greater regional impact.

The UNCT and UN agencies demonstrated adaptability, responding to crises with flexible programming while maintaining alignment with Cooperation Framework outcomes. A clear, logical structure connects outcomes, outputs, and performance indicators, ensuring relevance to North Macedonia's goals. The indicators are well-defined and organised, effectively capturing progress in economic development, social protection, and environmental management.

Coherence and Coordination: The evaluation highlights significant engagement between the UN Country Team (UNCT) and the Government of North Macedonia, where government officials acknowledge the Cooperation Framework's role in promoting cohesion within the UNCT, particularly through collaborative programming. Both parties appreciate these initiatives, while the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)'s leadership and coordination contributes to enhanced coherence among UN agencies. Nevertheless, there are opportunities to fortify the RCO's support for UN agencies in planning and programming, especially for non-resident agencies. Notwithstanding the progress that has been made, challenges also persist in aligning agency work plans with the Cooperation Framework in terms of implementation, monitoring and reporting.

Effectiveness: according to the evaluation, the Cooperation Framework was found to be highly effective in delivering outputs, with strong progress towards targets in the first three years. Although not every target was met, UN agencies have achieved substantial results. Development partners view the UN as a key partner in driving change, particularly at the local level, where coordinated efforts have strengthened resilience and promoted sustainable development.

In Outcome 1, aimed at improving living standards through equal access to decent work, the Framework supported impactful policy changes and initiatives targeting women entrepreneurs, youth, Roma, and rural communities. These efforts included direct support, skills training, and mentorship to foster an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem. Outcome 2 focused on ensuring universal access to quality social services. Notable achievements include legislative reforms in social protection, development of evidence-based health and education policies, and the expansion of mental health services. The Framework also supported advancements in school health, clinical protocols, home-based care, and mobile gynaecological clinics, alongside education reform and violence prevention initiatives. Outcome 3 emphasised ambitious climate action, sustainable resource management, and environmental resilience. The Framework contributed to a supportive policy environment and significant capacity-building initiatives that address pollution, disaster preparedness, risk management, waste reduction, and sustainable farming practices at both local and national levels. Outcome 4 focused on enhancing national and local capacities in governance, legislation, budgeting, and policymaking, with a particular emphasis on gender-responsive budgeting and digital readiness. The Framework's work in this outcome included prioritizing marginalised groups, reinforcing inclusivity across municipal and national levels.

The report also looks *across outcome areas*, to contributions of the Cooperation Framework 1) to legislative, policy, strategy and action plan development and implementation, 2) to strengthening capacities nationally and in local governance 3) in fostering key institutional, behavioural change and 4) in targeting the most marginalised through legislative and policy work, through special assistance and through capacity-building.

Efficiency: according to the evaluation, resource mobilisation was efficient, with financial and human resources well-aligned to the Cooperation Framework's needs. The results-based budgeting approach was realistic, with USD 94.8 million spent out of USD 150.9 million available, allocated as follows: Outcome 1 (18%), Outcome 2 (16%), Outcome 3 (34%), and Outcome 4 (32%).

The UNCT established effective governance mechanisms for coordination and collaboration, including a Resource Mobilisation and Partnerships Strategy, annual Joint Workplans, a Joint Government-UN Steering Committee, and for engagement with national coordination bodies, especially for EU accession-related processes.

Implementation modalities were well-organised, covering technical support, cash assistance, procurement, advocacy, and training, among other areas. The partnership strategy aimed to strengthen relationships with both existing and new partners, with a focus on engaging the private sector and the IFIs (International Financial Institutions). However, reporting lacks detail on specific partnership achievements. Finally, resource allocation and prioritisation were strongly based on needs assessments, ensuring alignment with North Macedonia's development goals.

Sustainability: the evaluation identified a strong emphasis on sustainability in program documents and in UN's planning and collaboration with its partners. Notably, there is awareness of the importance of strengthening national ownership over initiatives and results to drive the necessary systemic change. This aligns closely with the importance of strengthening national and municipal institutions. According to the evaluation, the SDG progress is likely to be sustainable in areas such as legislation, strategy, policy, and in cross-sectoral capacity-building. However, the evaluation noted insufficient details on sustainability in monitoring and reporting on the Cooperation Framework, particularly given the focus on *sustainable development*. Reporting, both narrative and in the monitoring system often lacks detailed analysis and insights in these key areas.

Orientation towards Impact: according to the evaluation, overall, the design and implementation of the Cooperation Framework are geared towards systemic change and resilience, especially where UN agencies partner with local entities, such as the Government or CSOs, rather than delivering results directly. Legislative, policy, and strategy developments clearly demonstrate national ownership of systemic change, with a clear focus in this area on marginalised groups. Similarly, capacity-building contributes to long-term change, and there is substantial evidence from local stakeholders on the importance of these efforts to both sustainability and

impact. The evaluation highlighted the active ownership taken by local stakeholders, both of initiatives and of results.

Relevance and Adaptability – The Cooperation Framework is highly relevant to North Macedonia, particularly in terms of how the intended and programmed results address the needs and priorities of key stakeholders in North Macedonia and the population in general. Given both the UN and the Government of North Macedonia's commitment to the SDGs, this starting point was critical and effective. Furthermore, the clear correlation between the Cooperation Framework and the first National Development Strategy, developed by the Government developed during the Cooperation Framework's implementation further solidifies this relevance. While the documentation and programming acknowledges North Macedonia's EU candidate status and the priorities and needs of EU accession, further emphasis is needed in *both* programming and reporting documentation on the contributions of the Cooperation Framework's work and EU accession process-related results.

Coherence and Coordination – The Cooperation Framework's programming and reporting demonstrates a clear, well-defined, and inclusive approach to complementarity, harmonisation, and coordination among UN agencies and other key development partners, fostering a high level of coherence and coordination within the Cooperation Framework between the UN/ UN agencies and the Government of North Macedonia, among UN agencies and between the RCO and UN agencies. The document of the Cooperation Framework itself, and the processes described within it, exemplifies this coherence and coordination, including the partnership approach that emphasises multi-stakeholder engagement, i.e., with the Government, IFIs, the EU, bilateral development partners, the private sector, civil society, and the media. The RC and the RCO, together with the UNCT as a whole, have played an important, positive, and effective role in ensuring greater coherence among UN agencies.

Effectiveness - The implementation of the Cooperation Framework has been effective, delivering outputs as planned and contributing to intended outcomes. Indicators reflect high success rates in meeting targets, supported by qualitative data indicating a largely successful implementation of the activities and output delivery. Output delivery is visible across UN agencies and across all four outcome areas. An *intersectional approach* is being taken, addressing economic disadvantage/employment, *together with* marginalisation, gender, age, disability, and geography.

Efficiency - The Cooperation Framework was well-designed to meet national and local priorities and needs and is being implemented with great efficiency. The year-on-year and overall relationship between required and available funds has been at better than acceptable levels, with expenditures closely tracking available funds. Human resources available for the implementation of the Cooperation Framework are appropriate, with both financial and human resources realistically budgeted. Funding has been provided by a range of partners. Effective and efficient systems have been established in support of the Cooperation Framework, including planning, coordination and stakeholder engagement systems. However, UN reporting lacks sufficient detail on partner engagement, and a reworking of outcome indicators is needed.

Sustainability - The Cooperation Framework prioritises sustainable results by aligning with national priorities, EU accession goals, capacity building, and supporting marginalised groups. However, reporting lacks clarity on how activities and outcomes contribute to sustainable development. While the monitoring system and annual reports provide detailed coverage of activities and outputs, they fail to analyse outcomes and impact contributions comprehensively. Detailed insights on the Framework's contributions to national policies, EU processes, strengthening institutions, and the rights of vulnerable groups—which are critical for sustainability beyond the Framework's duration—are absent in both monitoring and narrative reports.

Orientation towards Impact - The SDCF is dedicated to fostering sustainable and systemic change in North Macedonia. This commitment is evident in the range of activities and results that make or contribute to national policy, strategy or legislative changes. The focus on policy, strategy and legislation makes two contributions to impact: one, by supporting North Macedonia's EU accession preparations by aligning legislation and policy with the EU acquis and EU requirements, and two, by equipping practitioners skills (in Government ministries and agencies and at the municipal level) with the knowledge and skills to implement the changes required to meet EU membership obligations in practice.

This evaluation provides strategic recommendations:

R1. Strengthening Coherence Across UN Agency Contributions: To enhance collective UN impact, coherence among agency contributions to the CF must be prioritized. This includes aligning agency reporting with CF outputs and outcomes, harmonizing internal reporting processes to streamline efforts, and transitioning to unified joint programming with shared strategic objectives. Strengthened accountability mechanisms within Joint Work Plans (JWPs) and Outcome Groups will further ensure consistent implementation and reporting.

R2. Enhancing Focus on EU Accession Priorities: Given North Macedonia's EU accession agenda, CF contributions should explicitly address EU-related priorities in programming, implementation, and reporting. This includes highlighting CF activities that align with policy and legislative reforms, institutional capacity building, and the adoption of EU acquis. EU accession should also be reflected as a cross-cutting theme in JWPs and monitoring frameworks.

R3. Redesigning Outcome Indicators and Enhancing Data Utilization: Outcome indicators must be redesigned to establish logical links between outputs and outcomes, ensuring they reflect CF contributions and are measurable at intermediate levels. The introduction of metrics to assess service accessibility and quality in underserved areas, coupled with intersectional data approaches, will enhance the CF's ability to address vulnerabilities comprehensively. Additionally, leveraging digital monitoring systems and conducting sustainability analyses will strengthen reporting and accountability.

R4. Expanding and Strengthening Strategic Partnerships: Strategic partnerships are critical to CF success and must be leveraged more effectively. Enhanced reporting on partnership outcomes will ensure accountability for private sector engagement, IFI collaborations, and national ownership. Regional partnerships should be deepened to address shared priorities like migration and climate resilience, while civil society engagement should be expanded to align with long-term CF goals and sustainability efforts.

R5. Embedding Sustainability and Adaptive Management: Sustainability and flexibility must be central to CF programming to address systemic challenges and dynamic contexts. Institutionalizing sustainability in CF reporting will provide clarity on long-term contributions to systemic reforms, capacity building, and alignment with national policies. Adaptive management mechanisms and innovative financing tools, such as green finance facilities, should be embedded to ensure responsiveness and financial resilience.

R6. Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement and Inclusivity: Stakeholder engagement should be deepened to ensure participatory programming and promote national ownership. This includes fostering collaboration with municipalities, civil society, and marginalized communities, applying inclusive approaches across all initiatives, and building national capacities for disaggregated data collection and analysis to drive evidence-based decision-making.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

North Macedonia navigates complex political, socio-economic, and environmental challenges on the path to more sustainable development. Continued efforts in governance reforms, economic resilience, environmental sustainability, and social equity are crucial for the country's future growth. The country is focused on economic diversification and developing human capital, while reforming public finances and fiscal policies. In parallel, North Macedonia is steadily working on promoting energy efficiency, scaling up renewable energy and enhancing water resource management. Additionally, the country has made efforts to revitalise its agricultural sector by addressing key structural issues. These efforts include improving the structure of agricultural land through land consolidation, addressing land abandonment, and supporting the development of agricultural land markets.

North Macedonia's economy continues to grapple with significant challenges, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising inflation, and the global energy crisis. While the country has made strides in fiscal consolidation and economic diversification, the economy remains vulnerable to external shocks. The country recorded modest growth rates and remains exposed to external pressures, including the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, which has exacerbated the global energy crisis and disrupted trade. In 2022, GDP growth stood at 2.1%, further decelerating in 2023, reflecting the economy's vulnerability to external shocks. Inflation remains high, driven by rising food and energy prices, which continue to impact the living standards of the population.

Figure 1 - GDP Growth in North Macedonia, 2018-2023
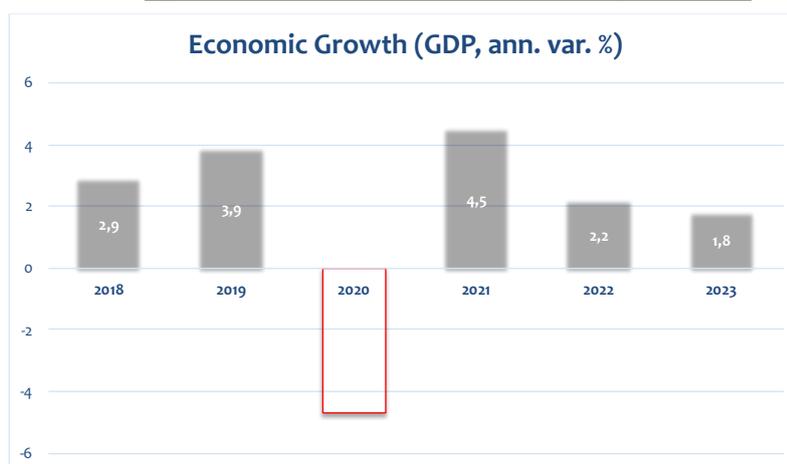
Source: State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia

The government has implemented several reforms aimed at fiscal consolidation, including tax reforms and a cautious approach to public spending. In 2023, adopting a new Organic Budget Law (OBL) represented a key step in enhancing fiscal discipline. This law introduces programme-based budgeting and provides an opportunity for gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). This approach aims to ensure that public financial resources are allocated equitably to meet both men's and women's needs. However, the economic outlook remains uncertain, with persistent challenges in the labor market. According to the recent World Bank analysis and national statistics, as of June 2024, the unemployment rate decreased to 12.5%, down from 12.9% in March 2024. However, youth unemployment remains significantly higher, with rates reaching 32.5% in December 2023. The Youth Guarantee programme has helped reduce youth unemployment, but more comprehensive labour market reforms are needed to boost job creation and productivity. The labor market also faces issues of low productivity and a substantial informal employment sector. Estimates indicate that informal employment accounts for approximately 22% of total employment, particularly affecting sectors like agriculture. Addressing these challenges is crucial for North Macedonia's economic development and its aspirations for European Union accession.

The government has also embarked on several large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the Corridor 8 project, which aims to improve connectivity and stimulate economic growth. However, concerns about transparency and public procurement processes have raised questions about the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of such projects.

Digitalisation is increasingly recognised as a key driver of economic growth and competitiveness in North Macedonia. The country has made strides in developing its digital infrastructure, with increased investments in broadband connectivity, e-governance, and digital services for businesses. However, the digital transformation of the economy remains in its early stages, and there are significant challenges in ensuring equitable access to digital tools and services across different regions and demographics.

The government has recently introduced several initiatives to promote digital literacy and expand digital services, particularly in education and public administration. The introduction of virtual electricity producers and digital platforms for renewable energy trading represents an innovative step towards modernising the energy sector. However, there a digital divide still exists between urban and rural areas, with many remote regions lacking reliable access to high-speed internet. This disparity limits opportunities for rural businesses and individuals to participate in the digital economy fully. To address these challenges, the Government has partnered with international organizations to provide affordable loans for digital infrastructure, services and capacity-building initiatives[1] to improve digital literacy across all sectors.

Moreover, the digitalisation of education is progressing, with schools increasingly using online learning platforms and tools. However, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed gaps in students' access to digital devices and internet connectivity, especially in rural and low-income households. Addressing these inequalities remains a priority for the country.

North Macedonia has made significant strides in aligning its legal frameworks with international standards. However, political polarisation - exacerbated by corruption and delays in EU accession talks - remains challenging. These factors, along with a lack of accountability, have eroded public trust in governance. The political landscape in North Macedonia remains highly polarised, mainly due to delays in the start of formal EU accession negotiations. Constitutional amendments required as part of the EU Negotiating Framework, particularly those involving the inclusion of the Bulgarian minority in the Constitution, have faced substantial resistance. This deadlock has further decreased popular support for EU integration, complicating the country's political trajectory.

Despite these challenges, North Macedonia has made moderate progress in consolidating democratic institutions and aligning its legal frameworks with international standards. Corruption remains a significant challenge, particularly in public procurement and the judiciary, where recent scandals have further eroded public trust. Although the Criminal Code was amended to reduce penalties for corruption-related offences, this has drawn criticism from civil society and anti-corruption organisations. They argue that the amendments weakens the country's ability to address high-level corruption. The amendments were passed without public consultation, raising concerns about transparency and accountability.

Efforts to enhance the rule of law are ongoing. The new Judicial Reform Strategy for 2023-2027 is expected to strengthen judicial independence, while the recent adoption of a new law governing the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors has reaffirmed the institution as the sole entry point for professionals in the judiciary. Nonetheless, public confidence in the judiciary remains low, with recent surveys indicating that 59% of judges feel current mechanisms do not protect the judiciary from external pressures effectively.

Civil society operates with relative freedom but faces shrinking space, unregulated financing, and limited policy transparency. According to the EU's 2023 report, "Overall, civil society organisations (CSOs) in North Macedonia continue to operate in an enabling environment. However, the government should increase its efforts to mainstream civil society engagement in priority areas and consultation activities."[2]

---

[1] https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/ar/348431571341516627/pdf/Concept-Project-Information-Document-PID-North-Macedonia-Digital-Economy-NODE-P170993.pdf

[2] North Macedonia Progress Report. European Commission. 2023. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_693%20North%20Macedonia%20report.pdf

Gender equality has been a long-standing challenge in North Macedonia, with progress made in some areas, yet significant gaps remaining in others. The country ranks 20th in the Global Gender Gap Index, a relatively strong position in global terms. However, female representation in key decision-making positions, particularly in ministerial and mayoral roles, remains low.

Although legal frameworks for gender equality have improved, implementation is hampered by societal resistance and inadequate funding. For example, the draft Law on Gender Equality has encountered opposition from conservative groups and religious organisations, posing a risk to the country's commitments to international gender equality standards. Despite these obstacles, progress has been made in key areas such as education and political participation, as reflected in the Gender Equality Index, which shows a 2.5-point improvement since 2019 to 2023.

Figure 2 - Overview of Human Development Index for North Macedonia
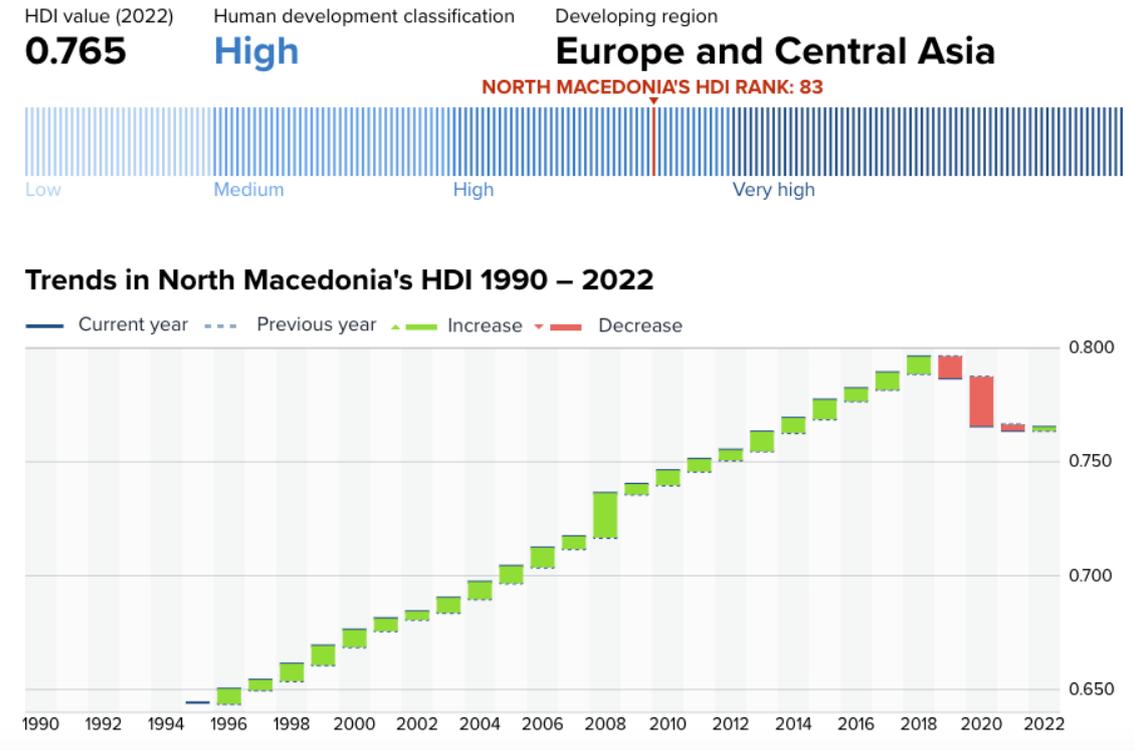
The country has made some strides in combating gender-based violence through the operationalisation of the Law on Prevention and Protection of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. This includes multisectoral protocols, enhanced service provider capacities, and increased funding for shelters and helplines. The provision of mobile gynaecological services in underserved areas has improved cervical cancer prevention. However, more work is needed to ensure these services are fully sustainable and accessible to all women, particularly in rural areas. North Macedonia has also made progress in addressing gender disparities in the labour market. However, women still face significant barriers, including lower wages, higher unemployment rates, and limited access to sexual and reproductive health services and leadership positions. The government's efforts to promote gender-responsive budgeting are a positive step towards ensuring equitable resource allocation to meet the needs of women and men.

In a report published in September of 2024, Statista states that "The Human Development Index (HDI) of North Macedonia has increased from 0.642 in 1995 to 0.770 by 2021, indicating that the country has reached high level of human development. HDI is an indicator that combines life-expectancy, education levels and GDP per capita. Countries with scores over 0.700 are considered to have high levels of development, compared with countries

that score lower."[3] Despite these improvements, the country still faces challenges in human development, shaped by demographic shifts, an aging population, and persistent issues within its social systems, particularly in health, education, and social protection. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the global energy crisis and rising food prices, affected this progress.

The country is grappling with **demographic challenges**, particularly the declining birth rate and outmigration of young, skilled workers. According to the 2021 Census, the population has decreased significantly from 2.02 million in 2002 to 1.83 million, marking a clear trend of aging and outmigration.

This demographic shift has led to population ageing and a shrinking working-age population, placing a heavier burden on social services and increasing the need for labour imports—a topic that is sensitive but increasingly necessary for economic growth.

Figure 3 - Overview of Population Status in North Macedonia
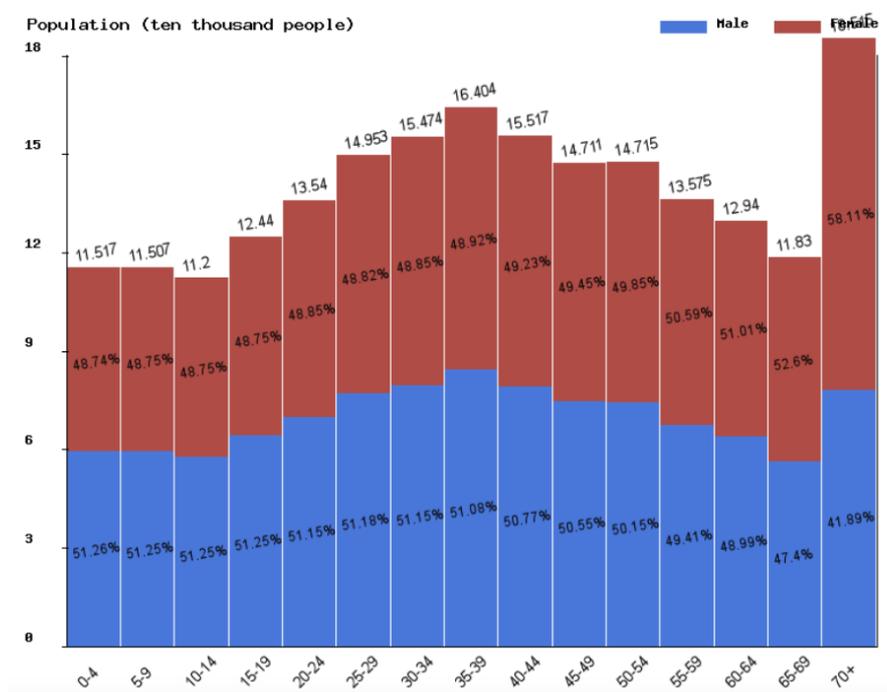
Source: State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia

Efforts to revitalise human capital through education reforms and labour market initiatives have been ongoing, but the challenges posed by demographic decline and emigration are substantial. Authorities recognise an urgent need for policies that promote demographic resilience, encourage the return of skilled workers, and attract foreign labour to fill gaps in the workforce[4].

North Macedonia lies on one of the main transit routes for migration movements. The country continues to play an active role in managing mixed migration flows. However, the need to enhance institutional and administrative capacities for all aspects of migration management remains[5].

The **health sector** remains critically strained due to chronic underfunding, shortages of medical staff, and corruption scandals that have eroded public trust in healthcare institutions further. The system has been

---

[3] https://www.statista.com/statistics/1085278/human-development-index-of-north-macedonia/

[4] The Resolution on Migration Policy 2021-2025 indicates that almost 700,000 citizens of North Macedonia live abroad. Given the very unfavourable impact that the process of emigration has on the country's demographic, social and economic development, there is a need to create preconditions for reducing permanent emigration, supporting temporary circular migration, and facilitating return migration. This document highlights the fact that the country has one of the highest levels of brain drain in the world, meaning that North Macedonia loses significant human capital due to emigration.

[5] November 2023. North Macedonia 2023 Report. Commission Staff Working Document. European Commission.

particularly challenged by the need to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, with resources stretched thin. However, a few scandals that occurred in the last years, such as the corruption allegations surrounding the procurement of deficient COVID-19 hospitals and the substitution of chemotherapy treatments with ineffective alternatives, have sparked public outrage and protests. On the positive side, the Government has made strides in improving access to gynaecological services in underserved areas, particularly focusing on life-saving services like cervical cancer prevention. Additionally, national immunisation rates for childhood vaccines have improved, though they still fall short of herd immunity targets.

Education reform has been a key Government focus as it seeks to address low learning outcomes and align the education system with the needs of the labour market better. Ongoing reforms include increased teacher salaries, capacity-building for school support staff, and the transformation of special schools into resource centres to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream education better. Despite these efforts, ensuring equitable access to quality education remains challenging, as shown by delays in distributing school materials and disruptions caused by false bomb threats (as it was happening in 2023).

The education system has made progress in enhancing inclusivity, with more educational assistants now supporting children with disabilities in mainstream schools. However, more work is needed to improve overall learning outcomes and prepare students for the demands of a rapidly changing labour market.

North Macedonia's **social protection system** has seen some improvements, particularly with regular pension increases and ongoing youth support initiatives like the Youth Guarantee. Additionally, the provision of free meals in primary schools has been expanded, offering much-needed support to vulnerable children.

In terms of gender-based violence, the Government has made substantial progress in implementing the Law on Prevention and Protection of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. This includes adoption of by-laws, the establishment of data collection protocols, and the enhancement of the capacities of service providers to support victims of violence. However, according to the EU report, "Services for victims of gender-based violence still need reinforcement and proper funding to meet the standards laid down by the Istanbul Convention. Persons with disabilities continue to face direct and indirect discrimination, social exclusion and barriers."[6]

Despite these advances, social inequality remains a concern, with women, youth, and persons with disabilities disproportionately affected by poverty and unemployment. Ongoing inflation and rising living costs have exacerbated these challenges further, placing additional strain on the most vulnerable segments of society.

North Macedonia is increasingly experiencing **climate change impacts** that manifest in more frequent extreme weather events, such as prolonged heatwaves, droughts, and intense rainfall. They have contributed to rising temperatures, leading to increased forest fires and the degradation of agricultural land. These phenomena disproportionately affect various population groups, such as women, the elderly, children, and particularly the most marginalised communities. Although the country has made progress in its green energy transition, especially with solar and wind power investments, the environmental situation remains critical. Slow progress in areas, such as wastewater management, solid waste disposal, and hazardous waste management overshadowed these efforts. Key environmental challenges persist in North Macedonia's major lakes, particularly Ohrid, Prespa, and Dojran, where water levels are declining due to poor management, increasing energy costs, and inadequate wastewater treatment. Despite these issues, the country is committed to a long-term transition to renewable energy, with a focus on reducing dependence on coal, especially through large projects like the construction of the Chebren hydropower plant, which is expected to start production by 2029[7].

The country remains vulnerable to disasters, such as floods and wildfires, exacerbated by climate change. The Government has made some progress in building capacities for disaster preparedness, including strengthening flood risk management in areas like the Polog and Drin River basins. Efforts to shift from reactive responses to proactive disaster prevention are supported by investments in local governments' knowledge of flood risks and the development of disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies. Additionally, the country continues to strengthen its early warning systems and cross-sectoral cooperation to mitigate the risks posed by climate change and related disasters.

---

[6] November 2023. North Macedonia 2023 Report. Commission Staff Working Document. European Commission. Page 6.
[7] November 2023. North Macedonia 2023 Report. Commission Staff Working Document. European Commission. Page 8.

1.2 The Cooperation Framework for North Macedonia 2021-2025

The Government of North Macedonia and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025[8] is "the key strategic document that guides the work of all UN agencies working in the country in the five years between 2021 and 2025. It has been developed with active engagement of UN entities and in close cooperation with the Government, following an extensive consultations process with organisations and individuals from all walks of life." The Cooperation Framework succeeds the 2016-2020 Partnership for Sustainable Development (PSD) and aligns with the country's national development priorities, international human rights obligations, gender equality commitments, and Agenda 2030. Additionally, the Cooperation Framework ensures full alignment with the EU accession process by recognizing EU membership as a critical national priority.

The Cooperation Framework outlines three strategic priorities for addressing North Macedonia's key development challenges.

The **first priority**, *sustained and inclusive economic and social development*, aims to improve living standards through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem. It also seeks to ensure universal access to rights-based quality social services, including healthcare, education, agricultural development, and necessary social and child protection rooted in resilient systems.

The **second priority** focuses on *climate action, natural resources, and disaster risk management*. It promotes ambitious climate action, sustainable natural resource management, and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster-resilient communities.

The **third priority** emphasises *transparent and accountable democratic governance*. It aims to enhance the rule of law, evidence-based and gender-responsive policies, social cohesion, and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable, and responsive institutions.

The UNSDCF defines the following specific outcomes related to the three strategic priorities:

1. Sustained and Inclusive Economic and Social Development:

Outcome 1: Improve living standards through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem.

Outcome 2: Ensure universal access to rights-based quality social services, including healthcare, education, and necessary social and child protection - rooted in resilient systems.

2. Climate Action, Natural Resources, and Disaster Risk Management:

Outcome 3: Promote ambitious climate action, sustainable natural resource management, and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster-resilient communities.

3. Transparent and Accountable Democratic Governance:

Outcome 4: Enhance the rule of law, evidence-based and gender-responsive policies, social cohesion, and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable, and responsive institutions.

---

[8] https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/100160-republic-north-macedonia-and-united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework

Figure 4 - UNSDCF Theory of Change

Prosperous, Inclusive and Resilient North Macedonia by 2030

If there is sustainable and inclusive economic and social development, if there is ambitious climate action, sustainable natural resource management and disaster risk management, and if there is transparent and accountable democratic governance, then the above impact will be achieved

Strategic Priority 1: Sustained & inclusive economic and social development **(Prosperity and People)**

Strategic Priority 2: Climate action, natural resources and disaster risk management **(Planet)**

Strategic Priority 3: Transparent and accountable democratic governance **(Peace & Partnerships)**

Outcome 1: By 2025, the living standard of all people in North Macedonia is improved through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem

Outcome 2: By 2025, people in North Macedonia have universal access to rights-based quality social services – healthcare, education, and necessary social and child protection - rooted in systems resilient to emergencies
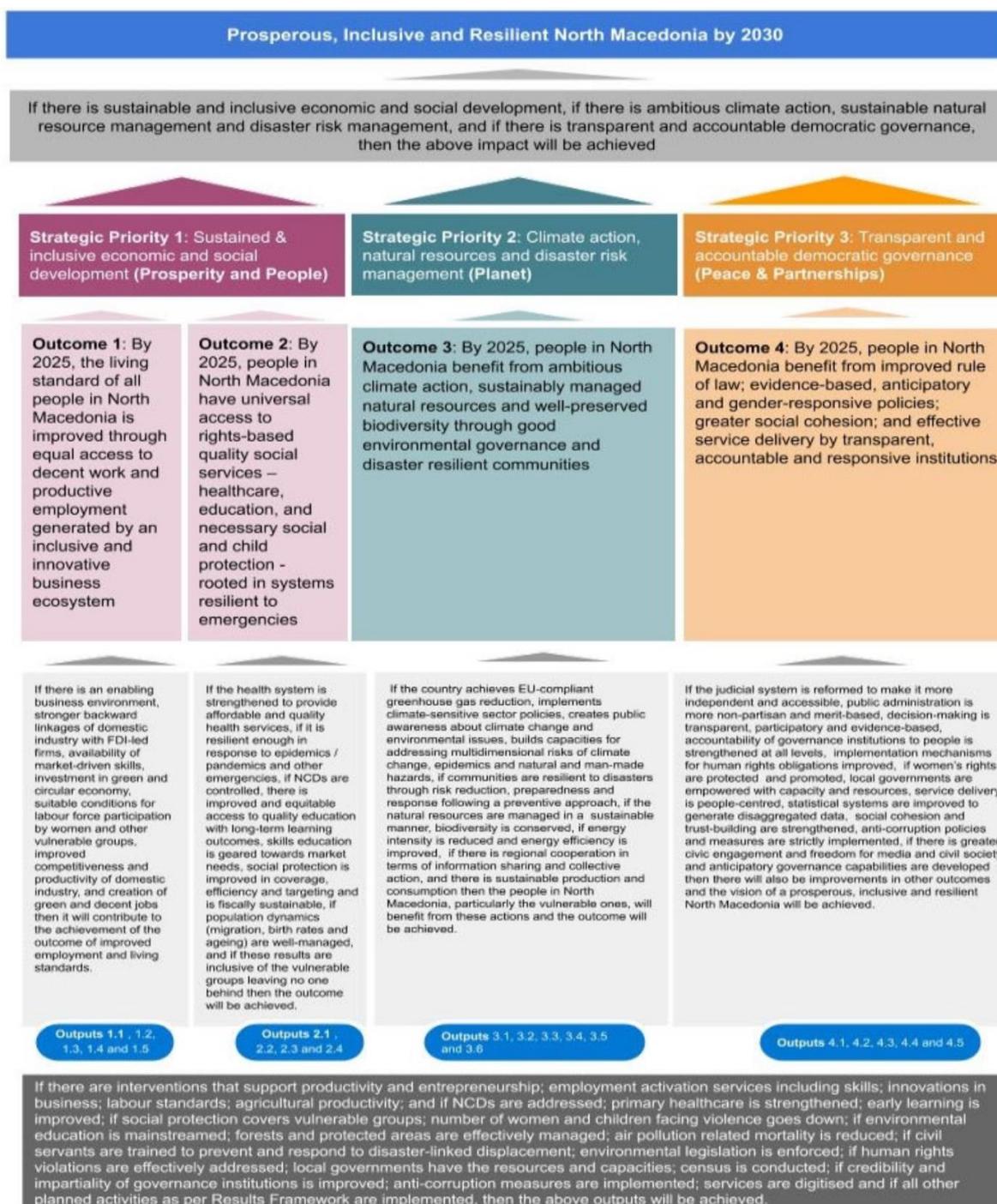
Outcome 3: By 2025, people in North Macedonia benefit from ambitious climate action, sustainably managed natural resources and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster resilient communities

Outcome 4: By 2025, people in North Macedonia benefit from improved rule of law; evidence-based, anticipatory and gender-responsive policies; greater social cohesion; and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable and responsive institutions

If there is an enabling business environment, stronger backward linkages of domestic industry with FDI-led firms, availability of market-driven skills, investment in green and circular economy, suitable conditions for labour force participation by women and other vulnerable groups, improved competitiveness and productivity of domestic industry, and creation of green and decent jobs then it will contribute to the achievement of the outcome of improved employment and living standards.

If the health system is strengthened to provide affordable and quality health services, if it is resilient enough in response to epidemics / pandemics and other emergencies, if NCDs are controlled, there is improved and equitable access to quality education with long-term learning outcomes, skills education is geared towards market needs, social protection is improved in coverage, efficiency and targeting and is fiscally sustainable, if population dynamics (migration, birth rates and ageing) are well-managed, and if these results are inclusive of the vulnerable groups leaving no one behind then the outcome will be achieved.

If the country achieves EU-compliant greenhouse gas reduction, implements climate-sensitive sector policies, creates public awareness about climate change and environmental issues, builds capacities for addressing multidimensional risks of climate change, epidemics and natural and man-made hazards, if communities are resilient to disasters through risk reduction, preparedness and response following a preventive approach, if the natural resources are managed in a sustainable manner, biodiversity is conserved, if energy intensity is reduced and energy efficiency is improved, if there is regional cooperation in terms of information sharing and collective action, and there is sustainable production and consumption then the people in North Macedonia, particularly the vulnerable ones, will benefit from these actions and the outcome will be achieved.

If the judicial system is reformed to make it more independent and accessible, public administration is more non-partisan and merit-based, decision-making is transparent, participatory and evidence-based, accountability of governance institutions to people is strengthened at all levels, implementation mechanisms for human rights obligations improved, if women's rights are protected and promoted, local governments are empowered with capacity and resources, service delivery is people-centred, statistical systems are improved to generate disaggregated data, social cohesion and trust-building are strengthened, anti-corruption policies and measures are strictly implemented, if there is greater civic engagement and freedom for media and civil society and anticipatory governance capabilities are developed then there will also be improvements in other outcomes and the vision of a prosperous, inclusive and resilient North Macedonia will be achieved.

Outputs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5

Outputs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4

Outputs 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6

Outputs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5

If there are interventions that support productivity and entrepreneurship; employment activation services including skills; innovations in business; labour standards; agricultural productivity; and if NCDs are addressed; primary healthcare is strengthened; early learning is improved; if social protection covers vulnerable groups; number of women and children facing violence goes down; if environmental education is mainstreamed; forests and protected areas are effectively managed; air pollution related mortality is reduced; if civil servants are trained to prevent and respond to disaster-linked displacement; environmental legislation is enforced; if human rights violations are effectively addressed; local governments have the resources and capacities; census is conducted; if credibility and impartiality of governance institutions is improved; anti-corruption measures are implemented; services are digitised and if all other planned activities as per Results Framework are implemented, then the above outputs will be achieved.

The Cooperation Framework is implemented by 18 resident and non-resident UN entities under the coordination of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) and the Government of North Macedonia. It includes collaboration with national and local governments, civil society, the private sector, international partners, and other stakeholders. The framework promotes mutual accountability and national ownership and is operationalised through annual Joint Work Plans (JWPs). The Joint Steering Committee (JSC) reviews progress annually, and the Cooperation Framework is evaluated in its penultimate year to assess its effectiveness and outcomes.

The Cooperation Framework reflects a commitment to supporting North Macedonia's ambitions for transformative change, envisioning public institutions that are more accountable, an economy that is more competitive and climate-neutral, and communities working together peacefully towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

2 THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE FINAL EVALUATION

In the penultimate year of implementation of the Cooperation Framework, the UNCT launched an independent evaluation as the principal accountability instrument to provide a summative, external, independent, impartial, and system-wide assessment of the United Nations Development System's (UNDS) collective contributions at the country level. The evaluation focused on strategic-level results, the aggregate contribution of the Cooperation Framework at the outcome level, and the UNDS contribution to Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) targets.

2.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

The rationale for the evaluation of the Cooperation Framework is to assess how effectively the UNCT in North Macedonia prioritises support and actively contributes to the country's overall development. As the Terms of Reference emphasise, the goal is to *strategically utilise the findings to inform the next UNCT strategic planning cycle, aligning with broader UN system reforms*. The insights gained from the evaluation and its recommendations are intended to facilitate the alignment of UN interventions with the Agenda 2030 and principles of equality and *leaving no one behind*. This alignment aims to forge a strong partnership to assist North Macedonia in achieving its SDG targets and effectively fulfilling its commitments.

2.2 Objectives of the Evaluation

This Cooperation Framework 2021-2025 final evaluation is an *external, independent, and substantively analytical exercise*. Its broad purpose is to facilitate learning by identifying what works, what doesn't, and why. The evaluation has gauged the performance and achievements of each of the four outcomes, providing insights to inform the design of the new Cooperation Framework 2026-2030. The evaluation has produced an independent assessment of achievements, their relevance, associated challenges, and detailed descriptions of lessons learned from the implementation of the Cooperation Framework. This will inform key stakeholders and ensure accountability of the UN system.

As specified in the Terms of Reference, the objectives of the evaluation were to:

- *Assess the* Cooperation Framework*'s contribution to national development results* through evidence-based judgments on issues and inputs from stakeholders, using evaluation criteria such as relevance and accountability.

- *Identify factors that have affected the* Cooperation Framework*'s contribution*, explain the reasons for such performance, and identify the enabling factors and bottlenecks to support learning.

- *Assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the UNCT North Macedonia support*, providing conclusions on the contributions across the examined scope to facilitate learning and continuity.

- *Provide clear and actionable recommendations* for improving the UN system's contribution to national development priorities, especially for incorporation into the upcoming Cooperation Framework programming cycle. This includes advice on the suitability of indicators and other verification tools used to measure progress towards outcomes and outputs.

2.3 Scope of the Evaluation

Thematic Scope: The evaluation covers the Cooperation Framework's implementation period from January 2021 to June 2024. It has examined the contributions of all results that UN agencies delivered in this period. Additionally, the evaluation has addressed cross-cutting issues and global UN programming principles, focusing on *Leave No One Behind* and the normative work of the UNCT.

The evaluation has focused on all Cooperation Framework outcomes, highlighting the connections between UN agency programmes, progress and results achieved under each Cooperation Framework outcome. The evaluation has also considered emerging issues, assessing the UNCT's responsiveness and adaptation, as well as its reprioritisation and operational methods for managing stakeholder participation and inclusiveness.

The evaluation has targeted the entire country, and representatives of central and local authorities, CSOs, partners and other stakeholders from different regions of the country.

Users of Findings: Primary users of the evaluation include the UNCT, the Government of North Macedonia and its ministries, national stakeholders (from various public and other institutions), and civil society. Additionally, bilateral and multilateral donors and broader development partners also serve as essential audiences for the evaluation findings.

3 Findings

3.1 Relevance and Adaptability

The ET analysed whether the CF's strategic priorities effectively addressed North Macedonia's national needs, priorities, and international and regional commitments, including alignment with the EU accession agenda. The ET also assessed the responsiveness of the UNCT (and CF) to emerging and emergency needs, particularly for the most vulnerable populations, including their adaptability to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the ET examined the logical connection between CF's outcomes and outputs, assessing whether performance indicators with baselines and targets were measurable, relevant, and informed by robust problem analysis. Finally, the evaluation considered how effectively the CF incorporated gender and human rights and alignment with LNOB.

EQ1.1. How well do the strategic priorities of the Cooperation Framework respond to the country's needs, national priorities, and international and regional commitments?

> *F1. The CF's strategic priorities, guided by its Theory of Change, demonstrated a high degree of alignment with North Macedonia's national development priorities, regional commitments, and international standards. The ToC's structure ensured flexibility and responsiveness, and the integration of the CCA's evidence-based analysis further reinforced the CF's focus on key areas such as governance, social inclusion, economic resilience, and environmental sustainability, underscoring its continued utility in fostering long-term progress in North Macedonia.*

The strategic priorities of the Cooperation Framework (CF) were strongly aligned with North Macedonia's national development priorities and the needs of its population, reflecting the foundational role of the Theory of Change (ToC). The ToC provided a structured and evidence-based approach, ensuring that the CF addressed the country's most pressing challenges while remaining flexible and responsive to emerging issues. By integrating findings from the Common Country Analysis (CCA), the ToC established clear links between the development challenges identified and the CF's strategic priorities, ensuring alignment with international and regional commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, the ToC's design, which emphasized systemic change and adaptability, allowed the CF to remain relevant and responsive to disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and economic shocks.

Subsequently, the Cooperation Framework's **structure and approach** aligned well with the country's national strategies, regional commitments, and international standards, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Cooperation Framework effectively addressed the country's development challenges by prioritizing sustained and inclusive economic and social development, climate action, and transparent and accountable governance.

The evaluation identified a strong correlation between the CF and key national strategic documents, valid at the time of design of the Cooperation Framework, including the **Economic Reform Programme (ERP) 2020-2022**[9]. Various areas of structural reform within the ERP closely align with the Cooperation Framework priority areas. For instance, **Structural Reform 1**, which focused on creating an enabling business environment and further integration into the EU single market, directly corresponded to the Cooperation Framework's priority of

---

[9] https://finance.gov.mk/economic-reform-programme/?lang=en

sustained and inclusive economic and social development under **Outcome 1**. This outcome aimed to improve living standards through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem. **Structural Reform 2**, which aimed to ensure a stable and sustainable food supply, particularly through modernizing post-harvest technologies and agricultural processes, was also aligned with **Outcome 1** of the CF, contributing to employment opportunities and economic resilience. **Structural Reform 3**, which focused on strengthening resilience to climate change and reducing environmental pollution, corresponded to the CF's **Outcome 3**, promoting ambitious climate action, sustainable natural resource management, and disaster-resilient communities.

Structural Reform 5, which targeted labour force efficiency, labour market flexibility, and healthcare quality improvement, linked well with **Outcomes 1 and 2** of the Cooperation Framework. **Structural Reform 6**, which emphasised social inclusion, was also aligned with **Outcome 2** of the Cooperation Framework, which addresses the social inclusion of vulnerable groups, including access to healthcare, education, and social protection.

The **Programme for Work of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia (2022-2024)** [10] and the CF's priorities show a close alignment as well. The Government's focus on accelerating economic growth, energy transition, infrastructure modernisation, and environmental protection guided the CF's priorities for **sustained and inclusive economic development** and **climate action** under **Outcome 1** and **Outcome 3**. The Government's commitment to social inclusion and human capital development, including supporting vulnerable groups, reforming education, and building a modern healthcare system, is reflected in the CF's objectives under **Outcome 1** and **2**[11].

Figure 5 - Local Stakeholders on UN Meeting the Most Urgent Needs
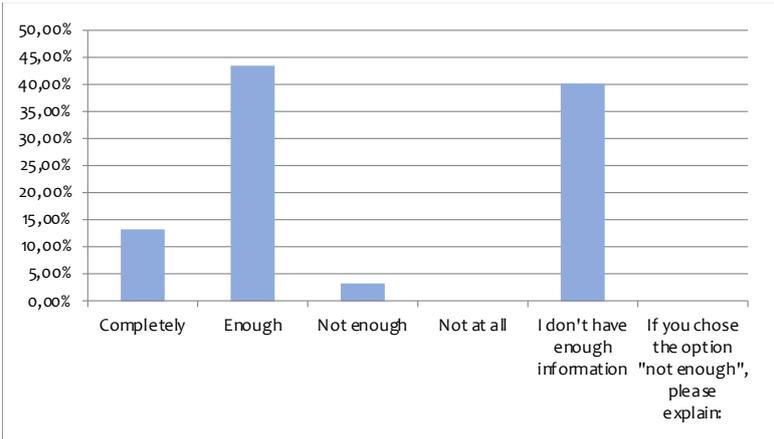
Source: Partners' Survey

Feedback from local stakeholders also supported the alignment between the Cooperation Framework and national priorities. A majority of stakeholders surveyed during the evaluation believed that the UN was responsive to urgent needs and that its interventions aligned well with the country's strategic priorities.[12] Equally important, these stakeholders were asked about the alignment of the Cooperation Framework and the UNCT's activities with national development priorities. Among those surveyed, the majority (respondents familiar with the framework) provided positive feedback.

Figure 6 - Local Stakeholders on the Alignment of National and UN Priorities.

---

[10] https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/programa/2022-2024/programme_of_the_government_2022-2024.pdf

[11] See Annex 6 - Comparison of UNSDCF priorities and the draft NDS, the ERP, and the Programme for Work for a detailed comparison of the UNSDCF with the Programme for Work, the ERP, and the draft National Development Strategy.

[12] The survey had 30 respondents representing institutions involved in governance (12), the economy (6), the environment (10), health and social services (10), and education (6).
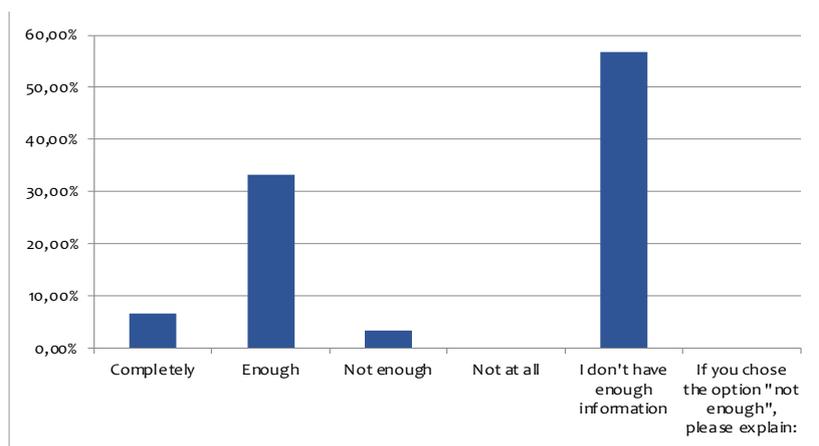
Source: Partners' Survey

UN personnel in North Macedonia similarly reported good alignment between UN activities and national priorities and needs.

__Figure 7 - UN Personnel on the Alignment of National and UN Priorities.__
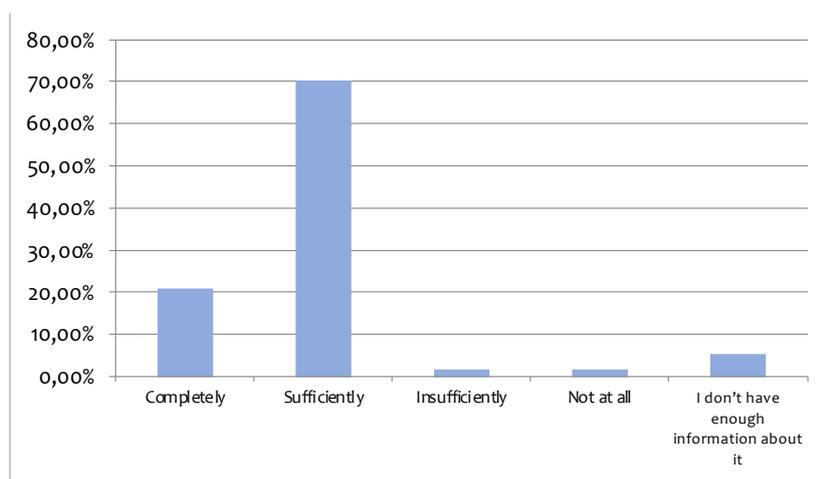
Source: UN Programme and Operations Staff Survey

The **Common Country Analysis (CC**A)[13] provides an evidence-based analysis of the country's development context, particularly in relation to the SDGs and EU integration, ensuring that the Cooperation Framework remains aligned with North Macedonia's evolving needs, national strategies, and regional and international commitments. The Cooperation Framework continues to serve as a pertinent and adaptive mechanism for addressing the most pressing development challenges the country is facing, although certain emerging areas from the post-SDG Summit 2023 recommendations have yet to be fully integrated.

The CCA highlighted North Macedonia's moderate progress in critical areas such as the alignment of legal, policy, and institutional frameworks with international standards and the EU acquis. While advancements were noted in the country, challenges such as political rights, civil liberties, and corruption continued to undermine public trust in governance institutions. This assessment confirmed the relevance of the Cooperation Framework's priority on **Transparent and Accountable Democratic Governance**, particularly under **Outcome 4**, which focused on enhancing the rule of law, fostering evidence-based and gender-responsive policies, and improving service delivery by transparent and accountable institutions. The CCA's findings regarding the public distrust in

---

[13] https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/253270-north-macedonia-common-country-analysis-2023-update

governance and ongoing corruption issues underscored the importance and relevance of the Cooperation Framework 's focus on addressing these critical governance challenges[14].

In relation to **gender equality**, the CCA's analysis further reinforced the relevance of the Cooperation Framework. While North Macedonia ranked 20th out of 146 countries in the **Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI)**[15], indicating progress in parliamentary representation, significant gaps remained in female representation in key leadership roles, such as ministerial and mayoral positions [16, 17]. The CCA also emphasised the ongoing implementation of the **Law on Prevention and Protection of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence**, a major breakthrough aligned with international obligations under the **Istanbul Convention**. These findings confirmed the importance of the Cooperation Framework's efforts to promote **gender-responsive governance** under **Outcome 4**, ensuring the continuation of support for both gender equality initiatives and the enforcement of protective laws[18].

In terms of **Sustained and Inclusive Economic and Social Development**, the CCA's analysis provided evidence that the Cooperation Framework's focus in this area was timely and relevant. Although the poverty rate remained stable (increasing marginally from 21.6% to 21.8% between 2019 and 2020), the CCA noted that women and youth were disproportionately affected by the economic downturn, which was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and intensified by the war in Ukraine further[19]. The Cooperation Framework's emphasis on **Outcome 2**, which promoted universal access to rights-based social services, including healthcare, education, and social protection, was confirmed by the CCA as a crucial intervention for addressing the needs of vulnerable populations during times of crisis.

The CCA annual updates also confirmed the relevance of the Cooperation Framework's priority on **Climate Action, Natural Resources, and Disaster Risk Management**. The CCA highlighted a positive trend in green energy transition, with significant investments in renewable energy, particularly in solar and wind power since the beginning of 2022. More than 630 licenses for electricity production from renewables had been issued, demonstrating a shift toward sustainable energy solutions[20]. This progress aligned closely with **Outcome 3** of the Cooperation Framework, which focused on ambitious climate action, sustainable natural resource management, and disaster resilience[21]. The CCA pointed out ongoing improvements in national capacities for climate policy and climate change education, which contributed towards achievement of SDG 13.2.1 and measurable enhancements in air quality, reflecting the relevance of Cooperation Framework's environmental focus[22].

As an overall recommendation post-SDG Summit 2023, the 2023 CCA update states that the "UN Country Team should assist national partners to focus accelerated efforts in **six key areas of transition** that have catalytic and multiplying effect across the SGDs: 1) food systems; (2) energy access and affordability; (3) digital connectivity; (4) education; (5) jobs and social protection; and (6) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution."[23]. While the evaluation acknowledged that these areas were not fully contextualised or integrated within Cooperation Framework at the time of assessment, the relevance of existing Cooperation Framework outcomes[24]—such as **education** and **jobs and social protection**—was confirmed. The evaluation also noted that areas like **food systems** and **energy access** could benefit from clearer alignment with the Cooperation Framework going forward.

---

[14] October 2023. North Macedonia Common Country Analysis, 2023 update. United Nations North Macedonia. Page 5.

[15] UNFPA, Child Marriage in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Overview). 463 SSO and UNICEF, MICS 2018-2019d Economic Forum (2022). The Global Gender Gap Report in https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/unw_cgep_nmk_eng_web.pdf

[16] October 2023. North Macedonia Common Country Analysis, 2023 update. United Nations North Macedonia. Page 6.

[17] Country Gender Equality Profile of North Macedonia, UN Women 2023.

[18] October 2023. North Macedonia Common Country Analysis, 2023 update. United Nations North Macedonia. Page 10.

[19] October 2023. North Macedonia Common Country Analysis, 2023 update. United Nations North Macedonia. Page 11.

[20] Ibid. Page 12.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/253270-north-macedonia-common-country-analysis-2023-update. Page 16

[24] 2023. Annual Results Report. UN North Macedonia. Page 9.

JC1.1.2. The extent to which the Cooperation Framework responded to international and regional commitments

> ***F2. The CF effectively aligned with the country's international and regional commitments, particularly in advancing EU accession priorities, also facilitating regional cooperation in areas such as climate change, disaster risk management, and migration, green transition and climate resilience. However, the evaluation noted gaps in articulating how specific outputs contributed to EU-driven reforms and regional integration, identifying the need for a stronger focus on critical transition areas, such as digital connectivity, and a more explicit connection between CF outcomes and EU accession priorities***

The Cooperation Framework effectively supported North Macedonia's progress toward EU accession by promoting, among other things, legislative harmonisation and institutional transformation, both of which are essential to meeting EU acquis requirements. In this context, the evaluation notes that the Cooperation Framework's work in Transparent and Accountable Democratic Governance (Strategic Priority 3, Outcome 4) contributed to aligning national laws and institutional frameworks with EU standards, including data generation, such as the Census and population projections. Examples under other outcomes illustrate the Cooperation Framework's support to the national statistical system and various sectoral priorities. These efforts helped North Macedonia meet critical EU reporting requirements, demonstrating how the Cooperation Framework supported the country's broader EU integration agenda.

In addition, the Cooperation Framework also facilitated regional cooperation in key areas that are part of the EU Connectivity Agenda and the EU Strategy for the Western Balkans. Some of the areas included: climate change, disaster risk management, and natural resource management, all of which are critical to fostering cross-border collaboration in the region. The Cooperation Framework also promoted initiatives related to migration management, asylum seeker and refugee support, and cross-border trade, thereby aligning with regional priorities. The Cooperation Framework's engagement with regional bodies such as the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) further contributed to building stronger regional partnerships and fostering youth dialogue,[25] with notable support from the Secretary General's Peacebuilding Fund[26].

When it comes to human rights, gender equality, and Agenda 2030, the Cooperation Framework's efforts have been robust and well-aligned with international standards. The framework incorporated the *Leave No One Behind (LNOB)* principle[27], which emphasised the inclusion of marginalised and excluded groups, such as Roma, youth, and women. Gender equality was a central focus, with a significant focus on combating gender-based violence (GBV) and trafficking in human beings, while ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services. Indicators related to inclusive prosperity and access to quality services were disaggregated by age and gender, ensuring that the Cooperation Framework addressed inequalities across all demographics. These efforts aligned closely with North Macedonia's commitments under Agenda 2030 and its human rights obligations.

Furthermore, the Cooperation Framework contributed to North Macedonia's climate action and sustainable development priorities, promoting green energy investments and air quality improvement. The framework's focus on renewable energy and sustainable resource management aligned with the EU Strategy for the Western Balkans, which prioritises environmental sustainability in the region. Through these efforts, the Cooperation Framework contributed to building resilience in the face of climate-related challenges and advancing North Macedonia's green transition.

Despite these contributions, the evaluation identified several areas for improvement in aligning the Cooperation Framework with regional and international priorities more closely. While the Cooperation Framework referenced the EU acquis and broader EU-driven reforms, the evaluation found that the framework did not fully articulate how specific Cooperation Framework outputs contributed to legislative and institutional reforms required for EU accession. Strengthening the connection between Cooperation Framework outcomes and EU accession priorities—for example, in critical areas such as judiciary reform, anti-corruption, and labour market improvements—would ensure better alignment with North Macedonia's long-term EU membership goal. Improved integration of EU-driven sectoral reforms into the results framework would also be beneficial. While

---

[25] Ibid. Page 18.
[26] https://mptf.undp.org/fund/pb000
[27] Ibid. Page 12.

the Cooperation Framework made contributions to sectoral reforms, such as in the areas of education, health, and social protection, the evaluation found that these were not always clearly linked to the specific EU accession chapters. More explicit articulation of the Cooperation Framework's support for EU-driven reforms would clarify its contribution to North Macedonia's EU accession journey.

The evaluation noted that the six key transition areas identified in the 2023 CCA update—food systems, energy access, digital connectivity, education, jobs, social protection, and climate change—were partially integrated into the Cooperation Framework. While areas such as education and jobs were well-represented, others, such as food systems and digital connectivity were less clearly linked to the Cooperation Framework's strategic priorities. Strengthening the Cooperation Framework's focus on these transition areas would align the framework more closely with North Macedonia's evolving development challenges and regional priorities.

Support to regional cooperation could be enhanced by explicitly aligning its activities with the EU Connectivity Agenda and regional frameworks (like the RCC). The evaluation highlighted the Cooperation Framework's support for various regional initiatives (e.g., dialogues on issues such as climate change and migration), but also identified opportunities to deepen its engagement in areas such as digital connectivity, energy access, and transport infrastructure, which are central to regional integration. A more structured approach to regional body collaboration could amplify the Cooperation Framework's impact on fostering regional connectivity.

EQ1.2. How relevant has the Cooperation Framework response been to emerging and emergency needs during crises, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalised groups?

JC1.2.1. The extent to which UNCT/ UN agencies responded to emerging and emergency needs during crises and external negative effects, especially for the most vulnerable

> *F3. The Cooperation Framework's areas of intervention elaborated under the ToC enabled flexibility and relevance during implementation, allowing the UNCT and UN agencies to respond to emerging crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic effectively. By maintaining a focus on vulnerable populations and embedding adaptability within the ToC, the UN system ensured timely, targeted interventions that addressed pressing needs while supporting long-term institutional resilience and sustainability.*

The evaluation found that the UNCT and UN agencies demonstrated responsiveness to emerging and emergency needs, which impacted North Macedonia early on in the Cooperation Framework period and at the later stages. The analysis showed that the COVID-19 pandemic had severely disrupted the country's sustainable development progress over the previous decade. The UN's response addressed the most pressing needs, especially for vulnerable and marginalised populations. The findings showed "substantial progress in enhancing the skills and knowledge of healthcare professionals and institutions in preventing and managing COVID-19. The focus was on vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, and improving vaccine surveillance and coverage, including for COVID-19 vaccines, and sexual and reproductive health services. For instance, UNCT supported two extensive catch-up 'door-to-door' campaigns to improve access to immunisation services, covering 40 municipalities in both urban and rural areas[28]. These campaigns exemplify how the UN's interventions specifically targeted populations facing evident barriers to healthcare access to ensure equitable coverage and timely responses to emerging health risks.

Additionally, the UN assisted in fully integrating mobile gynaecological services for women and girls in underserved areas into the e-health system during the pandemic. These life-saving services were effective during the pandemic and later incorporated into the Government's preventive health services and are now fully state-funded. This reflects the long-term sustainability and institutionalisation of emergency responses.

The UNCT emphasises the importance of data in driving social change, particularly through gender data development and usage. This was achieved through the Gender Data Bootcamp, which empowered participants, including civil society members and researchers, to utilise gender data to address societal inequities better. Participants acquired data literacy skills, enabling them to transform raw data into compelling narratives to highlight gender disparities. In parallel, the establishment of the Gender Data Platform, integrated into the State Statistical Office (SSO), further institutionalised the use of sex-disaggregated data in policymaking and gender

---

[28] Ibid. Page 58.

mainstreaming. This platform has provided valuable insights into gender inequalities across sectors and served as a foundation for more gender-responsive policies. Additionally, the 2021 Census and the 2023 population projections provided critical evidence as a basis for the preparation of the National Development Strategy and the National Demographic Strategy, showcasing the UN's responsiveness to emerging demographic needs by leveraging data to inform decision-making.

In addition to health and demographic responses, UN agencies also addressed disaster risk reduction (DRR). While North Macedonia was assessed as having low disaster risk in 2023, the UNCT and relevant entities prioritised preparedness and resilience-building. In collaboration with UN agencies, the national stakeholders in charge of energy, environment, and disaster risk management continued to focus on climate action, environmental sustainability, and resilience to ensure that the country could respond to future crises better.

JC1.2.2. Evidence that the UNCT/ UN agencies adapted its support to provide timely assistance and achieve the Cooperation Framework outcomes

> *F4. The ET finds that the UNCT and UN agencies adapted their support to provide timely assistance while achieving the CF's outcomes. Mechanisms such as regular coordination with national stakeholders, joint workplan development, and performance reviews enabled real-time adjustments to programming in response to emerging challenges. Initiatives like the COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan and gender-responsive budgeting were adapted to address urgent needs while maintaining alignment with CF's priorities. These efforts underscore the flexibility and responsiveness of UN agencies, ensuring relevance and effects during periods of crisis while advancing the CF's strategic objectives.*

The evaluation provided clear evidence of the capacity of UN agencies to adapt their programming in response to emerging challenges, yet remain within the scope of the Cooperation Framework outcomes which have been continuously assessed as relevant, even in times of emergencies or prolonged crisis. Regular coordination and communication with national stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Education, the State Statistical Office and other institutions, enabled joint assessments of shifting priorities and prompt intervention adjustments. For example, this approach allowed for flexible planning and the timely adaptation of initiatives in response to evolving national needs, particularly during regional crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic impacts of the Ukraine conflict. This flexibility ensured that the UN's work remained relevant and aligned with the intended Cooperation Framework outcomes.

The UNCT also employed adaptive programming as a key approach, formalised through joint workplan development and annual performance review workshops. These reviews occurred once or twice yearly, depending on the evolving circumstances. Furthermore, the UNCT held dedicated coordination meetings with ministries such as the Ministry of Education, Labour and Social Policy, Health, and Information Society and Administration. These meetings, which involved relevant UN entities and national ministers, provided a platform for real-time adjustments to programme portfolios based on the country's evolving needs. Through these mechanisms, the UNCT was able to regularly update its programming to reflect national priorities and unforeseen global developments.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the UNCT promptly adjusted and adapted many ongoing programmes to respond to the urgent needs arising from the health crisis. The COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) outlined a broad set of immediate and long-term measures to address the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, which included ensuring access to healthcare, strengthening social protection mechanisms, and supporting the most vulnerable populations. For example, the Youth Guarantee Programme, initially designed to reduce youth unemployment, was modified to respond to the new challenges posed by the pandemic and to ensure young people had access to employment opportunities, even during the crisis. Moreover, the UNCT and national partners scaled up gender-responsive budgeting efforts to address the specific needs of women who were disproportionately affected by the pandemic's economic fallout.

In addition, evidence provided by interviewed stakeholders and desk review showed how programming was reoriented to address these overlapping crises in detail. Stakeholders stated that UN agencies rapidly responded and adapted many ongoing programmes to provide immediate support, as with the energy shortages, food security disruptions, and the pandemic's socio-economic impact. The UNCT worked closely with national

authorities to ensure that its support met the urgent needs of the population, including through the introduction of emergency social protection measures and expanded healthcare support. These adaptive efforts underscore the flexibility of UN agencies in adjusting their portfolios to respond to the evolving national and regional context effectively.

The Cooperation Framework *established close correlation with the draft NDS, demonstrating its real-time relevance and the comprehensive and collaborative approach to addressing key development challenges in North Macedonia, with both frameworks mutually reinforcing the need for sustainable, inclusive, and resilient growth across all sectors.*

North Macedonia has initiated the development of a comprehensive National Development Strategy (NDS),[29] outlining six key strategic development areas aimed at guiding the country towards sustainable and inclusive growth. These six strategic areas are closely aligned with the Cooperation Framework priorities, reflecting a strong correlation between the national vision and the collaborative international development framework. The alignment ensures that both the NDS and the Cooperation Framework are working in tandem to meet the country's needs, address key challenges, and leverage development opportunities.

- **Sustainable, Innovative, and Competitive Economy**: The NDS emphasises the importance of creating a sustainable, innovative, and competitive economy. This directly correlates with the Cooperation Framework's strategic priority of "Sustained and Inclusive Economic and Social Development." The first outcome under this priority focuses on improving living standards through equal access to decent work and productive employment, supported by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem. This alignment aims to ensure that North Macedonia fosters economic growth that is beneficial for all segments of society.

- **Sustainable Local and Regional Development that Ensures Cohesion**: The NDS also highlights the importance of balanced regional development to ensure social cohesion across different areas of the country. This strategic priority again correlates with the Cooperation Framework's priority of "Sustained and Inclusive Economic and Social Development," supporting Outcome 1. Through equal access to employment and a fair distribution of economic benefits across regions, both the NDS and Cooperation Framework are focused on reducing regional disparities and promoting inclusive growth.

- **Demographic Revitalisation and Social and Cultural Development**: Addressing demographic challenges and fostering social and cultural development are key elements of the NDS. These priorities are mirrored in the Cooperation Framework's second outcome under its economic and social development priority. This outcome aims to ensure universal access to quality social services - including healthcare, education, and social protection - which are crucial for responding to demographic shifts and ensuring societal resilience.

- **Rule of Law and Good Governance**: Strengthening the rule of law and enhancing governance frameworks are integral to the NDS and align with the Cooperation Framework's second strategic priority: "Transparent and Accountable Democratic Governance." Outcome 4 under this priority aims to enhance the rule of law, promote evidence-based and gender-responsive policies, and ensure that institutions are transparent, accountable, and responsive in public service delivery. This shared focus on governance reform is crucial for reinforcing democratic processes and fostering social cohesion.

- **Secure, Safe, and Resilient Society**: Ensuring security, resilience, and disaster preparedness is another critical strategic area of the NDS. This priority aligns with the Cooperation Framework's third strategic priority of "Climate Action, Natural Resources, and Disaster Risk Management." Outcome 3 under this priority emphasises the need for ambitious climate action, sustainable natural resource management, and enhanced biodiversity preservation, all of which are supported by strong environmental governance and disaster-resilient communities.

- **Green Transformation**: Finally, the NDS's commitment to green transformation aligns with the Cooperation Framework's third priority, which also focuses on climate action and environmental sustainability. Outcome 3 seeks to promote green initiatives, including climate resilience, natural resource management, and biodiversity protection, all within the environmental governance framework. This shared objective underscores the importance of transitioning to a greener, more sustainable future for North Macedonia.

---

[29] https://www.nrs.mk/content/ENG%20Draft%20NDS%20fin.pdf

EQ1.3. Are the UNSDCF outcomes, outputs, and performance indicators with baselines and targets measurable and relevant?

JC1.3.1. The extent to which Cooperation Framework outcomes and outputs are logically connected and based on problem analysis

> *F5. The Cooperation Framework's ToC provided a comprehensive and strategic foundation for addressing North Macedonia's development priorities. Its relevance was sustained despite external shocks, owing to its robust design and alignment with national and global goals. However, challenges in linking high-level outcomes with specific outputs and addressing emerging priorities highlight areas for future refinement to enhance its effectiveness.*

The Cooperation Framework's Theory of Change (ToC) provided a robust framework for addressing North Macedonia's developmental priorities, ensuring its continued relevance throughout the implementation period. Grounded in evidence generated through the Common Country Analysis (CCA), the ToC systematically linked national challenges to strategic priorities, outcomes, and outputs. It identified bottlenecks to progress, such as systemic inequalities, limited governance transparency, and environmental vulnerabilities, while emphasizing accelerators or catalytic interventions, including inclusive governance, gender equality, and climate resilience.

The prioritization of strategic actions was achieved through the national Strategic Prioritization Workshop (SPW), which brought together stakeholders from the Government, UN entities, civil society, private sector, and development institutions. This inclusive process allowed the ToC to reflect a shared vision of creating a prosperous, inclusive, and resilient North Macedonia by 2030. The resulting ToC was structured around three strategic priorities—sustained economic and social development, climate action and disaster resilience, and transparent democratic governance—translated into four interconnected outcomes and operationalized through targeted outputs.

The ToC rested on several critical assumptions, including sustained political stability, the availability of sufficient financial and institutional resources, and the Government's commitment to aligning with EU accession priorities. These assumptions were largely validated during the initial implementation phases. However, some, such as the assumption of political stability, were tested by the pandemic's disruptions and the delays in EU negotiations. These challenges, compounded by the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, created a complex and dynamic environment for implementing the Cooperation Framework. Nonetheless, the ToC remained relevant and adaptable, providing a guiding framework for interventions even in the face of external shocks.

The flexibility of the ToC was evident during the pandemic, as it allowed the CF to integrate emergency responses, such as health and social protection measures, at the activity level without requiring fundamental changes to its upstream result chain. Stakeholder consultations during the inception phase reinforced the validity of the ToC, with UNCT and partners affirming that its overarching logic and strategic alignment with national priorities were sufficient to guide implementation. Regular updates to the CCA further confirmed the relevance of the ToC in addressing evolving challenges and opportunities.

The ToC emphasized systemic approaches to achieving its outcomes. For example, Outcome 1 targeted inclusive economic growth by strengthening value chains, fostering entrepreneurship, and enhancing workplace protection. Outcome 2 focused on universal access to quality health, education, and social protection services, ensuring that the most vulnerable groups were included. Outcome 3 aimed to address climate resilience through improved environmental governance, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable resource management. Finally, Outcome 4 emphasized governance reforms by advancing the rule of law, enhancing transparency, and building trust through citizen participation.

Despite its strengths, the ToC faced challenges in operationalization. Outcomes were articulated at a high, impact-level scope, making it difficult to demonstrate incremental progress or attribute results directly to specific interventions. Outputs, while operationally defined, sometimes lacked a clear causal linkage to the broader outcomes due to their abstract nature. This disconnect highlighted the challenge of translating the ToC's ambitious vision into measurable and attributable results.

The external environment also presented unanticipated challenges, such as the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and delays in North Macedonia's EU accession process. While the ToC

proved flexible in addressing these issues through activity-level adjustments, some emerging priorities, such as digital transformation and food systems resilience, were not explicitly integrated into the original framework. These gaps underscored the need for ongoing refinement of the ToC to address both current and emerging challenges more explicitly.

JC1.3.2. The extent to which performance indicators with baselines and targets are measurable and relevant

F6. The CF's performance indicators were generally measurable and relevant, particularly at the output level, where clear baselines and targets supported effective progress tracking. While outcome-level indicators aligned with national priorities and the SDGs, they struggled to demonstrate the direct contributions of UN interventions due to reliance on broader macroeconomic or societal trends. Key gaps included the absence of indicators to track incremental progress, limited data disaggregation, and insufficient focus on sustainability. The primary sources indicated the need for expanding indicators to better address equity, service quality, and underrepresented dimensions, such as biodiversity and governance reforms; hence, strengthen the CF's ability to measure its effects comprehensively and align with the LNOB

The performance indicators associated with the Cooperation Framework were mostly measurable and relevant, particularly at the output level, where indicators were paired with clear baselines and targets. As detailed in the monitoring section of the Cooperation Framework, these output indicators provided a robust quantitative framework that allowed for tracking progress towards set goals. This framework allowed for the identification of specific gaps within outputs and sub-outputs, offering opportunities to refine activities based on observed trends. The indicators were well organised and adequately reflected the progress in areas such as economic development, social protection, and environmental management.

The outcome indicators under the Cooperation Framework for North Macedonia reflect the country's pressing development challenges and align well with national priorities and international commitments, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, a detailed analysis of these indicators reveals both strengths and areas for improvement, especially in terms of their ability to measure the Cooperation Framework's direct contributions, the clarity of linkages between outputs and outcomes, and the enhancement of data disaggregation and sustainability tracking.

Outcome 1 focuses on improving living standards through decent work, inclusive employment, and sustained economic growth. The indicators for this outcome, such as the employment rate and the proportion of informal employment, are critical in measuring progress towards inclusive economic development. However, while these indicators align with national priorities and the SDGs, they have limited capacity to capture the specific impact of UN interventions. For example, macroeconomic indicators like GDP growth per employed person and the Global Competitiveness Index are influenced by broader factors beyond the Cooperation Framework's control, making it challenging to attribute economic growth solely to UN contributions.

The analysis indicates the need to introduce intermediate targets (and additional intermediate indicators) to better reflect how Cooperation Framework-supported programmes—such as skills development, innovation, and support for small businesses—contribute to job creation and economic diversification. More granular indicators, such as the survival rate of supported start-ups or revenue generated by SMEs, would provide clearer evidence of the impact of specific interventions. Additionally, disaggregating employment data by age, gender, ethnicity, and region would offer a more comprehensive overview of which groups benefit from economic growth and which are left behind, aligning with the *Leave No One Behind (LNOB)* principle more closely.

Outcome 2 addresses universal access to healthcare, education, and social protection, with indicators such as life expectancy, maternal mortality ratio, and education enrolment rates. These indicators are highly relevant and reflect the country's development challenges in terms of inequality, social protection, and service quality. However, the evaluation noted that while these indicators measure overall trends in health, education, and social inclusion, they do not always capture the nuanced impact of UN interventions, particularly those aimed at targeting service delivery improvements or policy reforms.

Outcome 2 could benefit from additional indicators that measure service quality and accessibility, particularly in rural or underserved areas. For example, introducing indicators such as the accessibility and status of primary healthcare facilities or the percentage of marginalised populations accessing social protection programmes - and their satisfaction levels - would provide a clearer link between outputs (e.g., healthcare infrastructure

development or social protection reforms) and long-term health and education outcomes. Moreover, while some gender-disaggregated data are available, a greater focus on disaggregating data by income level, disability status, and geographic location would help track the equity of service delivery.

Outcome 3 promotes climate resilience, sustainable resource management, and environmental protection. Indicators such as greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy share, and air quality improvements are aligned with national and global climate action commitments. They are crucial in measuring the country's transition towards sustainable energy and environmental stewardship. However, the evaluation found that the indicators do not sufficiently address biodiversity protection or disaster risk management, both of which are critical areas for North Macedonia, given its vulnerability to natural disasters and the degradation of ecosystems.

To improve the relevance of Outcome 3, indicators should be expanded to include specific measures of biodiversity conservation (e.g., habitat preservation/species diversity) and disaster resilience (e.g., the number of communities with disaster preparedness plans or investment in disaster risk reduction infrastructure). These additional indicators would reflect the country's broader environmental challenges better and ensure that progress in climate resilience includes all aspects of environmental sustainability. Moreover, tracking climate adaptation policy implementation and the impact of renewable energy projects on local economies would provide a clearer link between output-level activities and the higher-level outcome of climate resilience.

Outcome 4 focuses on strengthening democratic institutions, the rule of law, and governance accountability. Indicators such as the **Rule of Law Index**, **perception of corruption**, and **freedom of information** are very relevant for assessing progress in governance reforms and institutional transparency. While these indicators provide valuable insights into the country's overall governance landscape, they do not fully capture the Cooperation Framework's contributions to specific governance improvements, such as **civil society engagement**, **media freedom**, and **citizen participation** in decision-making processes.

Outcome 4 would benefit from indicators that specifically measure civil society participation and the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures. For instance, indicators such as the number of civil society organisations involved in policy dialogue or the percentage of prosecuted corruption cases could offer more concrete evidence of the Cooperation Framework's impact on strengthening governance structures. Additionally, introducing public trust indicators—such as the percentage of the population expressing trust in public institutions—would provide a more nuanced view of how the public perception of governance reforms.

Across all outcomes, the ET identified a need for better integration of sustainability elements within both results and indicators. While current indicators effectively track short- to medium-term progress, there is a need for a more explicit consideration in terms of whether these achievements will extend beyond the life of the CF. There are views that the addition of sustainability indicators would reflect the Framework's commitment to fostering lasting changes better.

To clarify the pathway from outputs to outcomes further, the ET recommends that the CF refine results and indicators, demonstrating a more explicit linkage between interventions and outcomes. The informants stated that introducing targets focused on early signs of progress towards long-term outcomes—rather than adding intermediate results—would enhance this connection without expanding the results structure beyond current guidance. This approach would clarify the contributions of UN interventions to North Macedonia's broader development goals.

EQ1.4. To what extent did the Cooperation Framework build on a sound gender and human rights analysis?

JC1.4. The extent to which the Cooperation Framework considered and included gender and human rights analysis

> *F7. The CF effectively integrated gender and human rights analysis, leveraging the ToC to align with international standards and North Macedonia's national commitments. The UNCT- identified and addressed challenges and barriers formulating outcomes to embed LNOB, human rights and gender equality. However, gaps remain in addressing more systemic challenges concerning human rights issues and expanding gender mainstreaming to all sectors (like agriculture, infrastructure, sports). The need remains to deepen CSOs engagement and proceed with implementation of EU accession agenda.*

The evaluation found that the Cooperation Framework effectively integrated gender and human rights analysis, leveraging the Theory of Change to align with international standards and North Macedonia's national commitments. It identified and addressed barriers faced by vulnerable groups through a Leave No One Behind (LNOB) framework and embedded gender equality and human rights into strategic outcomes. Key achievements included advancing gender-responsive budgeting, strengthening data collection on inequalities, and supporting legislation such as the Law on Violence against Women. However, gaps remain in addressing systemic issues like corruption and judicial independence, as well as expanding gender mainstreaming to sectors like agriculture and infrastructure. Continued efforts to deepen civil society engagement and align with EU standards will be critical for sustaining progress.

The Cooperation Framework in North Macedonia demonstrated a strong foundation based on gender and human rights analysis, integrating fundamental principles aligned with international standards and frameworks. The CCA from the design stage, as well as updates from 2020 through 2023, consistently highlighted the country's progress and challenges related to gender equality and human rights. These insights informed the design and implementation of the Cooperation Framework, ensuring that issues of inequality, discrimination, and human rights violations were factored into programmatic responses.

A critical aspect of the gender and human rights analysis was the identification of vulnerable and marginalised groups through a *Leave No One Behind* (LNOB) framework. This framework emphasised the inclusion of women, Roma, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ individuals, older persons, and other disadvantaged groups. The CCA, used in the Cooperation Framework design, provided a clear understanding of the barriers these groups faced, such as discrimination, poverty, and exclusion from social and economic opportunities. The Cooperation Framework, in turn, responded by embedding these insights into its four strategic outcomes, specifically focusing on human rights, gender equality, social inclusion, and access to services (within each outcome area).

The work of the UNCT further built on this foundation by incorporating gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and gender-disaggregated data into its monitoring and reporting systems. For instance, the desk analysis and interviews with the stakeholders noted the introduction of programme-based budgeting to facilitate gender tagging in financial allocations, which was seen as an opportunity to drive gender equality through more transparent and accountable fiscal policies. This focus on data-driven approaches was critical for measuring progress, particularly in terms of women's participation in the economy, social protection, and political life.

Regarding human rights, the Cooperation Framework effectively aligned with North Macedonia's commitments under international obligations and the EU accession framework. The country made strides in operationalising the legislation on key human rights, such as the Law on Prevention and Protection of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which was implemented at full speed during the Cooperation Framework period. The Cooperation Framework supported capacity-building and the development of multisectoral protocols to enhance services for survivors of violence, ensuring that human rights obligations were not only established in legal frameworks but translated into actionable initiatives. The evaluation found that significant progress in legislative and policy reforms has been achieved. Additionally, access to mobile life-saving gynaecological services to those in underserved areas was introduced and institutionalised. However, challenges such as pervasive corruption, gaps in judicial independence, and lack of transparency continue to undermine the broader human rights agenda. The evaluation found these challenges were particularly evident in areas related to related to political rights, the rule of law, and access to justice for marginalised groups.

In addition, the evaluation noted positive steps in civil society involvement in decision-making processes and activities concerning human rights and gender equality, although the actual impact of these initiatives was not always clearly reflected in Cooperation Framework reporting. The stakeholders highlighted the need for the Cooperation Framework to continue fostering CSO engagement in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of gender and human rights initiatives, further institutionalising these gains. Partners suggested that establishing mechanisms such as community-based monitoring systems or participatory evaluations could provide a platform for local communities and marginalised groups to hold authorities accountable, ensuring that interventions meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

The evaluation found that the Cooperation Framework has been effective in embedding GRB in social services; still, the priority to ensure a more holistic approach in addressing gender disparities remains. Expanding GRB to include sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, and environment would ensure that gender considerations are systematically integrated into all national development initiatives, supporting sustained progress in gender

equality over the long term. Moreover, the Cooperation Framework has effectively built capacity for local actors, ensuring that the progress in gender equality and human rights is filtered down to local administrations. The UNCT provided targeted support to municipalities and local governments to integrate gender and human rights considerations into their planning and budgeting processes. For example, training local government officials in implementing gender-responsive budgeting at the municipal level and piloting local gender structures to monitor the delivery of social services helped embed gender equality and human rights in local governance structures.

The focus on data collection and disaggregation has been recognised and needs to continue. While significant progress was made through initiatives like the Gender Data Bootcamp and the integration of gender data into the State Statistical Office, there is room for further improvement in the collection of more detailed data on marginalised groups, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, and ethnic minorities. The completion of the Census and the population projection provide a basis for examining the needs of various population categories and highlight the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment. Expanding data collection scope would provide a clearer picture of where inequalities persist and enable more targeted interventions. Additionally, more **qualitative data** on attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions around gender and human rights would provide insights into societal norms and barriers that quantitative data alone cannot reveal. As North Macedonia continues on its path towards EU accession, aligning gender and human rights efforts with EU standards and expectations will be crucial. The Cooperation Framework's work in this area was commendable, especially in supporting the government to harmonise its legal and institutional frameworks with the EU acquis on gender equality and human rights while also working to effective implementation of these reforms at the grassroots level. These efforts need to continue, particularly in fostering **stronger partnerships with EU institutions**, leveraging EU funding for gender equality initiatives, and supporting North Macedonia in meeting EU accession criteria related to human rights, governance, and gender equality.

As shown in the chart below from the survey on local stakeholder perspectives regarding the mainstreaming of gender and human rights, respondents who felt they had enough information were positive in their assessments. However, it is notable that 30% of respondents reported not having enough information to make a judgement, which itself serves as an important indicator of the effectiveness of the UNCT's work on human rights and gender equality.

Figure 8 - Local Stakeholders Perspective on Mainstreaming Gender and Human Rights
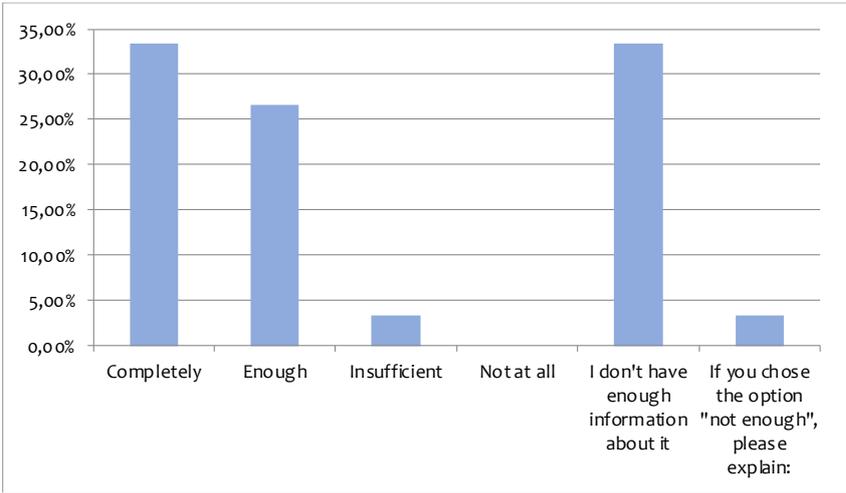
Source: Partners' Survey

The 2023 CCA Update discussed the impact of poverty and inequality, the disproportionate effects on women and youth, which worsened due to the COVID-19 crisis and could be exacerbated by Russia's war against Ukraine and its impact on prices. The CCA noted that, in line with the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council and the Government, North Macedonia's Assembly ratified the ILO Convention on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work in 2023. The CCA also noted the adoption of the Organic Budget Law which

introduces programme-based budgeting that will provide "an opportunity for SDG tagging and Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)."[30]

The adoption of the Law on Prevention and Protection of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, developed with UN involvement, was also achieved during the Cooperation Framework period.

3.2 Coherence and Coordination

The ET assessed the Cooperation Framework's coherence and coordination by examining how effectively UN agency programmes and work plans were derived from the Cooperation Framework, focusing on their design and implementation. The evaluation analysed the role of the post-reform RCO in enabling coherence, particularly how its redefined roles and responsibilities supported the UNCT in collaborating and aligning efforts towards achieving the outcomes. Furthermore, the ET explored how the Cooperation Framework facilitated complementarity, harmonisation, and coordination among UN agencies and development partners to address national development priorities. Finally, the evaluation assessed the effectiveness of the joint coordination structures, including mechanisms and processes, in advancing progress towards the SDGs and the overall UNSDCF outcomes.

> **EQ2.1. Following UN reform, to what extent have UN agency programmes and work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from the Cooperation Framework in both design and implementation?**

The UN Cooperation Framework in North Macedonia included 18 signatories in 2021 and also involved work with non-signatory agencies. These agencies collaborate through the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), the main mechanism in country for inter-agency coordination and decision-making under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) – the designated representative of the UN Secretary-General for development operations in the country.

JC2.1. The extent to which UN agencies and their programmes and work plans derived from the Cooperation Framework

> *F8. The CF, through Joint Work Plans (JWPs) effectively aligned UN agency programmes and planning processes, ensuring coherence in addressing national priorities. While many UN agencies fully synchronised their programmes with the CF's outcomes and outputs, others exhibited partial alignment, often maintaining parallel work plans and monitoring systems. Though fostering individual agency contributions, this dual structure introduced complexities in data alignment and coordination. Despite these challenges, the CF significantly enhanced cohesion within the UNCT, supported joint programming efforts, and reinforced the integration of cross-cutting themes such as gender, human rights, and the LNOB principle.*

The evaluation found that the Annual Joint Work Plans (JWPs) have become essential tools for aligning UNCT and UN agency programme planning with the Cooperation Framework (CF) in North Macedonia. This alignment is rooted in the initial derivation of strategic priorities at the CF design level, where programme goals and outcomes are set in close consultation with national stakeholders and UN agencies. By establishing this foundation, the CF design phase ensures that JWPs directly reflect the Cooperation Framework's objectives, facilitating consistent alignment across annual planning cycles.

At the JWP stage, this alignment is further refined through a collaborative process led by Outcome Groups and documented in UN INFO, providing an accessible format for programme monitoring and coordination. The JWPs comprehensively break down CF priorities by Outcomes and Outputs, offering clear frameworks for planning and execution. Each Outcome in the JWPs is structured with specific Outputs and sub-outputs, detailing activities, timelines, agency responsibilities, contributing and implementing partners, budgets, contributions to SDG

---

[30] November 2023. North Macedonia Common Country Analysis, 2023 update. United Nations North Macedonia. Page 9.

targets, geographical focus, as well as the types of support provided, including policy advice, capacity development, and technical assistance.

Additionally, the JWPs incorporate analysis on cross-cutting themes, such as gender mainstreaming, human rights, the *Leave No One Behind (LNOB)* principle, policy development, and EU accession. This structured approach enables the JWPs to function not only as planning and implementation tools but also as mechanisms for reinforcing the CF's intended impacts by systematically reflecting its objectives in each programming stage.

The evaluation found varying degrees of alignment between UN agency work plans and the Cooperation Framework. Some agencies have fully aligned their programmes with the Cooperation Framework, including synchronising timeframes, which has allowed for a unified approach to addressing national priorities. Others exhibit partial alignment with the Cooperation Framework outcomes into their planning and reporting processes. These strategies and plans reflect the Cooperation Framework's areas of intervention and utilise appropriate outcome-level indicators from the Cooperation Framework, to which the agencies contribute. Additionally, these documents detail agency-specific outputs that differ from those in the UNSDCF results matrix, providing a comprehensive view of individual agency contributions.

High-level officials have acknowledged that the Cooperation Framework has enhanced cohesion within the UNCT, particularly in developing and implementing Joint Programmes. Both the UNCT and the government have stressed the value of these initiatives, highlighting a strong commitment to prioritising joint programming. UN agencies have aligned their respective country programming instruments with the Cooperation Framework.

Despite progress in aligning agency work plans with the Cooperation Framework, the evaluation highlighted ongoing challenges in joint planning, implementation, and monitoring processes. The existence of parallel agency-specific country programmes and work plans alongside the Cooperation Framework creates additional demands throughout all implementation phases. UN agencies often coordinate activities, monitor progress, and report on their specific strategies and benchmarks in addition to their contributions to Cooperation Framework sub-outputs, outputs, and outcomes. This dual structure places an added burden on agency staff, complicating data alignment and coherence across the system.

Moreover, UN agencies have acknowledged that they maintain unique monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, often with tailored indicators specific to their outputs. While there is consistency at the outcome level across agencies, variations in the definition of indicators, data collection methodologies, and collection frequencies at the output level complicate data comparison across agencies and assessment of collective contributions to Cooperation Framework outcomes.


EQ2.2. To what extent did the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office's roles and responsibilities enable coherence in implementing the Cooperation Framework, both across and among UN agencies?

JC2.2. Evidence that the post reform RCO's roles and responsibilities contributed or did not contribute to the UNCT's unified efforts and enabled coherence in implementing the Cooperation Framework

> *F9. The evaluation revealed that the RCO) significantly improved coherence among UN agencies within the CF. A majority of UN personnel recognized the pivotal role of the RCO in promoting joint programming and aligning UN initiatives with national development priorities. Noteworthy accomplishments comprised initiatives such as the Multi-Partner Trust Fund migration program. Nonetheless, challenges persist in fully engaging UN agencies with smaller program portfolios and non-resident agencies, ensuring consistent alignment among larger agencies, and addressing fragmentation in endeavours such as gender mainstreaming, where overlapping mandates and competition for funding continue to exist. Stakeholders emphasized the necessity to enhance accountability and collaboration to further the "One UN" approach.*

The evaluation found strong evidence that the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) has enhanced coherence among UN agencies in North Macedonia under the Cooperation Framework. According to a survey of UN programming staff, a significant portion of respondents—40.1%—stated that the RCO has "sufficiently" contributed to coherence in implementing the Cooperation Framework. Additionally, 12% of the respondents believed that the RCO has "completely" fulfilled its role in fostering agency alignment and coordination, further underscoring a positive view of the RCO's effectiveness.
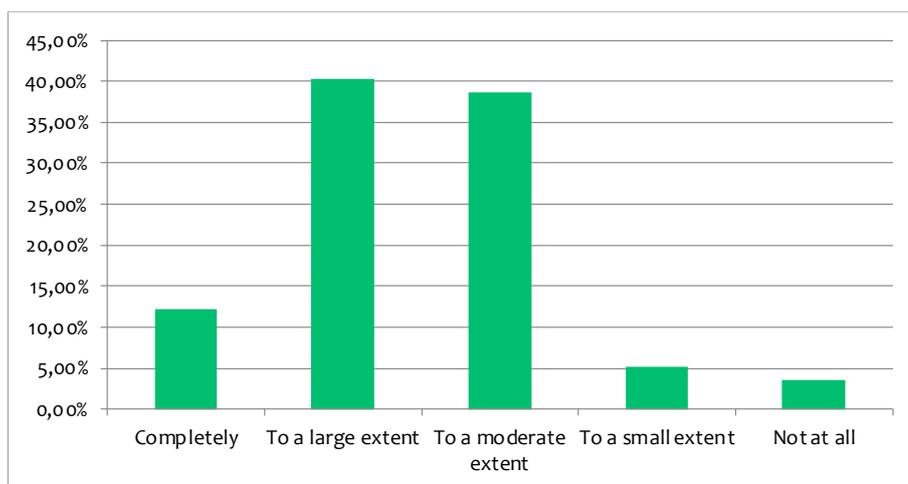
Source: UN Programme and Operations Staff Survey

However, some respondents offered more critical perspectives. A smaller portion of respondents (5%) rated the RCO's contribution as "insufficient," and 4% felt that the RCO did not contribute to coherence "at all". These more critical views likely reflect challenges faced by smaller UN agencies with limited capacity and resources, making it difficult for them to engage fully in joint planning and coordination processes. Furthermore, 37.5% of respondents noted that this progress has been moderate, suggesting a need for improved communication and clarity in RCO's efforts (as highlighted in the comments).

Findings from discussions with UN programming and management staff supported the overall positive assessment of the RCO's role, with a clear recognition of its leadership and coordination functions. The RCO has played a strategic role in integrating the efforts of various agencies under the Cooperation Framework, ensuring that the work of UN agencies is aligned with national priorities and the government's development agenda. High-level engagement with key government counterparts has been an essential factor in achieving this alignment, and stakeholders consistently acknowledged the RCO's pivotal role in facilitating UN-wide collaboration.

However, the evaluation also highlighted areas where the RCO's role could be further strengthened, particularly to meet the needs of non-resident UN agencies and those with fewer financial and human resources (within the framework of their programmes in the country). While UN agencies with large portfolios and more resources and capacities can align their work plans and activities more seamlessly with the Cooperation Framework, "smaller" and non-resident agencies face challenges in fully participating in joint programming. Resource constraints and limited staffing capacity often hinder their ability to contribute to the comprehensive joint planning and reporting processes led by the RCO effectively.

These differences among UN agencies were highlighted in feedback from some UN staff who expressed concerns about the added burden of aligning their agency-specific work plans with the broader Cooperation Framework. For agencies with limited in-country capacities and resources, balancing agency-specific priorities with the Cooperation Framework's collective outcomes has proven challenging.

Furthermore, although the RCO has achieved considerable progress in fostering coherence, challenges persist in monitoring and reporting. Several agencies reported difficulties in illustrating their contributions to the Cooperation Framework outcomes, citing discrepancies in reporting structures and data collection methodologies among various agencies. This lack of standardisation in reporting complicates the evaluation of agency contributions and obscures the overall impact of the implementation of the Cooperation Framework. Enhanced coordination of monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems, with an emphasis on standardising indicators and methodologies, would help bridge this gap and improve clarity on progress towards the goals of the Cooperation Framework.

Despite these challenges, the evaluation found that the RCO has made substantial progress in ensuring coherence among UN agencies in North Macedonia. The leadership and coordination by the RCO have been critical in fostering joint programming, aligning UN activities with national development priorities, and building stronger partnerships with the government. The RCO's engagement with non-resident agencies has also been of immense importance, as it has enabled these agencies to contribute their expertise and resources effectively, even without in-country presence.

The evaluation found that the "Cooperation Framework notably contributed to fostering complementarity, harmonisation, and coordination between UN agencies and key development partners in North Macedonia", as the key informants and survey participants stated. The leadership and strategic guidance of the RC were pivotal in ensuring greater coherence in UN operations, with the Cooperation Framework providing a unifying framework for both UN resident and non-resident agencies. The Cooperation Framework enabled these UN agencies to align their activities with national priorities, reinforcing the UN's role as a credible and non-partisan partner of the Government of North Macedonia. This alignment supported the UN's capacity to convene multi-stakeholder discussions and advance national development priorities.

The development of **Joint Work Plans (JWPs)** played a key role in operationalising the Cooperation Framework, serving as a critical coordination tool. These JWPs structured agency contributions towards Cooperation Framework outcomes, defining clear activities, timelines, and responsible agencies. JWPs facilitated joint efforts and served as a mechanism for ongoing performance review and accountability through annual results reporting.

Survey feedback from UN programming and management staff indicated that 82% believe the RCO has effectively facilitated joint efforts among UN agencies, underscoring the positive impact of the RCO's leadership on coordination (33% stated that the RCO *strongly* facilitated and 49% *somewhat* facilitated joint efforts).

__Figure 10 - UN Staff Perspectives on the Role and Responsibilities of the RCO in Relation to Joint Programming__
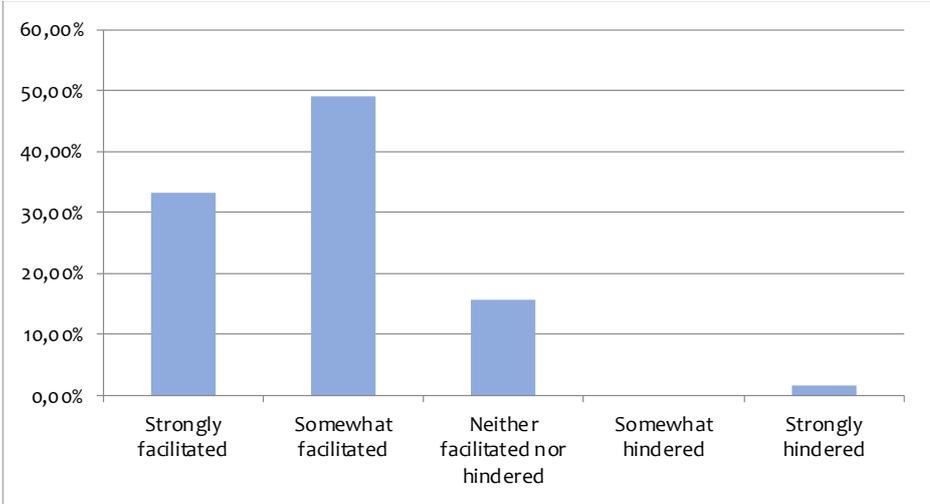
*Source: UN Programme and Operations Staff Survey*

However, the evaluation also identified some persistent challenges in harmonising and aligning activities among UN agencies. One notable issue was the perceived dichotomy between larger and smaller agencies. Smaller agencies, with limited intervention and resource scope, tended to align more closely with the Cooperation Framework and were more reliant on it to guide their activities and reporting. In contrast, UN agencies with robust programmes and resources often maintained their programmatic directions, creating challenges in fully integrating into the Cooperation Framework's collective approach. While UN reform is intended to apply to all agencies uniformly, these variations in engagement demonstrate the need for greater enforcement of the "One UN" principle. Some key informants stated that the "success of the Cooperation Framework should depend on the agencies' level of participation and utilisation of the Framework" - not on the size of their programmes or resources.

Moreover, some larger agencies expressed resistance to the level of coordination required by the Cooperation Framework. The evaluation highlights this challenge in reporting processes, where the contributions of larger agencies were often less visible or structured within the Cooperation Framework compared to smaller agencies, which directly aligned their reporting with the Framework. As a result, there was a lack of consistent and comparable reporting across agencies, with larger agencies sometimes pursuing parallel initiatives. This finding underscores the need for strengthening accountability mechanisms to ensure that all agencies contribute transparently and coherently to the Cooperation Framework's reporting process.

On the other hand, joint programming efforts under the Cooperation Framework yielded some noteworthy successes. For example, the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF)-funded joint programme facilitated the development of evidence-based migration policies, improved institutional data exchange mechanisms, and enhanced the public perception of migrants and refugees. This joint initiative ultimately contributed to formulating North Macedonia's Migration Policy 2021–2025, showcasing the benefits of coordinated, multi-agency efforts. Another key example was the SDG appraisal tool for forced displacement and statelessness, jointly implemented by UNHCR and UNDP. This initiative successfully engaged local stakeholders in exploring the SDGs and the LNOB principles, advancing the rights of stateless and forcibly displaced persons in the country.

As for the other key development partners, the evaluation highlighted strong engagement with the Government of North Macedonia. The support for the development of the country's first Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2020, coordinated by the Sustainable Development Unit of the Deputy Prime Minister's Cabinet and the State Statistical Office, exemplifies this alignment. The VNR, which serves as a baseline for tracking SDG achievements, was developed with input from a broad range of government offices and ministries, demonstrating strong alignment between the VNR and Cooperation Framework priorities. Among the local stakeholders surveyed, 88% reported sufficient or complete alignment between the Cooperation Framework and their own areas of work, further affirming the Framework's effectiveness in aligning with national development priorities.

Figure 11 - Local Stakeholder Perspectives on the Alignment of the Cooperation Framework and Local Priorities.
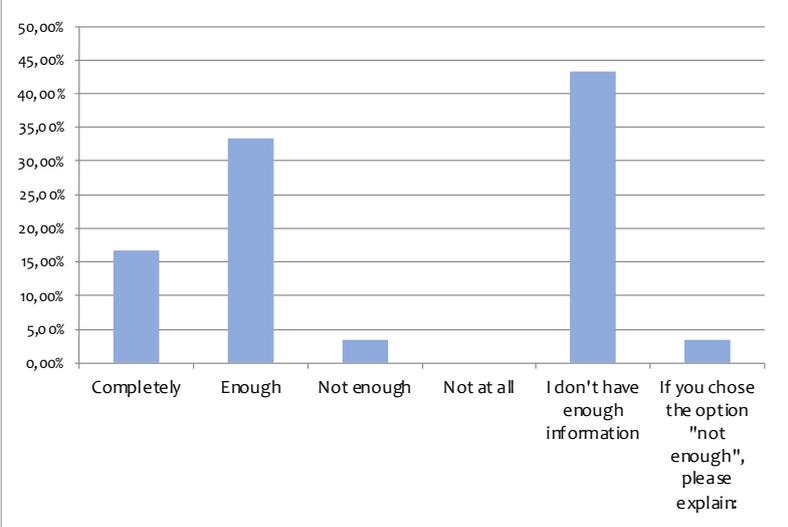
Source: Partners' Survey

However, the evaluation also noted differing perspectives among development partners on the coordination of UN activities. Specifically, they observed frequent "competition for funding and overlapping services within the UN system in North Macedonia". One prominent example cited was the work in the gender mainstreaming sphere. While partners recognised "considerable challenges that the country is facing concerning gender equality", UN agencies proposed similar interventions, creating redundancies in gender mainstreaming efforts. This reflects a broader issue of fragmentation within the UN system. Despite the Cooperation Framework's unifying intent, competition for resources and overlapping mandates continue to hinder the coherence and efficiency of the "One UN" approach. Additionally, partners criticised the variation in agency engagement on gender equality issues, perceiving some agencies as more committed to gender mainstreaming than others.

3.3 Effectiveness

The ET assessed the Cooperation Framework's effectiveness by examining its achievements against outputs, progress toward outcomes, and contributions to national capacities and institutional, behavioural, and legislative changes. Specifically, the ET assessed whether the envisaged outputs were achieved and how they contributed to the Cooperation Framework outcomes, analysing the extent to which UNCT efforts advanced or are likely to advance the overarching objectives of the Cooperation Framework. Furthermore, the ET evaluated the benefits delivered to vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalised populations, including the nature and scope of measures targeting inequalities and cross-cutting issues.

EQ3.1. Have the outputs been achieved, and to what extent do they contribute to the Cooperation Framework Outcomes? To what extent has the UNCT contributed to, or is likely to contribute to achieving the outcomes defined in the Cooperation Framework?

JC3.1.1. The extent to which the envisaged outputs have been achieved and progressed towards outcomes

> *F10. The implementation of the Cooperation Framework was largely successful, with most indicators meeting or surpassing their targets, supported by quantitative data and qualitative stakeholder feedback. The stakeholders (national partners and UN staff) expressed predominantly positive views on the UN's effectiveness while recognising that challenges such as economic pressures, political polarisation, and strained public administration require sustained and adaptive efforts.*

As shown in the graph below, local stakeholders were largely positive about the effectiveness of the UN's work in North Macedonia, with 21 of 30 respondents assessing the UN's work as sufficient or completely effective.

Figure 12 - Local Stakeholder Perspectives on UN Effectiveness
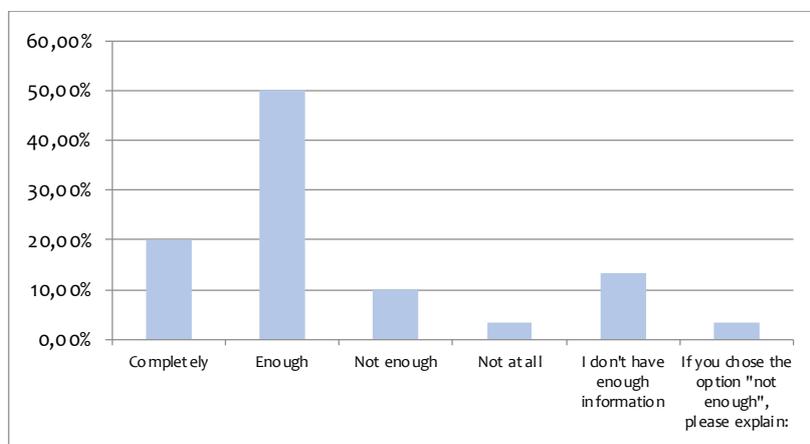
Source: Partners' Survey

UN staff also expressed positive views on the effectiveness of the UN's work, with 48 of 57 survey respondents (84.22%) stating that UN agencies were either completely or sufficiently effective in achieving results.

Output data in the *Cooperation Framework Monitoring (2024) Indicators* spreadsheet supports these views. The spreadsheet data reflects a high level of effectiveness in delivering programmed outputs based on actual numbers when compared to targets across the first three years of the Cooperation Framework. Not every target has been met, but the majority of output indicators have been met or surpassed, per the assessment.

In 2023, the UNCT in North Macedonia conducted a mid-term self-assessment of its implementation of the Cooperation Framework. In terms of the Cooperation Framework's programmed *outcomes*, the self-assessment found overall positive progress across all four outcome areas, each at a different pace:

- **Outcome 1: Inclusive Prosperity** – North Macedonia is **likely to achieve the expected results** in inclusive prosperity, despite rising pressure on living standards due to the economic crisis, looming inflation, and the uncertainty stemming from the war in Ukraine. Joint UN efforts aim to improve job creation, increase productivity, and enhance the resilience of Macedonian companies. Additionally, policies and capacities were strengthened to ensure a sustainable, competitive rural economy aligned with EU standards, with a particular focus on supporting small farms and women farmers. Improved access to decent work for all workers has contributed to improvements in most of the labour market indicators.

- **Outcome 2: Quality Services for All** – North Macedonia is **likely to achieve the expected results** in providing quality social services for all residents **partially**. UN support in this area was instrumental and should continue at the same or an increased pace if funding permits.

- **Outcome 3: Healthy Environment** – The country is making good progress towards **partially achieving the expected results under this outcome by 2025**, despite the unfavourable context/challenges i.e. COVID-19, the energy and food security crisis and the war in Ukraine. Notable achievements include reductions in air pollution, expanding the network of protected areas and improving natural resource management.

- **Outcome 4: Good Governance** - North Macedonia is **likely to achieve the expected results** in the area of good governance, with several sub-results lagging behind. Despite the start of the EU screening process, which is an important step forward in the EU accession process, significant previous delays and concessions expected from the country heightened the political polarisation and reduced overall support for EU accession. At the same time, successive multidimensional crises further strained the already overwhelmed public administration capacities at central and local levels.[31]

Qualitative data from the evaluation's fieldwork, including feedback from academics, civil society, and Ministry representatives, confirmed strong support for the quality and outputs of the UN's work under the Cooperation Framework.

JC3.1.2. The extent to which progress has been made towards achieving the Cooperation Framework outcomes and meeting targets

> *F11. The CF has effectively addressed North Macedonia's development priorities and fostered resilience amidst evolving challenges. The progress under the outcomes is evident, with substantial UN contributions to inclusive prosperity, social services, environmental sustainability, and governance. Stakeholders and UN staff largely recognised the effectiveness of UN efforts, particularly in areas like employment generation, climate resilience, and social protection reforms. Notable achievements include advancements in rural development, improved labour market inclusion for marginalised groups, enhanced legislative frameworks, and strengthened disaster preparedness. However, the stakeholders recognised the remaining challenges in fully aligning agency contributions, addressing governance gaps, and overcoming political and administrative constraints.*

As illustrated in the two graphs below, both UN agency staff and local stakeholders view the UN's work on the Cooperation Framework as effective and contributing to development outcomes.

The evaluation found that UN Agencies are progressing well with output targets, and progress towards outcomes is also evident. However, as discussed elsewhere, analysing outcomes is somewhat limited by the outcome statements themselves. The UN is perceived as a "critical partner that supports and brings changes", particularly where initiatives are well-coordinated and jointly implemented. Particularly positive results were observed at the local level, where local development is emerging as a significant investment area, strengthening resilience and creating spillover effects.
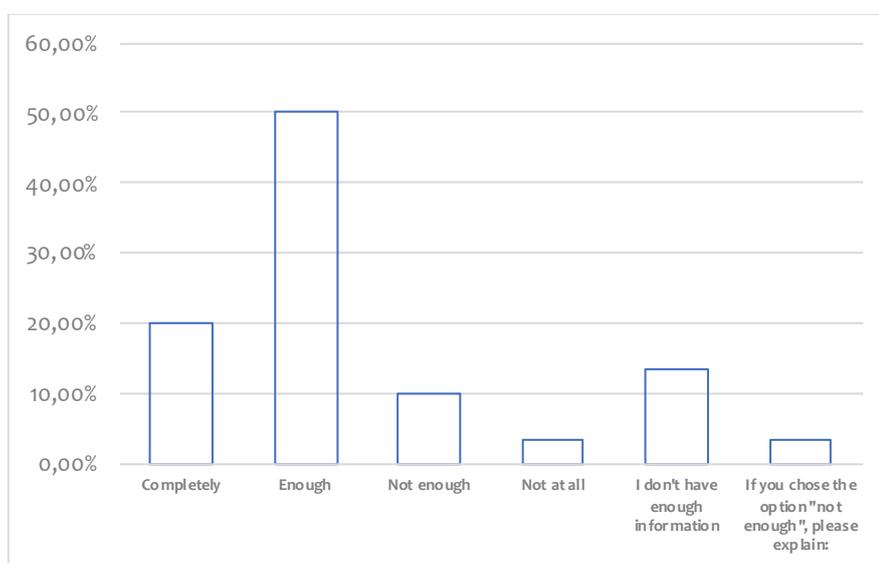
Figure 13 - UN Staff Perspectives on UN Contributions to Development Results

---

[31] 2023. UNCT. SDCF Mid-term Review Self-Assessment. United Nations North Macedonia.
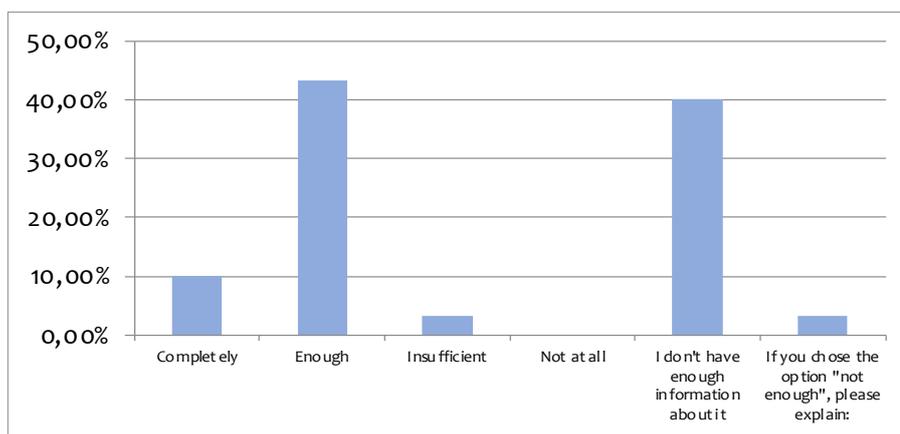
Figure 14 - Local Stakeholder Perspective on the Effectiveness of UN Agencies.

The Cooperation Framework defined outcomes based on three strategic priorities. The discussion below is structured according to these three priority areas and their related outcomes.

Sustained and Inclusive Economic and Social Development (People and Prosperity SDGs):

Outcome 1: Improve living standards through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem.

Output 1.1 – The output Sustainable enterprises as generators of employment is being effectively delivered. This is visible in legislative and policy areas, such as the Law on Secondary Education and the Law on Vocational Education and Training, as well as in the assistance to the Assembly of North Macedonia in parliamentary ratification of ILO Convention 190 – eliminating violence and harassment in the workplace. Activities and results for entrepreneurs have included a focus on women entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs with disabilities and building business skills, which have been achieved through direct support, capacity building work/training with entrepreneurs, and mentorship. As a result, numerous SMEs have been created or have benefited from support. Results are also visible with youth - triangular cooperation between the UN, line ministries, and public employment services together with the EU towards adopting a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan and implementing the Youth Guarantee with over 23,000 registered youth. Additionally, the establishment of the iCan – Youth Resource Centre in Gostivar has bolstered the job prospects of young individuals in Gostivar and the broader Polog region. Persons with disabilities have benefited from the establishment of a vocational, educational and training centre in a public-private partnership in Gostivar and the establishment of centres for work-oriented rehabilitation and support for employing persons with disabilities in Strumica and Skopje. In

connection with the Strategic Priority on the environment, work in this area has included initiatives with green investments, energy efficiency, and renewable energy. A focus on the "care economy" has resulted in improvements in capacity for home-based care services, creating both full and part-time work.

Output 1.2 – The output Tailored employment measures for women and excluded persons is being effectively delivered. This is visible in the number of new jobs created through the Active Labour Market Measures, supported through the Cooperation Framework. In conjunction with this, employers have been involved in shaping employment policies and activities *within* the Active Labour Market Measures to ensure the vocational training aligns with employers' requirements. This work has been supported by contributions from social partners, including training on participatory and data-based methodologies in business environment analysis with the Organization of Employers of North Macedonia and the Business Confederation of North Macedonia. This work has the potential to widen the focus on job creation. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy adopted legal provisions related to new social services through the development of new occupational standards and training programmes for (i) Caregivers for people with Alzheimer's disease, (ii) Palliative care and (iii) Assistants for the provision of care to people with multiple sclerosis, as only through qualified staff is it possible to increase the scope of social services provided and to increase the number of beneficiaries of the social services.

Output 1.3 – The output Entrepreneurship fostered through gender-responsive policy and regulatory measures is being effectively delivered, although both outcomes and reporting require a greater focus on the specific outputs/ products resulting from activities, as well as an analysis of how these results are benefiting the population of North Macedonia. The work of the Cooperation Framework has made numerous contributions to legislation and policy frameworks, including the Law on Labour Relations, the National Strategy on Social Entrepreneurship, and the Public Sector General Collective Agreement, contributing to the further development of the policy frameworks on employment and entrepreneurship.

Output 1.4 – The output Improved quality of employment is being effectively delivered, with UN agencies facilitating the introduction of ACCEDER, a leading European methodology for the integration of the Roma population on the labour market, and the establishment of a pilot Acceder Centre in Prilep to facilitate employment opportunities for Roma individuals and others who face the risk of social exclusion. Furthermore, the engagement of Roma mentors has contributed to new employment for Roma, including full-time work, assistance with Roma returnee documentation, which has enabled access to social services and education, and assistance with the completion of primary education with Roma returnees, inmates, and juveniles, which enabled better integration in society.

Output 1.5 – The output Policies and capacities strengthened for sustainable and competitive rural economy is being effectively delivered. The Cooperation Framework's contributions in this output area include legislative support (the Law on Agricultural Land, Law on Privatisation of State-Owned Land and other related laws aimed at assisting the privatisation of state-owned land). Results have also been achieved in relation to strategies (developing the National Strategy for Agricultural Land Consolidation and the National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy), which provide guidance for implementing national priorities. The work on land consolidation went beyond the strategy. Support was provided in the preparation of procedures for each phase of the land consolidation projects, awareness was raised, and capacity was developed. Policy has benefited too, including support for the development of gender-responsive budgeting and enhancements to national capacity in pricing and market information systems, visible in the Food Price Monitoring and Analysis (FPMA) tool, which provides up-to-date domestic food prices and enables the monitoring of price trends. Strengthened policies and capacities, and improved conditions in rural areas to increase small-scale farmers' competitiveness and modernisation, has promoted job creation and decent employment, and improved living standards in rural areas.

Outcome 2: Ensure universal access to rights-based quality social services, including healthcare, education, and necessary social and child protection, rooted in resilient systems.

Output 2.1 – Strengthened health systems to improve universal access have assisted the Ministry of Health in immunisation campaigns, as well as in the development of evidence-based health policies and the promotion of health in schools. The overall focus has been placed on four areas, with results achieved in: primary healthcare, mental health, sexual and reproductive health (SRH), and perinatal care. Results in primary healthcare have been particularly notable in clinical protocols and in building the capacities of health professionals. As importantly, evidence that supports further development of home-based care services has been gathered. In addition, mental

health services have been supported through the training and mentorship of school professionals on mental health in schools, and at the policy level, in mapping mental health services in North Macedonia, and preparing a set of related recommendations. SRH support has led to improvements in mobile gynaecological clinics and in the National Cervical Cancer Screening Programme. Additionally, efforts have been made at the level of legislation/strategy/policy to advocate for a Comprehensive Sexuality Education approach. UN agencies contributed to the Review of the Master Plan for Perinatal Care, together with evidence-based recommendations.

Output 2.2 – The output Quality and affordable education is being effectively delivered by addressing North Macedonia's declining learning outcomes, although policy work requires a greater analysis of both outputs and how these outputs specifically strengthen learning outcomes. Results are in two key areas: legislative, strategy and policy development support, and capacity building and legislative support. Legislation/ policy results include development of legislation that incorporates the principle of *leaving no one behind* and engagement with the Ministry of Education and Science to reform the education curriculum. Programming documentation requires greater analysis of the actual policy impacts of this support. The Ministry received direct support for a programme aimed at transforming primary school education in 10 model municipalities, which will be expanded over the coming period. UN also provided capacity building to over 6,000 teachers and provided support across a wide range of vulnerable groups to facilitate their access to education.

Output 2.3 – The output A resilient social protection system is being effectively delivered. Some of the Cooperation Framework's results are at the level of legislation, strategy, policy, while some are of a more practical, service-delivery type. At the "higher" level, contributions have been made to legislation (such as the Law on Foreigners) and to improving the social protection system by conducting a functional analysis of the Centres for Social Work and collaborating with the State Statistical Office to calculate the multi-dimensional child poverty index. Contributions were also made in the development of evidence-based policy recommendations on the Early Childhood Intervention System and on the development of protocols and procedures for the social plan at both municipal and regional levels and in the piloting of a model for an integrated home-based (mobile) health and social protection service. On the more service-oriented side, results include the development of the Digital Learning Platform, assistance to parents with the National Parenting Hotline, the creation of digital tools for persons with visual impairments, and support for the resettlement processes of persons with disabilities from institutional into community-based living in Strumica.

Output 2.4 – The output Preventing and addressing all forms of violence is being effectively delivered by supporting the authorities, including revisions to the Standard Operating Procedures for Unaccompanied and Separated Children and Vulnerable Foreigners, assistance with the new Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, the new protocol for a victim-centred multi-sectoral response to violence against women/domestic violence (VAW/DV) and the amendments of the Criminal Code in line with the Istanbul Convention. Other results have been achieved in improving the capacity of journalists and media professionals to report on gender-sensitive topics and forced displacement challenges, working with CSOs to enhance SOS helplines, providing psycho-social counselling, and offering free legal aid to women survivors of VAW. Additionally, the provision of free legal aid to Roma women survivors of violence led to positive court decisions in their favour, enabling them to live outside the violent environment, receive child support and state benefits**.**

Outcome 3: Promote ambitious climate action, sustainable management of natural resources, and well-preserved biodiversity through effective environmental governance and disaster-resilient communities.

Progress under Output 3.1 has been marked by significant achievements in advancing North Macedonia's policy and regulatory frameworks for low-emission development and climate resilience, although further efforts are needed to address the full scope of legislation, strategies, and policies comprehensively and align them with long-term climate resilience and sustainability goals. Key milestones include the development of the enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution (eNDC), along with its associated Roadmap and Financing Strategy, which set a robust framework for achieving greenhouse gas emission reductions by 2030. Complementary to this, a Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) Platform and integrated climate finance tracking systems were established, enabling data-driven policymaking and alignment with UNFCCC requirements. The CF supported

initiatives such as the Green Finance Facility, an innovative mechanism targeting SMEs and underserved households from vulnerable groups, including female-headed households, families with members with disabilities, and those affected by COVID-19, to facilitate their transition to renewable energy and green investments. These inclusive approaches underscore a strong focus on equitable access to sustainability opportunities.

In the agricultural sector, progress includes capacity-building for farmers on climate-resilient practices, such as high-quality, climate-tolerant seed production. Data integration through platforms like the Earth Map has supported evidence-based agricultural planning, while upgraded resources like the www.agrometeo.mk climate website provides actionable insights to help farmers mitigate climate change impacts. Additionally, advancements in sustainable and organic farming practices, food safety, and forest and soil management have been realized, supported by legislative and strategic achievements such as the development of the Strategy and Law on Soil Protection, a Feasibility Study of Coastal Urban Planning for the Ohrid Region, and Local Environmental Action Plans.

Youth engagement has also been a critical component, with climate education integrated into school curricula and youth-led initiatives, such as the Climate Change Declaration, amplifying their role in national strategies. Public awareness campaigns and targeted training further enhanced environmental education and community engagement.

Output 3.2 - Focus has been placed on finding solutions for sustainable management of natural resources at local and national levels, although greater emphasis is needed in this area. Support has been provided to North Macedonia to ensure compliance with ratified multilateral agreements on climate change and the Paris Agreement, but detailed outcomes of these initiatives remain limited.

Output 3.3 - Building capacity on pollution threats and health consequences at local and national levels is being effectively delivered. Progress was made in building capacity to address air pollution threats and their health consequences at local and national levels in the country. For example, efforts included the replacement of inefficient heating systems in the targeted households in Skopje's suburb with cleaner alternatives, resulting in a 40% reduction in air pollution (PM10 levels) and a 60% reduction in emissions. The Communication Strategy and Action Plan for the Decade of Climate Action was developed, and CSOs have been supported in implementing projects related to climate change, biodiversity, and nature protection. The Source Apportionment Study and the establishment of an online platform provided reliable data and facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogue. Additionally, air quality monitoring was expanded to five new municipalities, supported by enhanced technical capacities and mobilization of academia and civil society

Output 3.4 – Capacity-building activities for risk management, particularly in relation to natural disasters and their impact on the population have continued to be carried out in several key areas and include disability-inclusive DRR preparedness and strengthening DRR preparedness of national organisations of persons with disabilities. Capacity-building activities for disaster risk management have also been conducted in cooperation with the Crisis Management Centre, the Directorate for Protection and Rescue, and key stakeholders, such as municipal governments. Moreover, support has been provided for the development of river basin flood risk management plans, the implementation of priority measures outlined in management plans, and the extension of the hydrological monitoring networks to several river basins. Source Apportionment Studies were carried out to determine the sources of pollution in the capital city of Skopje and 5 other cities.

Output 3.5 – Efforts to build capacity for waste reduction at local and national levels have continued through contributions to improving *regional* waste management skills and capabilities, addressing ozone depletion issues, and reviewing relevant legislation.

Outcome 4: Enhance the rule of law, evidence-based and gender-responsive policies, social cohesion, and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable, and responsive institutions.

Output 4.1 – Building capacity activities at national and local levels on legal, policy and institutional frameworks have been effectively delivered. As detailed above, throughout Outcomes 1-3, the work of the Cooperation Framework has focused on EU accession, including the development and adoption or revision of national policies, laws, bylaws and rulebooks in line with the EU acquis and international standards. Within this outcome area, with support from UN Agencies, significant milestones include the adoption of the Law on the National Development Strategy and the adoption of the Strategy by the National Development Council; the development

of the Migration Profile 2021 and the adoption of the Resolution on Migration Policy 2021-2025 by the Parliament; the formulation of the National Strategy for Combating Human Trafficking and Irregular Migration; the preparation of the National Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and the development of the National Youth Strategy. North Macedonia also completed the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, with contributions made towards developing the Demography Policies Strategy.

Output 4.2 -Efforts to build capacities for budgeting at national and local levels have been made. UN Agencies have contributed to the implementation of the Public Finance Management Reform process and supported numerous advancements for local governments, including improvements to the normative and financial framework for local communities through the Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization Action Plan for 2021-2023, and enhanced municipal transparency through the e-dashboard available on the Ministry of Finance website, the municipal digital platform LOGES established in 24 municipalities, and particularly through the new Law on Financing of the Units of Local Self-Government and the two new financial instruments (Equalization and Performance Funds) for financing of local self- government units.

Output 4.3 – The use of evidence in policymaking has been enhanced through several initiatives. These include support for digital readiness of municipalities by upgrading and institutionalizing the Municipal Development Index, and contributions to the digital transformation in the national administration through the preparation of a Digital Readiness and Digital Gap Assessment and the Methodological Guidelines for Integrated Local Development Planning that is aligned with the principles of the EU Green Deal and emphasises gender sensitivity and integrated strategic planning.

Output 4.4 –Dialogue with and participation of marginalised groups has been effectively supported through a series of activities carried out in cooperation with local municipalities, focusing on youth, women and minority ethnic groups. Outcomes included support for the implementation of the National Strategy for Deinstitutionalisation of Social Services through the development of home-based and community-based care services. Municipal and regional councils for social protection have also been supported in designing social services in line with the Law on Social Protection. Programming contributed to legal counselling and representation of asylum seekers and stateless persons. Capacity-building activities for the provision and enhanced delivery of inclusive education were carried out in a number of educational agencies, including the Ministry of Education, the State Education Inspectorate, the Bureau for Development of Education, and the Adult Education Centre, as well as the Regional Vocational Education and Training Centres and State Secondary Schools for education and rehabilitation of students with disabilities. Within this outcome area, the specific outcomes related to gender equality include development and submission of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2022-2027, which was adopted by the Parliament, preparation of the Shadow Report to GREVIO (Group of Experts on Action Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence), facilitation of specialised services for survivors of gender-based violence through inter-municipal cooperation and close collaboration with local CSOs, and capacity building for gender-responsive policy and budgeting at national and local levels. The preparation of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy on Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence has also been supported.

Output 4.5 – Capacity building for countering corruption at national and local levels has been successful and support has been provided through the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Programme for national and municipal public enterprises and state-owned limited liability companies in North Macedonia 2024-2025, as well as the implementation of the Action plan for the Implementation of the Anti-Corruption Programme.

EQ3.2. To what extent has the Cooperation Framework contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioural, and legislative changes necessary for advancing its desired outcomes, particularly in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability?

JC3.2. The extent to which the Cooperation Framework contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioural, and legislative changes, particularly in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability

> *F12. The Cooperation Framework has contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering institutional, legislative, and behavioural changes in the country, with a strong emphasis on gender*

equality, human rights, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability. It has supported legislative alignment with the EU Acquis, the development of action plans, and capacity building for institutions and individuals, particularly in areas such as gender-responsive budgeting, education, social protection, and disaster risk management. Despite substantial progress, gaps remain in operationalising key strategies at the local level, integrating marginalised groups, and ensuring sustained resources for implementation. The stakeholders emphasized the necessity to persist in efforts to refine local capacities, align endeavours with EU standards, and enhance monitoring systems to achieve inclusive and sustainable development in accordance with the SDGs and EU accession priorities.

The Cooperation Framework has *significantly contributed* to the development and implementation of legislation, policies, strategies and action plans, thereby strengthening national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioural, and legislative changes. These contributions and their significance in terms of capacity development are outlined below.

Legislation, strategies, policies and action plans. As described above, extensive support has been provided to the Government of North Macedonia in developing and revising national legislation across various sectors. These changes specifically address national legislative priorities in line with North Macedonia's reform agenda and EU accession goals. North Macedonia's legislative and strategic framework has undergone substantial transformation, with significant support from UN Agencies.

Alignment of legislative changes with the EU Acquis is a crucial step in the accession process – the Cooperation Framework's contributions in this area have been instrumental in preparing North Macedonia for EU membership. This support extends beyond legislative reform to include the preparation of related strategies facilitating the implementation of this legislation and the preparation of action plans outlining the implementation stages of the strategies. In essence, UN Agencies' contributions have facilitated each step of the legislative reform agenda in numerous sectors, including education, employment, labour relations, health, social policy, disability, youth, women, municipal administration and local development, climate change and resilience, agriculture and rural development, social status such as citizenship and residence, and waste management.

Institutional/behavioural change. The Cooperation Framework has also contributed to related capacity building of national and municipal administrations, some of which are directly related to legislation, strategies and policies, while others are focused more on service delivery and provision of services to local stakeholders. Institutional and behavioural change has been facilitated through knowledge acquisition and skill development – UN Agencies continue to make significant contributions in these areas across various sectors.

Local and national administrations, as well as local service providers and CSOs, have gained knowledge and skills on the rights of marginalised groups, provision of social services, domestic and gender-based violence, counselling, education (for all age groups), employment services, including career counselling, digital learning, health services delivery, evidence-based health policy development, urban planning, sustainable forest and land management, environmental planning, disaster risk management, addressing and responding to corruption and evidence-based approaches to policymaking.

Building individual capacities among beneficiaries and within institutions. The Cooperation Framework has placed a strong emphasis on building individual capacities within institutions and among beneficiaries through targeted training and empowerment initiatives. Focus has been placed on gender-responsive budgeting, with government officials receiving training for integrating gender considerations into financial planning. This has been vital for the implementation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and its action plans. Local authorities have also benefited from capacity-building programmes designed to enhance gender-responsive policymaking and budgeting.

In the education sector, capacity-building efforts have targeted teachers and administrative staff. The development of the Digital Learning Platform and e-learning resources for municipal officials has improved the delivery of educational services and supported the transformation of primary and adult education.

Social protection and disability inclusion have also been prioritized. Employment centre staff have received specialized training to provide career counselling services to persons with disabilities, aiding their integration into the labour market. The REHA Centre in Skopje, established with the Cooperation Framework's support, plays

a key role in professional rehabilitation and has strengthened institutional capacities for the provision of services tailored to individuals with disabilities.

In the area of environmental sustainability, training programmes on disaster risk management and sustainable environmental practices have equipped community members and local government officials with the skills to manage environmental risks and promote sustainable practices. These programmes have strengthened both institutional and individual capacities to address environmental challenges and build resilient communities.

Although the Cooperation Framework has made significant progress in strengthening national capacities through policy reforms, institutional development, and individual capacity building, there are still gaps to be addressed to ensure sustained and inclusive development. The implementation of key strategies, such as the National Strategy on Gender Equality and the National Climate Change Policy, requires more robust operational mechanisms, especially at the local level. Although institutions have been strengthened, many still face challenges in fully integrating gender-responsive budgeting, environmental governance, and comprehensive social protection measures due to limited resources and technical capacities. Additional efforts are needed to address the gaps in meeting the specific needs of marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities and rural communities, who require targeted and sustained support to ensure their inclusion in mainstream economic and social services.

Moving forward, efforts should address these gaps by strengthening local-level capacities to implement national policies, backed by adequate financial resources and technical assistance. This aligns with the goals of the National Development Strategy, the EU accession process, and the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems will also be crucial to track progress and address emerging challenges effectively. Additionally, aligning national efforts with EU standards, especially in the areas of governance, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion, will be of crucial importance for North Macedonia's EU accession process. Integrating these efforts into the NDS and leveraging the EU accession framework will ensure a development trajectory that is coherent with global sustainability goals and EU accession requirements, fostering a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future.

> **EQ3.3. What benefits have people targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized groups, received?**

JC3.3. The extent to which the Cooperation Framework and its results contributed to most vulnerable and marginalized groups and type of implemented measures

> *F13. The UN Agencies during the Cooperation Framework implementation have yielded important benefits for vulnerable and marginalised groups by advancing legal and policy frameworks, strengthening institutional capacities, and implementing direct support interventions. Legal and policy efforts included the development of the National Youth Strategy and Comprehensive Sexuality Education, alongside advocacy for gender equality through the adoption of the National Strategy for Gender Equality. Institutional capacity building supported healthcare, education, and employment services, exemplified by mobile gynaecological clinics and vocational training centres. Direct interventions provided tangible benefits, such as Roma mentorship programs, psychosocial counselling for violence survivors, and support for agricultural development benefiting smallholders. Despite notable progress, gaps remain in fully implementing and sustaining these measures, highlighting the need for ongoing capacity building and consistent monitoring to ensure no one is left behind.*

The Cooperation Framework in North Macedonia has been working on advancing legal and policy frameworks, strengthening institutional capacities, and implementing direct support interventions. These efforts resulted in improved access to justice, healthcare, education, and economic opportunities, simultaneously strengthening national capacities for sustainable and inclusive development.

1. Legal and policy support: At the legal and policy level, the Cooperation Framework played a crucial role in advocating and supporting the development of key national strategies to protect and empower vulnerable groups. The National Youth Strategy 2023-2027 and its Action Plan for 2023-2025 laid the foundation for

addressing the specific needs of youth, particularly in the areas of employment, education, and civic engagement, with a strong focus on marginalised youth groups.

In the healthcare sector, the UNCT contributed to the development and implementation of the National Cervical Cancer Screening Programme, which improved access to preventative healthcare services for women, especially in underserved and rural areas. This programme not only increased early detection rates, but also empowered women to take proactive steps in managing their health. Additionally, the Cooperation Framework 's advocacy for Comprehensive Sexuality Education supported efforts to equip young people with knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, further contributing to gender equality and the well-being of vulnerable groups.

The UNCT also supported the ratification of ILO Convention 190, focused on eliminating violence and harassment in the workplace, while also contributing to the advancement of gender-responsive budgeting and gender-sensitive policies through the adoption of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2022-2027. These legal and policy interventions created a solid foundation for the protection of the rights of women, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups, while promoting gender equality and social inclusion across multiple sectors.

2. Institutional capacity building: At the institutional level, the Cooperation Framework focused on strengthening the capacities of service providers across various sectors for the delivery of quality services to vulnerable and marginalised groups. Key informants and survey participants highlighted that the key to this effort was strengthening the capacities of national and local governance for gender-responsive policymaking and budgeting. For example, UN agencies delivered well-perceived and targeted training programmes for municipal officers, health professionals, educators, and social workers. The training participants and representatives of vulnerable groups that were part of the focus groups stated that these efforts enabled the improvement of skills and services necessary to address gender equality, sexual and reproductive health (SRH), mental health, and other critical needs of vulnerable groups.

The Cooperation Framework also supported the professional rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, facilitating their inclusion in the open labour market through vocational training and job placement programmes. Establishing the Future Skills Platform and inclusive training centres for industries such as construction, textiles, and renewable energy helped individuals from marginalised groups acquire the skills needed to thrive in the evolving labour market. For example, the UN supported the establishment of the VET Centre in Gostivar designed to provide specialised vocational education to youth, women, and minority ethnic groups.

Healthcare institutions benefited from strengthened capacities for addressing the needs of underserved groups of the population. The Cooperation Framework supported mobile gynaecological clinics, which expanded healthcare access for women in rural and underserved areas and contributed to the implementation of the National Cervical Cancer Screening Programme. Similarly, the Early Childhood Intervention System for children with disabilities and developmental delays and the provision of educational assistants in secondary education underscored the Cooperation Framework's commitment to building an inclusive education system.

3. Direct results for vulnerable groups: The UNCT efforts under the Cooperation Framework's translated into direct benefits for marginalised groups through a wide range of targeted interventions. UN Agencies implemented the flagship economic empowerment programme – the triangular cooperation initiative that resulted in the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan. These efforts resulted in the registration of over 23,000 young people engaged in labour market programmes. Roma populations, a historically marginalised group, benefited from the engagement of Roma mentors and the applied Acceder methodology, which facilitated their integration into the workforce. UN assisted Roma returnees in acquiring documentation, enabling them to access education and social services.

For migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, the UN provided comprehensive support, including medical and psychosocial care, legal counselling, and early integration activities such as language classes and soft skills training. These initiatives were crucial in helping these vulnerable groups navigate complex legal and social environments and access essential services.

The UN also made significant progress in addressing gender-based violence through the establishment of SOS helplines and the development of protocols for a multi-sectoral response to VAW/DV. The economic empowerment of women survivors of violence was facilitated through targeted training and employment opportunities, while the new psychosocial counselling centres provided the much-needed support to survivors.

Additionally, capacity-building activities for youth with disabilities, particularly those engaging deaf people and individuals with hearing impairments, were instrumental in fostering inclusion and social cohesion through intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

The UN's interventions extended to the agricultural sector, where the National Land Consolidation Programme became fully operational. This initiative improved land structures, expanded farm sizes, and improved access to agricultural infrastructure, benefiting over 6,200 farmers, including 630 women. The programme increased land use efficiency, boosted yields, and created opportunities for rural economic development, thereby empowering smallholders and family farms to improve food security and stimulate local economies.

JC3.3.2. The type of measures that target inequalities and other cross-cutting issues

These initiatives have included special assistance for entrepreneurs with disabilities, enabling them to access financial resources and mentorship tailored to their unique needs. Additionally, professional rehabilitation programmes have focused on integrating persons with disabilities into the open labour market, thereby promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities.

The deployment of specialized mentoring programmes, such as the Acceder methodology for Roma entering the labour market, has shown promise in enhancing employment outcomes for this community. These initiatives have been complemented by legal support for migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, ensuring they receive the necessary assistance while navigating complex legal frameworks. The focus on educational access has also been crucial, with special assistance provided to Roma returnees, inmates, and juveniles to help them complete their primary education as a fundamental human right.

Moreover, active labour market measures have been prepared to address various forms of inequality across gender, age, geography, and social status among job seekers. Legislative and policy initiatives were aimed at aligning local laws with EU standards, particularly those related to gender equality, violence against women and children, and the rights of marginalized groups. This includes adopting gender-responsive budgeting practices and preparing action plans that address informal work arrangements that disproportionately affect the poor and socially excluded.

Despite these efforts, significant gaps still need to be addressed. For instance, while progress has been made in legal and policy frameworks, their actual implementation and enforcement can be inconsistent. Future measures should be aimed at strengthening capacities at various levels to ensure these policies translate into sustainable services and benefits for vulnerable and marginalised communities. Constant monitoring and evaluation of existing programmes will be key in identifying challenges and adapting initiatives to better serve those who need them the most, ensuring that progress is sustained and that no one is left behind.

3.4 Efficiency

The analysis of efficiency focused on the appropriateness and allocation of resources by UN agencies, including their alignment with the needs of the country and its citizens- including vulnerable groups. Evidence and stakeholder opinions were reviewed to determine whether the delivery methods and funding framework were strategic and effective. The ET also examined resource mobilisation and allocation strategies, comparing mobilised and delivered resources to planned budgets to assess their efficiency. Additionally, the ET evaluated whether CF activities prioritised demand-side needs and if implementation was flexible to address emerging priorities. The findings highlighted strengths and areas for improvement in planning, prioritisation, and resource alignment to optimise the efficiency.

> **EQ4.1. Has the UNCT established and implemented clear procedures and mobilised resources to ensure its contribution to the achievement of the defined outcomes?**

JC4.1.1. The extent to which financial and human resources allocated by UN Agencies to support the implementation of strategies and the achievement of the Cooperation Framework outcomes is adequate

F14. The ET finds that the Cooperation Framework's resource mobilization and allocation mechanisms were satisfactory, effectively addressing the financial and human resource needs to achieve its outcomes. The total budget of USD 150.88 million reflects a realistic and result-based approach, aligning resource planning with North Macedonia's development priorities. Significant emphasis was placed on environmental sustainability, climate action, governance, and transparency, with 66% of the budget. Outcomes focusing on inclusive prosperity and access to quality social services received the remaining 34%. Expenditures were consistent with planned allocations, underscoring the UNCT's strategic focus. Key contributing partners, including the Governments of North Macedonia, Switzerland, and Sweden, and the European Union, played a critical role in supporting resource mobilization efforts.

Resource Mobilisation

According to the Cooperation Framework Mid-term Review Self-Assessment, 'resource mobilization for the Cooperation Framework is satisfactory'[32], which corresponds to the details extracted from UNINFO[33] for the current evaluation.

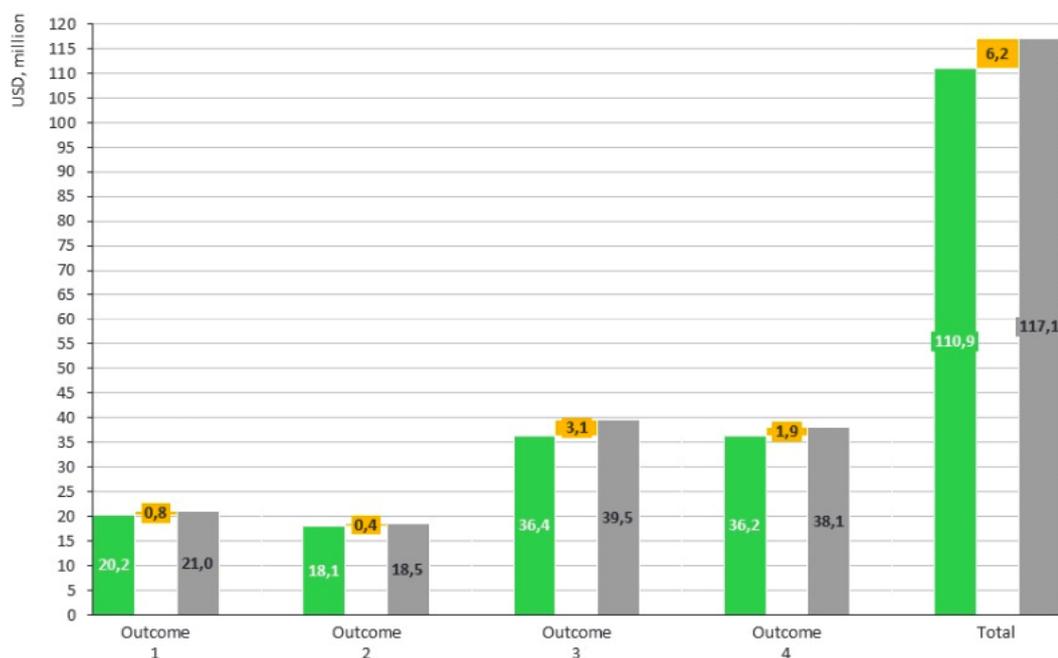*Figure 15 Delivery Rate under Cooperation Framework Outcomes*
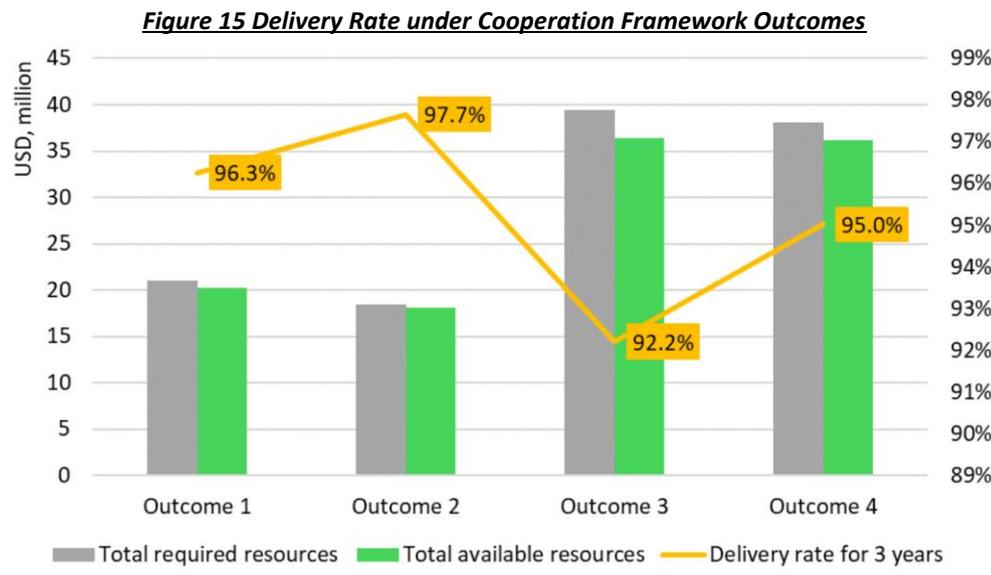
As can be seen in these graphs, there is a relatively close and satisfactory tracking of required, available and expended resources.

---

[32] 2023. UNCT. SDCF Mid-term Review Self-Assessment. UN North Macedonia.
[33] https://uninfo.org

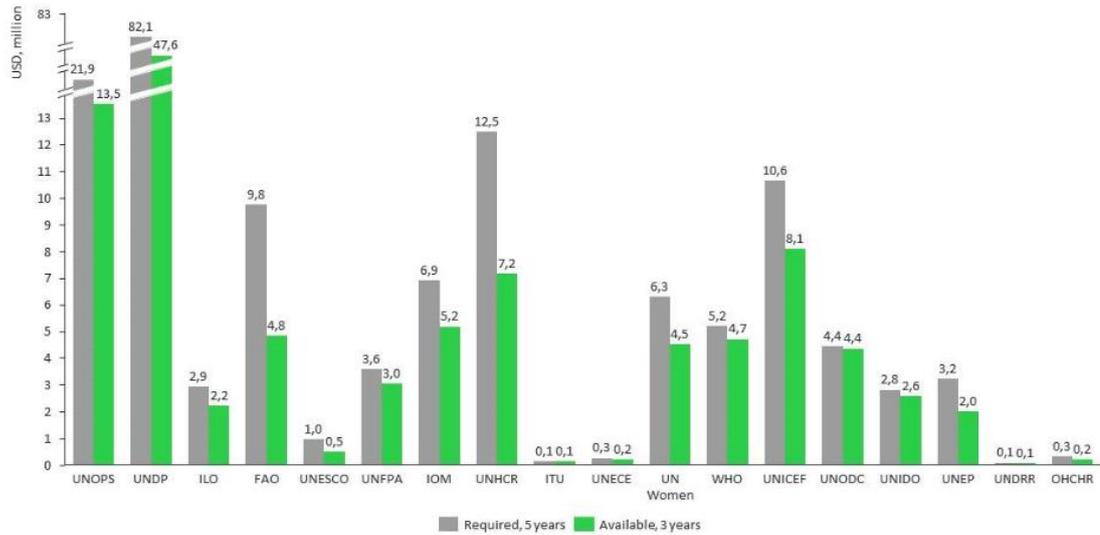*Figure 16 Overview of Required vs Available Resources – Three Years*

The evaluation found that the financial and human resources allocated by UN Agencies have adequately met the needs of the Cooperation Framework.

The Cooperation Framework established a realistic and rational budget structure based on the actual costs of achieving specific outputs within the Cooperation Framework. The result-based approach to budgeting has ensured that financial planning is grounded in the reality of North Macedonia, and its needs related to the Cooperation Framework.

Resource Allocation by UN Agencies

At the time of preparing this report, a total of USD 150,875,695 were allocated to the Cooperation Framework in North Macedonia. Overall, UN Agencies have set realistic targets:

Figure 17 Overview of Resources Planned for 5 years vs Available Resources (3 years)

This finding is further stipulated by the analysis at the three-year level - considering planned and available resources for the first three years of the CF implementation by UN Agencies:

*Figure 18 Overview of Planned vs Available Resources (3 years)*
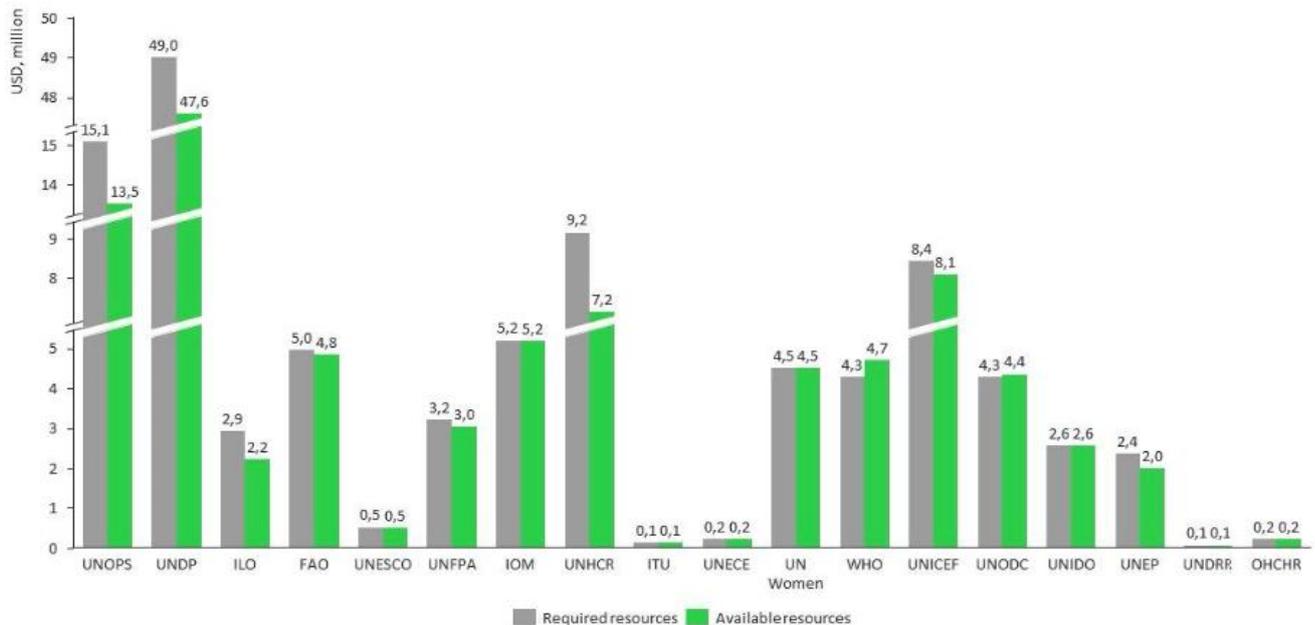
Allocation to Outcome Areas

A breakdown of allocations to outcome areas is provided below.

The UNCT strategically planned the major allocation of resources for Outcome 3 (34%) and Outcome 4 (32%) of the Cooperation Framework 2021-2025 for North Macedonia. These allocations indicate that environmental sustainability, climate action, and governance are priorities. The other two planned outcomes are Outcome 1, with 18% of the budget, focusing on inclusive prosperity and economic development, and Outcome 2, with 16% of the budget, aiming to ensure universal access to quality social services such as healthcare, education, and social protection.

Figure 19 -Planned Budget by Outcome (UNINFO)

Outcome 1 ■ *Outcome 2* ■ *Outcome 3* ■ *Outcome 4*
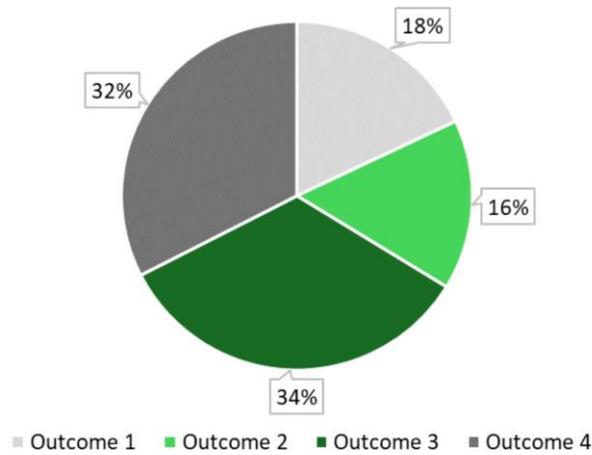
Similarly, expenditures show that Outcome 4 and Outcome 3 make up 62% of the delivered funds in the Cooperation Framework 2021-2025 for North Macedonia, reflecting a significant focus on governance, transparency, and environmental sustainability. The remaining 38% of the expenditures were allocated to Outcome 1, with 20% directed towards inclusive prosperity and economic development, and Outcome 2, with 18% intended to improve access to quality social services such as healthcare, education, and social protection. These expenditures highlight the UNCT's strategic distribution of resources across the country's development priorities.

Figure 20 -Delivered Funds by Outcome (UNINFO)

■ *Outcome 1* ■ *Outcome 2* ■ *Outcome 3* ■ *Outcome 4*
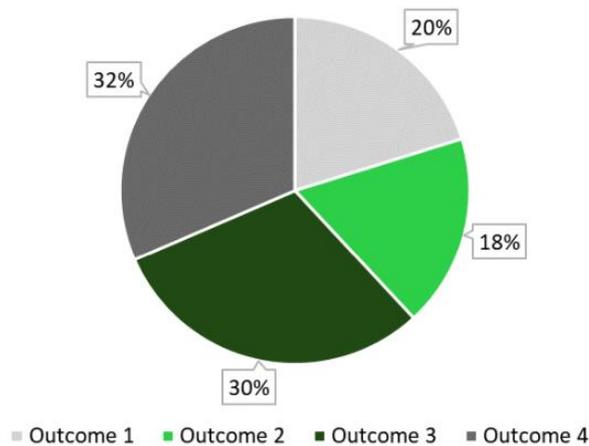
Contributing Partners

Here, it is important to highlight the funding allocated to the Cooperation Framework from contributing partners, notably the Government of North Macedonia, the Government of Switzerland, the Government of Sweden and the European Union.

Figure 21 - Resources from Contributing Partners. (UNINFO)
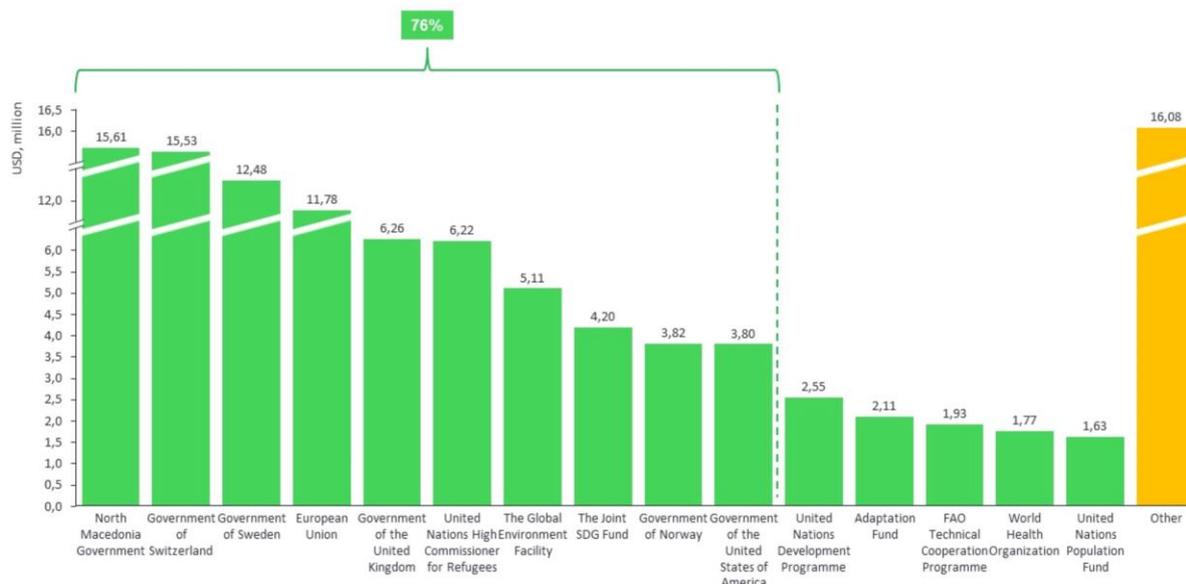
JC4.1.2. Evidence of the UNCT's Established Procedures and Resources Utilization to Ensure its Contribution to the Achievement of the Defined Outcomes

> *F14. With the RC's leadership, the UNCT established effective coordination mechanisms, including the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) and Outcome Groups (OGs), which facilitated alignment with national priorities, joint planning, and implementation of the Cooperation Framework. The RCO played a pivotal role in fostering collaboration, ensuring coherence, and introducing joint Results Group meetings to enhance cross-sectoral synergies. While the JSC ensured strategic oversight, its role was often limited to formal approvals rather than proactive contributions. The OGs operationalized Cooperation Framework outcomes but faced challenges due to limited participation from national partners, affecting ownership and decision-making. Thematic Groups addressed cross-cutting issues like gender and human rights, although their broad mandates strained member capacities.*

Coordination and Engagement

The UNCT in North Macedonia operated under robust coordination mechanisms facilitated by the RCO's, which, according to the national stakeholders, "played a pivotal role in enhancing coordination and collaboration across UN agencies and with development partners". The Joint Steering Committee (JSC), co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, served as the highest oversight body for the Cooperation Framework. The JSC structure ensured alignment between UN interventions and national priorities, providing strategic guidance and political engagement. The ET finds that the RCO organised and facilitated regular JSC meetings- the analysis of meeting minutes showed that the JSC successfully oversaw the Cooperation Framework's implementation. Still, its role was affected by the political challenges and often limited to formal endorsement of plans and progress reports, with stakeholders suggesting a need for more proactive strategic contributions during its sessions.

Complementing the JSC's oversight role, the Outcome Groups focused on operationalising the four outcomes. These groups enabled joint planning, programming, and reporting. However, the limited participation of national partners in the work of these groups was identified as a pressing challenge, affecting joint decision-making and national ownership. Additionally, the UNCT established Thematic Groups as platforms for addressing cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights, disability inclusion, youth, migration and digital transformation. Despite resource constraints, they facilitated joint programming and strengthened coherence, although their broad mandates often stretched the capacities of their members and UN Agencies. The ET identified a call to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration and linkages with national structures to address evolving development challenges comprehensively- improvements were suggested to strengthen the engagement of national counterparts in the OGs and align their work more closely with existing national coordination structures. In this context, stakeholders suggested expanding the scope of these groups and integrating more diverse actors,

including national partners and civil society, to ensure inclusive and participatory approaches to development planning and implementation.

The survey of local stakeholders highlighted the quality of engagement and coordination with civil society, with 16 out of 30 respondents providing a positive assessment of UN Agency coordination (13 respondents indicated that information was insufficient to make an analysis, while one found coordination was lacking.) Similarly, 21 out of 30 respondents evaluated the effectiveness of UN Agencies coordination with the government and other development partners as positive.

UN Agency staff also expressed general satisfaction with the effectiveness of the Cooperation Framework's coordination structures.

Figure 22 - UN Agency Perspectives on Coordination Structures.
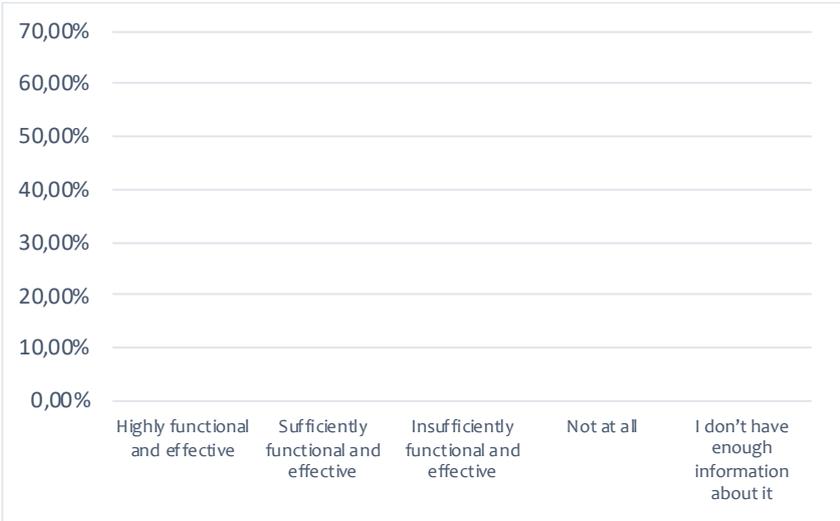
Source: UN Programme and Operations Staff Survey

Despite some areas for improvement, the RCO played an instrumental role in coordinating these mechanisms, fostering synergies, and ensuring alignment with national development priorities. Through the RCO's leadership, regular consultations, and the development of Joint Work Plans (JWPs), the UNCT maintained a unified approach to addressing North Macedonia's development challenges. Furthermore, introducing joint meetings among Results Groups was a notable step toward enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration and maximising the impact of UN interventions. These mechanisms underscored the UNCT/ commitment to ensuring coherence, responsiveness, and alignment with the country's evolving priorities.

Implementation Modalities

The Cooperation Framework also specifies the implementation modalities, including 'technical support, cash assistance, supplies, commodities and equipment, procurement services, transport, funds for advocacy, research and studies, expert support, programme development, project management, grant management, fund management, monitoring and evaluation, training activities and staff support. Part of the UN system entities' support may be provided to NGOs and CSOs as agreed upon within the framework of individual workplans and project documents. [34] The evaluation found these implementation modalities to be appropriate and well-organised.

---

[34] https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/100160-republic-north-macedonia-and-united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework. Page 37.

Partnership Approach

The Cooperation Framework has a documented Resource Mobilisation and Partnership Strategy.[35] The Strategy acknowledges that to achieve the 2030 Agenda[36] the UN will require

'a far more holistic approach across traditional development silos and all levels of governance. Partnerships at the national and municipality-level – those that can best harness and optimize the resources available –will drive forward the real change required to deliver the SDGs and impact people's lives for the better. Partnerships across silos and multiple stakeholders will be crucial to co-creating, resourcing, and delivering solutions to today's development challenges.'

In this context, the Partnership Strategy identified three objectives:
- Maintain good relationships with existing partners and expand the partner network when needed to achieve Cooperation Framework results, invest in coordinated approaches to key strategic partners.
- Proactively seek opportunities for cooperation and partnerships with the private sector and IFIs.
- Improve national ownership of the Cooperation Framework.

The SDCF Mid-Term Review Self-Assessment notes that the 'number of **joint programmes** has significantly increased, coordination and collaboration through joint initiatives or activities has improved,' also stating that '**National partners and donor feedback** on UN development system reform is positive and improvement is observed each year.[37] The Review credits joint work planning workshops and the transparency provided through the Annual Result Reports, which contain detailed information, including financial data.

Reporting on the Cooperation Framework also offers many comments and insights into the partnership arrangements and outcomes of the Cooperation Framework. These include a clear commitment to international cooperation and partnership, and examples of partnerships with municipalities, educational organisations, government agencies and ministries, civil society, the private sector and international organisations.

Unfortunately, while annual reporting does cover partnerships,[38] it *does not specifically address the three objectives* described above. Although achievements in relation to each of the three objectives can be inferred from overall reporting, a *targeted analysis of results vs. objectives is lacking*. For instance, the 2023 Annual Result Report provided detailed analysis of the resource mobilisation component of the Resource Mobilisation and Partnership Strategy, but did not analyse the partnership component.

The survey of local stakeholders asked whether the UN in North Macedonia is considered an important partner in supporting development processes. Out of the 30 respondents, 25 agreed, while 5 indicated that they lacked sufficient information to make an informed analysis.

EQ4.2. To what extent has the Cooperation Framework prioritized activities based on demand rather than resource availability, and how effectively has it reallocated resources to address emerging needs and priorities?

JC4.2.1. The extent to which the Cooperation Framework has prioritized activities based on a needs assessment and evidence that resources have been mobilized and allocated based on these needs

> *F15. Through the Cooperation Framework implementation, the UNCT has demonstrated its capacity to prioritize activities based on demand and resource availability. Practically, UN Agencies have successfully addressed national priorities and emerging needs through strategic resource reallocation, innovative programming, and partnership-driven implementation. Still, there is a need to diversify funding and enhance national ownership further (with a more inclusive and participatory approach to resource planning and allocation).*

---

[35] https://northmacedonia.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/MK%20UNSDCF%20Resource%20Mobilization%20and%20Partnership%20Strategy.pdf

[36] https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

[37] UNCT. SDCF Mid-term Review Self-Assessment. UN North Macedonia.

[38] 2023. Annual Results Report. UN North Macedonia. Page 25.

During the planning and implementation, UNCT has effectively prioritized demand-based activities, leveraging limited core UN resources and external funding to meet national needs and address emerging challenges. This approach reflects the UNCT's capacity to operate within the constraints of reduced UN core ("own") resources and its reliance on "external" development funding to ensure sustainable delivery of results. Despite these conditions, the Cooperation Framework's demand-driven approach demonstrated flexibility and responsiveness, underpinned by a commitment to align its interventions with national priorities, the EU accession agenda and the SDGs.

Evidence from the implementation highlights its ability to reallocate resources strategically to address unforeseen challenges. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the entities adapted the programming to support critical healthcare infrastructure, expand access to immunization campaigns, and provide social protection for vulnerable groups. Similarly, the UNCT addressed the energy crisis by reallocating resources to promote renewable energy solutions and energy efficiency initiatives targeting underserved communities and SMEs. These efforts underscore the Cooperation Framework's agility in addressing immediate national needs, even within the constraints of limited resources.

The UN Agencies also invested in targeted pilot programs to address structural challenges and explore scalable solutions. Initiatives such as the Green Finance Facility demonstrated the innovative approach under the Cooperation Framework, enabling vulnerable households and small enterprises to transition to sustainable energy solutions. Vocational training programs and the establishment of inclusive training centres aimed at marginalized groups, including youth and persons with disabilities, further exemplify the commitment to promoting equitable access to opportunities and fostering resilience at the community level.

The UNCT's ability to mobilize external resources was critical to the responsiveness and the ability (of UN Agencies) to deliver on its commitments effectively. Namely, resource allocation under the Cooperation Framework reflected a strategic focus on critical national priorities, particularly those tied to EU accession requirements. While the ET recognized the UNCT's success in leveraging external resources, it also identified opportunities to enhance national ownership and opportunities from national development funding. Expanding the involvement of national stakeholders in resource planning and implementation processes- especially considering available development funds- according to the stakeholders has the potential to amplify the Cooperation Framework's effects. The ET already highlighted gaps in resource mobilization for specific sectors- still, the partners stated that the priority is to explore opportunities to diversify funding sources and strengthen partnerships with traditional and non-traditional donors[39].

3.5 Sustainability

The analysis of sustainability prospects centred on the likelihood that national partners and stakeholders will maintain the progress made towards the Cooperation Framework outcomes over time. The ET assessed how well the Cooperation Framework incorporated sustainability considerations into its design and implementation, ensuring the achievements would endure beyond the Cooperation Framework's lifespan.

> **EQ5.1. To what extent are the Cooperation Framework results sustainable and what is the likelihood that progress towards SDG achievement is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time?**

JC5.1.1. The extent to which the Cooperation Framework has considered and ensured sustainability of achievements

> *F16. The Cooperation Framework has advanced the sustainability of results through strategic policy alignment, institutional strengthening, capacity-building, and partnerships. However, the long-term sustainability of results remains contingent on addressing systemic challenges, including financial constraints, governance gaps, and the evolving political and socio-economic landscape. The ET finds*

---

[39] There is a relatively close and satisfactory tracking of required, available and expended resources. See evidence provided above, in JC4.1.1. The extent to which financial and human resources allocated by UN Agencies to support the implementation of strategies and the achievement of the Cooperation Framework outcomes is adequate, and JC4.2.1. The extent to which the Cooperation Framework has prioritized activities based on a needs assessment and evidence that resources have been mobilized and allocated based on these needs.

that addressing these barriers is critical to ensure achievement of the Cooperation Framework's immediate objectives and lays a foundation for sustained progress towards the SDGs and the country's EU accession and development priorities.

The ET finds that the UN Agencies in North Macedonia have established several mechanisms that support the sustainability of outcomes.

Improving policymaking processes, and advocating for systemic reforms: The Cooperation Framework's design and implementation demonstrated strategic alignment with national priorities, the EU accession agenda, and the SDGs. It integrated sustainability considerations by focusing on anticipatory policy advice and institutional reforms. A key achievement was the formulation of the National Development Strategy (2024–2044), which incorporated long-term goals that reflected national and international priorities through extensive stakeholder consultations. This recently adopted document serves as a critical framework for sustainability, linking the Cooperation Framework's outcomes to broader development objectives.

Still, the ET finds that challenges persist in aligning policies with effective implementation mechanisms. Weak public structures and diminishing public trust in institutions undermined policy adoption and enforcement, particularly in areas requiring cross-sectoral coordination. Moreover, insufficient narrative reporting on the Cooperation Framework's contributions to national policy priorities and EU accession processes has made it difficult to assess its systemic impact fully- but rather to anticipate it.

Enhancing national institutions by addressing their operational efficiency, facilitating modernization, and supporting reforms: the Cooperation Framework emphasized institutional strengthening to ensure sustainability. Key initiatives supported governance reforms, including transparency, accountability, and public financial management. For example, the introduction of an E-dashboard for municipal budget execution significantly enhanced fiscal transparency. Social protection reforms targeted service accessibility, especially for vulnerable populations such as persons with disabilities and Roma communities. However, gaps in institutional capacities at central and municipal levels continue to hinder the scalability and sustainability of these interventions. High staff turnover, resource limitations, and shifting political priorities exacerbate these challenges, highlighting the need for deeper institutional ownership of reforms. Furthermore, the Cooperation Framework's monitoring and reporting systems have not sufficiently documented institutional improvements or their contribution to sustainability.

Capacity development and building resilience through skills enhancement and knowledge management at various levels: Capacity development was a cornerstone of the Cooperation Framework, enhancing systemic capabilities to deliver sustainable outcomes. In health and social protection, reforms aimed to strengthen primary care services and improve access for vulnerable groups. Governance interventions focused on training for transparent fiscal practices, while education initiatives targeted inclusive policies and competency-based curricula. Still, the country needs a more systemic approach to capacity development to stipulate the reform processes and implementation of the EU Acquis. In the context of this evaluation, the ET finds that the CF lacked detailed monitoring of how capacity-building initiatives translated into improved knowledge, skills, and practices. This gap limits insights into the long-term effect of capacity development on systemic resilience.

The CF strengthened knowledge-sharing and monitoring systems, improving data-driven decision-making and transparency. Tools like SDG reporting mechanisms and fiscal dashboards supported evidence-based policymaking. However, significant gaps in data availability, particularly for marginalized groups, hinder comprehensive sustainability assessments.

Additionally, while monitoring systems effectively tracked outputs, they fell short in documenting contributions to sustainability, such as alignment with national policies, EU accession reforms, and LNOB-related outcomes. Narrative reporting under the CF often lacked detailed analysis of progress toward sustainability commitments.

Partnership building and ensuring stakeholder engagement: these elements were foundational to the results and effectiveness. The Cooperation Framework fostered collaboration among government entities, civil society organizations, and the private sector. For example, notable initiatives included the National Youth Strategy (2023–2027) and expanded partnerships in green financing and digital innovation, which broadened the inclusivity and impact of the interventions.

However, deeper engagement with local stakeholders, particularly NGOs and marginalized groups, remains necessary. The partners highlighted the need to extend support for civil society partners and enhance their ability

to scale or maintain impact, hence, improve the sustainability prospects for the outcomes' achievement. Sustained participation of beneficiaries in program design, implementation, and monitoring is critical to achieving systemic change.

Financial sustainability posed a significant challenge for the Cooperation Framework. Heavy reliance on external donor funding and constrained national resources limited the ability to scale successful interventions. Funding gaps were especially evident in areas like education, governance and social services. Innovative financing mechanisms, such as the Green Finance Facility, demonstrated potential but still need to be improved to ensure long-term financial resilience.

Sustained progress requires diversified funding sources and a stronger alignment of financial priorities with national development objectives. Without these, the CF's ability to deliver long-term sustainable outcomes is at risk.

The Monitoring System

The evaluation found[40] a lack of detailed monitoring in key areas critical to the sustainability of the Cooperation Framework (CF). These include tracking the CF's contributions to national development policies and its alignment with EU accession processes, documenting improvements in knowledge, skills, and practices that demonstrate its impact on capacity building and institutional strengthening and assessing its contributions to the rights of vulnerable groups and the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle as a means of sustaining results beyond the CF's duration.

Narrative Reporting

The Cooperation Framework lacks analysis of and details about contributions to sustainability. For example, while the Annual Results Reporting discusses assistance provided to the Food and Veterinary Agency for sustainable land and forest management, the ARR does not offer a specific analysis of progress towards meeting the commitments of the Cooperation Framework.

JC5.1.2. Existence of Cooperation Framework priority areas where SDG progress is likely to be sustainable

> *F17. While UNCT has achieved progress under all SDGs, the sustainability of these results will depend on the national institutional and financial capacities to maintain these achievements.*

The evaluation found that SDG progress is likely to be sustainable in the following areas:

Legislation, strategy, policy. The legislation, strategy and policy initiatives supported by the Cooperation Framework are sustainable and contribute to SDG achievement.

Capacity building. Sustainable progress towards SDG achievement has been identified in various capacity-building initiatives, such as training teachers, sustainable land and forest management and regional waste management, as well as sustainable skills and changes in practices related to gender-budgeting, provision of services to survivors of violence and improved media reporting (capacities of journalists) on gender issues.

Direct delivery. There are notable sustainable outcomes, such as the cleaning of two old chemical basins, which involved removing 1,250 tons of hexachlorocyclohexane (HCH) waste and contaminated soil, as well as the VET Centre in Gostivar.

3.6 Orientation Towards Impact

Under progress towards impact, the ET analysed if and how UN interventions under the Cooperation Framework have strengthened systemic and individual resilience, including partners ownership of the results achieved.

---

[40] As discussed in JC1.3.2. The extent to which performance indicators with baselines and targets are measurable and relevant

EQ5.2. To what extent have UN interventions stemming from the Cooperation Framework strengthened systemic and individual resilience and contributed to reducing vulnerability?

JC5.2. The extent to which partners claim ownership over the results achieved during the Cooperation Framework implementation

F18. The Cooperation Framework fostered systemic change, resilience, and local ownership through systemic (policy and legislative) advancements and capacity-building initiatives at various levels- but inconsistent stakeholder engagement and challenges in inter-agency coordination occasionally hindered its overall impact.

The evaluation found that, overall, the design and implementation of the Cooperation Framework is geared towards systemic change and resilience, particularly in instances when UN Agencies collaborate with a local partner (the Government or a CSO), instead of offering direct delivery. Abovementioned legislative, policy and strategy advancements reflect national ownership of systemic change, with a particular emphasis on marginalised groups in this area. Similarly, capacity-building initiatives contribute to this longer-term change, and there is considerable evidence from local stakeholders of the importance of these initiatives to both sustainability and impact. Additionally, there is evidence of the development of training-of-trainers, ensuring the capacities to upskill remain 'in house'. Through the Cooperation Framework, UN Agencies are providing substantive support across these areas. More time is needed to assess the actual impact, as actual changes in practices through capacity building and changes in the normative framework cannot be seen in such a short period.

The evaluation found substantial evidence of ownership being taken by local stakeholders: ownership of initiatives and ownership of results. Evidence includes the following:

- Leadership by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in overall coordination of the Cooperation Framework with the RC, particularly through the Joint Government-UN Steering Committee.

- Ownership of specific ministries, visible in leadership and delivery of funded initiatives, including the Ministry of Education's collaboration with UNICEF on teacher training.

- The Statistics Office and its cooperation with various UN Agencies.

- The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy formalizing the Resource Centre on Gender Responsive Policy Making and Budgeting, established with the support of UN, as part of its organizational structure.

However, the evaluation identified gaps in stakeholder engagement, with some ministries and government agencies reporting insufficient direct involvement. Furthermore, variations in the substantive engagement offered by different UN Agencies led to challenges, with ministries highlighting inconsistencies in the depth of collaboration. Instances of ineffective coordination between UN Agencies were also noted, which undermined the overall impact. A specific example is the fragmented approach to gender equality, which has occasionally caused confusion among government partners and hindered the effectiveness of interventions in this area.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The ET prepared conclusions based on an in-depth analysis of findings and facts obtained from desk reviews, surveys, interviews, and direct interactions with final beneficiaries through focus groups.

4.1 Relevance and Adaptability

C1. The Cooperation Framework demonstrated significant relevance to North Macedonia, aligning closely with national development priorities, regional commitments, and international standards (F1). The Theory of Change (ToC) provided a robust foundation for addressing the country's key challenges, with evidence-based insights from the Common Country Analysis (CCA) ensuring a focus on governance, social inclusion, economic resilience, and environmental sustainability. Its alignment with national strategies such as the Economic Reform Programme (ERP) and the Programmes for Work of the Government of North Macedonia was notable, particularly in areas such as inclusive economic growth, labour market efficiency, and climate resilience (F1, F2). The CCA also successfully integrated gender equality, human rights considerations and LNOB, and this focus remained relevant during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (F3, F4). Still, systemic challenges like sector-wide gender mainstreaming remain areas for further improvement (F6). Finally, while the CCA provided a strong evidence base, certain priorities, such as digital transformation, were insufficiently addressed, leaving room for stronger alignment with evolving national and regional needs (F7).

C2. The Cooperation Framework references North Macedonia's EU Candidate status and related priorities, but greater emphasis is needed in programming and reporting to explicitly demonstrate how initiatives contribute to EU accession, particularly in aligning with the EU acquis through legislation, policies, strategies, and action plans (F5).

4.2 Coherence and Coordination

C3. The Cooperation Framework demonstrated significant coherence in programming and planning, with JWPs effectively aligning UN agency programs with national priorities and CF objectives (F8). While many UN agencies fully synchronized their efforts with the CF, some maintained parallel work plans and monitoring systems, complicating data alignment and coordination. Despite these challenges, the CF enhanced cohesion within the UNCT, supported joint programming efforts, and reinforced cross-cutting themes such as gender, human rights, and the LNOB principle (F8).

C4. The post-reform RCO played a pivotal role in enhancing coherence across UN agencies under the CF (F9). The RCO facilitated joint programming, aligned initiatives with national development priorities, and fostered multi-agency collaboration, as seen in successful initiatives such as the Multi-Partner Trust Fund migration program. However, challenges persisted in fully engaging smaller and non-resident agencies, aligning larger agencies, and addressing overlapping mandates in areas like gender mainstreaming. These challenges highlighted the need for strengthened accountability and enhanced collaboration to advance the "One UN" approach (F9). In addition, there is potential to enhance both relevance and effectiveness, as well as the long-term impact of contributions by strengthening the relationship between the UNCT (and UN Agencies) and regional bodies, whether governing structures or civil society groups. Regional connectivity, a longstanding notable component of life in the Balkans, can benefit the people of the region while strengthening the agencies working on addressing development priorities.

4.3 Effectiveness

C5. The implementation of the Cooperation Framework is effective and is delivering outputs as planned. It is also contributing to intended outcomes. Indicators point to a high level of success in meeting targets, and qualitative data also indicates a largely successful implementation of activities and delivery of outputs. Delivery of outputs is visible across UN Agencies and within each of the four outcome areas of the Cooperation Framework. That an *intersectional approach* is being taken, addressing economic disadvantage/employment *along with* marginalisation (Roma, asylum seekers, refugees, persons under subsidiary protection, persons under temporary protection, persons at risk of statelessness), gender, age, disability and geography, is particularly notable and requires an ongoing focus on implementation and reporting. Another important component of the success of several initiatives has been the *partnership with civil society*. Furthermore, this partnership includes direct

delivery of activities, as well as contributions to policy documents and legislation and contributions of UN Agencies to CSO partners through strengthened organisational capacities that contribute to the long-term sustainability of partner organisations (F10-F13).

C6. There is sufficient evidence to conclude that the Cooperation Framework is well on the way to achieve expected results in the outcome areas. In summary, progress is being made in **Inclusive Prosperity** through active labour market programmes, working with women in the rural economy, and efforts focused on youth employment and on marginalised groups such as the Roma. Initiatives of the Cooperation Framework under **Inclusive Services for All** have seen visible improvements in rural women's health, civil society engagement in the delivery of initiatives, children's health, the work on mental health, particularly in schools, and a variety of initiatives addressing VAW/ DV, both with women victims and the structures in society that deal with VAW/ DV and who provide care and services for victims. Useful results are being delivered in **Healthy Environment**, such as work on soil protection with civil society, work on sustainable forest and land management and ongoing work on land consolidation. A significant number of outputs have been achieved in relation to **Good Governance**, notably the range of policy, strategy and legislative requirements necessary for harmonisation with the EU acquis. Also, significant work has been done in building the capacities of personnel in ministries and government agencies (F10-F13).

4.4 Efficiency

C7. The Cooperation Framework was well-structured to address national and local priorities and needs in North Macedonia and is being implemented efficiently. The alignment between required and available resources has been consistently robust, with expenditures closely tracking the allocated funds. Human resource allocations under the CF have been realistic and adequate to achieve the set outcomes, supported by a well-planned budget (of over 150 million USD). Key contributors, including the Government of North Macedonia, the Governments of Sweden and Switzerland, and the European Union, played critical roles, each contributing to the specific CF areas (F14).

C8. Efficient systems for planning, coordination, and stakeholder engagement have been established. Mechanisms such as joint annual work planning and the Joint Government-UN Steering Committee have been pivotal in ensuring coherence across UN Agencies and alignment with national priorities. These systems facilitated collaborative programming and stakeholder engagement at international, national, and municipal levels, including with civil society, ensuring effective delivery of CF objectives. However, reporting on partnerships within the CF has been insufficiently detailed. Annual reports lack explicit analysis of progress in achieving the three identified partnership priorities: strengthening relationships with existing partners, fostering partnerships with the private sector and International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and enhancing national ownership of the CF (F15).

C9. Key challenges remain with the CF's outcome indicators. There is often a weak logical connection between outputs and defined outcome indicators. For example, while creating a limited number of new jobs is a notable achievement (targeted: 3000 new jobs), there is no clear linkage of how this directly translate to measurable improvements in the overall employment rate in North Macedonia. Current outcome indicators are primarily focused at the impact level and do not sufficiently capture critical contributions such as the CF's alignment with national development policies, EU accession processes, capacity building, and the rights of vulnerable groups under the LNOB principle (F15). These gaps hinder tracking tangible contributions and sustainability beyond the CF's implementation period. Outcome 2, in particular, lacks indicators that measure service quality and accessibility, especially in rural and underserved areas. Such indicators would enhance the ability to assess equity and access challenges effectively (F14).

C10. Additionally, parallel agency reporting practices—covering both agency-specific goals and contributions to the CF—create unnecessary burdens and impede the uniform collection and analysis of data. Addressing these inefficiencies is essential to streamline evidence gathering, enhance data comparability, and improve result analysis under the CF (F15).

4.5 Sustainability

C10. The CF has effectively incorporated sustainability considerations into its design and implementation, demonstrating strategic alignment with national priorities, the EU accession agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Achievements such as the formulation of the National Development Strategy (2024–2044) and initiatives targeting institutional reforms and capacity-building highlight the CF's commitment to systemic change. However, the sustainability of these results remains contingent on addressing persistent systemic challenges, including governance gaps, financial constraints, and limited national ownership of interventions (F16).

While significant progress has been made in areas like policy alignment, institutional strengthening, and partnerships, gaps in monitoring and narrative reporting have limited the CF's ability to track and communicate its contributions to sustainability. The CF's monitoring systems lack detailed tracking of alignment with EU accession reforms, contributions to the LNOB principle, and improvements in knowledge and practices resulting from capacity-building initiatives. Furthermore, the reliance on external donor funding and constrained national resources poses challenges to scaling and sustaining successful interventions. Financial diversification and a stronger focus on national ownership are critical to enhancing the long-term sustainability of results (F17).

4.6 Orientation towards Impact

C11. The Cooperation Framework focuses on sustainable, systemic change in North Macedonia. This focus is particularly visible in the range of activities and results that are achieved or contribute to change in national policies, strategies or legislation. This focus contributes to the impact in two ways: by contributing to North Macedonia's preparations for EU accession through alignment of legislation and policies with the EU acquis and requirements, and by building knowledge and skills of practitioners (in government ministries and agencies and municipalities) to implement the changes necessary to fulfil the obligations of EU membership in practice. In addition to being directly relevant to the EU accession processes, change in practice is important across numerous policy and strategic areas, such as in delivering/ providing services and support to marginalised groups such as the Roma, asylum seekers, refugees, persons under subsidiary protection, persons under temporary protection, persons at risk of statelessness, or in fulfilling obligations arising from international covenants related to gender equality, persons with disabilities and environmental and climate responsibilities.

5 LESSONS LEARNED

The following lessons have been generated during the Cooperation Framework implementation:

Adaptive Management and Flexibility in Responding to Crises and Changing Contexts: Implementing the Cooperation Framework in North Macedonia underscored the critical importance of adaptive management and flexibility in navigating crises and evolving socio-political contexts. The challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the energy crisis, and economic instability required the UNCT to rapidly repurpose funds, adjust activities, and leverage partnerships to address emerging needs. These adaptive strategies ensured that the Cooperation Framework remained relevant and effective despite disruptions. Additionally, the dynamic political landscape, including delays in EU accession-related reforms and public mistrust in institutions, highlighted the necessity of flexible governance strategies. Successful implementation required the development of resilient initiatives capable of adjusting to governance complexities while ensuring inclusive engagement with diverse stakeholders. Flexibility in program design, coupled with strategic partnerships, enabled the Cooperation Framework to sustain its activities and maintain progress toward its goals, even in the face of unforeseen challenges.

EU Accession as a Catalyst for Development: the Cooperation Framework demonstrated the potential of aligning development initiatives with North Macedonia's EU accession priorities to drive systemic reforms in governance, social protection, and environmental sustainability. Legislative and policy changes linked to EU accession provided a framework for long-term development impact, fostering alignment with international standards. However, the dynamic nature of EU integration processes requires continuous adaptation to emerging priorities, ensuring that Cooperation Framework activities remain strategically aligned. By leveraging

the EU accession framework, the Cooperation Framework strengthened national policies and promoted public awareness of the tangible benefits of development efforts, contributing to both progress and increased public trust.

Comprehensive and Participatory Programming Approach: the Cooperation Framework's implementation highlighted the value of a comprehensive and participatory programming approach that engages a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including government entities, CSOs, the private sector, and local communities. By involving diverse stakeholders in all stages of programming—from design to implementation and monitoring— the Cooperation Framework enhanced the relevance, ownership, and sustainability of its initiatives. This inclusive approach ensured that the Cooperation Framework addressed the interconnected challenges faced by communities, promoting equity and resilience. The use of technology and innovative delivery methods, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, further demonstrated the importance of leveraging digital solutions to maintain continuity and improve program outcomes.

Sustainability Through Capacity Building and Policy Integration: Capacity-building efforts under the Cooperation Framework were instrumental in fostering systemic change and resilience. Initiatives such as training-of-trainers programs ensured the long-term integration of skills within national institutions, while policy advancements reinforced national ownership of reforms. However, sustaining these gains required more than implementation—it demanded institutional integration, financial support, and mechanisms for continuous adaptation to evolving needs. Embedding capacity-building efforts into institutional frameworks ensured their relevance and durability beyond the CF's implementation period.

Ensuring coherence and coordination enhances effectiveness in the delivery of results and alignment with national priorities: the RCO played a pivotal role in ensuring coherence and alignment among UN agencies, improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Cooperation Framework. Through mechanisms such as the Joint Government-UN Steering Committee and annual Joint Workplans, the RCO facilitated coordination among agencies and alignment with national priorities. This collaborative approach ensured that Cooperation Framework activities supported the government's development objectives and contributed to systemic reforms aligned with the SDGs and EU accession processes. This coordinated approach proved to be instrumental in achieving impactful and coordinated results.

A gender-responsive and inclusive approach has been practical and important in delivering results. The Cooperation Framework prioritized gender equality and inclusivity, operationalizing the LNOB principle to address the needs of marginalized groups, including Roma communities, persons with disabilities, and women. Key achievements included gender-responsive budgeting, targeted capacity-building initiatives, and reforms to improve access to education and healthcare. Efforts to combat gender-based violence, such as operationalizing the Law on Prevention and Protection of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, highlighted the Cooperation Framework's commitment to equity. However, gaps in stakeholder engagement and inconsistent implementation revealed areas for improvement, emphasizing the need for sustained inclusivity in all stages of programming to ensure long-term systemic change.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The ET has analysed conclusions and lessons learned and provided the following recommendations for the UNCT and national partners:

R1. Enhancing Coherence Across UN Agency Contributions: The ET recommends enhancing coherence across UN agency contributions and ensure alignment with national priorities and collective UN efforts as required steps to maximise the Cooperation Framework's impact (Linked to C3, C4).

In this context, the ET recommends the following steps:

- **R1.1. Align reporting frameworks with CF outputs and outcomes:** Require all UN agencies to integrate their reporting with CF outputs and outcomes, emphasizing their contributions to achieving programmed results. This will streamline reporting, minimize redundancies, and foster a unified narrative of progress. Best-practice examples from agencies such as FAO and ILO can serve as benchmarks.

- **R1.2. Develop harmonized internal reporting processes:** Encourage agencies to adopt internal reporting frameworks that align with Cooperation Framework reporting requirements. This approach will reduce staff burden, improve efficiency, and ensure consistent data collection and evidence use for both internal and Cooperation Framework reporting needs.

- **R1.3. Transition to unified joint programming:** Shift from fragmented joint programming to shared strategic objectives within JWPs. Focus on intersectoral collaboration in areas such as governance, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion. Establish shared performance indicators that reflect both immediate outputs and longer-term impacts, ensuring coherent tracking of progress across sectors.

  R1.4. Strengthen accountability mechanisms: Introduce clearer accountability frameworks within JWPs and Outcome Groups to ensure consistent implementation and reporting by all agencies, including smaller and non-resident ones.

R2. Strengthening Focus on EU Accession Priorities: The ET recommends that the Cooperation Framework strengthen its contributions to the EU Acquis Communautaire and accession priorities in programming, implementation, and reporting (Linked to C2).

The following steps are recommended:

- **R2.1. Focus CF reporting on EU accession contributions:** Reporting must highlight how Cooperation Framework activities contribute to EU accession priorities, such as policy alignment, institutional strengthening, and adoption of the EU acquis. This emphasis should be evident at the outcome level, ensuring clarity on the Cooperation Framework's alignment with EU requirements.

- **R2.2. Expand technical assistance for EU integration:** UN agencies should enhance technical support in areas critical to EU alignment, such as governance, environmental protection, and social inclusion. This includes providing capacity-building for government officials and supporting the development of strategies and legislative reforms linked to EU accession.

  R2.3. Integrate EU accession as a cross-cutting theme: Reflect EU accession priorities across JWPs and monitoring frameworks to ensure a unified focus on this national development priority.

R3. Redesigning Outcome Indicators and Enhancing Data Utilization: The ET recommends to UNCT to redesign outcome indicators and data systems to ensure that they better capture CF contributions and inform evidence-based decision-making. (Linked to C8, C9, C10, C6 and Lessons Learned).

The ET recommends the following:

- **R3.1. Redesign outcome indicators:** Establish logical links between outputs and outcomes by developing indicators that reflect Cooperation Framework contributions and are measurable at intermediate levels. This will enable better tracking of Cooperation Framework's impact on national priorities.

- **R3.2. Expand service accessibility and quality indicators:** Introduce metrics to assess improvements in service delivery in underserved areas. These could include healthcare facility status, marginalized population access to services, and user satisfaction.

- **R3.3. Strengthen intersectional data approaches:** Develop a monitoring framework to track intersecting vulnerabilities (e.g., gender, disability, geography). This will ensure programming addresses the specific needs of marginalized populations and promotes equity in service delivery.

- **R3.4. Leveraging Digital Solutions for Monitoring and Reporting**: Digital innovation should be prioritized to enhance Cooperation Framework monitoring and reporting systems.

- **R3.5. Conduct sustainability-focused analyses:** Ensure that Cooperation Framework reporting includes detailed analyses of how activities contribute to long-term sustainable development outcomes, such as systemic reforms, capacity building, and alignment with national policies.

R4. Expanding and Strengthening Strategic Partnerships: The ET recognised that strategic partnerships are critical for Cooperation Framework implementation; hence, the ET recommends that UNCT need to further leverage these partnerships to amplify impact. (Linked to C4, C5).

The following steps are recommended:

- **R4.1. Strengthen reporting on partnership outcomes:** Cooperation Framework reporting should evaluate progress against the Resource Mobilization and Partnership Strategy, focusing on objectives such as private sector engagement, IFI partnerships, and enhancing national ownership.

- **R4.2. Deepen regional collaboration:** Leverage regional partnerships to address shared development priorities, such as migration and climate action. The unique context of the Balkans provides opportunities for cross-border cooperation that can strengthen Cooperation Framework outcomes.

  R4.3. Explore opportunities to strengthen partnership and involvement of CSOs in strategic activities: Consider multiannual support or more active involvement for CSOs to align their participation (and long-term capacity-building efforts for CSOs) with Cooperation Framework priorities and enhance their sustainability.

R5. Sustainability and Adaptive Management in Programming: The ET recommends that UNCT consider and embed sustainability and flexibility into Cooperation Framework programming to address systemic challenges and adapt to dynamic contexts. (Linked to C10, Lessons Learned).

In this context, the ET recommends the following:

- **R5.1. Institutionalize sustainability in reporting:** Cooperation Framework reporting must analyse how activities contribute to long-term development outcomes, such as institutional strengthening, alignment with EU accession processes, and systemic reforms.

- **R5.2. Promote adaptive management principles:** Embed mechanisms for rapid resource reallocation and partnership adjustments into Cooperation Framework planning to ensure programming remains relevant and effective during crises and shifting priorities.

- **R5.3. Innovate financing mechanisms:** Explore opportunities to expand the use of tools such as green finance facilities or social impact bonds to diversify funding sources and enhance financial sustainability.

R6. Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement and Inclusivity: The ET recommends to ensure more substantive and deeper stakeholder engagement as essential to defining and achieving progress under CF outcomes. These efforts are required to further enhance and foster national ownership. (Linked to C6, Lessons Learned)

The ET recommends the following steps:

- **R6.1. Foster participatory programming:** Engage local stakeholders, including municipalities, civil society, and marginalized communities, in programming and monitoring processes. This will ensure interventions are inclusive and aligned with real needs.

- **R6.2. Promote inclusive approaches across all Cooperation Framework initiatives:** Ensure participatory methods, such as co-design workshops, are consistently applied to address the needs of marginalized groups and foster equitable outcomes.

- **R6.3. Build capacities for data-driven engagement:** Strengthen the capacities of national partners to collect and analyse disaggregated data, enabling more targeted and effective interventions for vulnerable populations.

Annexes to the Evaluation report

ANNEX 1: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation's Terms of Reference (ToR) provided the framework for the evaluation. The evaluation employed a theory-based evaluation approach using the UNSCDF's Theory of Change (ToC) (see *Annex 5 – Analysis of the UNSCDF's Theory of Change*) as the fundamental theory on which analysis was undertaken. In its approach, the team integrated contribution analysis, gender-responsive principles, and a human-rights-based approach. The figure below provides more detail on how the evaluation team made use of these approaches.

This methodology offered a comprehensive and structured framework, using the ToC as a roadmap to outline the intended sequence of events and causal pathways leading from outputs to progress under desired outcomes, including the UNSDCF's contribution to broader development processes in the country. The ToC articulated assumptions and risks, allowing the evaluation team to systematically assess whether and how the UNSDCF organised processes to achieve objectives. The evaluation team identified components and variables within the result chain, providing a basis for measurement and analysis. Theory-based evaluation enabled the evaluation team to compare actual achievements with those outlined in the ToC and its chain of objectives while identifying discrepancies. Contribution analysis complemented these efforts, examining and disentangling connections between the UNSDCF's initiatives and observed outcomes. This process enabled the evaluation team to analyse the causal chain within the ToC to validate each step and determine whether planned activities led to the desired outputs and whether these outputs contributed to progress towards outcomes and broader.

The evaluation was participatory and consultative, with key stakeholders and national partners engaged, and their views and feedback used throughout the evaluation. By engaging all key stakeholders from the outset, the evaluation maintained its focus on national ownership and ensured a regular review of findings and conclusions concerning the implementation of the current UNSDCF and in the preparation of recommendations informing the next planning cycle.

The evaluation explicitly addressed cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights and non-discrimination, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability. It also considered the programming approaches that the UNSDCF defined, such as cross-sectional cooperation, results orientation, data and statistics, young people's participation, gender mainstreaming, innovation and technology.

6.1 Evaluation criteria

The evaluation's methodological approach was based on the United Nations Development Coordination Office/ United Nations Evaluations Group Guidelines for the Evaluation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks,[41] which was designed in line with evaluation criteria defined by OECD DAC[42] and adheres to and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for evaluations[43]. The evaluation concentrated on the evaluation criteria of *relevance and adaptability*, *coherence and coordination*, *efficiency*, *effectiveness*, *sustainability* and *orientation towards impact*.

Relevance and Adaptability

Focus on the design process, real-time consistency with the national priorities, Agenda 2030/ SDGs framework, and adaptability to changing context.

The evaluation has assessed the relevance of the UNSDCF by determining the extent to which its strategic priorities have responded to the country's needs, national priorities, and international and regional commitments. This assessment analysed how well the UNSDCF aligns with and supports critical areas identified within the country's development framework. In parallel, the evaluation examines the relevance of the UNSDCF in responding to emerging and emergency needs, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, assessing evidence of the adaptability of the UNCT and UN Agencies in their support to achieving the intended outcomes of the UNSDCF.

The evaluation has analysed the relevance of the UNSDCF outcomes, outputs, and performance indicators, focusing on logical connections and a thorough problem analysis.

---

[41] *http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2972*

[42] *http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm*

[43] http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2787

Coherence and Coordination

Focus on UNSDCF coherence, oversight and implementation frameworks and UN's role in coordinating with other actors.

The evaluation assessed the UNSDCF's coherence and coordination by evaluating the extent to which UN agency programmes and work plans have been effectively and meaningfully derived from it in design and implementation. This has involved examining how well the strategic priorities outlined in the UNSDCF have been translated into actionable programmes and work plans by the various UN agencies.

Additionally, evaluation analysed the role of the post-reform Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) in enabling UN agencies to achieve coherence in implementing the UNSDCF. This includes evaluating the contributions of the RCO's roles and responsibilities in fostering a unified and convergent approach among the UNCT. The evaluation assessed how well the UNSDCF promoted complementarity, harmonisation, and coordination among UN agencies and key development partners to maximise results.

The has assessed the adequacy and efficiency of oversight, coordination and implementation structures, including oversight from the Government, functioning of the Results and Thematic Groups, and existing monitoring and reporting practices. In this context, the evaluation assessed the actual synergies established among UN agencies, involving concerted efforts to ensure effective and efficient planning and prioritisation of activities, optimising results, and avoiding duplication.

Effectiveness

The evaluation gave a specific focus to the progress of UNSDCF implementation, real-time results and the probability of full achievement of outcomes and outputs by the end of the cycle.

The evaluation assessed the achievement of outputs and their contribution to UNSDCF outcomes, evaluating the extent to which the envisaged outputs have been realised and have progressed towards achieving intended outcomes. This includes examining UNCT contributions to achieving these outcomes and assessing whether the targets set under the UNSDCF have been met. The evaluation analysed the connection between the outputs and the broader outcomes and has determined how effectively the outputs have driven progress towards the strategic goals defined in the UNSDCF.

The evaluation has assessed how the UNSDCF has supported the development of national capabilities and the implementation of significant reforms that align with its strategic priorities, including the extent to which the UNSDCF has contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering the key institutional, behavioural, and legislative changes necessary for advancing its desired changes. Focus has been placed on gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

Efficiency

The evaluation has assessed whether the integrated funding framework effectively supported the UNSDCF, identified any resource mobilisation gaps, and evaluated the efficiency of resource allocation. The evaluation has analysed the UNSDCF's added value to development processes in North Macedonia, focusing on its role in assisting the government and stakeholders in achieving development priorities. It also examined the UNSDCF's contribution to clarity and transparency of results, risk prevention, and opportunity identification. The evaluation also considered the UNSDCF's effects on efficiency gains from UNCT collective actions and reduced transaction costs and its effectiveness in reallocating resources to emerging needs and priorities.

The evaluation analyses if/ how the UNCT uses results-based management to ensure a logical chain of results and establish a monitoring and evaluation framework for the efforts and quality of collected and analysed data.

Sustainability and Orientation Towards Impact

The evaluation has focused on the UNSDCF's ability to contribute to impact-level changes and overall sustainability and mitigate the risk of potentially undermining achievements and progress.

Although formally, an ex-post evaluation is not feasible until at least 2-3 years after the end of a programme to validate the impact and sustainability of the intervention undertaken, the evaluation has assessed, to the extent possible, the anticipated impact and the likelihood of sustainability of achieved outcomes and results. The evaluation has analysed the strategies and mechanisms to maintain the gains made under the UNSDCF, ensuring that they continue to benefit the country in the long term. Additionally, an assessment has been done on the

extent to which national partners claim ownership over the results achieved during the implementation of the UNSDCF. This includes evidence that national partners have committed the financial and technical/ human resources to maintain and build on achievements, thereby enhancing the sustainability of the progress made towards the SDGs.

The evaluation has analysed how UN interventions stemming from the UNSDCF have strengthened systemic and individual resilience and contributed to reducing vulnerability, assessing changes at the national level, including specific examples of contributions by the UN Agencies to the progress in various SDG areas.

UN normative work, programming principles and cross-cutting issues

The analysis of the UN normative work to meet UN standards and norms and UN programming principles has been considered throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation analyses the extent to which UNCT prioritised the needs of the most vulnerable, the poor and the marginalised and the extent to which these groups have benefited from the assistance, including accessibility and quality of support.

6.2 Evaluation approach

Inception Phase

The inception phase included initial discussions with the Evaluation Manager and the Evaluation Management Team (EMT). These discussions focused on specific details and evaluation approaches, including identifying potential interviewees.

During the inception phase, the EMT prepared a selection of secondary data and provided this to the Evaluation Team. The inception phase included a comprehensive desk review of the secondary data:

- Critical documents provided by the Evaluation Manager and UN Agencies.
- National statistics.
- Other analytical reports prepared by development partners in North Macedonia.

The full list of studied documentation can be found in *Annex 3 – List of analysed documentation*.

The EMT reviewed a list of the key stakeholders for the in-country mission. This list of stakeholders included representatives of the UN agencies and the government ministries of North Macedonia, as well as key donors and other partners. The guiding principle was to cover the most relevant stakeholders involved in preparing the UNSDCF, in identifying areas of priority, and in being involved in the implementation of and progress toward UNSDCF outcomes. An analysis of the stakeholders with whom the evaluation interacted can be found in *Annex 2 – Stakeholder map*. (See section *5.4 Ethical Considerations* below for more detail on personal or identifying information about stakeholders. In order to comply with data privacy obligations, this information is not provided in this report. Please see Table 1 presenting summary data on interviews conducted.)

Persons interviewed	
Government	46
Donor	18
Academia	8
CSO	15
UN	22
TOTAL	109

Figure 23 - Participants in the evaluation

An inception report was prepared. The inception report presented the specific methodology for the evaluation, including the overall approach that the evaluation team applied while analysing UNSDCF relevance and coherence, performance and the status of outcomes, including transformation of development processes in the country and sustainability of achievements in the context of national development priorities. The inception

report provided a comprehensive overview of data collection and analysis methods linked to the evaluation criteria and questions proposed for the evaluation. The inception report included comprehensive interview guides and questionnaires for online surveys for different stakeholders, with specific questions related to each evaluation criteria (corresponding to the evaluation matrix). These guides and surveys can be found in *Annex 4 - Field work instruments*. The evaluation matrix, detailed in the inception report and updated in this document (see *Annex 1 – Evaluation matrix*) served as the framework for analysis of the rationale, performance, and results/ progress related to the UNSDCF. The evaluation matrix links all the elements of the evaluation together.

6.3   Data collection Phase

During the data collection phase, special attention was given to the following aspects:

- The ***completeness of the sample frame*** (inclusion of all programme components and all stakeholders).

- The ***triple representativeness*** of the sample to be interviewed:
  - Programmatic representativeness
  - Geographic representativeness
  - Stakeholder representativeness (national government; UN entities; implementing partners; donors; beneficiaries with specific positioning of civil society and most vulnerable populations).

- The ***interview approaches*** for different groups of stakeholders (in-depth-Interview; focus group discussion; group discussions and observations).

- The ***survey approaches*** for different groups of stakeholders including UN programme and management staff, UN operations staff and public administration survey (both on national and local levels).

- The ***thorough analyses of the ToC***, reflecting implementation, challenges and positive experiences.

- The soundness of evaluation questions per criteria and the completeness of the evaluation matrix.

Secondary data - A comprehensive desk review of key national development strategies and programmes of the country as well as all UNSDCF and UN Agencies documents, including annual reports, strategic plans, implementation guidelines, and other relevant materials was undertaken, serving as a solid foundation for the evaluation process. This review enabled a full understanding of the UNSDCF context, objectives, and historical performance.

Primary data - The evaluation included semi-structured face-to-face and online interviews as well as focus groups based on the Evaluation Matrix and interview guidance found in *Annex 1 – Evaluation matrix* and *Annex 4 – Field work instruments*. Figure 4 below provides info on responses from the stakeholders during the data collection phase.

Methods	Number
National and local government survey	30
Survey UN programme staff	57
Survey UN operations staff	15
Focus groups Academia	2
Focus groups CSOs	4
Focus groups UN per OG	4

Figure 24 - Stakeholder evaluation responses.

This approach ensured the collection of in-depth information about UN agency contributions to the achievement of UNSDCF outputs and progress under outcomes and identified links between different development interventions and issues affecting progress in achievement of outcomes.

Synthesis and reporting Phase

This phase was devoted to analysing and synthesising the collected data and preparing the evaluation report (this document) based on the work done during the inception and data collection phases. This Final Evaluation Report presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations that follow a logical cause-effect linkage based on the field enquiry and structured against the evaluation criteria and matrix. When formulating and presenting findings and conclusions, the report describes the facts assessed, the judgment criteria applied and how this led to findings and conclusions. The report applies a **cross-validation approach**[44] for information from various sources and different collection methods to ensure the accuracy of findings. This **triangulation**, involving various sources and methods, will ensure the confirmation and cross-checking of major trends while establishing a pattern through the convergence of data from different source and methods[45].

The report includes a consolidated analysis of key results, challenges, and lessons learned from the analytical phase. Forward-looking recommendations address the gaps and opportunities identified, with concrete solutions proposed. The recommendations are intended to be realistic and operational, i.e., *useful*, to provide relevant and feasible inputs for concrete decision-making and follow-up related to the formulation of the next UNSDCF cycle.

Phase 4 Review and validation

This draft Final Evaluation Report was shared with all UNCT, Evaluation Steering Committee members and other stakeholders as appropriate. These stakeholders reviewed and validated the outcomes of the evaluation. This phase included:

- Review of the draft report by UNCT, Government and other key partners.

- Validation workshop.

- Incorporation of received feedback, correction of factual inaccuracies and professional editing.

- Submission of the Final UNSDCF Evaluation Report.

This Final Evaluation Report includes key findings, conclusions, lessons learned (as provided by stakeholders) and actionable recommendations to inform the new UNSDCF cycle.

6.4 Ethical Considerations

The evaluation adhered to and was guided by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) ethical considerations for development evaluations[46], the UNEG Norms and Standards (2016) and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines (2020), including but not limited to informed consent from participants and considerations of privacy and confidentiality. Relevant ethical standards were identified, and mechanisms and measures to ensure standards were maintained throughout the evaluation. Each Evaluation Team member was provided with and signed off on the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators[47].

The evaluation team requested informed consent from stakeholders before asking questions about the UNSDCF and its evaluation. The team briefly explained the reasons for and objectives of the evaluation and the scope of the questions. Stakeholders had the right to refuse or to withdraw at any time. The team ensured respondent privacy and confidentiality, as disclosing confidential information may seriously jeopardise the efficiency and credibility of the evaluation process. The team has respected key informant rights to provide information confidentially and ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source to protect key informants from reprisals. Original data, including interview records and notes from interviews, are retained in confidential files until the completion of the evaluation. The evaluation team is fully independent and unaware of any conflicts of interest in this work.

---

[44] Morras-Imas and Rist define triangulation of methods as "Collection of the same information using different methods in order to increase the accuracy of data", p. 300. Morra **Imas,** L. G., & **Rist,** R. C. (2009). The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations. Washington, D.C., World Bank.
[45] Morras- Imas and Rist, p. 376.
[46] https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf
[47] http://www.uneval.org/document/download/2148

6.5 Limitations During the Evaluation

The evaluation of the UNSDCF (2021–2025) encountered several challenges that impacted the comprehensiveness of findings and the depth of analysis.

Access to stakeholders posed a significant challenge, particularly as the evaluation coincided with the aftermath of national elections in North Macedonia. The resulting transfer of power during the in-country mission limited access to outgoing government representatives, while new government structures were not yet available for interviews. This political transition hindered engagement with some key interlocutors, affecting the breadth of insights collected. Scheduling difficulties during the summer months, a period typically marked by holidays and reduced institutional activity, further compounded these challenges, limiting the evaluation's ability to conduct comprehensive in-depth interviews.

Data availability and quality were also significant constraints. Outcome-level indicators often relied on macro-level data that lacked sufficient disaggregation by gender, age, or geography, thereby restricting the evaluation's ability to analyze equity and inclusivity in outcomes. Specific gaps in disaggregated data limited the assessment of the Cooperation Framework's contributions to marginalized groups and the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle. Furthermore, fragmented reporting systems across UN agencies posed challenges in consolidating evidence of progress, as parallel agency-specific reporting did not always align with Cooperation Framework objectives, hindering the ability to construct a unified narrative of results.

Attribution of results to the Cooperation Framework was complex, as many high-level outcomes were influenced by a range of external factors. This made isolating the direct contributions of the CF to national development outcomes challenging, particularly in areas such as economic resilience and governance reforms. The broad scope of the UNSDCF and the interdependence of its outcomes required extensive cross-sectoral analysis, which was further complicated by gaps in causal pathways between some outputs and outcomes.

External factors such as the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global energy crisis also influenced the evaluation process and the implementation of CF activities. These crises disrupted implementation timelines and affected the ability to conduct in-person engagements during the data collection phase, thereby limiting the depth of focus group discussions and field visits. Additionally, engagement with local civil society organizations (CSOs) and community stakeholders was more limited than anticipated, which reduced the evaluation's ability to capture grassroots-level perspectives on CF impacts.

Finally, the evaluation was conducted under a tight timeline, which restricted deeper exploration of sector-specific issues and more extensive validation of findings. This constraint, coupled with the complexity of the Cooperation Framework, necessitated trade-offs in the scope of certain analyses.

These limitations highlight the need for more robust and disaggregated data systems, improved stakeholder engagement strategies, and clearer causal linkages between outputs and outcomes to strengthen both future evaluations and the overall monitoring and reporting of the UNSDCF.

ANNEX 2 INCEPTION REPORT

Inception Report for the

*Final Evaluation of the
United Nations Sustainable Development Coherence
Framework (UNSDCF) for North Macedonia 2021–2025*

prepared by UNSDCF Final Evaluation Team:

Ms. Elizabeta Markovska Spasenoska, Evaluation Expert

Mr. Tomislav Novovic, Team Leader- Evaluation Expert

Skopje, May 2024

Table of contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Contribution Analysis
CCA	Common Country Analysis
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
EM	Evaluation Manager
EMT	Evaluation Management Team
EE	Evaluation Expert
ET	Evaluation Team
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FE	Final Evaluation
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GoM	Government of North Macedonia
HDI	Human Development Index
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IR	Inception report
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicator
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SoV	Sources of Verification
ToC	Theory of Change
TL	Team Leader
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN SWAP	UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNSDCCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEG	UN Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR)	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNSDS	United Nations Sustainable Development System
VNR	Volontary National Report
WHO	World Health Organisation

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (UN) has named the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) a key tool for implementing the UN's support for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in various countries. Basically, the UNSDCF is at the heart of the UN's efforts to make the 2030 Agenda work. It describes how UN Country Team in cooperation with partners will contribute to achieving development results based on a common country analysis and UN comparative advantage.

Before the final year of UNSDCF implementation, the UNCT has launched an independent evaluation as the principal accountability instrument to provide a summative, external, independent and system-wide assessment of the UN Development System's (UNDS) collective contribution at the country level. It will focus on issues at a strategic level, the aggregate contribution of UNSDCF at the outcome level, and the System's contribution to Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) targets.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) envisaged that the evaluation will include three interlinked phases, starting with the Inception/ desk review phase, through Primary data collection and Synthesis phases. The Inception phase includes a comprehensive desk review of the secondary data: critical documents provided by the Evaluation Manager and UN Agencies, national statistics and other analytical reports prepared by the development partners in North Macedonia. These efforts include the initial discussions with the UNSDCF Evaluation Manager (EM) and the Evaluation Management Team (EMT). The discussion focuses on specific details and evaluation approaches, including identifying potential interview interlocutors.

The inception phase's intention is to reconfirm the nature and objectives of the final UNSDCF evaluation, as set in the Terms of References.

During this phase, the EMT prepared a selection of secondary data and delivered them to the Evaluation Team (ET). Also, the EMT reviews a list of the key stakeholders for the in-country mission concerning the specific UNSDCF Focus Areas. This list includes representatives of the UN agencies and the government ministries of North Macedonia, as well as key donors and other partners. The guiding principle is to cover the most relevant stakeholders involved in preparing UNSDCF and identifying the areas of priority while also being involved in the implementation and progress under UNSDCF outcomes.

The Inception report is designed to present the specific methodology for the final UNSDCF evaluation, including the overall approach that the ET will apply while analysing UNSDCF relevance and coherence, performance and the status of outcomes including transformation of development processes in the country and sustainability of achievements in the context of national development priorities. The ET will assess UNCT's normative work, particularly focusing on whether and to what extent UNSDCF implementation "left no one behind".

The IR also provides a comprehensive overview of data collection and analysis methods linked to the evaluation criteria and questions proposed for this evaluation. The evaluation matrix is prepared; it is detailed but practical and based on the questions from the ToR. It will serve to analyse rationale, performance, and results/ progress. The evaluation matrix links all the elements of the evaluation together.

The IR also provides comprehensive interview guides and questionnaires for online surveys for different stakeholders, with specific questions related to each evaluation criteria (corresponding with the evaluation matrix).

BACKGROUND

6.6 Country background

North Macedonia navigates complex political, socio-economic, and environmental challenges while progressing towards sustainable development and EU integration. Continued efforts in governance reforms, economic resilience, environmental sustainability, and social equity are crucial for the country's future growth.

In a landmark decision for its future trajectory, North Macedonia has developed it's first Voluntary National Review in 2020 which serves as a baseline for achievements against SDGs and commenced a highly consultative and participatory process of formulating a twenty-year long National Development Strategy (NDS) that is yet to

be adopted by the Parliament[48]. Other strategic and sectoral plans aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the EU integration process[49]. The country is focused on economic diversification and developing human capital, while reforming public finances and fiscal policies. In parallel, North Macedonia is steadily working on promoting energy efficiency, scaling up renewable energy, enhancing water resource management. In addition, the country has made efforts in revitalizing its agricultural sector by addressing key structural issues. Efforts include enhancing the structure of agricultural land through consolidation, tackling land abandonment, and supporting the development of agricultural land markets. This also involves improving essential agricultural infrastructure in rural areas, such as access roads, irrigation, and drainage systems, and enhancing climate adaptation practices in agriculture. However, more efforts are still needed to fully address the structural and climate challenges in the agricultural sector.

North Macedonia experienced an economic resurgence in 2021, rebounding from the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the GDP growth rate has moderated in 2022-2023, primarily due to high inflation, fiscal pressures, and a significant informal economy. Unemployment remains a concern, particularly among youth with low labour force participation. While fiscal consolidation efforts are facing obstacles, progress has been made in poverty reduction.
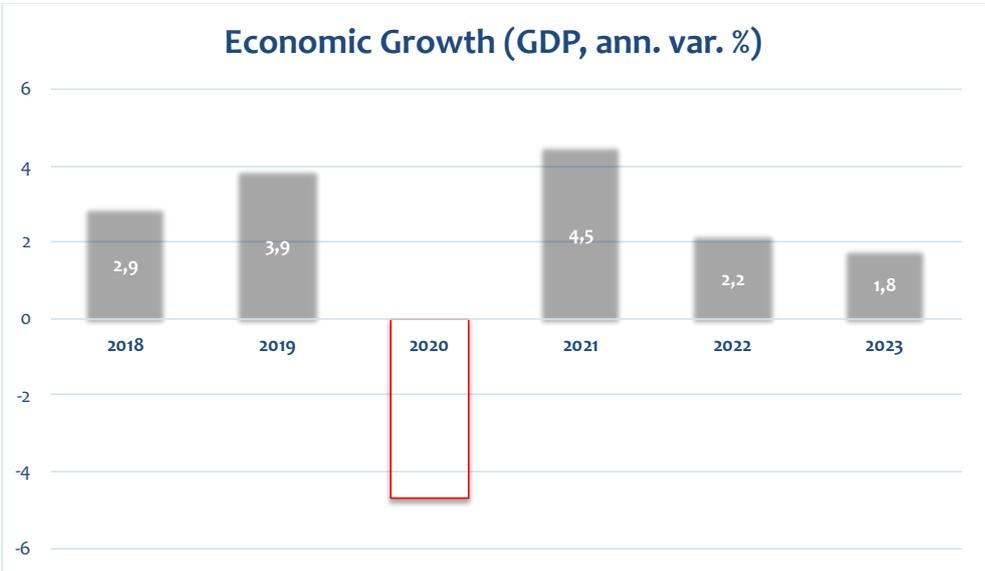
Figure 25: GDP Growth in North Macedonia, 2018-2023

Source: National Statistical Office- North Macedonia

North Macedonia has made significant strides in aligning its legal frameworks with international standards. However, political polarization, exacerbated by corruption and delays in EU accession talks, remains a challenge. These factors, coupled with a lack of accountability, have eroded public trust in governance. Nevertheless, the country remains committed to strengthening democratic institutions, human rights, and obligations, as evidenced by initiatives like the National Development Strategy.

Civil society operates with relative freedom but confronts shrinking space, unregulated financing, and limited policy transparency. Media freedoms have improved, but journalists, especially women, face threats and online harassment.

Gender equality advanced legally, but implementation funding and societal pushbacks posed obstacles. While ranking reasonably in the Global Gender Gap Index, female political representation lags.

---

[48] The National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2009-2020 was adopted prior to adopting the Agenda2030, thus not reflecting the integrative nature of economic, social and environment development.
[49] For example, the Government Programme 2020-2024, the Economic Reform Programme Government Programme 2020-2022, the Strategy for Regional Development 2020-2029 and the National Plan for Adoption of Acquis (NPAA).

The renewable energy transition made gains with climate policies, air quality improvements, and critical renewable projects replacing coal power. However, waste management, land degradation, and sustainable resource use remain challenges.

The Human Development Index declined slightly due to COVID-19. Education reforms aimed for inclusiveness, but issues persisted with materials and learning disruptions. Despite efforts to enhance services, the health system grappled with resources, staffing gaps, and corruption allegations denting public confidence.

Figure 26: Overview of Human Development Index for North Macedonia

Source: https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/MKD
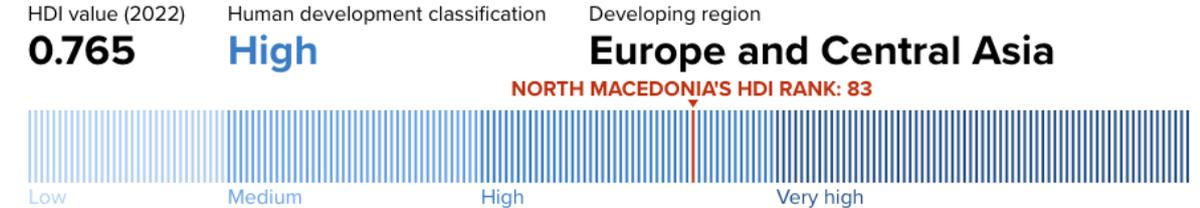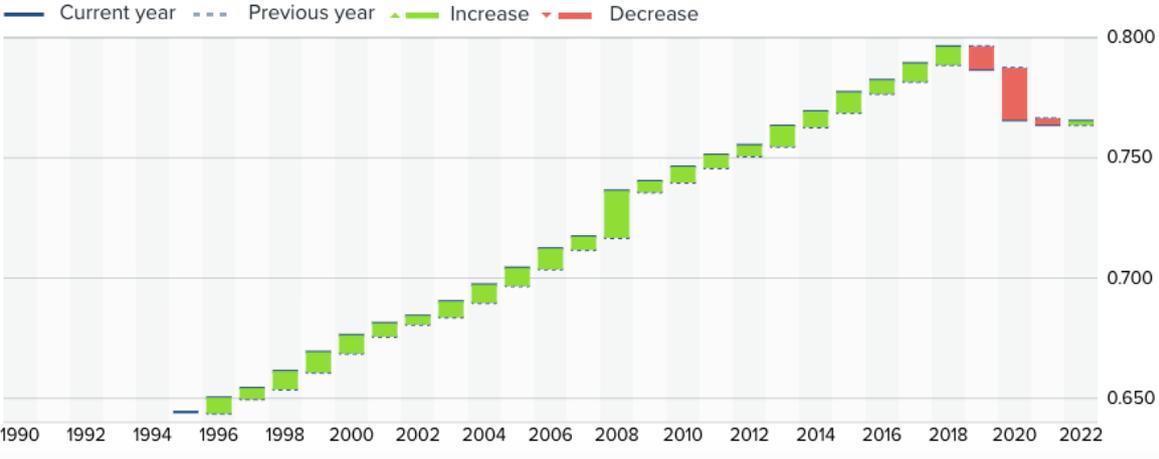
The government has implemented measures to support vulnerable groups, including increasing minimum wages and pensions and providing free meals in primary schools. Social reforms and efforts to combat informality are ongoing, but challenges remain in fully realizing these initiatives' intended benefits. Operationalization of the Law on Prevention and Protection of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence has progressed significantly, with by-laws developed, multisectoral protocols established, and service providers' capacities enhanced.

North Macedonia ranks 20th out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index, indicating reasonable progress in gender equality. However, female representation in ministerial and mayoral positions remains low. The country has improved gender equality, particularly in education and political participation, but challenges persist in achieving full gender equality. The justice sector struggles with inadequate resources and public trust, and corruption remains widespread, hindering governance and public confidence.

6.7   UNSDCF for North Macedonia 2021-2025

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for North Macedonia (2021-2025) is a strategic document guiding the work of the UN system in the country. Developed in close partnership and consultations with the Government of North Macedonia and other stakeholders through participatory approach, the UNSDCF succeeds the 2016-2020 Partnership for Sustainable Development (PSD) and aligns with the country's national development priorities, international human rights, gender equality commitments, and

Agenda 2030. The UNSDCF ensured full alignment with the EU accession process by recognizing EU membership as a critical national priority.

The UNSDCF outlines three strategic priorities to address North Macedonia's key development challenges. The first priority, sustained and inclusive economic and social development, aims to improve living standards through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem. It also seeks to ensure universal access to rights-based quality social services, including healthcare, education, agricultural development, and necessary social and child protection, rooted in resilient systems.

The second priority focuses on climate action, natural resources, and disaster risk management. It promotes ambitious climate action, sustainable management of natural resources, and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster-resilient communities.

The third priority emphasizes transparent and accountable democratic governance. It aims to enhance the rule of law, evidence-based and gender-responsive policies, social cohesion, and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable, and responsive institutions.

Three strategic priorities and outcomes:

1. **Sustained and Inclusive Economic and Social Development**:

   - **Outcome 1**: Improve living standards through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem.

   - **Outcome 2**: Ensure universal access to rights-based quality social services, including healthcare, education, and necessary social and child protection, rooted in resilient systems.

2. **Climate Action, Natural Resources, and Disaster Risk Management**:

   - **Outcome 3**: Promote ambitious climate action, sustainable management of natural resources, and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster-resilient communities.

3. **Transparent and Accountable Democratic Governance**:

   - **Outcome 4**: Enhance the rule of law, evidence-based and gender-responsive policies, social cohesion, and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable, and responsive institutions.

The UNSDCF aims to bring about transformative change through several key actions, including building a robust, competitive, inclusive, and resilient low-carbon economy; addressing exclusion and inequalities with a focus on gender equality and women's empowerment; increasing job quantity and quality, particularly for women and youth, and managing migration; investing in human capital through improved education and healthcare; enhancing the design and delivery of basic services for efficiency and sustainability; improving governance through anti-corruption measures and an independent judiciary; addressing climate change and improving environmental governance; promoting social cohesion and trust-building; ensuring compliance with international norms for migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and other vulnerable groups; promoting evidence-based policymaking and data collection; fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development and strengthening policies and capacities for a sustainable and competitive rural economy aligned with EU standards, with a focus on small farms and women farmers.

The UNSDCF is guided by overarching principles, including leaving no one behind (LNOB), human rights-based approaches, gender equality and women's empowerment, resilience, sustainability, and accountability. It emphasizes evidence-based interventions and strengthened statistical capacity for policy development and implementation.

The UNSDCF is executed under the coordination of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) and the Government of North Macedonia. It involves collaboration with national and local governments, civil society, the private sector, international partners, and other stakeholders. The framework promotes mutual accountability and national ownership and is operationalized through Joint Work Plans (JWPs). Progress is reviewed annually by the Joint Steering Committee (JSC), and the UNSDCF is evaluated in its penultimate year to assess its effectiveness and outcomes.

The UNSDCF reflects a commitment to supporting North Macedonia's ambitions for transformative change, with public institutions becoming more accountable, the economy more competitive and climate-neutral, and communities working together peacefully towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

7 THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE FINAL EVALUATION

7.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The rationale for this UNSDCF evaluation is to assess the extent to which the UNCT in North Macedonia prioritises support and actively contributes to the country's comprehensive development. As the Terms of Reference emphasised, the goal is strategically utilising the findings to inform the next UNCT strategic planning cycle, aligning with broader UN system reforms. The insights gained from the evaluation and the recommendations derived from its conclusions are intended to facilitate the alignment of UN interventions by integrating Agenda 2030 and principles of equality and leave no one behind more substantively. This alignment aims to forge a robust coalition to assist North Macedonia in achieving its SDG targets and fulfilling its commitments effectively.

7.2 Objectives of the evaluation

The UNSDCF 2021-2025 final evaluation is an external, independent, and stand-alone exercise. Its broad purpose is to facilitate learning by identifying what works, what doesn't, and why. This evaluation will gauge the performance of the Outcome Groups and their achievements under each of the four outcomes, providing insights to inform the design of the new UNSDCF 2026-2030. The evaluation will produce an independent assessment of the achievements, their relevance, challenges, and lessons learned from the implementation of the Partnership. This will inform key stakeholders and ensure accountability of the UN system.

The objectives of the evaluation are:

- To assess the UNSDCF's contribution to national development results through evidence-based judgments on issues and inputs from stakeholders, using evaluation criteria such as relevance and accountability.

- To identify factors that have affected the UNSDCF's contribution, explain the reasons for such performance, and identify the enabling factors and bottlenecks to support learning.

- To assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the UNCT North Macedonia's support, providing conclusions on the contributions across the examined scope to facilitate learning and continuity.

- To provide clear and actionable recommendations for improving the UN system's contribution to national development priorities, especially for incorporation into the new UNSDCF programming cycle. This should include advice on the suitability of indicators and other verification tools used to measure progress towards outcomes and outputs.

7.3 Scope of the evaluation

Thematic Scope: The evaluation will cover the three and a half years of implementation from January 2021 to June 2024. It will examine the contributions of all sub-outputs by the UN Country Team (UNCT), including those of non-resident agencies. Additionally, the evaluation will address cross-cutting issues and global UN programming principles, focusing on Leave No One Behind (LNOB) and the normative work of the UNCT, especially in areas where working groups have been established (e.g., gender equality and empowerment of women, human rights, disability inclusion, youth, smallholder farmers, accountability, etc.).

The evaluation will target the UNSDCF 2021-2025 four outcomes regarding programmatic scope. It will not evaluate individual programs or activities of UN agencies. However, after consulting stakeholders, the evaluation team may suggest specific thematic areas for detailed review if necessary.

The evaluation will also consider emerging issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the energy crisis, assessing the UNCT's responsiveness, adaptation, and reprioritization and operational methods for managing stakeholder participation and inclusiveness.

Given that the UNSDCF evaluation will coincide with some agencies' specific country-program evaluations, this evaluation will benefit from data collection carried out as part of those evaluations and their findings.

Geographic scope: Following an analysis of the geographical reach achieved by UNSDCF interventions through a desk review, the evaluation will target national and selected sub-national levels.

Time Scope: The evaluation covers the implementation period from January 2021 to June 2024.

Users of Findings: The evaluation's primary users include the UNCT, Government and Parliament of North Macedonia, national research institutions, line ministries participating in UNSDCF Results Groups, and civil society. Additionally, bilateral and multilateral donors and broader development partners are important audiences for the evaluation findings.

8 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY, CRITERIA AND APPROACH

The proposed Evaluation Methodological approach is based on the United Nations Development Coordination Office/ United Nations Evaluations Group Guidelines for the Evaluation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks,[50] which was designed in line with evaluation criteria defined by OECD DAC[51] and adheres to and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for evaluations[52]. The review will concentrate on the main evaluation criteria – relevance and adaptability, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, coordination and orientation towards impact.

The CF evaluation will adhere to and be guided by the UNEG Norms and Standards (2016) and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines (2020) at every stage of the evaluation process, including but not limited to informed consent from participants and considerations of privacy and confidentiality. The relevant ethical standards will be identified, and the mechanisms and measures to ensure that standards are maintained during the CF evaluation process should be provided in the inception report. Each Evaluation Team member will also be provided with and sign off on the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators, which provides ethical evaluation guidelines[53].

8.1 Outline of the evaluation methodology

The Terms of Reference (ToR) set the framework for this evaluation, which served the Evaluation Team (ET) to develop a tailor-made methodology. The ET will employ a ***theory-based evaluation approach using the Theory of Change (ToC), integrating contribution analysis, gender-responsive principles, and a human-rights-based approach***.

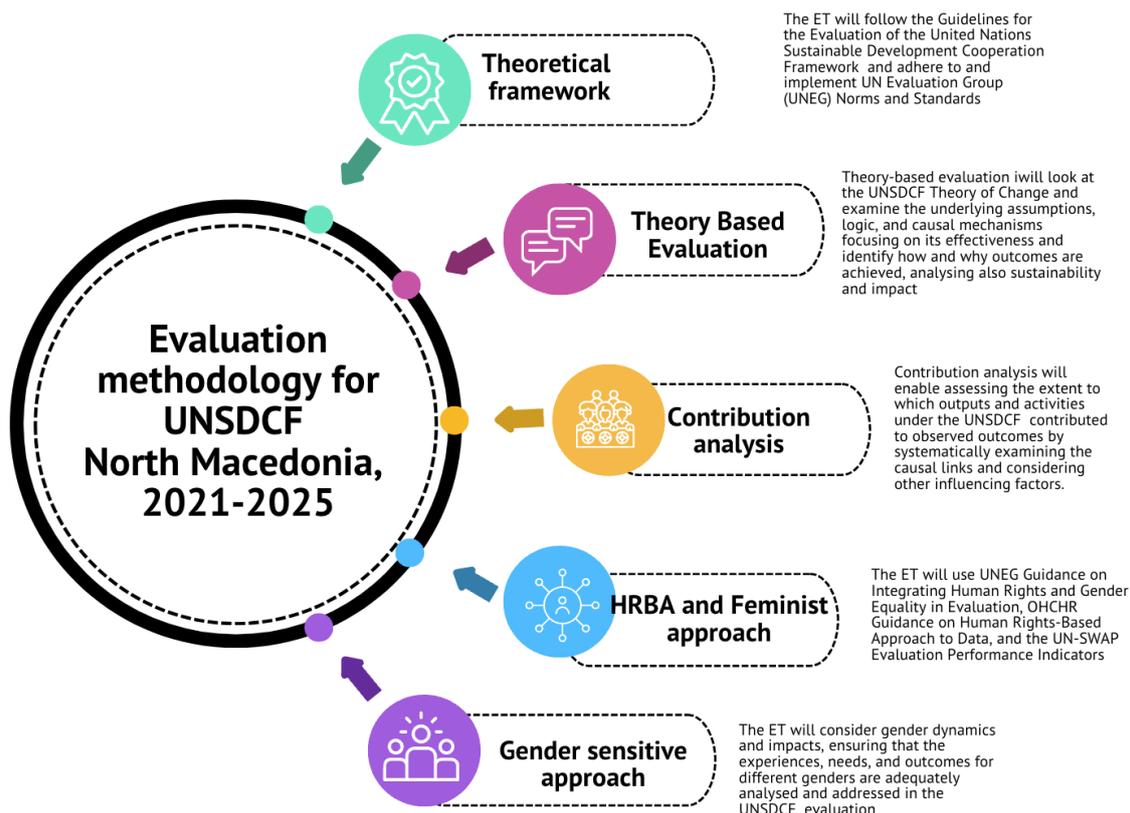[50] *http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2972*

[51] *http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm*

[52] http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2787

[53] http://www.uneval.org/document/download/2148

Figure 27 Overview of the evaluation methodology

Theoretical framework — The ET will follow the Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and adhere to and implement UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards

Theory Based Evaluation — Theory-based evaluation iwill look at the UNSDCF Theory of Change and examine the underlying assumptions, logic, and causal mechanisms focusing on its effectiveness and identify how and why outcomes are achieved, analysing also sustainability and impact

Contribution analysis — Contribution analysis will enable assessing the extent to which outputs and activities under the UNSDCF contributed to observed outcomes by systematically examining the causal links and considering other influencing factors.

HRBA and Feminist approach — The ET will use UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, OHCHR Guidance on Human Rights-Based Approach to Data, and the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicators

Gender sensitive approach — The ET will consider gender dynamics and impacts, ensuring that the experiences, needs, and outcomes for different genders are adequately analysed and addressed in the UNSDCF evaluation

Evaluation methodology for UNSDCF North Macedonia, 2021-2025

This proposed methodology offers a comprehensive and structured framework, using the ToC as a roadmap to outline the intended sequence of events and causal pathways leading from outputs to the progress under desired outcomes, including the UNSDCF's contribution to broader development processes in the country. The ToC articulated assumptions and risks, allowing the ET to systematically assess whether and how the UNSDCF organised the process to achieve its objectives. The ET will identify critical components and variables within the results chain, providing a basis for measurement and analysis. This method is crucial given the contributions of multiple UN Agencies, national stakeholders, and other interrelated factors. The theory-based evaluation promotes adaptability and learning, enabling the ET to compare actual achievements with those outlined in the ToC and its chain of objectives while identifying discrepancies. This iterative process will help the ET to uncover the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors influencing the delivery of outputs and progress towards outcomes. The contribution analysis will complement these efforts, disentangling and examining the connections between the UNSDCF's initiatives and observed outcomes. This process will enable the ET to establish a causal chain within the ToC to validate each step and determine whether planned activities led to the desired outputs and whether these outputs contributed to progress towards outcomes and broader.

The Evaluation will be *participatory and consultative*, and key stakeholders and national partners will be engaged, and their views and feedback used at different stages of the evaluation. The ET will work closely with the UN RCO, UNCT, Result/ Thematic Groups, representatives from the government, civil society, private sector, and academia and other development partners. By engaging all key stakeholders from the outset, the ET will bolster national ownership and ensure regular review of findings and conclusions concerning the implementation of the current UNSDCF and prepare recommendations to inform the next planning cycle. Evaluation will include both an internal and external participatory process.

The ET will explicitly address cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights and non-discrimination, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability. It will also consider the programming approaches that the UNSDCF defined, such as cross-sectional cooperation, results orientation, data and statistics, young people's participation, gender mainstreaming, innovation and technology.

8.2 Evaluation criteria

The ET follows the United Nations Development Coordination Office/ United Nations Evaluations Group Guidelines for the Evaluation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, [54] and will be structured around 6 key evaluation criteria – **relevance and adaptability, coherence and coordination, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and orientation towards impact**:

8.2.1 Relevance and Adaptability

Focus on the design process, real-time consistency with the national priorities, Agenda 2030/ SDGs framework, and adaptability to changing context.

The ET will assess the relevance of the UNSDCF by determining the extent to which its strategic priorities have responded to the country's needs, national priorities, and international and regional commitments. This assessment will thoroughly analyse how well the UNSDCF aligns with and supports critical areas identified within the country's development framework. In parallel, the ET will examine the relevance of the UNSDCF in responding to emerging and emergency needs, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, during crises. The ET will look for evidence that the UNCT and UN Agencies adapted their support to provide timely assistance and achieve the intended outcomes of the UNSDCF.

Furthermore, the ET will analyse the relevance of the UNSDCF outcomes, outputs, and performance indicators, focusing if these elements are logically connected and based on a thorough problem analysis. The ET will evaluate whether the performance indicators, baseline data, and targets are appropriately designed to track progress and relevance effectively. Additionally, the ET will assess to what extent the UNSDCF has incorporated a sound gender and human rights analysis, examining the inclusion and consideration of these critical aspects in its strategic planning and implementation processes.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

Focus on the progress of UNSDCF implementation, real-time results and the probability of full achievement of outcomes and outputs by the end of the cycle.

The ET will assess the achievement of outputs and their contribution to the UNSDCF outcomes, evaluating the extent to which the envisaged outputs have been realised and have progressed towards achieving the intended outcomes. This includes examining the UN Country Team's (UNCT) contributions to achieving these outcomes and assessing whether the targets set under the UNSDCF have been met. The ET will analyze the connection between the outputs and the broader outcomes, determining how effectively the outputs have driven progress towards the strategic goals defined in the UNSDCF. Furthermore, the ET will evaluate the extent to which the UNSDCF has contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioral, and legislative changes necessary for advancing its desired changes. Particular focus will be placed on areas such as gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability. The ET will assess how the UNSDCF has supported the development of national capabilities and the implementation of significant reforms that align with its strategic priorities.

Additionally, the ET will examine the benefits derived by the people targeted by the interventions, especially the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalised populations, particularly analysing interventions to reduce disparities and enhance the well-being of these groups.

The ET will assess whether the integrated funding framework effectively supported the UNSDCF, identify any resource mobilisation gaps, and evaluate the efficiency of resource allocation. The evaluation will analyze the UNSDCF's added value to development processes in North Macedonia, focusing on its role in assisting the government and stakeholders in achieving development priorities. It will also examine the UNSDCF's contribution to clarity and transparency of results, risk prevention, and opportunity identification. Additionally, the ET will evaluate the UNSDCF's effects on efficiency gains from UNCT collective actions and reduced transaction costs and its effectiveness in reallocating resources to emerging needs and priorities.

---

[54] http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2972

Focus on UNSDCF coherence, oversight and implementation frameworks and UN's role in coordinating with other actors.

The ET will assess the UNSDCF's coherence and coordination by evaluating the extent to which UN agency programs and work plans have been effectively and meaningfully derived from it in design and implementation. This involves examining how well the strategic priorities outlined in the UNSDCF have been translated into actionable programs and work plans by various UN agencies.

Additionally, the ET will analyse the role of the post-reform Resident Coordinator office (RCO) in enabling UN agencies to achieve coherence in implementing the UNSDCF. This includes evaluating the contributions of the RCO's roles and responsibilities in fostering a unified and convergent approach among the UN Country Team (UNCT). The ET will seek evidence to determine whether the RCO has effectively facilitated joint efforts and coherent implementation of the UNSDCF across various UN agencies. Furthermore, the ET will assess how the UNSDCF has promoted complementarity, harmonisation, and coordination among UN agencies and key development partners to maximise results.

The ET will assess the adequacy and efficiency of the oversight, coordination and implementation structures, including oversight from the Government, functioning of the Results and Thematic Groups, and existing monitoring and reporting practices. In this context, the ET will assess the degree of actual synergies established among UN agencies, involving concerted efforts to ensure effective and efficient planning and prioritisation of activities, optimising results, and avoiding duplication.

Sustainability and Orientation on Impact:

The focus will be UNSDCF's ability to contribute to impact-level changes and overall sustainability and mitigate the risk of potentially undermining the achievements and progress.

Although formally, an ex-post evaluation is not feasible until at least 2-3 years after the end of the program to validate the impact and sustainability of the intervention undertaken, the ET will attempt to assess the anticipated impact and the likelihood of sustainability of achieved outcomes and results. The ET will analyse the strategies and mechanisms to maintain the gains made under the UNSDCF, ensuring that they continue to benefit the country in the long term. Additionally, the ET will evaluate the extent to which national partners claim ownership over the results achieved during the implementation of the UNSDCF. This includes looking for evidence that national partners have committed financial and technical/human resources to maintain and build upon the achievements, thereby enhancing the sustainability of the progress made towards the SDGs.

Furthermore, the ET will evaluate how UN interventions stemming from the UNSDCF have strengthened systemic and individual resilience and contributed to reducing vulnerability. The ET will gather examples and opinions on areas where the UNSDCF has made contributions to sustainable SDG progress, highlighting the impact of these interventions at both systemic and individual levels. Additionally, the ET will assess changes at the national level, including specific examples of contributions by the UN Agencies to the progress in various SDG areas.

8.2.2   UN normative work, programming principles and cross-cutting issues:

The analysis of the UN normative work to meet UN standards and norms and UN programming principles will be considered throughout the evaluation process. The ET will analyse the extent to which UNCT prioritised the needs of the most vulnerable, the poor and the marginalised. The ET will analyse if these groups have benefited from the assistance, including accessibility and quality of this support and assess how the human rights-based approach, gender equality, environmental sustainability, results-based management, and capacity development, have been considered and mainstreamed during the preparation and implementation.

The FE will analyse if the UNCT adequately uses results-based management to ensure a logical chain of results and establish a monitoring and evaluation framework for the efforts and quality of collected and analysed data.

8.3   Evaluation approach

The ET will follow the four-phase approach:

8.3.1 Phase 1. Inception - desk review and document analyses

This phase will include mapping, reviewing and analyzing all relevant documents and background data, including key national development strategies and programmes of the country, especially:

- UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines - Revised July 2022
- UNEG Norms and Standards (2016) and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines (2020)
- UNSDCF for North Macedonia 2021-2025
- Joint Work Plans
- Annual Results Reports
- UNINFO data
- Steering Committee meeting reports
- CF Result Matrix Monitoring documents
- Common Country Analysis for North Macedonia Documents
- Information Management Survey Reports
- Development and Sectoral Strategies of North Macedonia (including EU Accession process and regular EC Progress Reports on North Macedonia),
- Evaluation reports (programmes and projects) from UNCT
- Other documents as relevant

Preliminary identification of critical horizontal issues and themes, lessons learned and best practices/ success stories for further investigation, verification, and triangulation. Identification of main interlocutors, partners and stakeholders for the structured interviews and focus group discussions.

Inception Report:

This inception report details the evaluation's methodology, scope, approach, and evaluation matrix (including data collection tools and approaches)[55].

The document identifies data gaps and specifies the approach for additional data collection during the in-country visit. In connection with this, the ET in close cooperation with UN Agencies has prepared a comprehensive stakeholder analysis of various data collection approaches that will be used during the evaluation. (e.g., semi-structured interviews, group interviews, focus groups or online surveys). This part of the report included data collection and analysis tools, key evaluation questions, and methods for answering these questions- such as focus groups, group discussions, surveys, and comprehensive stakeholder mapping and sampling. The report explains how various hard-to-reach stakeholders, including vulnerable and marginalised groups, will be included,

The IR included an evaluation matrix outlining selected analysis criteria, core questions, specific questions, and indicators. The ET will use this comprehensive Evaluation Matrix, which is included in Chapter 4.

8.3.2 Phase 2. Data collection and analysis

The ET proposes a comprehensive approach for the final evaluation of the UNSDCF, integrating summative and formative methodologies. The summative component aims to critically evaluate best practices and lessons learned, analysing the realization of visible results at both output and outcome levels. Meanwhile, the formative component looks ahead, considering the adaptability of these results for future phases and possible expansions of the UN Coherence Framework. In this context, the ET will utilise various information sources and diverse data-gathering tools to understand the UNSDCF's implementation and influence thoroughly.

As indicated in the previous paragraphs, the ET has prepared a customised methodology and proposes employing **a mixed-methods paradigm** that synergizes qualitative and quantitative data collection and

---

[55] Based on the initial desk review, discussions and the initial inputs from the Evaluation Management Team and a preliminary inputs from the UNCT The ET carried out a comprehensive follow-up desk review to address some of the initial challenges

interpretative techniques to answer specific evaluation questions. To validate the findings and identify points of convergence and divergence, the ET will triangulate all collected information and engage with various sources, confirming and cross-checking major trends while establishing a pattern through the convergence of data from disparate sources. The evaluation will include a well-balanced combination of desk research and key informant interviews, group discussions, focus groups, and reflective sessions.

The collection and analysis of secondary data (e.g., UNCT reports, reports from different UN Agencies, government and national reports, reports from CSOs, think tanks, and other development partners) will form the backbone of the desk research. Primary data collection through in-person and teleconference interviews—individual and group interviews—focus groups and on-line survey will further strenghten findings and validate conclusions enabling a more in-depth analysis of the overall UNSDCF implementation in North Macedonia.

During the data collection phase, the special attention will be given to the following aspects:

- The **completeness of the sample frame** (inclusion of all programme components and all stakeholders)

- The **triple representativeness** of the sample to be interviewed:

  - Programmatic representativeness,

  - Geographic representativeness,

  - Stakeholders' representativeness (national government; UN entities; implementing partners; donors; beneficiaries with specific positioning of the civil society and most vulnerable populations),

- The **interview approaches** for different groups of stakeholders (in-depth-Interview; focus group discussion; group discussions and observations),

- The **thorough analyses of the ToC** and its potential reconstruction reflecting the implementation, challenges and positive experiences,

- The soundness of evaluation questions per criteria and the completeness of the evaluation matrix.

The ET will ensure high quality throughout the entire evaluation process, using the following premises:

- The conclusions will build on the findings from the analysis but go one step further by highlighting the key overall insights, successes and shortcomings of UNSDCF implementation in North Macedonia during the entire period;

- The lessons learned will add value to the evaluation, while considering potential implications of the findings beyond the scope of UNSDCF design and implementation, such as for future policy-making or development programming, especially for the next cycle;

- The recommendations will be based on the analysis and presented in a separate section at the end of the report. The evaluation recommendations will be based on its findings and conclusions, and be clear, realistic, prioritised and actionable. All the recommendations will be validated through participation and discussion with the key stakeholders. For each recommendation, the target audience/ stakeholders, scope, expected outcome and timeframe (long-term vs. short-term) will be clearly defined.

Document Review:

The ET has conducted a comprehensive desk review of key national development strategies and programmes of the country as well as all UNSDCF and UN Agencies documents, including annual reports, strategic plans, implementation guidelines, and other relevant materials, serving as a solid foundation for the evaluation process. This review enabled a full understanding of the UNSDCF context, objectives, and historical performance. The list of analyzed documents is included in the Annex V. of this report.

Primary Data Collection:

The evaluation will include semi-structured face-to-face or online interviews based on the Evaluation Matrix in Chapter 4 and interview questionnaires/ guidance presented in Annex IV of this report. This approach will ensure the collection of in-depth information about UN agencies' individual and joint contributions to the achievement

of UNSDCF outputs and progress under outcomes and identify links between different development interventions and issues affecting this progress achievement of outcomes.

The ET will apply a ***purposive sampling technique***, concentrating on selecting key informants based on the nature and extent of their involvement across formulation and design, decision-making, implementation, monitoring & evaluation, and final beneficiary aspects. This approach ensures a comprehensive perspective on both achievements and obstacles encountered within the initiative.

The Evaluation Team was working with RCO and other UN agencies to identify key interlocutors among UN agencies, Government, local government, civil society, academia and private sector as well as vulnerable and marginalised group and prepared a comprehensive Stakeholder Mapping matrix and table (Annex II and draft in-country visit Agenda included in the Annexes IV).

The nominations from UN agencies were validated in the meeting with the Evaluation Advisory Group on 31 May 2024. Given the inclusiveness of the process and the fact that the Evaluation Team will spend time in different locations, the evaluation will meet the criteria of programmatic, geographic and stakeholders' representativeness (reference to the Stakeholders Table in Annex II. indicating these characteristics as well as overall number of interlocutors).

As for the involvement of vulnerable groups, the ET will use the focus group discussions planned with five vulnerable groups in the CCA preparation framework to add questions on UNSDCF performance and support received from UN system. Visits outside of the capital or online interviews will be considered to reach out to as many of the final beneficiaries of UNSDCF as possible.

Group Interviews/ Discussions will be conducted with stakeholders representing selected institutions or various departments within these institutions. Employing group interviews as a data collection method proves especially advantageous for organisational teams, such as UN agencies in North Macedonia. It fosters the amalgamation of information and economizes time by circumventing the need to reiterate points, which is common in individual interviews with teams affiliated with the same organisation or initiative.

ET will also use **Focus Groups** to bring different stakeholders together around key topics corresponding to UNSDCF outcomes to allow for discussion and reflection. This will enable ET to collect and validate the opinions of a larger number of participants on the same topic. ET proposes to bring together relevant interlocutors and critical agents in a particular sector to discuss a selected number of relevant points and reveal essential issues related to UNSDCF areas or outcomes.

For example, the ET team envisages a focus group discussion with the Technical Level Result Groups (also serving as Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Groups) and Thematic Groups (Gender Thematic Group, Operations and Communication Groups) and civil society organizations, private sector and think tanks. In addition, the ET envisages focus groups with vulnerable groups, as indicated in the previous paragraphs.

Where sensible, efficient and in line with the competencies, the members of the FE team may conduct particular data collection activities in parallel.

Online survey: The ET will also develop specific questionnaires for online surveys. Using the advantages of online research platforms, it is planned to design questionnaires and distribute them to national and local level stakeholders who have participated in or benefited from UNSDCF and UN Agencies support under the UNSDCF. The ET envisages three distinct questionnaires- one for national partners and stakeholders that benefited from the UN Agencies' support (within the UNSDCF) and another two for UN Agencies Programme Staff and UN Agencies Operations and Support Staff The questionnaire corresponds to the UN Agencies/ UNSDCF outcomes and core areas of work, and it will capture the areas of support, perception of this support in terms of effectiveness and appropriateness, and analyse if and to what extent the beneficiaries have improved their performance with support from the UNSDCF initiatives.

The key element of the data collection phase is an **in-country Visit to North Macedonia planned for 01 until 12 July 2024**. This phase will focus on additional data collection and analyses using personal interviews and consultations with the Government, UN Resident Coordinator and RCO staff, members of the UNCT, UNSDCF Results and Thematic Groups and other international and national development partners.

8.3.3   Phase 3. Synthesis & reporting

This phase is mainly devoted to analysing and synthesising the collected data and preparing the Final Evaluation based on the work done during the desk and field phases. The ET will prepare codes and classifications based on the evaluation matrix and its elements- the sub-questions, judgement criteria and indicators. In parallel, the ET will add classifications or other attributes[56] to facilitate data analysis tailored to the evaluation purpose.

The responses will be grouped according to the evaluation matrix and respondent categories, and interview notes will be coded against the evaluation matrix (as indicated in the previous paragraph for direct alignment with the judgement criteria and indicators).

The Final Evaluation Report will present findings, conclusions, and recommendations following a logical cause-effect linkage. When formulating and presenting findings and conclusions, the report will describe the facts assessed, the judgment criteria applied and how this led to findings and conclusions. The ET will apply a **cross-validation approach**[57] for information from various sources and different collection methods to ensure the accuracy of findings. In parallel, the ET will examine multiple sources to ensure the internal validity of the findings. This **triangulation**, involving various sources, will ensure the confirmation and cross-checking of major trends while establishing a pattern through the convergence of data from different sources[58].

The report will include a consolidated analysis of key results, challenges, and lessons learned from the analytical phase. It is envisaged that the qualitative assessment of progress and achievement probability will be done on outcome and output levels, accompanied by an outcome indicators assessment, related risk assessment, and formulation of lessons learned. Forward-looking recommendations will address the potential gaps and opportunities identified with concrete solutions proposed, they will be realistic and operational to provide relevant and feasible input for concrete decision-making and follow-up related to the formulation of the next UNSDCF cycle.

8.3.4   Phase 4 Review and validation

The Final Evaluation Report will be shared with all UNCT, Evaluation Steering Committee members and other stakeholders as appropriate, who will review and validate the outcomes of the evaluation exercise. This phase will include i) preparation of the first draft of the Evaluation Report as per the proposed structure, ii) review of the draft report by UNCT, Government and other key partners, iii) validation workshop, iv) appropriate incorporation of the received feedback, correction of factual inaccuracies and professional editing, all this leading to v) submission of the Final UNSDCF Evaluation Report.

The Final Evaluation Report will include key findings, actionable recommendations, lessons learned, and good practices that will inform the new UNSDCF cycle. It will also reflect on the country's context changes and priorities and potentially suggest changes in the monitoring and reporting framework and oversight and implementation structures to support high UNSDCF performance and achievement rates in the cycle.

Ethical Considerations

Generally, the ET is aware of the OECD DAC ethical considerations for development evaluations[59] and United Nations Ethical Guidelines[60]. The evaluation team will follow ethical considerations in selecting interviewees, interacting with them, and respecting their personal and institutional rights.

The ET will request informed consent from stakeholders before asking questions about the UNSDCF and its evaluation. The ET will briefly explain the reasons for and objectives of the evaluation and the questions' scope.

---

[56] Some examples could be duty bearer, rightsholder, and implementation partners

[57] Morras-Imas and Rist define triangulation of methods as "Collection of the same information using different methods in order to increase the accuracy of data", p. 300. Morra **Imas**, L. G., & **Rist**, R. C. (2009). The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations. Washington, D.C., World Bank.

[58] Morras- Imas and Rist, p. 376.

[59] https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf

[60] United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation- UNEGFN/CoC , 2020. Ref to http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866

Stakeholders will have the right to refuse or to withdraw at any time. The ET will also ensure respondent privacy and confidentiality, as disclosing confidential information may seriously jeopardise the efficiency and credibility of the evaluation process. Therefore, the ET is responsible for exercising discretion in all evaluation matters and not divulging confidential information without authorisation. The ET will respect informants' right to provide information confidently and ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source to protect the key informants from reprisals. Original data, including interview records and notes from interviews, will be retained in confidential files until the completion of the evaluation. The ET is fully independent and unaware of any conflicts of interest for this work. During the evaluation process, the ET will follow the principles of impartiality, credibility, and accountability.

9   Evaluation matrix

The ET has improved the understanding of the UNSDCF's structure and available data sources through an initial document review and the creation of an evaluation matrix. This matrix, which includes the main evaluation questions from the ToR and additional sub-questions, was reviewed to ensure that the questions are answerable, all UNSDCF's components are appropriately addressed, there is no duplication or undue overlap, the question formulation is precise, and that it allows for an exploratory approach to data collection. As a result of this review, the list of evaluation questions has been consolidated, as questions that were too similar have been combined, and sub-questions have been re-framed to make them more focused.

Evaluation criteria and questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data analysis	Data Sources & collection tools
Relevant evaluation criteria: RELEVANCE AND ADAPTABILITY				
EQ1.1. How well do the UNSDCF strategic priorities responded to the country's needs, national priorities, and international and regional commitments?	JC1.1.1. The extent to which the UNSDCF addressed country needs and priorities JC1.1.2. The extent to which the UNSDCF responded to international and regional commitments	▪ Evidence and examples that the UNSDCF addressed the country's needs and responded to strategic priorities ▪ Evidence and examples that the UNSCDF responded to international and regional commitments: i) EU accession; ii) Agenda2030 and leaving no one behind; iii) human rights, iv) environment, and v) gender equity	Desk based research Assessment of the strength of the ToC designed for the UNSDCF (explicit or implicit). Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders concerning the UNSDCF	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Progress Reports and other deliverables, Government Program 2021 – 2024 and Government Economic Program, National strategic documents covering the cross-cutting issues including gender and human rights Stakeholders from the UNCT/ UN Agencies, the GoM-the Ministry, other partners from the national and local levels, public and, other institutions, and development partners in the respective fields of UNSDCF
EQ1.2. How relevant has the CF responded to emerging and emergency needs, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, during crises?	JC1.2.1. The extent to which UNCT/ UN Agencies responded to emerging and emergency needs, especially for the most vulnerable, during crisis and external negative effects JC1.2.2. Evidence that the UNCT/ UN Agencies adapted its support to provide timely assistance and achieve the UNSDCF outcomes	▪ Evidence that the UNCT/ UN Agencies were resilient and responsive in addressing emerging and emergency needs of the country: the COVID-19 pandemic and the energy/food price crisis ▪ Examples and opinions that the UNSDCF responded to the needs of most vulnerable and marginalized groups during the time of crisis ▪ Examples that the UNCT/ UN Agencies adapted its support to provide timely assistance and achieve the UNSDCF outcomes		
EQ1.3. Are the UNSCDF outcomes, outputs and performance indicators with baseline and targets measurable and relevant?	JC1.3.1. The extent to which UNSCDF outcomes, outputs are logically connected and based on problem analysis JC1.3.2. The extent to which performance indicators with baseline and targets are measurable and relevant	▪ Connection and integration of the UNSCDF outcomes, outputs against identified problems ▪ Adequacy, measurability and relevance of the performance indicators with baseline and targets		
EQ1.4. To what extent did the UNSDCF build on a sound gender and human rights analysis?	JC1.4. The extent to which the UNSDCF considered and included gender and human rights analysis	▪ Evidence that UNCT carried out a sound gender and human rights analysis for the UNSDCF preparation ▪ Evidence that the UNSDCF reflected priorities from the gender and human rights analysis		
Relevant evaluation criteria: COHERENCE AND COORDINATION-				

2.1. Following the UN reform, to what extent have UN agency programs and work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from the UNSDCF in both design and implementation?	JC2.1. The extent to which UN agencies and their programs and work plans derived from the UNSDCF	▪ Opinions and examples that UN agencies and their programs and work plans reflected UNSDCF priorities at the design stage and during the implementation	Desk based research Assessment of the strength of the ToC designed for the UNSDCF (explicit or implicit).	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Progress Reports and other deliverables
2.2. To what extent did the post-reform Resident Coordinator office's roles and responsibilities enable UN Agencies to achieve coherence in implementing UNSDCF and among UN Agencies?	JC2.2.1. Evidence that the post reform RCO's roles and responsibilities contributed/ or not contributed to UNCT's joint converging power and enabled coherence in implementing UNSDCF	▪ Examples and opinions if the post reform RCO's roles and responsibilities contributed/ or not contributed to UN Agencies coherence in implementing priorities under the UNSDCF	Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders Results and findings from on-line surveys	Stakeholders from the UNCT/ UN Agencies, the GoM-the Ministry, other partners from the national and local levels, public and, other institutions, and development partners in the respective fields of UNSDCF
2.3. To what extent did the UNSDCF facilitate and promote complementarity, harmonization, and coordination among UN agencies and other key development partners to maximise results?	JC2.3. The extent to which the UNSDCF facilitated and promoted complementarity, harmonization, and coordination among UN agencies and other key development partners to maximise results	▪ Opinions that the UNSDCF facilitated and promoted complementarity, harmonization, and coordination among UN agencies and other key development partners and evidence of ehnaced achievements ▪ Examples complementarity, harmonization, and coordination among UN agencies and other key development partners under the framework of the UNSDCF implementation		

Relevant evaluation criteria: **EFFECTIVENESS**

EQ3.1. Have the outputs been achieved, and to what extent they contribute to the UNSDCF Outcomes? To what extent the UNCT contributed to, or is likely to contribute to the achievement of the outcomes defined in the UNSDCF?	JC3.1.1. The extent to which the outputs envisaged have been achieved and progressed towards outcomes JC3.1.2. The extent to which progress under UNSDCF outcomes has been achieved and targets met	▪ Examples of the main achievements during the UNSDCF implementation including the extent of utilization of resources for their achievement ▪ Evidence and figures showing progress under UNSDCF outcomes has been achieved and targets met ▪ Examples and opinions that the UNSDCF contributed to key institutional, behavioral and legislative changes under outcomes	Desk-based research including national and organizational statistics, and third parties' reports Analysis of UNSDCF results chain/ intervention logic. Analysis of UNSDCF progress reports	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Annual UNSDCF Joint Work Plans Progress Reports and other deliverables Strategic plans/ country programs of UN agencies in North Macedonia
EQ 3.2. To what extent has the UNSDCF contributed to national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioral, and legislative changes necessary for advancing its desired changes, particularly in the areas of gender	JC3.2.1. The extent to which UNSDCF contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioral, and legislative changes in the main sectors for advancing its desired changes, particularly in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights,	▪ Evidence that UNSDCF contributed to strengthening national capacities and fostering key institutional, behavioral, and legislative changes: i) in gender equality and women's empowerment, ii) human rights, iii) disability inclusion, and iv) environmental sustainability	Analysis of the available data sets evidencing the progress toward the targets Interviews with key informants –group	Stakeholders from the UNCT/ UN Agencies, the GoM-the Ministry, other partners from the national and local levels,

equality and women's empowerment, human rights, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability?	disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability	▪ Examples of institutional, behavioral, and legislative changes that the UNSDCF contributed to in the core areas of interventions	interviews with institutional beneficiaries and experts On-line survey/ questionnaires for UN staff in North Macedonia	public and, other institutions, and development partners in the respective fields of UNSDCF
EQ3.3. What have been the benefits for the people targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized population?	JC3.3.1. The extent to which the UNSDCF and its results contributed to most vulnerable and marginalized groups JC3.3.2. The type and kind of measures targeting inequalities and other cross-cutting issues	▪ Opinion of the key stakeholders about the degree to which UNSDCF considered and addressed the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in North Macedonia ▪ Examples of specific measures that have been defined to address the needs of vulnerable and marginalized people and inequalities		

Relevant evaluation criteria: **EFFICIENCY**

EQ4.1. Has the UNCT established and implemented clear procedures and mobilised resources to ensure contribution to the achievement of the defined outcomes?	JC4.1.1. The extent of appropriateness of financial and human resources allocated by UN Agencies to support the implementation of strategies and achievement of UNSDCF outcomes JC4.1.2. Evidence that the UNCT has established and implemented clear procedures and resources to ensure contribution to the achievement of the defined outcomes	▪ Opinions about the appropriateness and adequacy of resources for the achievement of UNSDCF outcomes- the analysis of mobilized and delivered vs. planned resources for UNSDCF implementation ▪ Opinions about possible improvements in planning and delivery of resources to address the needs of the country and especially its vulnerable population ▪ Evidence and opinions about the appropriateness of the UNSDCF selected method of delivery and the funding framework ▪ Evidence that the resources have been allocated strategically and effectively	Desk-based research- with the focus on Annual Progress Reports and UNSDCF Framework UN Agencies financial reports Analysis of the UNSDCF budget Analysis of the management and advisory mechanisms and coordination approaches from the meetings- to verify decision-making approaches Interviews with key informants from WGs, UN Agencies	Programming documents: UNSDCF, Results Matrix, Annual UNSDCF Work Plans Progress Reports and other deliverables Available meeting minutes Contractual arrangements including analysis of the approved budget Stakeholders from the implementing partners- UN Agencies, and international development partners/ GoM
EQ 4.2. To what extent has the UNSDCF prioritized activities based on demand-side needs rather than resource availability, and how effectively has it reallocated resources to address emerging needs and priorities?	JC4.2.1. The extent to which UNSDCF prioritized activities based on needs assessment and evidence that resources have been mobilized and allocated based on these needs JC4.2.2. The extent of mobilized and delivered vs. planned resources for UNSDCF implementation	▪ Evidence that the UNSDCF appropriately assessed and prioritized the needs and examples that resources were allocated according to these principles ▪ Opinions about the links between planning- needs assessment and budgeting process within the framework of UNSDCF ▪ The effectiveness of resource mobilization strategy- (mobilized vs planned resources) and the delivery ratio during the implementation of UNSDCF		

Relevant evaluation criteria: **IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

5.1. To what extent the UNSDCF results are sustainable and what is the likelihood that progress towards the SDGs is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time?	JC5.1.1. The extent to which the UNSDCF has considered and ensured sustainability of the achievements JC5.1.2. The extent to which partners claim ownership over the results achieved during UNSDCF implementation	▪ Mechanisms, financial and technical/human resources ensured by the national partners to maintain achievements under UNSDCF and the SDGs ▪ Evidence about the level of of ownership over the results achieved during UNSDCF implementation	Desk based research including national and organizational statistics, and third parties' reports Interviews with key informants - Group interviews	UNSDCF document and deliverables Legal and policy documents concerning National and international statistics Stakeholders from the implementing partners, public institutions and other
5.2. To what extent have UN interventions stemming from the UNSDCF strengthened systemic and individual resilience and contributed to reducing vulnerability?	JC5.2.1. Existence of UNSDCF priority areas in which the SDG progress is likely to be sustainable	▪ Examples and opinions about areas in which UNSDCF contributed to the SDG progress that is likely to be sustainable ▪ Examples of changes at the national level including examples of UNCT contribution to the progress in the specific areas under SDGs		

10 ANALYSING THE THEORY OF CHANGE

The UNSDCF was conceptualised and developed in the politically challenging period for North Macedonia- it began with preparations for early parliamentary elections, prompted by the inability to progress on the EU accession path. In the interim, election preparations were disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, leaving the country without a functional Parliament for over five months, a significant setback for executive oversight. A new government was finally formed at the end of August, following the July elections and weeks of negotiations between political parties[61]. The COVID-19 has also affected the CF preparation.

The evidence generated through the Common Country Analysis (CCA) shaped the prioritisation of actions and theory of change, with strategic priorities being established at the national Strategic Prioritisation Workshop (SPW) by bringing together the comparative advantages of United Nations entities, the Government, development institutions, the private sector, and civil society. Using the results of the CCA, the UNCT identified accelerators or catalytic interventions that address bottlenecks impeding progress. The vision from the CCA process and capacity gap analyses identified the building blocks required to achieve a prosperous, inclusive, and resilient North Macedonia by 2030.

Strategic priorities and outcomes of the UNSDCF:
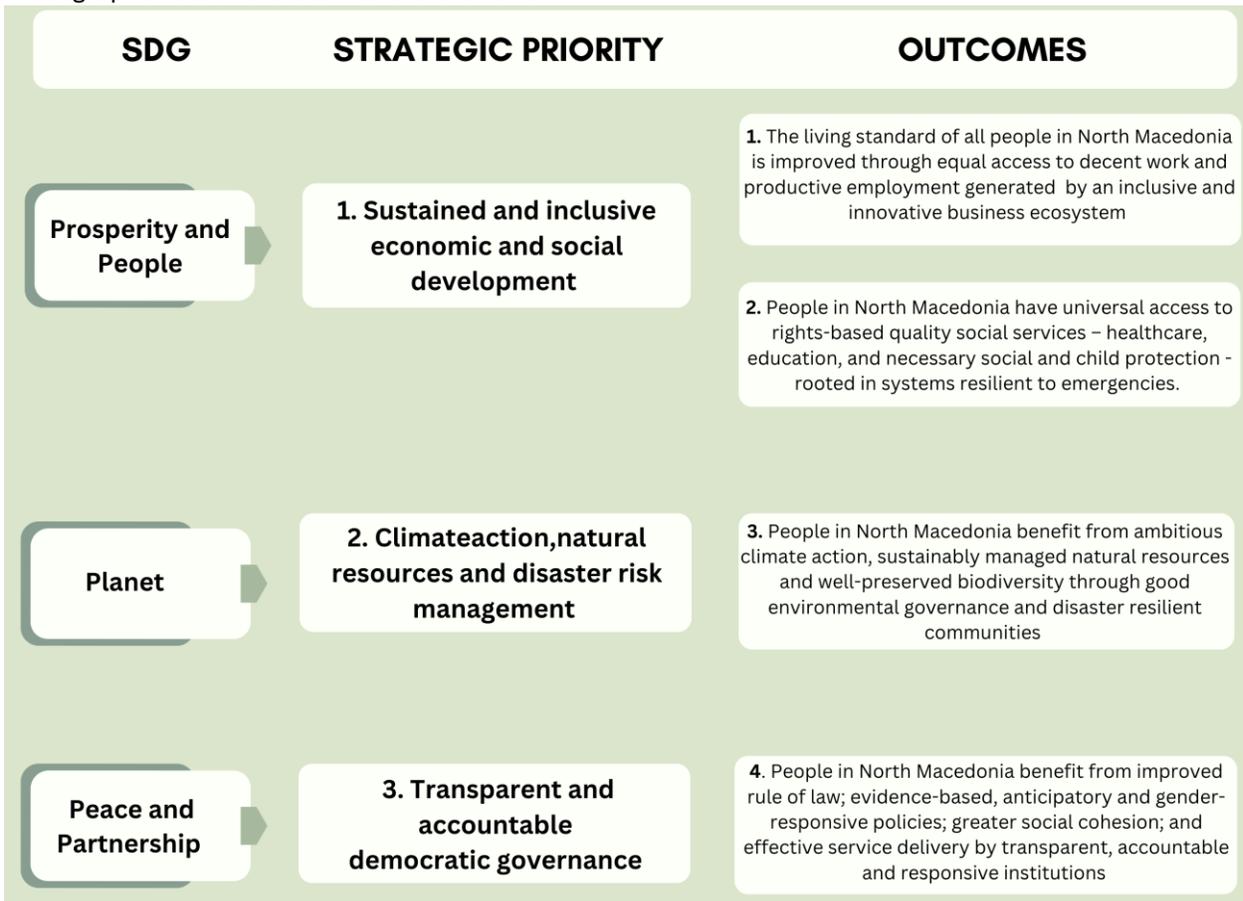
Three strategic priorities and four outcomes are further orgenised around the following outputs:

PROSPERITY and PEOPLE	PLANET	PEACE and PARTNERSHIP
OUTCOME 1.	OUTCOME 3	OUTCOME 4.

---

[61] The mandate of this GoM has been characterised by frequent personal changes in the ministries, especially at higher-level positions

Output 1.1. Sustainable enterprises created as generators of employment, decent work and innovations through strengthened value chains and increased capacities to adopt new business models, enhance productivity & competitiveness.

Output 1.2. Women and vulnerable/ excluded persons benefit from supportive environment through tailored employment measures and a more dynamic and inclusive skilling system to respond to labour market needs

Output 1.3. Enhanced and gender-responsive policy and regulatory measures that foster entrepreneurship and financing for inclusive and green growth in line with EU standards

Output 1.4. Improved quality of employment through reduced under-employment, informality and adequate protection at work in compliance with international labour standards

Output 1.5. Policies and capacities strengthened for sustainable and competitive rural economy aligned with EU, with focus on small farms and women farmers

OUTCOME 2.

Output 2.1. Health system is strengthened to provide universal access to affordable high quality and people-centred services to promote healthy lifestyles and address population-specific health needs and risk factors, including in emergencies**.**

Output 2.2. Quality and affordable education is provided in trauma-informed, gender responsive and inclusive learning environments to children and young people in the country to raise learning outcomes, enable their socioemotional development and empower them with skills for transition to the labour market.

Output 2.3. Social protection system is resilient to external shocks and strengthened to deliver progressively improved services to all persons in need, especially to those left behind**.**

Output 2.4. Improved multisectoral response to prevent and address all forms of violence based on victims/ survivor centred approach, including harmful practices discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes

Output 3.1. The enabling policy, regulatory environment, capacities at central and local level and community actions strengthened for low-emission development and multi-sector resilience to climate change

Output 3.2. Solutions are identified and scaled-up at central and local levels for integrated, sustainable and inclusive management of natural resources

Output 3.3. Capacities at central and local levels are strengthened to prevent and respond to the air pollution threats and health consequences in most vulnerable communities

Output 3.4. Capacities at central and local levels are strengthened to identify multi-hazard risks and to plan, finance and implement effective disaster risk reduction and response, including human displacement, in the Sendai framework

Output 3.5. National and local capacities strengthened, and awareness increased for waste reduction and efficient waste management

Output 3.6. Adverse impacts of the unsustainable farming practices in the lake/river watersheds reduced

Output 4.1. Advanced rule of law, access to justice and protection and promotion of human rights for all, especially those left behind by improved and gender responsive legal, policy and institutional frameworks and capacity building.

Output 4.2. Capacities of central and local governments strengthened to: plan, budget, monitor and track expenditure and leverage resources and improve design and efficient delivery of quality public services

Output 4.3. Increased utilization of foresight and quality and disaggregated data for improved forward looking, evidence-based, results-oriented and transparent policy-making, responsive to the rights of women, men, girls and boys and vulnerabilities of the groups left behind, at all levels and in all contexts

Output 4.4. Social cohesion and trust improved through dialogue and meaningful participation by youth, women, ethnic and religious minorities, refugees, and other vulnerable groups.

Output 4.5. Enhanced national and local capacities in asset recovery and countering corruption in public life through better enforcement of anti-corruption laws and preventive measures..

The UNSCF states that the 2030 Agenda strives to leave no one behind, envisaging "a world of universal respect for equality and non-discrimination" between and within countries, including gender equality, and by reaffirming the responsibilities of the State as the main duty bearer to "respect, protect and promote human rights, without distinction of any kind'. At the same time, sustainable development must be achieved with the active participation of all people, including the most vulnerable ones. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals depends on ensuring the empowerment, inclusion and equality of all people- the CF is designed to create a prosperous, inclusive, and resilient North Macedonia by 2030.
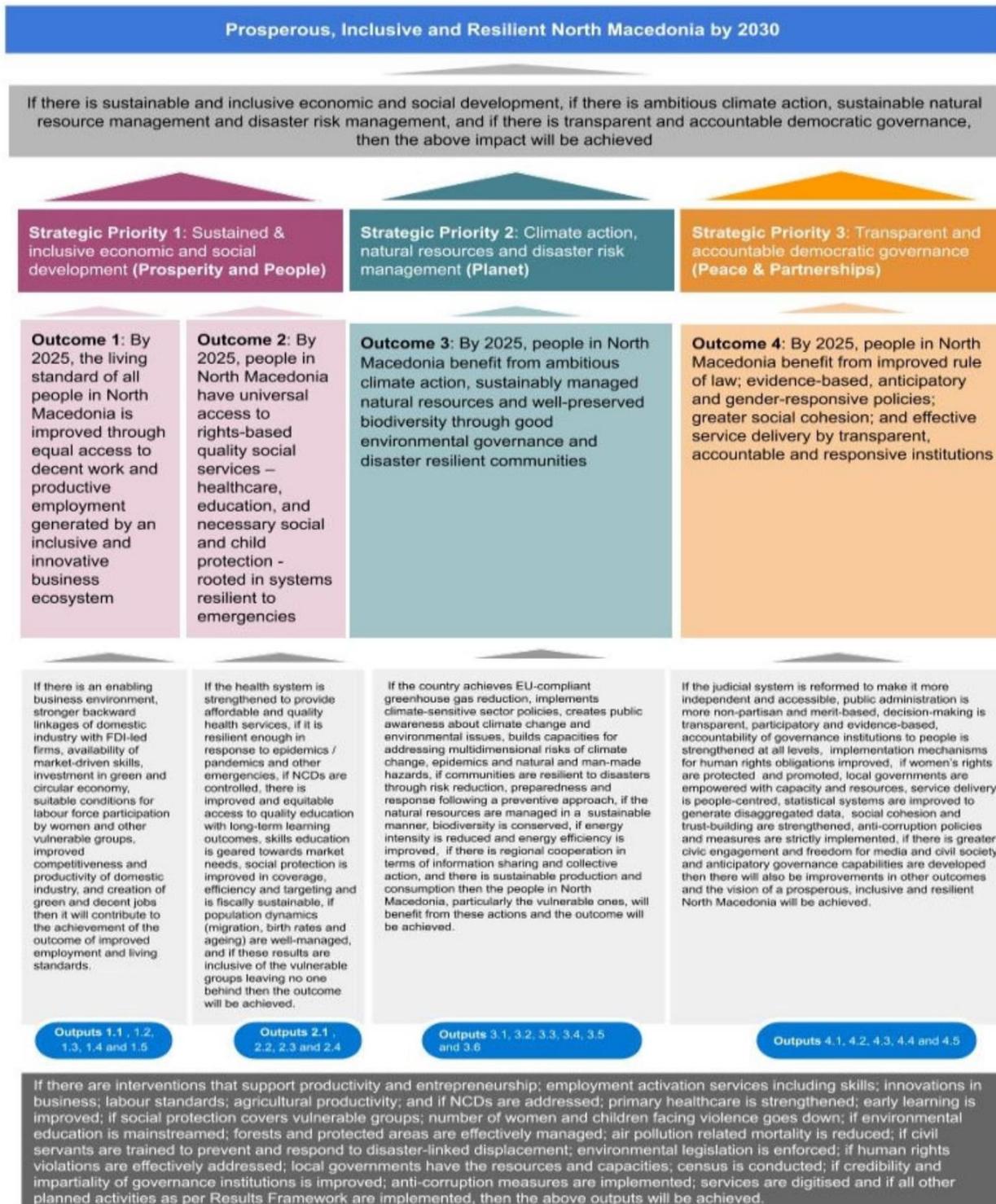
The ToC and associated Results Framework is based on several key assumptions: there is political will to carry out economic and governance reforms, political stability to provide long-term vision and direction, strengthened statistical systems to monitor SDGs and collect disaggregated data, effective management of the post-COVID-19 economic recession and its consequences on employment, no fiscal crunch affecting social protection, sufficient implementation and monitoring capacity, no environmental crises, a calm geopolitical situation, and enough resources, including external funding, to finance SDGs and national priorities.

The CF integrates human rights and empowerment of all people in North Macedonia, including those identified by Common Country Analysis as at most risk of being left behind. Grounded in human and social capital development theories, the ToC for the CF emphasises that achieving inclusive economic growth, environmental sustainability and good governance requires the participation of all people in North Macedonia – women, men, youth, elderly, disabled and others, including from vulnerable groups.

Under efforts to improve living standards (Outcome 1), the CF envisaged creating sustainable enterprises to generate jobs, decent work, and innovations by strengthening value chains and adopting new business models. It planned to implement labour-market-driven employment measures and a dynamic, inclusive skilling system to support women and vulnerable persons. The CF aimed to foster entrepreneurship and financing for inclusive and green growth with gender-responsive policies aligned with EU standards, reduce under-employment and informality, and ensure adequate workplace protection. Additionally, it focused on strengthening policies for a sustainable and competitive rural economy, emphasising small farms and women farmers. For universal access to quality social services (Outcome 2), the CF aimed to provide affordable, high-quality, people-centred health services to promote healthy lifestyles and address specific health needs and risks, including emergencies. It planned to deliver quality education to improve learning outcomes, foster socio-emotional development, and equip students with skills for the labor market. The CF also focused on building a resilient social protection system, particularly for those in need, and aimed to prevent and address all forms of violence through a victim-centred approach, combating harmful practices and discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes.

The CF aimed to promote ambitious climate action, sustainable management of natural resources, and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster-resilient communities. It plans to strengthen policy and regulatory environments and capacities at all levels for low-emission development and climate resilience (Outcome 3) . The CF scales up solutions for sustainable resource management, enhances capacities to address air pollution, and improves disaster risk reduction and response in line with the Sendai framework. It also focuses on waste reduction and efficient management, and reduces the impacts of unsustainable farming practices in watersheds. It aimed to advance the rule of law, access to justice, and human rights for all, especially those left behind, through improved and gender-responsive legal, policy, and institutional frameworks (Outcome 4). It aimed to strengthen the capacities of central and local governments to plan, budget, monitor, and track expenditure, leveraging resources for efficient public service delivery. The framework also planned using quality and disaggregated data for evidence-based, results-oriented, and transparent policymaking responsive to everyone's rights. Furthermore, it aimed to enhance social cohesion

and trust through dialogue and participation by youth, women, minorities, migrants, refugees, and other vulnerable groups. Additionally, it is committed to enforcing anti-corruption laws and preventive measures.

Prosperous, Inclusive and Resilient North Macedonia by 2030

If there is sustainable and inclusive economic and social development, if there is ambitious climate action, sustainable natural resource management and disaster risk management, and if there is transparent and accountable democratic governance, then the above impact will be achieved

Strategic Priority 1: Sustained & inclusive economic and social development **(Prosperity and People)**

Strategic Priority 2: Climate action, natural resources and disaster risk management **(Planet)**

Strategic Priority 3: Transparent and accountable democratic governance **(Peace & Partnerships)**

Outcome 1: By 2025, the living standard of all people in North Macedonia is improved through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem

Outcome 2: By 2025, people in North Macedonia have universal access to rights-based quality social services – healthcare, education, and necessary social and child protection - rooted in systems resilient to emergencies

Outcome 3: By 2025, people in North Macedonia benefit from ambitious climate action, sustainably managed natural resources and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster resilient communities

Outcome 4: By 2025, people in North Macedonia benefit from improved rule of law; evidence-based, anticipatory and gender-responsive policies; greater social cohesion; and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable and responsive institutions

If there is an enabling business environment, stronger backward linkages of domestic industry with FDI-led firms, availability of market-driven skills, investment in green and circular economy, suitable conditions for labour force participation by women and other vulnerable groups, improved competitiveness and productivity of domestic industry, and creation of green and decent jobs then it will contribute to the achievement of the outcome of improved employment and living standards.

If the health system is strengthened to provide affordable and quality health services, if it is resilient enough in response to epidemics / pandemics and other emergencies, if NCDs are controlled, there is improved and equitable access to quality education with long-term learning outcomes, skills education is geared towards market needs, social protection is improved in coverage, efficiency and targeting and is fiscally sustainable, if population dynamics (migration, birth rates and ageing) are well-managed, and if these results are inclusive of the vulnerable groups leaving no one behind then the outcome will be achieved.

If the country achieves EU-compliant greenhouse gas reduction, implements climate-sensitive sector policies, creates public awareness about climate change and environmental issues, builds capacities for addressing multidimensional risks of climate change, epidemics and natural and man-made hazards, if communities are resilient to disasters through risk reduction, preparedness and response following a preventive approach, if the natural resources are managed in a sustainable manner, biodiversity is conserved, if energy intensity is reduced and energy efficiency is improved, if there is regional cooperation in terms of information sharing and collective action, and there is sustainable production and consumption then the people in North Macedonia, particularly the vulnerable ones, will benefit from these actions and the outcome will be achieved.

If the judicial system is reformed to make it more independent and accessible, public administration is more non-partisan and merit-based, decision-making is transparent, participatory and evidence-based, accountability of governance institutions to people is strengthened at all levels, implementation mechanisms for human rights obligations improved, if women's rights are protected and promoted, local governments are empowered with capacity and resources, service delivery is people-centred, statistical systems are improved to generate disaggregated data, social cohesion and trust-building are strengthened, anti-corruption policies and measures are strictly implemented, if there is greater civic engagement and freedom for media and civil society and anticipatory governance capabilities are developed then there will also be improvements in other outcomes and the vision of a prosperous, inclusive and resilient North Macedonia will be achieved.

Outputs 1.1 , 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5

Outputs 2.1 , 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4

Outputs 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6

Outputs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5

If there are interventions that support productivity and entrepreneurship; employment activation services including skills; innovations in business; labour standards; agricultural productivity; and if NCDs are addressed; primary healthcare is strengthened; early learning is improved; if social protection covers vulnerable groups; number of women and children facing violence goes down; if environmental education is mainstreamed; forests and protected areas are effectively managed; air pollution related mortality is reduced; if civil servants are trained to prevent and respond to disaster-linked displacement; environmental legislation is enforced; if human rights violations are effectively addressed; local governments have the resources and capacities; census is conducted; if credibility and impartiality of governance institutions is improved; anti-corruption measures are implemented; services are digitised and if all other planned activities as per Results Framework are implemented, then the above outputs will be achieved.

As also indicated in the Theory of Change Chart, the Evaluation Team came to the conclusion that original (theoretical) UNSDCF Theory of Change is comprehensive and its outcomes and outputs are sufficiently aligned with the national strategic documents of North Macedonia. UNSDCF's result chain and contribution links between pillars, outcomes and outputs are also assessed as sufficient.
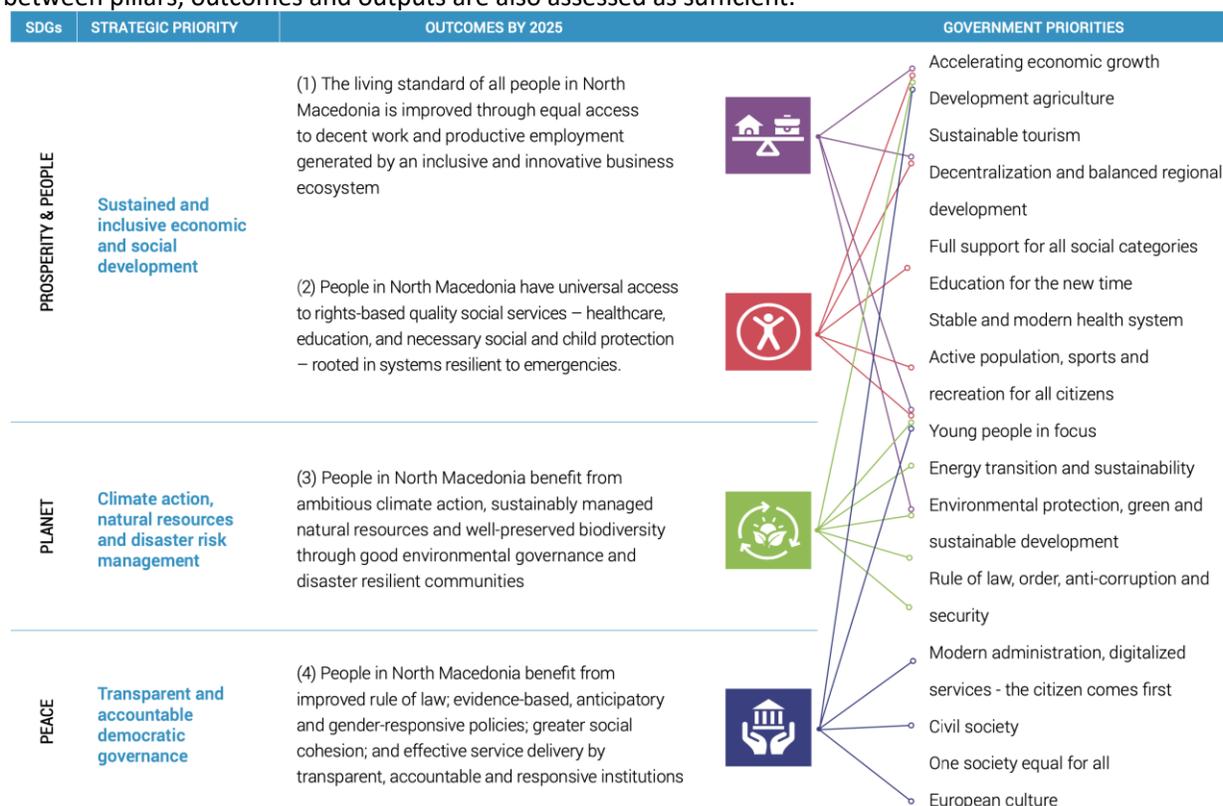
In the meetings during the Inception Phase (discussion with EM/ EMT), UNCT and other partners have considered the Theory of Change as adequate throughout UNSDCF implementation, and there have been no formal changes to any of its elements. The stakeholders stated that the ToC has been flexible/ adaptable enough to accommodate the emerging issues in response to new developments and crises (such as the Covid response). It was mentioned that the UN response had been incorporated on an activity level without a need to adjust the upstream result chain. Furthermore, UNCT has analysed the situation in the country through the regular CCAs, confirming the relevance and validity of the strategy included in the ToC.

Despite this reassurance, the assessment of the adequacy of UNSDCF ToC and its flexibility and adaptability will be a standing inquiry during the entire final evaluation process and the questions related to this aspect will be included both in the structured interviews and focus group discussions as well as in the evaluation survey. As a part of the relevance/ flexibility/adaptability evaluation criteria, the ET will answer the following questions:

- Was the theoretical ToC that informed the development of the CF sound? (contribution to addressing the relevance evaluation criteria)

- Were the hierarchy of objectives and planned targets under the ToC realistic and achievable? (as measured through the "results chain indicators" associated with the ToC)

- The way the programme was implemented, was it necessary to modify the theoretical ToC? (contribution to addressing the flexibility/ adaptability evaluation criteria)

- Was it necessary to create more outputs? reduce outputs? change indicators, and if so who it was done?

If needed, the ET will reconstruct the ToC to be in line with how outcomes and outputs were actually implemented. The ET will also formulate the ToC-related recommendations for the development of the new UNSDCF.

11 FE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND THE DELIVERABLES

11.1 Management arrangements for the evaluation

The UN Resident Coordinator and UN Country Team (UNCT) are responsible for commissioning the evaluation and any follow-up actions.

The following entities will govern this UNSDCF evaluation:

Evaluation Manager (EM): As the point person for the day-to-day evaluation management, the EM plays a crucial role in ensuring timely and practical evaluation and providing strategic directions. By preparing the evaluation's Terms of Reference (TOR) in consultation with relevant stakeholders, the EM ensures that the evaluation methodology and the overall process reflect and address the objectives and expectations of all involved parties. Additionally, the EM's role in managing interactions between the Evaluation Team and the Evaluation Management Team (EMT) fosters effective communication and collaboration throughout the evaluation process. The EM's responsibility to coordinate feedback on deliverables and obtain approval ensures that evaluation outputs meet the required standards and that the appropriate authorities endorse them.

Evaluation Management Team (EMT): Comprising technical experts from various UN Agencies, (UN MEL Group) the EMT provides invaluable support to the evaluation process. The EMT involvement ensures that the evaluation benefits from diverse perspectives and expertise, enhancing its credibility and robustness. The EMT's responsibilities include ensuring evaluation quality and relevance, guiding the Evaluation Team, facilitating stakeholder engagement and reviewing critical deliverables. Furthermore, the EMT task of preparing a management response to the evaluation demonstrates a commitment to transparency and accountability, as it entails addressing evaluation findings and recommendations in a structured manner. Overall, the EMT's contributions contribute to the overall effectiveness and utility of the evaluation.

Evaluation Reference Group (ERG): As the highest-level governance structure for this UNSDCF evaluation, the ERG brings together senior representatives from Result Groups to provide strategic oversight and guidance. Their involvement ensures that the evaluation remains closely aligned with the overarching goals and priorities of the UNSDCF. By offering feedback on key evaluation documents and advising on stakeholder engagement, the ERG helps to steer the evaluation in the right direction, ensuring its relevance and utility. Additionally, the ERG members' participation in review meetings underscores the UN Agencies' commitment to accountability and transparency as they engage in discussions to validate evaluation findings and recommendations. In essence, the ERG serves as a critical forum for ensuring the overall success and impact of the evaluation.

11.2 Evaluation Team Composition, Roles and Responsibilities

The independent **Evaluation Team (ET)** comprises one international team leader and one senior evaluation expert. The team has ample collective knowledge of the national context and high technical capacities in the core areas of UN work in North Macedonia.

Considering on-going evaluations- such as UN Agencies country programme evaluations- the ET will coordinate and cooperate with these teams to the extent possible, especially in exploring possibilities to participate in the same meetings with the stakeholders, and discuss lessons learned and preliminary findings.

The evaluation expert will work closely with the TL, who will be responsible for the evaluation.

Inception phase:

During the Inception phase, the following core tasks have been envisaged:

The Team Leader (TL) will oversee the work and take the lead in analysing, reconstructing and fine-tuning the Theory of Change and the overall UNSDCF intervention logic. Based on this, the TL will propose the evaluation methodology, including the Evaluation Matrix, preparation of evaluation questions, analysis of indicators, and the whole intervention logic within UNSDCF.

The TL will analyse the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets for North Macedonia, policy papers on socio-economic development, governance, delivery of social services, gender mainstreaming, resilience, environmental protection, and other common readings. The TL will also analyse the documented work of UNCT/ UN Agencies, critical deliverables, and obstacles while looking at joint UN initiatives.

The Evaluation Expert (EE) will assist in designing interview guides and data collection tools, analysing judgement criteria, and providing evidence under indicators, analysing the existing analytical documents, legal and policy frameworks relevant to UNSDCF and SDGs and reflecting on the key areas of success or underperformance concerning particular SDGs and UNSDCF indicators.

On behalf of the Evaluation Team, the Team Leader will finalise and submit the Inception report.

Field phase- primary data-collection:

The TL and EE will interview key stakeholders from UN Agencies/ UNCT, the Government of North Macedonia, other public institutions and stakeholders at the national and local levels, and international development partners. The EE will organise and deliver focus group meetings.

The ET will also organise online meetings with the stakeholders to complement in-person data collection.

The ET members will work closely with UN colleagues to ensure that all crucial stakeholders have been contacted and that (in-person and online) interviews have been organised and delivered. The ET members will prepare comprehensive minutes from KII and groups meetings as well as from the focus groups under various outcomes

Synthesis phase

The TL will lead in writing the synthesis report, drawing on inputs from the field phase. The TL will also focus on the lessons learned and future strategic recommendations. The EE will lead the work of synthesising the Collection of evidence under indicators and judgement criteria into final and nuanced answers to the EQs and contribute to the outline and potentially the report's writing.

11.3 Deliverables and milestones

№	Deliverables	Date
1.	**Desk review** of all relevant documents	May 2024
2.	**Inception report** (IR) to present evaluation methodology and evaluation questions, highlighting proposed methods; proposed sources of data; and data collection procedures. The IR includes a proposed schedule of tasks, activities and deliverables.	Revised version 10.06.2024
3.	**Detailed plan for primary data-collection with the schedule of meetings**	10.06.2024

4.	**Primary data collection (on-line interviews, in-person interviews, on-line survey)**	10 June 15 July 2024
	- In country mission	01-12 July 2024
5.	**A draft Final Evaluation report** with findings and conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations. The draft FE will be submitted for the review by UNSDCF specific groups, Government Focal Points and UNCT	July-August 2024 mid-August submission
6.	**Validation workshop including PPT**	Sept 2024
7.	**Pre-UNSDCF Final Evaluation Report** provided for the final review by the **UNCT in North Macedonia**	Sept 2024
8.	**UNSDCF Final Evaluation Report** submitted	Sept 2024
9.	**Dissemination workshop including PPT for the workshop**	Oct 2024

12 EVALUABILITY, RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Evaluability Analysis

The ET applied an evaluability checklist to assess the UNSDCF 2021-2025's evaluability, focusing on the design, information availability, and institutional context (Annex 3—Evaluability checklist).

The evaluability is confirmed by a solid foundation laid out by a clearly defined ToC and a comprehensive results framework. The ToC effectively outlines the strategic objective for advancing sustainable development and improving the well-being of North Macedonia's population, in alignment with the country's national development priorities and the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Outcomes and objectives are well-detailed, with SMART indicators established and all levels of the intervention logic.

There is ample data for a substantive final evaluation, including progress reports and baseline data, ensuring an informed analysis of the progress. The relevance of the evaluation remains intact despite changing circumstances, with clear, shared objectives among stakeholders and realistic evaluation questions.

The evaluation process considers various political, social, and economic factors. This theory-based approach comprehensively analyses and integrates these factors to understand North Macedonia's development landscape. Given the expert evaluators' deep understanding of climate and environmental challenges specific to North Macedonia, it promises to be an insightful process. The ET finds that the resources are adequately allocated, and experienced ET will execute the evaluation.

Risks and Assumptions

Assumptions

The ET makes several assumptions for the smooth conduct of the evaluation. These include timely data and information availability, including the provision of documentary sources by UN Agencies and Evaluation Manager, the availability of critical informants for interviews and group discussions and their willingness to cooperate during the evaluation. Moreover, the ET assumes no unforeseen setbacks during the evaluation process.

Risk, limitations and mitigation measures

In the final evaluation of the UNSDCF North Macedonia, the ET is aware of potential biases arising from time constraints, potentially leading to heavy reliance on insights from the UN Agencies for Key Informant Interviews (KII) selections. To counteract any resulting selection bias, the ET will adopt a broad sampling approach, ensuring a diverse range of stakeholders are included in KIIs, thus capturing varied perspectives. Recognizing the risk of bias or incomplete information, the ET will employ a rigorous critical assessment strategy. By employing methods such as triangulation, cross-referencing, and validation of information from multiple stakeholders, the reliability and validity of the findings will be enhanced, leading to more robust conclusions based on corroborated evidence.

There is a potential for positive review bias stemming from the evaluation's reliance on documentation and UN Agencies/ UNCT insights. To mitigate this, the ET will seek out diverse data sources corresponding with the UNSDCF outcomes areas, beyond those supplied by the Evaluation Management Team and UN Agencies. By independently identifying relevant documents and stakeholders, the ET aims to reduce dependence on any single data source.

Moreover, the ET acknowledges that stakeholders familiar with the UN Agencies' work may disproportionately report successes while overlooking challenges. To ensure a balanced evaluation, the ET will adhere to a structured review matrix, systematically assessing all aspects of the UNSDCF. During KIIs, questions about any unmet objectives will be asked to uncover valuable insights into the overall UNSDCF results and performance. The ET will strategically prioritize data collection, focusing on primary and significant informants. Utilizing online tools for interviews and focus groups will help address time and logistical constraints, ensuring comprehensive stakeholder engagement, even if in-person visits are not feasible.

Considering the period for the in-country mission (beginning of July) it is expected that the current political situation in North Macedonia particularly the establishment of the new Government and changes within the Ministries may moderately affect the data collection process and availability of the key informants. To overcome this, the ET will rely on the contacts and networks within the ministries who work on a more operational level and possess the critical information needed for the evaluation.

Annex 2: Interview Guides

During the field phase the Final Evaluation Team will use semi-structured interviews with the main questions provided in this interview guide. Interviews will enable the Evaluation Team to ask additional, more specific questions, in line with the Evaluation Matrix and the Terms of References.

Also, the Evaluation Team will prioritise in-person interviews, with the intention of ensuring a representative sample during the field phase. Other options, like online surveys, will be explored and discussed as needs arise.

Interview Guide: UN Resident Coordinator- UN Coordinator's Office/ UN Agencies and UN Results groups

RELEVANCE

SQ1.1.1: To what extent has the UNSDCF aligned its strategic priorities with the identified country's needs and priorities? Can you provide examples?*?*

SQ1.1.2: Has the UNSDCF integrated international and regional commitments into its strategic priorities and programs? If so, how?

SQ1.2.1: What specific actions did the UNCT/UN Agencies take to address the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups during crises?

SQ1.2.2: In what ways did the UNCT/UN Agencies adapt their support during crises? How did these adaptations impact the achievement of the UNSDCF outcomes?

EQ1.4: To what extent did the UNSDCF build on a sound gender and human rights analysis?

SQ1.4: Was gender and human rights analysis incorporated into the UNSDCF planning process? If so, how, and what specific strategies were taken to address these issues?

COORDINATION AND COHERENCE:

EQ2.1: Following the UN reform, to what extent have UN agency programs and work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from the UNSDCF in both design and implementation?

SQ2.1: In what ways have UN agency programs and work plans been designed based on the UNSDCF? To what extent have these programs and work plans been implemented effectively in alignment with the UNSDCF?

SQ2.2.1: To what extent have the post-reform Resident Coordinator office's roles and responsibilities contributed to the coherence of UN Agencies in implementing the UNSDCF? What evidence exists to show that these roles and responsibilities have facilitated or hindered joint efforts among UN Agencies?

SQ2.3: How has the UNSDCF facilitated complementarity, harmonisation, and coordination among UN agencies? In what ways has the UNSDCF promoted effective collaboration with other key development partners to maximise results?

EFFECTIVENESS

SQ3.1.1: To what extent have the outputs envisaged in the UNSDCF been achieved, and how have they progressed towards meeting the defined outcomes?

SQ3.1.2: To what extent has progress been made towards achieving the UNSDCF outcomes and meeting the defined targets?

SQ3.2.1: In what ways has the UNSDCF strengthened national capacities and fostered key institutional, behavioral, and legislative changes?

Can you describe any specific advancements n made in gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability?

EQ3.3: What benefits, if any, have been for the people targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalised population?

SQ3.3.1: In what ways have the interventions under the UNSDCF impacted the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized populations?

SQ3.3.2: What measures have been implemented to target inequalities and address other cross-cutting issues, and what has been their impact?

EFFICIENCY

SQ4.1.1: To what extent have the financial and human resources allocated by UN Agencies been appropriate and effective in supporting the implementation of strategies and achieving UNSDCF outcomes?

SQ4.1.2: What procedures and resources, if any, has the UNCT established and implemented contribute to achieving the defined outcomes?

SQ4.2.1: To what extent has the UNSDCF prioritized activities based on needs assessment, and how effectively have resources been mobilized and allocated based on these needs?

SQ4.2.2: How do the mobilized and delivered resources compare to the planned resources for UNSDCF implementation?

IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

EQ5.1: To what extent are the UNSDCF results sustainable, and what is the likelihood that national partners and stakeholders will sustain progress towards the SDGs over time?

JC5.1.1: To what extent has the UNSDCF considered and ensured the sustainability of its achievements?

JC5.1.2: To what extent do national partners claim ownership over the results achieved during UNSDCF implementation?

What evidence exists that national partners have provided financial and technical/human resources to maintain the achievements under UNSDCF and the SDGs?

JC5.2: Can you provide examples and opinions about areas in which the UNSDCF has contributed to SDG progress that is likely to be sustainable? What changes at the national level, including specific examples of UNCT contributions, have been observed in the progress of specific areas under the SDGs?

Interview Guide: Chair of the UN Monitoring Group

Could you please introduce yourself- including the UN Agency you are representing?

General questions

- Could you describe your involvement in preparation and/or implementation of UNSDCF 2021-2025?

- What are North Macedonia's key national development priorities, in your opinion? Has UNSDCF been well-targeted and effective in addressing national priorities?

- Are there any important areas that should be considered for the new UNSDCF cycle?

Specific questions

- How appropriate and realistic have been the UNSDCF outcomes and established targets? How adequate have been the outputs in achieving these targets?

- To what extent has the Logic Matrix and hierarchy of objectives ensured internal coherence?

- Have the indicators been well-defined to measure progress under outcomes and outputs?

- To what extent have the Results Based Management principles and tools been reflected in the UNSDCF Results Matrix?

- To what extent have the indicators and targets reflected gender equality and "leave no one behind"?

- Have the indicators (including their benchmarks- targets and baselines) been revised and updated to reflect better external developments and progress achieved?

- How do you assess the level of data availability for the established indicators and measurements? What challenges exist and how they can be addressed?

- What is the data management capacity of the national partners? What would you recommend to strengthen the data availability and data management practices of the national partners?

- To what degree did UNSDCF contribute to SDG targets? Can you provide examples of how the UNSDCF outcomes correspond with SDG indicators?

- Have the UN Agencies used these indicators to report results and progress? What is your opinion about the work of the UNSDCF Monitoring Group?

- Has UNSDCF effectively strengthened the capacities for data collection and analysis to ensure disaggregated data?

Interview Guide: Chair of the UN Communication Group

Could you please introduce yourself- including the UN Agency you are representing?

General questions

- Have you been involved in the preparation and/or implementation of UNSDCF 2021-2025?

- What are North Macedonia's key national development priorities, in your opinion? Has UNSDCF been well-targeted and addressing national priorities?

- Have there been any important areas that should be considered for the new UNSDCF cycle

Communication-specific questions:

- Has the UN Joint Communication Strategy been developed and implemented? Is the joint communication policy satisfactory?

- Do you think "One UN voice" could be an important principle for UN coherence and effectiveness of results in North Macedonia?

- How effective has UNCT been in North Macedonia in communicating results under UNSDCF? How well have the results achieved and progress under outcomes communicated? Could you provide some of the most important communication activities that have been implemented in the context of UNSDCF?

- How coherent are UN agencies in sending core UN advocacy messages (especially those related to UNSDCF implementation)?

- Was the communication between the UN Agencies satisfactory?

- What would be your suggestions for improving and strengthening internal communication and facilitating access to and sharing of information among UN Agencies and employees?

Interview Guide: International development partners

- Could you please introduce yourself, your organisation and your role?

- Are you familiar with the work of the United Nations Agencies in North Macedonia? If yes, how is your work related to their intervention areas?

Relevant evaluation criteria: RELEVANCE

- What have been the priority development needs of North Macedonia from 2021-2025?

- Which specific development priorities of the country and needs of the population (especially vulnerable) your organisation is addressing?

- Who is your main partner among UN Agencies? Do you think that UN Agencies that you have supported have been sufficiently focused on the priority areas and the needs of citizens?

- Have any external factors affected the country's development needs? Did any new needs appear? Did any of the previously recognised needs lose priority?

Relevant evaluation criteria: EFFECTIVENESS, IMPACT and SUSTAINABILITY

- What initiatives/UNSDCFs has your organisation supported/implemented in North Macedonia? What are your priority sectors?

- What has been the degree of cooperation with UN Agencies?

- How was your organisation coordinating and cooperating with UN Agencies? Was there an effective nation-driven mechanism for donor coordination in place? If not, what other mechanisms were in place?

- Are there any examples of successful cooperation (joint forces for implementing activities in the priority sectors) of UN Agencies with you or other donors (e.g. supported or implemented by your organisation)? What factors contributed to the effectiveness of these joint actions?

- From your experience, did any UN Agencies take a leadership role in delivering support in specific sectors? How effective was the UN Agency leadership in specific sectors or sub-sectors in contributing to the results? How?

- Have the national partners (the Government of North Macedonia and other stakeholders) created a policy environment conducive to sustaining the accomplished results?

- In your opinion, what are the most relevant country priorities and needs for the upcoming five-year period?

Interview Guide: Bilateral and multilateral donors

- Could you please introduce yourself, your organisation and your role in this organisation?

- Are you familiar with the work of the United Nations Agencies in North Macedonia?

- How is your work related to the intervention areas of the United Nations Agencies in North Macedonia?

Relevant evaluation criteria: RELEVANCE

- What have been the priority development needs of North Macedonia from 2021-2025? Which specific development priorities of the country and needs of the population (especially vulnerable) your organisation is addressing through UN Agencies?

- Who are your main UN partners?

- Do you think that your partner UN Agencies have relevant and adequate approach to address priorities?

- Have any external factors affected the country's development needs?

- What areas should be prioritised in the future?

Relevant evaluation criteria: EFFECTIVENESS, IMPACT and SUSTAINABILITY

- What have been the main results that you have achieved in partner initiatives/UNSDCFs supported/ implemented by your organisation in North Macedonia? What are your priority sectors?

- What has been the degree of cooperation with UN Agencies?

- How was your cooperation and communication with UN Agencies?

- Was there an effective nation-driven mechanism for donor coordination in place? If not, what other mechanisms were in place?

- Are there any examples of successful cooperation (joint forces for implementing activities in the priority sectors) of UN Agencies with you or other donors (e.g. supported or implemented by your organisation)? What factors contributed to the effectiveness of these joint actions?

- From your experience, did any UN Agencies take a leadership role in delivering support in specific sectors? How effective was the UN Agency leadership in specific sectors or sub-sectors in contributing to the results achieved? How?

- Have the national partners (Government of North Macedonia and other stakeholders) created a policy environment that is conducive to sustaining the accomplished results?

- In your opinion, what are the most relevant country priorities and needs for the upcoming five-year period?

Interview Guide: Institutional partners

- Could you please introduce yourself, your organisation and your role in this organisation?

- Are you familiar with the work of the United Nations Agencies in North Macedonia? If yes, how is your work related to the areas of intervention of the United Nations Agencies in North Macedonia?

Relevant evaluation criteria: RELEVANCE

- What have been the priority development needs of North Macedonia from 2021-2025?

- Which specific development priorities of the country and needs of the population (especially vulnerable) your institution is addressing?

- Do you think that UN Agencies have been sufficiently focused on the priority areas and the needs of citizens?

- Have any external factors affected the country's development needs? Did any new needs appear? Did any of the previously recognized needs lose priority?

Relevant evaluation criteria: EFFECTIVENESS, IMPACT and SUSTAINABILITY

- What have the initiatives/UNSDCFs supported/ implemented by your institution in North Macedonia been? What are your priority sectors? What has been the degree of cooperation with UN Agencies?

- How was your institution coordinating and cooperating with UN Agencies? Were there measures such as policy dialogues or joint interventions in place to coordinate efforts? If not, what other mechanisms were in place?

- Are there any examples of successful cooperation (joint forces for implementing activities in the priority sectors) between UN agencies and you or other donors (e.g., those implemented by your institution)? What factors contributed to the effectiveness of these joint actions?

- From your experience, did any UN Agencies take a leadership role in delivering support in any of the specific sectors? How effective was the UN Agency leadership in specific sectors or sub-sectors in contributing to the results? How?

- Have the national partners created a policy environment that sustains the accomplished results?

- In your opinion, what are the most relevant country priorities and needs for the upcoming five-year period?

Interview Guide: Beneficiaries (if appropriate)

Could you please introduce yourself,

- How did you become involved in the activities of UN Agencies?

- How did you benefit from the support from UN Agencies? Please provide specific examples.

- Do you know about other results of support from UN Agencies?

- What were your needs, and did the UN support address these needs? Did UN Agencies' work and results help improve the situation in your community or in North Macedonia?

- Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the support provided by UN Agencies?

- What are the priority areas of your community (or the country) that you recommend for future development assistance to address?

12.1 ONLINE questionnaires

ONLINE questionnaire for UN management and programme/ project staff

Which priority area your work fits best with:

- o   Public administration reform (based upon the rule of law, human rights, gender equality, labour rights, and quality data)
- o   Economic governance- sustainable and inclusive economic diversification
- o   Environmental sustainability- disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation and mitigation measures, "green economy transition"
- o   Quality and inclusive health and social protection services.
- o   Education and skilling system

Please, provide the answers to the following questions primarily having in mind your priority area of work.

1.   In your opinion, how well were UNSDCF 2021-2025 and UN Agencies' activities aligned with North Macedonia's national priorities and needs of the people?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information about it
-
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?

- _____

-

2.   In your opinion, what is the extent to which the UNSDCF and UN Agencies have been addressing the needs of the people in North Macedonia since 2021?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information about it
  -
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?

- _____

3.   To what degree would you say UNSDCF followed the "leaving no one behind" principle in North Macedonia and contributed to SDGs and other international commitments?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information about it

-
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?
- _____
-

4. In your opinion, what is the extent to which the UNSDCF and UN Agencies have been addressing the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups?
   - Completely
   - Sufficiently
   - Insufficiently
   - Not at all
   - I don't have enough information about it
     -
   - If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why you think so?
- _____

5. To what extent have UN agency programs and work plans been designed in alignment with the UNSDCF?
   - Completely
   - Sufficiently
   - Insufficiently
   - Not at all
   - I don't have enough information about it
     -
   - If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why you think so?
- _____

6. To what extent have the post-reform Resident Coordinator office's roles and responsibilities contributed to coherence among UN Agencies?
   - Completely
   - To a large extent
   - To a moderate extent
   - To a small extent
   - Not at all

7. How have the post-reform Resident Coordinator office's roles and responsibilities facilitated or hindered joint efforts among UN Agencies?
   - Strongly facilitated
   - Somewhat facilitated
   - Neither facilitated nor hindered
   - Somewhat hindered
   - Strongly hindered

8. To what extent has the UNSDCF facilitated complementarity, harmonisation, and coordination among UN agencies?

- Completely
- To a large extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

9. How effectively has the UNSDCF promoted collaboration with other key development partners to maximise results?
    - Highly effectively
    - Effectively
    - Moderately effectively
    - Somewhat effectively
    - Not effectively at all

10. How effective have UN agencies been in achieving results under the UNSDCF?
    - Completely
    - Sufficiently
    - Insufficiently
    - Not at all
    - I don't have enough information about it
        -
    - If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why you think so?
- _____

11. From your perspective, what have been the most important results achieved during UNSDCF implementation (laws, policies, institutional level; level of beneficiaries)

_____

12. Would you say there were areas under which UNSDCF has been underperforming?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

    If yes, which ones?

_____

13. Would you say there were unplanned results achieved during UNSDCF implementation?
    - Yes
    - No
    - I don't know

    If yes, which ones?

_____

14. Have you been cooperating with other UN Agencies during programming and planning new initiatives?

   1. Yes

   2. No

   If yes, provide examples.

   _____

15. Have you been cooperating directly with other UN Agencies while implementing activities (projects and programs)?

   - Yes

   - No

   If yes, provide examples.

   _____

16. In your opinion, has UN Agencies in North Macedonia cooperated and used sufficiently joint programming to address complex development challenges?

   - Yes

   - No

17. From your experience or perspective, how would you rate the functionality and effectiveness of the UNSDCF joint coordination structures and national SDG governing bodies in ensuring progress towards outcomes?"

   - Highly functional and effective

   - Sufficiently functional and effective

   - Insufficiently functional and effective

   - Not at all

   - I don't have enough information about it

   -

   If you think it was insufficiently functional and effective, can you please explain why do you think so?

   - _____

18. To what extent do you believe an integrated funding framework and adequate funding instruments supported the UNSDCF?

   - Completely

   - Sufficiently

   - Insufficiently

   - Not at all

   - I don't have enough information about it

   -

   - If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?

   - _____

19. How effectively has the UN system mobilized and utilized its resources (human, technical, and financial), along with inter-agency synergies, to achieve the planned UNSDCF results?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information about it
-

If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?

- _____

20. In your opinion, are the financial and human resources allocated by the UN Agencies appropriate to support the implementation of strategies and achieve UNSDCF outcomes?

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information about it
-
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?
- _____

21. Have there been external factors that (negatively) affected efficiency in UNSDCF implementation?

- Yes
- No
- I don't have enough information about it
-
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?
- _____

22. According to your opinion, what would you improve to ensure more efficient (individual and joint) delivery of results?

- _____

23. To what extent would you say has the UNCT's work contributed to development changes in North Macedonia since 2021?

- Sufficiently
- Partially
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information about it
-
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?

- _____

24. Could you please provide examples where UNCT contributed to development changes (legal framework, institutions, social and economic structure)?

   _____

25. In your opinion, has the UNCT's work effectively mainstreamed gender and human rights?
    - Completely
    - Sufficiently
    - Insufficiently
    - Not at all
    - I don't have enough information about it
    -
    - If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?
    -

-

26. In your opinion, would the results achieved during the implementation of UNSDCF have long-lasting effect?
    a. Completely
    b. Sufficiently
    c. Insufficiently
    d. Not at all
    e. I don't have enough information about it
       -
    2. Can you indicate factors that could affect the long-term sustainability of achieved results?
- _____

ONLINE questionnaire for UN operations staff

Please, provide the answers to the following questions primarily having in mind your priority area of work.

1. In your opinion, how well were UNSDCF 2021-2025 and UN Agencies' activities aligned with North Macedonia's national priorities and needs of the people? national development priorities in North Macedonia?
    a. Completely
    b. Sufficiently
    c. Insufficiently
    d. Not at all
    e. I don't have enough information about it

    - If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?
    - _____

    •

2. In your opinion, what is the extent to which the UNSDCF and UN Agencies have been addressing the needs of the people in North Macedonia in the period since 2021?
    a. Completely
    b. Sufficiently
    c. Insufficiently
    d. Not at all
    e. I don't have enough information about it

    •
    - If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?
    - _____

3. To what degree would you say UNSDCF followed the "leaving no one behind" principle in North Macedonia and contributed to SDGs and other international commitments?
    f. Completely
    g. Sufficiently
    h. Insufficiently
    i. Not at all
    j. I don't have enough information about it

    •
    - If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?
    - _____
    •

4. How appropriate have the financial and human resources allocated by UN Agencies been in supporting the implementation of strategies and achieving UNSDCF outcomes?
    - Extremely appropriate
    - Very appropriate
    - Moderately appropriate
    - Somewhat appropriate
    - Not appropriate at all

5. How effectively has the UNCT established and implemented procedures and resources to ensure contribution to achieving the defined outcomes?
   - Extremely effectively
   - Very effectively
   - Moderately effectively
   - Somewhat effectively
   - Not effectively at all

6. How well do the mobilized and delivered resources compare to the planned resources for UNSDCF implementation?
   - Completely aligned
   - Mostly aligned
   - Moderately aligned
   - Slightly aligned
   - Not aligned at all

7. In your opinion how has the Delivering as One in North Macedonia implemented:
   - Completely
   - Sufficiently
   - Insufficiently
   - Not at all
   - I don't have enough information about it
-
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?
- _____
-

8. In which of the areas of operations has the Delivering as One approach advancing?
   - Joint procurement of goods
   - Example and explanation:
   - Joint procurement of services
   - Example and explanation:
   - Joint recruitment of experts- joint HR approach
   - Explanation:
   - ICT and ICT support
   - Explanation
   - Establishment of One UN budget
   - Explanation:
   - Financial management
   - Explanation
   - Joint communication
   - Explanation
   - Shared premises/ common unitilities
   - Explanation:

- I don't have enough information about it
-

9. In your opinion, what were the areas in which Delivering as One was underperforming?

- Joint procurement of goods
- Example and explanation:
- Joint procurement of services
- Example and explanation:
- Joint recruitment of experts- joint HR approach
- Explanation:
- ICT and ICT support
- Explanation
- Establishment of One UN budget
- Explanation:
- Financial management
- Explanation
- Joint communication
- Explanation
- Shared premises/ common unitilities
- Explanation:
- I don't have enough information about it
-

10. Have you been cooperating directly with other UN Agencies while implementing activities (projects and programs)?

k. Yes

l. No

If yes, provide examples.

_____

11. In your opinion, to what extent the roles and responsibilities of the post-reform Resident Coordinator office have facilitated UN Agencies in achieving better coherence in implementing the UNSDCF

- Completely
- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information about it
-
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?
- _____

12. From your experience or perspective, how would you rate the functionality and effectiveness of the UNSDCF joint coordination structures and national SDG governing bodies in ensuring progress towards outcomes?"

- Highly functional and effective
- Sufficiently functional and effective
- Insufficiently functional and effective
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information about it

-
- If you think it was insufficiently functional and effective, can you please explain why do you think so?

- _____

13. How would you assess cooperation and communication among UN Agencies?

- Highly functional and effective
- Sufficiently functional and effective
- Insufficiently functional and effective
- Not at all
- I don't have enough information about it

If you think it was insufficiently functional and effective, can you please explain why do you think so?

- _____

14. Have would you assess cooperation with other UN Operations staff/ units?
- Very satisfactory
- Satisfactory
- Fair
- Unsatisfactory
- Non-existent

If you think it was unsatisfactory, can you please explain why do you think so?

_____

15. In your opinion, has UN in North Macedonia used sufficiently DoA to enhance and improve delivery of results?

m. Yes

n. No

16. Have there been external factors that (negatively) affected efficiency in UNSDCF implementation?

o. Yes

p. No

q. I don't have enough information about it

- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?

-

17. According to your opinion, what would you improve to ensure more efficient (individual and joint) delivery of results?

- _____

ONLINE questionnaire for the national stakeholders

1. Which of the following best describes the focus of your organisation's work:
    - Public administration reform (based upon the rule of law, human rights, gender equality, labour rights, and quality data)
    - Economic governance- sustainable and inclusive economic diversification
    - Environmental sustainability- disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation and mitigation measures, "green economy transition"
    - Quality and inclusive health and social protection services.
    - Education and skilling system

2. How familiar you are with UNCT work in North Macedonia since 2021?
    - Very familiar
    - Familiar
    - I know a few things
    - I have no information
    -

If options 1-3 are chosen…

-
3. In your opinion, what is the extent to which the UNCT has been addressing the most pressing identified needs of the people in North Macedonia in the period since 2021?
    - Completely
    - Sufficiently
    - Insufficiently
    - Not at all
    - I don't have enough information about it
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why you think so?
-

-
4. In your opinion, how well were UNSDCF and UNCT activities aligned with national development priorities?
    - Completely
    - Sufficiently
    - Insufficiently
    - Not at all
    - I don't have enough information about it
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?
-

-
5. In your opinion, how well were UNSDCF and UNCT activities aligned priorities in your area of work?
    - Completely
    - Sufficiently
    - Insufficiently

- ▪ Not at all
- ▪ I don't have enough information about it
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?
- _____
-

6. In your opinion, has the UN in North Macedonia been delivering planned results (in your area of work)?
    - ▪ Completely
    - ▪ Sufficiently
    - ▪ Insufficiently
    - ▪ Not at all
    - ▪ I don't have enough information about it
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?
-
_____
-

7. Do you think the UN in North Macedonia is an important partner to support development processes?
    - ▪ Yes
    - ▪ No
    - ▪ I don't have enough information about it
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why you think so?
-
_____
-
-

8. How effective UN in North Macedonia was in the implementation of projects and programs in your area of work?
    - ▪ Completely
    - ▪ Sufficiently
    - ▪ Insufficiently
    - ▪ Not at all
    - ▪ I don't have enough information about it
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?
- _____
-

9. How would you assess your cooperation and communication with UN in North Macedonia?
    - ▪ Excellent
    - ▪ Very good
    - ▪ Fair
    - ▪ Not Good
    - ▪ We could not communicate or cooperate
- Please explain why do you think so?

- _____
-

10. How effective would you say were the UN Agencies in coordinating activities with the GoM and other development partners in North Macedonia?

    - Completely
    - Sufficiently
    - Insufficiently
    - Not at all
    - I don't have enough information about it

- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?

- _____

11. How effective were the UN Agencies in coordinating activities with civil society in North Macedonia?

    - Completely
    - Sufficiently
    - Insufficiently
    - Not at all
    - I don't have enough information about it

- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?

- _____
-

12. To what extent would you say the UNCT's work contributed to development results in North Macedonia since 2021?

    - Completely
    - Sufficiently
    - Insufficiently
    - Not at all
    - I don't have enough information about it

-
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?

-

-

13. In your opinion, has the UNCT's work effectively mainstreamed gender and human rights?

    - Completely
    - Sufficiently
    - Insufficiently
    - Not at all
    - I don't have enough information about it

-
- If you think it was insufficient, can you please explain why do you think so?

- _____
-

14. What would you say should be UNCT's priority in the next 5 years?

_____

ANNEX 3 - STAKEHOLDER MAP

The evaluation team prepared, in close cooperation with the RCO and UNCT, a comprehensive Stakeholder Map for interviews, group interviews and focus group discussions during the in-country visit and online data gathering activities.

The map followed a purposive sampling framework in identifying interventions and stakeholders to ensure sample representativeness, which follows relevant guidance on programmatic, stakeholder, and geographical representation and the principle of LNOB.

The Table below summarises stakeholders that have been interviewed, institutional affiliation, relevant pillar/ programmatic area, gender and location.

==PERSONAL IDENTIFYING DETAILS WILL BE REMOVED TO FULFIL PRIVACY REQUIREMENTS==.

Figure 28 - Stakeholder map

#	Entity/ Authority	Name	Title	Email/ phone number
GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS				
1	Deputy Prime Minister in charge of Good Governance Policies	Slavica Grkovska	Former Deputy Prime Minister in charge of Good Governance Policies	Cabinet.Grkovska@gs.gov.mk
2		Tatjana Popovska	Special advisor for coordination of the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia in charge of good governance policies	tatjana.popovska@gs.gov.mk
3	Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs	Fatmir Bytyqi	Former DPM for Economic Affairs	fatmir.bytyqi@gmail.com
4	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Natasha Hroneska	Head of Unit for climate change and environment	- natasha.hroneska@mfa.gov.mk
5				
6	Ministry of Finance	Magdalena Simonovska	Advisor to the Minister	magdalena.simonovska@finance.gov.mk
7	Ministry of Education and Science	Mila Carovska	Former Minister of Education	mila.carovska@hera.org.mk
8		Biljana Kazandjiska	State Secretary of Ministry of Education and Sience	Biljana.Kazandjiska@mon.gov.mk
9		Sanja Janceva	OiC Head of Sector for Primary Education	sanja.janceva@mon.gov.mk
10		Natalija Kizevska	OiC Head of Sector forSecondary Education	natalija.kizevska@mon.gov.mk

11		Elena Grozdanova	State Advisor for Equal Opportunities	elenagro@yahoo.com; egrozdanova@mtsp.gov.mk
12		Svetlana Cvetkovska	Head of Department for Equal Opportunities	scvetkovska@mtsp.gov.mk
13		Lidija Sterjov	Head of the Social Inclusion Department/Sector for Social Protection	lsterjov@mtsp.gov.mk
14	Ministry of Labor and Social Policy	Elka Todorova	Head of the Department for Social, Family and Legal Protection of children and family	ETodorova@mtsp.gov.mk
15		Mladen Frckovski	Head of Labour Market Unit	MFrckovski@mtsp.gov.mk
16		Aleksandra Slavkoska	Head of Sector	aslavkoska@mtsp.gov.mk
17		Radmila Loshkovska	Secretary of Economic and Social Council	radmila.loshkovska@mtsp.gov.mk
18		Maja Papatolevska	Head of Labour Law and Employment Policy Department	MPapatolevska@mtsp.gov.mk
19		Maja Cvetkovska	MoI IPA Unit Head	Maja_Cvetkovska@moi.gov.mk
20	Ministry of Interior	Elisaveta Jovanovik	Deputy Head of NESKMTL Criminal Investigation Sector	Elisaveta_Jovanovik@moi.gov.mk
21		Edvard Fisher	Chef Inspector in the Unit for serious crimes related with cultural heritage	edvard_fisher@moi.gov.mk
22	Secretariat of EU Affairs	Drita Abdiu-Halili	Former State Secretary	Drita.Abdiu-Halili@sep.gov.mk 072 235 056
23		Dragan Tilev	State counselor	dragan.tilev@sep.gov.mk
24		Bekim Sali	Former Minister of Health	bekimsali@yahoo.com
25		Gordana Majnova	State Advisor	gordana.majnova@zdravstvo.gov.mk
26	Ministry of Health	Biljana Celevska	Head of Department for EU Integration and International Cooperation	biljana.celevska@zdravstvo.gov.mk
27		Kiril Soleski	Macedonian Medical Association	soleskik@gmail.com
28		Zhaklina Chagoroska	Head of Unit, e-Health Directorate, Ministry of Health	zaklina.cagoroska@zdravstvo.gov.mk
29	iInstitute for Public Health	Elena Kosevska	Head of sector for health promotion	kosevska@yahoo.com
30		Naser Ziberi	Ombudsman	contact@ombudsman.mk
31	Ombudsman	Jovan Andonovski	Deputy Ombudsman	contact@ombudsman.mk
32		Vaska Bajramovska-Mustafa	Deputy Ombudsman	contact@ombudsman.mk

33	Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination	Igor Jadrovski	Chairperson	i.jadrovski@kszd.mk
34	State Audit Office	Maksim Acevski	Auditor General	maksim.acevski@dzr.gov.mk
35	State Statistical Office	Apostol Simovski	Director	apostol.simovski@stat.gov.mk
36		Jasmina Gjorgieva	Advisor to the Director	jasmina.gjorgieva@stat.gov.mk;
37		Bojkica Markovska	Advisor on Migration and the Statistical Registry of the Population	bojkica.markovska@stat.gov.mk
38		Marina Mijovska	To be provided	marina.mijovska@stat.gov.mk
39		Snezana Sipovic	SDGs indicators focal point	snezana.sipovic@stat.gov.mk
40	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning	Teodora Obradovic Grncarovska	State Advisor on Climate Change	dori.moeppgovmk@gmail.com
41		Vesna Indova Tocko	Head of Sector for the European Union/GEF Operational Focal Point	V.Indova@moepp.gov.mk
42		Jasmina Petkovska	Sector for International Cooperation	J.Petkovska@moepp.gov.mk
43	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy	Kiril Georgievski	Head of Land Consolidation Department	kiril.georgievski@mzsv.gov.mk
44		Aleksandar Musalevski	Head of Agriculture Policy Department and FAO National Correspondent	a.musalevski@mzsv.gov.mk
45	Agency for Youth and Sport	Gordana Cekova	Head of Youth Department	gordana@ams.gov.mk
46	Employment Service Agency	Goran Petkovski	Head of Unit for European Integration and Projects	Goran.Petkovski@av.gov.mk
UN OFFICIALS (both at the country and regional, plus many more through discussion with UN Results and Thematic Groups)				
47	Office of the UN Resident Coordinator	Ms. Rossana Dudziak	Resident Coordinator	rossana.dudziak@un.org
48		Joana Babushku	Economist	joana.babushku@un.org
49	UNDP Office	Armen Grigoryan	Resident Representative	armen.grogoriyan@undp.org
50	UNICEF	Olimpija Markoska	Representative	skopje@unicef.org
51	UN Women	Vesna Ivanovikj - Castarede	Head of the Office	vesna.ivanovikj@unwomen.org
52	IOM	Sonja Bozinovska Petrusevska	Head of the Office	sbozinovska@iom.int
53	FAO	Nabil Gangi	Deputy Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia	Nabil.Gangi@fao.org
54	UNDRR			
55	UNFPA	Afrodita Shalja Plavjanska	Head of the Office	shalja-plavjanska@unfpa.org

56	UNECE	Polina Tarshis	Programme Management Officer	polina.tarshis@un.org
57	UNEP	Iskra Stojanova	WB Projects Coordinator at UN Environment Programme	iskra.stojanova@un.org
58		Sonja Gebert	Associate Programme Management Officer at UNEP	sonja.gebert@un.org
59	UNESCO	Rosati Matteo	Head of Unit	m.rosati@unesco.org
60	UNEOPS	Michela Telatin	Head of the office	michelat@unops.org
61	UNODC	Valentina Ancevska	Officer in Charge and Head of Office a.i.	valentina.anchevska@un.org
62	UNIDO	Solomiya Omelyan	Chief of the Regional Bureau for Europe and Central Asia	s.omelyan@unido.org
63		Maria Pavlova	Programme Officer	m.pavlova@unido.org
64	UNHCHR	Tatjana Temelkovska	HR advisor	tatijana.temelkoska@un.org
65	ILO	Emil Krstanovski	National Coordinator	krstanovski@ilo.org
66	UNHCR	Gabriel Gualano de Godoy	Representative	godoy@unhcr.org
67	WHO	Anne Johansen	Representative	johansena@who.int
68	World Bank	Massimiliano Paolucci	Country Representative	mpaolucci@worldbankgroup.org
CIVIL SOCIETY, DONOR COMMUNITY and ACADEMIA				
69	Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA)	Teodora Kjoseva Kostadinovska	Programme Manager	acvetanovska@myla.org.mk
70	Institute for Human rights	Jelena Kadrikj, Marija Chekeredji	Executive Director	jelena.kadric@ihr.org.mk
71	Coalition of Youth Organizations SEGA	Zoran Ilieski	Executive Director	zorani@sega.org.mk
72	City Red Cross Skopje	Suzana Tuneva Paunovska	Secretary General	skopje@redcross.org.mk
73	HERA	Elizabeta Bozinoska	Programme Director	elizabeta.bozinoska@hera.org.mk
74	Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia	Biljana Zhurovska	Focal Point for Health Prevention Programmes	zdravstvo@redcross.org.mk
75	Open Gate/La Strada	Marija Todorovska	Prrogramme Director	jasmina@lastrada.org.mk
76	Roma Women's Initiative from Šuto Orizari	Salije Bekim Halim	President	inicijativanazeni.sutoorizari@gmail.com
77	Etika - Gostivar	Sbajete Zenku	President	szenku@yahoo.com

78	Trade Unions	Slobodan Trendafilov	President of the Federation of Trade Unions of Macedonia	s.trendafilov@ssm.org.mk/ info@ssm.org.mk
79	Macedonian Ecological Society	Elena Minova	Executive Director	arsovska@mes.org.mk brajanoska@mes.org.mk contact@mes.org.mk
80	Association of Employers	Svetlana Ristovska - Antic	Executive Director	info@orm.org.mk
81	LEAD	Ivan Jovanov	Programme Manager	ivan.jovanov@lead.org.mk
82	BFSD (CSO)	Viktorija Brndevska Stipanovic		vandonovski5@gmail.com
83	IPECC	Jadranka Ivanova		contact@ipecc.org.mk
84	Embassy of Sweden to North Macedonia/ SIDA	Mikael Atterhög	Head of Cooperation, SIDA	mikael.atterhog@gov.se
85		Biljana Dzartova-Petrovska	To be provided	biljana.dzartova-petrovska@gov.se
86	Embassy of Switzerland to North Macedonia	Lucien Aegerter	Head of Development Cooperation	lucien.aegerter@eda.admin.ch
87		Katerina Kolozova		kristina.kolozova@eda.admin.ch
88		Stanislava Dodeva	Senior National Programme Officer	stanislava.dodeva@eda.admin.ch
89		Xhevahire Prusi-Zajazi		xhevahire.prusizajazi@eda.admin.ch
90	British Embassy	Andrew Brand,	Head of Programmes	andrew.brand@fcdo.gov.uk
91		Irena Stevcevska	To be provided	irena.stevcevska@fcdo.gov.uk
92	Head of French Cultural Centre	Hugo Bechtel		hugo.bechtel@diplomatie.gouv.fr
93	EU Delegation	Steffan Hudolin	Head of Cooperation	Steffen.HUDOLIN@eeas.europa.eu,
94		Katerina Kus-Ivanova	To be provided	Katerina.KUS-IVANOVA@eeas.europa.eu
95		Danica Stoshevska	To be provided	danica.stoshevska@eeas.europa.eu
96		Sanja Frkovic-Gelevska	To be provided	Sanja.FRKOVIC-GELEVSKA@eeas.europa.eu
97		Natasa Ducevska	Comms	Natasa.DUCEVSKA@eeas.europa.eu
98		Margarita Deleva	Programme Manager for Agriculture and Rural Development	Margarita.deleva@eeas.europa.eu
99		Irena Ivanova	To be provided	Irena.IVANOVA@eeas.europa.eu
100	USAID	Jeri Dible,		jdible@usaid.gov
101		Enid Nunez	Programme Office Director	enunez@usaid.gov

102	University of Ss Cyril and Methodius	Nikolina Kenig	Professor	ninakenig@yahoo.com
103	Faculty of Law Iustinianus Primus	Gordana Lazetikj	Professor	gordana2206@gmail.com
104	Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food - Skopje	Marina Nacka	Professor	marina.nacka@fznh.ukim.edu.mk
105		Ordan Cukaliev	Professor of Irrigation of Agricultural crops with experience in climate change, smart agriculture and digitalisation of agriculture	Ordan.Cukaliev@zf.ukim.edu.mk; cukaliev@gmail.com
106	FINKI	Petre Lameski	Professor	petre.lameski@finki.ukim.mk
107		Ivan Chorbev	**Professor**	ivan.chorbev@finki.ukim.mk
108	Faculty of Medicine	Katarina Stavric	Professor	kstavric@hotmail.com
109	Faculty of security	Stojanka Mircheva	Professor	s.mirceva@gmail.com

Persons interviewed	
Government	46
Donor	18
Academia	8
CSO	15
UN	22
TOTAL	109

Methods	Number
National and local government survey	30
Survey UN programme staff	57
Survey UN operations staff	15
Focus groups Academia	2
Focus groups CSOs	4
Focus groups UN per OG	4

ANNEX 4 – LIST OF ANALYSED DOCUMENTATION

Following is a list of the documents reviewed during the evaluation.

United Nations – North Macedonia Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/100160-republic-north-macedonia-and-united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework

United Nations Common Country Assessment
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/101667-north-macedonia-common-country-analysis-2021-2025-united-nations-sustainable-development
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/157996-common-country-analysis-update-2021
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/207326-north-macedonia-common-country-analysis-2022-update
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/253270-north-macedonia-common-country-analysis-2023-update

National Development Strategy
- https://www.nrs.mk/en-GB/dokumenti.nspx

Voluntary National Review 2020
- https://hlpf.un.org/countries/republic-of-north-macedonia/voluntary-national-review-2020

UNCT Joint Work Plans 2021-22-23-24
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/266475-sdcf-2024-joint-workplans
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/220256-joint-workplan-2023
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/175898-joint-workplans-2022

United Nations Country Results Report 2021-22-23
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/266803-united-nations-north-macedonia-2023-annual-results-report
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/236018-united-nations-north-macedonia-2022-annual-results-report
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/182132-united-nations-north-macedonia-2021-annual-results-report
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/126560-united-nations-north-macedonia-2020-annual-results-report

Resource Mobilization and Partnership Strategy North Macedonia 2021-2015. UN North Macedonia.

Business Operations Strategy and the associated annual business operations plans

United Nations Communication Strategy 2021-2025 and the associated annual communication plans

United Nations Resource Mobilization Strategy for 2021-2025
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/175837-resource-mobilization-and-partnership-strategy-north-macedonia

Agency-specific country programmes

Agency-specific country reporting

Agency-specific country programme evaluations and joint programme evaluations conducted by the United Nations entities during the UNSDCF 2021-2025 cycle

UNINFO data

Steering Committee meeting reports

UNSDCF Result Matrix Monitoring documents

Information Management Survey Reports

Development and Sectoral Strategies of North Macedonia (including EU Accession process and regular EC Progress Reports on North Macedonia),

North Macedonia UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecards and the associated work plans and annual reports

North Macedonia UNCT Accountability Scorecard on Disability Inclusion

North Macedonia UNCT Youth 2030 Scorecard

Reports of Human Rights Treaty bodies and mechanisms concerning North Macedonia

North Macedonia COVID-19 Response Framework (30.07.2020)
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/94768-north-macedonia-covid-19-response-framework-30072020

Sustainable Development Bulletin and other publications
- https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/resources/publications

UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines - Revised July 2022

UNEG Norms and Standards (2016) and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines (2020)

ANNEX 5: UNSDCF RESULTS MATRIX

Impact:

National development priorities[16]:
Per the new Programme, in the period 2020-2024, the Government will focus on implementation of the following strategic priorities: EU membership, good neighbourly and interethnic relations, social cohesion, addressing the global COVID-19 pandemic; accelerated economic growth, sustainable development, modern education, efficient good governance and strong institutions. SDCF Strategic priority 1 directly contributes to the following Government strategic priorities:

- Economic transformation (MK Restart), accelerated growth and higher living standard
- COVID-19 is not only a health challenge
- Care for all

Reform Package No 2[17]: Economy (a) Invest in workforce development, job readiness, and labour market information systems to support job intermediation, (b) Streamline support programs for access of firms to finance, (c) Close infrastructure gaps in key transport corridors and rebalance spending to invest in road and railway maintenance and in road safety, (d) Reduce restrictions on part-time, temporary, and seasonal work
EU acquis chapters: 11. Agriculture and rural development; 19. Social policy and employment; 20. Entrepreneurship and industrial policy; 21. Trans-European networks; 25. Science and research; 26. Education and culture
Reform Package No 3: Human Capital (a) Put in place a broad-based strategy to strengthen the quality and relevance of...tertiary education, (b) ...promote behaviour changes to achieve gender parity in employment
EU acquis chapters: 26. Education and culture, 19. Social policy and employment.

SDGs and SDG targets:
Goal 1: 1.2
Goal 2: 2.2, 2.4
Goal 3: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.a, 3.b
Goal 4: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5
Goal 5: 5.1, 5.3, 5.5, 5.6, 5.b
Goal 6: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.3
Goal 8: 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.10
Goal 9: 9.1, 9.2, 9.5, 9.b, 9.c
Goal 10: 10.1, 10.2, 10.5
Goal 11: 11.1, 11.3

---

[16] Government Programme 2020-2024
[17] Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and UNDP, THE EUROPEAN PATHWAY OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA: ACHIEVING FASTER, MORE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH, North Macedonia 2035: Policy, institutional, and economic convergence with the EU, 2019.

SDGs accelerators:
1. Investing in creating supportive business environment for inclusive 'green' growth
2. Investing in modernization of agriculture and resilient food systems
3. Investing in innovations, inventions and R&D and digitalization of business processes and services
4. Increasing women's activation and labourforce participation including closure of the gender-pay gap
5. Prioritizing investments to increase youth activation and labourforce participation of young women
6. Improving management of culture and cultural heritage as driver of life in urban areas and sustainable tourism development
7. Investing in quality, inclusive and sustainable health and education systems
8. Investing in protection services including social protection and community-based services
9. Greater cross-sector coordination to improve access to basic social services
10. Investing in inclusive and sustainable local and regional development

Results	Performance Indicators (disaggregated)	Baseline (year)	Target (2025)	Source/ MoV	Partners
Outcome 1: **By 2025, the living standard of all people in North Macedonia is improved through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by inclusive and innovative business ecosystem**	I_10: Employment rate (20-64, %) a) All b) Female c) Male d) Youth (15-29) e) Youth Female f) Youth Male *SDG indicator: EU SDG 08_30* *PAF indicator[18]: EESP 8.3, EESP 8.5 (Youth)* *Custodian UN entity: ILO*	(2019) a) 59.2 b) 48.4 c) 69.8 d) 34.4 e) 28.0 f) 40.4	a) 63.1 b) 49.2 c) 74.3 d) 34.9 e) 28.2 f) 41.8	State Statistical office, Labour Force Survey	**National Partners** Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Employment Services Agency; Regional Employment Offices; Fund for Innovation and Technological Development; Trade Unions; Chambers of Economics and Commerce; Local Economic and Social Councils;
	I_20: Proportion of informal employment in total economy, by sex and age (%) a) All b) Female c) Male d) Youth (15-24) *SDG indicator: SDG_A831_SEX_RT_A Modified indicator, covering also agriculture/SDG_8.3.lb* *Custodian UN Entity: ILO*	(2019) a) 16.1 b) 13 c) 18.1 d) 28.9	a) 14	State Statistical Office, Labour Force Survey	

[18] PAF stands for Performance Assessment Framework that is developed by the Government with EU support to monitor the performance within the implementation of the EU Instrument for Pre-accession assistance (EU IPA 3 2021 -2027). This framework consists of over 200 indicators at impact, outcome and activity level and it is in a process of finalization.

I_30: Percentage of young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex: a) All b) Female c) Male and age d) 15-29 years e) 15-24 years f) and 25-29 years *SDG indicator: SDG_0861_SEX_RT_A / EU SDG: 08_20* *PAF indicator: EESP 8.9* *Custodian UN Entity: ILO*	(2019): 15-29 years: Total: 24,5 Male: 20,9 Female:28,3 15-24 years: Total: 18,1 Male:17,l Female:19,2 25-29 years: Total: 34,9 Male: 27,1 Female: 43,1	15-29 years: Total: 22 Male: 20 Female:28.2 15-24 years: Total: 15.8 Male: 16,9 Female:19.1 25-29 years: Total: 33.3 Male: 25.6 Female:43.0	State Statistical Office, Labour Force Survey	Employers; Farmers Associations, Producer organizations **Participating UN Entities** FAO, ILO, UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNECE, IOM, UNHCR, UN-Habitat
I_40: Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person *SDG indicator: SDG_A821_NOC_RT_A /SDG 8.2.1* *Custodian UN entity: ILO*	-1.3(2019)	2.7	State Statistical Office	
I_50: Global Competitiveness Index 4.0 (rank) *PAF indicator: CI 21* *Custodian UN entity: UNDP*	(2019) Rank 82/141 57.3 points	Rank 67	World Economic Forum	
I_60: Working Poverty rate a) All b) Female c) Male *SDG indicator: EU SDG_01_41* *Custodian UN entity: ILO*	(2018) a) 8.8 b) 6 c) 10.6	a) 7	State Statistical Office, Lae ken poverty indicators	

Assumptions: 1. There is political will to carry out economic and governance reforms 2. There is political stability in the country to provide long-term vision and direction to the country. 3. The statistical systems are strengthened to monitor SDGs, collect disaggregated data to analyse impact on vulnerable groups and for evidence-based policy-making 4. Post-Covid-19 economic recession and its consequences on employment are well managed 5. There is no fiscal crunch that could affect social protection especially in crisis situation arising out of Covid-19 6. There is enough implementation and monitoring capacity 7. There are no environmental crises 8. Geo-political situation is calm 8. There are enough resources, including external, to finance SDGs and national priorities

I_30: Percentage of young people neither in employment nor in education and training
by sex:
  a) All
  b) Female
  c) Male
and age
  d) 15-29 years
  e) 15-24 years
  f) and 25-29 years
 	
SDG indicator: SDG_0861_SEX_RT_A / EU SDG: 08_20
PAF indicator: EESP 8.9
Custodian UN Entity: ILO
	(2019):
	15-29 years:
	Total: 24,5
	Male: 20,9
	Female:28,3
	
	15-24 years:
	Total: 18,1
	Male:17,l
	Female:19,2
	
	25-29 years:
	Total: 34,9
	Male: 27,1
	Female: 43,1
		15-29 years:
		Total: 22
		Male: 20
		Female:28.2
		
		15-24 years:
		Total: 15.8
		Male: 16,9
		Female:19.1
		
		25-29 years:
		Total: 33.3
		Male: 25.6
		Female:43.0
			State Statistical Office, Labour Force Survey	Employers; Farmers Associations, Producer organizations
				
				Participating UN Entities
				
				FAO, ILO, UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNECE, IOM, UNHCR, UN-Habitat

I_40: Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person *SDG indicator: SDG_A821_NOC_RT_A /SDG 8.2.1* *Custodian UN entity: ILO*	-1.3(2019)	2.7	State Statistical Office	
I_50: Global Competitiveness Index 4.0 (rank) *PAF indicator: CI 21* *Custodian UN entity: UNDP*	(2019) Rank 82/141 57.3 points	Rank 67	[World Economic Forum](#)	

I_60: Working Poverty rate
  a) All
  b) Female
  c) Male
SDG indicator: EU SDG_01_41
Custodian UN entity: ILO
	(2018)
	  a) 8.8
	  b) 6
	  c) 10.6
		a) 7	State Statistical Office, Lae ken poverty indicators	

Assumptions: 1. There is political will to carry out economic and governance reforms 2. There is political stability in the country to provide long-term vision and direction to the country. 3. The statistical systems are strengthened to monitor SDGs, collect disaggregated data to analyse impact on vulnerable groups and for evidence-based policy-making 4. Post-Covid-19 economic recession and its consequences on employment are well managed 5. There is no fiscal crunch that could affect social protection especially in crisis situation arising out of Covid-19 6. There is enough implementation and monitoring capacity 7. There are no environmental crises 8. Geo-political situation is calm 8. There are enough resources, including external, to finance SDGs and national priorities

Output 1.1: Sustainable enterprises created as generators of employment, decent work and innovations through strengthened value chains and increased capacities to adopt new business models, to enhance productivity and competitiveness.
Agencies: UNDP, ILO, UNOPS, UNECE, UN-Habitat

Output 1.2: Women and vulnerable/excluded persons benefit from supportive environment through tailored employment measures and a more dynamic and inclusive skilling system that responds to labour market needs for all people
Agencies: UNDP, ILO, IOM, UNHCR, UNOPS, UNFPA

Output 1.3: Enhanced and gender-responsive policy and regulatory measures that foster entrepreneurship and financing for inclusive and green growth in line with EU standards
Agencies: ILO, UNDP, UNHCR, IOM, UN Women, FAO, UN-Habitat

Output 1.4: Improved quality of employment through reduced under-employment, informality and adequate protection at work in compliance with international labour standards
Agencies: ILO, WHO

Output 1.5: Policies and capacities strengthened for sustainable and competitive rural economy aligned with EU, with focus on small farms and women farmers
Agencies: FAO, UN Women, UN-Habitat

Results	Performance Indicators (disaggregated)	Baseline (year)	Target (2025)	Source/ MoV	Partners

Outcome 2: By 2025, people in North Macedonia have universal access to rights-based quality social services - healthcare, education, and necessary social and child protection - rooted in systems resilient to emergencies.	2_10: Percentage of children age 36-59 months attending an early childhood education program (attendance rate), by sex
	  a) Total
	  b) Girls
	  c) Boys
	PAF indicator: (similar to EESP 2.1)
	Custodian UN entity: UNICEF
		(2019)
		a) 39.8
		b) 47.76
		c) 52.24
			a) 60
			b) 60
			c) 60
				ECD database	**National Partners**
					Ministry of Health
					Ministry of Education
					Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
					Vocational Training Institutes
					Trade Union of Health Workers
					Civil Society
					
					Participating UN Entities
					WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNECE, IOM, ILO, UNAIDS, UNODC, UNOPS, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNODC, UN Women, UN-Habitat

	2_20: Proportion of children and young people at the end of lower secondary education, achieving at least minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) numeracy *SDG indicator: 4.1.1* *PAF indicator: EESP 3.2 (TIMSS only)* *Custodian UN entity: UNICEF*	(2018) 0)45 (ii)39	(i) 55 (ii) 49	PISA	

	2_30: Self-reported unmet need for medical examination and care, % of population aged 16 and over, by sex
	  a) Total
	  b) Female
	  c) male
	SDG indicator: SDG_03_60
	Custodian agency: WHO
		(2018)
		
		a) 2.3
		b) 2.6
		c) 2.0
			a) 2.0
			b) 2.2
			c) 1.8
				EU SILC Survey Annual	

2_40: Proportion of the target population covered by all vaccines included in their national programme: 　a) All vaccines coverage 　b) 3 doses of diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTP3) (%) 　c) Measles-containing-vaccine second dose (MCV2) (%) *SDG indicator: 3.b.I* *Custodian UN entity: WHO/UNICEF*	(2018) a) 95 b) 92.5 c) 74.8	a) >95 a) 95 b) 95	Institute of Public Health annual report on immunization	
2_50: Probability of dying from any of Cardiovascular diseases (CVD), cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases (CRD) between age 30 and exact age 70 (%) *SDG indicator: 3.4.1.* *Custodian UN entity: WHO*	20.3 (2016)	18.5	Institute of Public Health	
2_60: Modern contraceptive prevalence Rate[19] *SDG indicator: 3.6.1.* *Custodian UN entity: UNFPA*	14 (2018)	20	MICS	
2_70: Neonatal mortality rate *SDG indicator: 3.2.2.* *Custodian UN entity: UNFPA*	3.8 (2019)	3.5	SSO	
2_80: Proportion of households covered by social protection cash transfers *PAF indicator: similar to LRD 10.1* *Custodian UN entity: UNICEF*	8	14.5	SSO	
2_90: Human Development Index *Custodian UN entity: UNDP*	0.759 (2019) Ranked 82/189	0.78	UNDP Human Development Report	

---

[19] Percentage of women currently in union who are using, or whose partner is using modern contraceptives

2_100: Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex
  a) Total
  b) Male
  c) Female
by age group
  d) 0-17 years
  e) Youth (15-24 years)
  f) Adult (16 years and over)
  g) 25 +
 	
SDG indicator: EU SDG: 01_20
Custodian UN entity: UNDP
	(2018)
	
	a) 21.9
	b) 21.8
	c) 22.0
	
	d) 30
	e) 29.7
	f) 20.6
	g) 16.3
		a) 15.5
		b) 16.8
		c) 14.2
		
		Currently, no targets are set
			SSO / EU SILC

Assumptions: 1. There is political will to carry out economic and governance reforms 2. There is political stability in the country to provide long-term vision and direction to the country; 3. The statistical systems are strengthened to monitor SDGs and for evidence-based policy-making; 4. Post-Covid-19 economic recession and its consequences on employment are well managed; 5. There is no fiscal crunch that could affect social protection especially in crisis situation arising out of Covid-19; 6. There is enough implementation and monitoring capacity; 7. There are no environmental crises 8. Geo-political situation is calm; 8. There are enough resources, including external, to finance SDGs and national priorities.

Output 2.1: Health system is strengthened to provide universal access to affordable high quality and people-centred services to promote healthy lifestyles and address population-specific health needs and risk factors, including in emergencies.
Agencies: WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, IOM, UNHCR, UNOPS, UN-Habitat

Output 2.2: Quality and affordable education is provided in trauma-informed, gender-responsive and inclusive learning environments to children and young people in the country to raise learning outcomes, enable their socio-emotional development and empower them with skills for transition to the labour market.
Agencies: UNICEF, UNODC, UNFPA, UNHCR

Output 2.3: Social protection system is resilient to external shocks and strengthened to deliver progressively improved services to all persons in need, especially to those left behind.
Agencies: UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, IOM, UNHCR, UNODC

Output 2.4: Improved multisectoral response to prevent and address all forms of violence based on victims/survivor-centred approach, including harmful practices and discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes
Agencies: UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Habitat

2_100: Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex
   a) Total
   b) Male
   c) Female
 by age group
   d) 0-17 years
   e) Youth (15-24 years)
   f) Adult (16 years and over)
   g) 25 +
 	
 SDG indicator: EU SDG: 01_20
 Custodian UN entity: UNDP
	(2018)
	
	 a) 21.9
	 b) 21.8
	 c) 22.0
	
	 d) 30
	 e) 29.7
	 f) 20.6
	 g) 16.3
		a) 15.5
		 b) 16.8
		 c) 14.2
		
		 Currently, no targets are set
			SSO / EU SILC	

Assumptions: 1. There is political will to carry out economic and governance reforms 2. There is political stability in the country to provide long-term vision and direction to the country; 3. The statistical systems are strengthened to monitor SDGs and for evidence-based policy-making; 4. Post-Covid-19 economic recession and its consequences on employment are well managed; 5. There is no fiscal crunch that could affect social protection especially in crisis situation arising out of Covid-19; 6. There is enough implementation and monitoring capacity; 7. There are no environmental crises 8. Geo-political situation is calm; 8. There are enough resources, including external, to finance SDGs and national priorities.

Output 2.1: Health system is strengthened to provide universal access to affordable high quality and people-centred services to promote healthy lifestyles and address population-specific health needs and risk factors, including in emergencies.
Agencies: WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, IOM, UNHCR, UNOPS, UN-Habitat

Output 2.2: Quality and affordable education is provided in trauma-informed, gender-responsive and inclusive learning environments to children and young people in the country to raise learning outcomes, enable their socio-emotional development and empower them with skills for transition to the labour market.
Agencies: UNICEF, UNODC, UNFPA, UNHCR

Output 2.3: Social protection system is resilient to external shocks and strengthened to deliver progressively improved services to all persons in need, especially to those left behind.
Agencies: UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, IOM, UNHCR, UNODC

Output 2.4: Improved multisectoral response to prevent and address all forms of violence based on victims/survivor-centred approach, including harmful practices and discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes
Agencies: UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Habitat

Impact:
National development priorities:
  • Environmental protection and green development

Reform Package No 4: Green Energy (a) Shift the energy sector to a low-carbon development path, away from the current dependence on coal, while improving security and efficiency of energy supply, (b) Adopt a comprehensive approach to reducing air pollution.
EU acquis chapters: 15. Energy; 27. Environment.

SDGs and SDG targets:
    Goal 3: 3.4
    Goal 5: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3
    Goal 7: 7.1, 7.2, 7.3
    Goal 8: 8.4
    Goal 11: 11.6
    Goal 12: 12.2, 12.4
    Goal 13: 13.2
    Goal 15: 15.1

SDGs accelerators:
    1. Improving effective and efficient environmental governance
    2. Sustainable natural resource management through utilization of the partnership potentials with the local population
    3. Improving the efficiency in the use of natural resources
    4. Addressing air, water and soil pollution
    5. Enabling greater reliance on renewable energy and increasing energy efficiency
    6. Strengthening resilience of communities to climate change and disaster risks
    7. Innovative solutions for green cities
    8. Introducing new technologies and encouraging greener and sustainable citizens' behaviour

Strategic Priority 2: Climate action, natural resources and disaster risks management					
Results	Performance Indicators	Baseline (year)	Target (2025)	Source/ MoV	Partnership
Outcome 3: By 2025, people in North Macedonia benefit from ambitious climate	3_10: Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Gg CO2-eq) SDG indicator: EU SDG_13_10 PAF: MK-NI010 Custodian UN entity: UNDP	8,021[20] (2016)	6,196 (WEM scenario)	3rd BUR (MOEPP)	National Partners Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning; Ministry of Health;

---

[20] Data up to 2018 will be available by the end of 2020 (Important note: The values might change during future revisions of the GHG inventory)

Impact:

National development priorities:

• Environmental protection and green development

Reform Package No 4: Green Energy (a) Shift the energy sector to a low-carbon development path, away from the current dependence on coal, while improving security and efficiency of energy supply, (b) Adopt a comprehensive approach to reducing air pollution.

EU acquis chapters: 15. Energy; 27. Environment.

SDGs and SDG targets:

Goal 3: 3.4
Goal 5: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3
Goal 7: 7.1, 7.2, 7.3
Goal 8: 8.4
Goal 11: 11.6
Goal 12: 12.2, 12.4
Goal 13: 13.2
Goal 15: 15.1

SDGs accelerators:

1. Improving effective and efficient environmental governance
2. Sustainable natural resource management through utilization of the partnership potentials with the local population
3. Improving the efficiency in the use of natural resources
4. Addressing air, water and soil pollution
5. Enabling greater reliance on renewable energy and increasing energy efficiency
6. Strengthening resilience of communities to climate change and disaster risks
7. Innovative solutions for green cities
8. Introducing new technologies and encouraging greener and sustainable citizens' behaviour

Strategic Priority 2: Climate action, natural resources and disaster risks management

Results	Performance Indicators	Baseline (year)	Target (2025)	Source/ MoV	Partnership
Outcome 3: By 2025, people in North Macedonia benefit from ambitious climate	3_10: Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Gg CO2-eq) *SDG indicator: EU SDG_13_10* *PAF: MK-NI010* *Custodian UN entity: UNDP*	8,021[20] (2016)	6,196 (WEM scenario)	3rd BUR (MOEPP)	**National Partners** Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning; Ministry of Health;

---

[20] Data up to 2018 will be available by the end of 2020 (Important note: The values might change during future revisions of the GHG inventory)

action, sustainably managed natural resources and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster resilient communities.	3_20: Proportion of a country designated total area that is protected *PAF: MK - NI 008* *Custodian UN entity: UNEP*	10.34 (2019)	15[21]	MOEPP(UNEP)	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy Ministry of Education; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; Ministry of Economy; Cabinet of Deputy President of the Government in charge of Economic Affairs; Crisis Management Centre; Directorate for Protection and Rescue; Local self-governments; Farmers' associations; Chambers of Commerce; NGOs, Private sector **Participating UN Entities** FAO, UNDP, UNEP, UNECE, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIDO, WHO, UNDRR, UNFPA, UN Women, IOM, UNOPS, UN-Habitat
	3_30: Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter PM10 (Hg/m3) *SDG Indicator: EU SDG_II_50* *PAF: similar to MK - NI 061 (measuring total emissions)* *Custodian UN entity: UNDP*	88.2 (2019)	40 pg/m3	MOEPP	
	3_50: INFORM Risk Index (2020) (on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is very low and 10 is very high) *Custodian UN entity: UNDP*	Low, 2.6 (2020)	Very low (2.0)	Inter-UN entity Standing Committee Reference Group	
	3_60: System for integrated pest management in place *Custodian UN entity: UNDP/FAO*	No system in place (2020)	System in place and fully functional	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy	
	3_70: Pesticides per hectare (Average use of pesticide per area of cropland (kg/ha)) PAF indicator: ARD 106 *Custodian UN entity: FAO*	0.22 (2017)	EU and neighbouring countries benchmarks are used currently: EU average: 3.14 Albania: 2.02	FAO / SSO	
	3_80: Degree of integrated water resources management implementation (0-100) *SDG indicator: 6.5.1* *Custodian UN entity: UNDP*	Medium-low (33) (2020)	60	MOEPP, EU Progress Report	

[21] NBSAP 2018-2023

action, sustainably managed natural resources and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster resilient communities.	3_20: Proportion of a country designated total area that is protected *PAF: MK - NI 008* *Custodian UN entity: UNEP*	10.34 (2019)	15[21]	MOEPP(UNEP)	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy Ministry of Education; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;
	3_30: Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter PM10 (Hg/m3) *SDG Indicator: EU SDG_II_50* *PAF: similar to MK - NI 061 (measuring total emissions)* *Custodian UN entity: UNDP*	88.2 (2019)	40 pg/m3	MOEPP	Ministry of Economy; Cabinet of Deputy President of the Government in charge of Economic Affairs; Crisis Management Centre; Directorate for Protection and Rescue; Local self-governments; Farmers' associations; Chambers of Commerce; NGOs, Private sector **Participating UN Entities** FAO, UNDP, UNEP, UNECE, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIDO, WHO, UNDRR, UNFPA, UN Women, IOM, UNOPS, UN-Habitat
	3_50: INFORM Risk Index (2020) (on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is very low and 10 is very high) *Custodian UN entity: UNDP*	Low, 2.6 (2020)	Very low (2.0)	Inter-UN entity Standing Committee Reference Group	
	3_60: System for integrated pest management in place *Custodian UN entity: UNDP/FAO*	No system in place (2020)	System in place and fully functional	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy	
	3_70: Pesticides per hectare (Average use of pesticide per area of cropland (kg/ha)) PAF indicator: ARD 106 *Custodian UN entity: FAO*	0.22 (2017)	EU and neighbouring countries benchmarks are used currently: EU average: 3.14 Albania: 2.02	FAO / SSO	
	3_80: Degree of integrated water resources management implementation (0-100) *SDG indicator: 6.5.1* *Custodian UN entity: UNDP*	Medium-low (33) (2020)	60	MOEPP, EU Progress Report	

---

[21] NBSAP 2018-2023

3_90: Renewable energy share in the total final energy a) consumption b) production SDG indicator: 7.2.1 (EU_SDG_07_40) *Custodian UN entity: UNDP*	(2018) a) 26.1 b) 35.1	a) 32 (2040) b) 33 (2030)	SSO (Energy development strategy by 2030)	

Assumptions: 1. Economic pressures do not side-track climate action and environmental governance as priorities; 2. There is political will to carry out economic and governance reforms; 3. There is political stability in the country to provide long-term vision and direction to the country; 4. The statistical systems are strengthened to monitor SDGs and for evidence-based policy-making; 5. Post-Covid-19 economic recession and its consequences on employment are well managed; 6. There is no fiscal crunch that could affect social protection especially in crisis situation arising out of Covid-19; 7. There is enough implementation and monitoring capacity; 8. There are no environmental crises; 9. Geo-political situation is calm; 10. There are enough resources, including external, to finance SDGs and national priorities.

Output 3.1: The enabling policy, regulatory environment, capacities at central and local level and community actions strengthened for low-emission development and multi-sector resilience to climate change
Agencies: UNDP, UNEP, FAO, UNICEF, UNECE, UNIDO, UN-Habitat

Output 3.2: Solutions are identified and scaled-up at central and local levels for integrated, sustainable and inclusive management of natural resources (water, land, forests, biodiversity).
Agencies: UNDP, FAO, UNEP, UNECE, UN-Habitat

Output 3.3: Capacities at central and local levels are strengthened to prevent and respond to the air pollution threats and health consequences in most vulnerable communities
Agencies: UNDP, UNEP, WHO, IOM, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNFPA, UNECE, UN-Habitat

Output 3.4: Capacities at central and local levels are strengthened to identify multi-hazard risks and to plan, finance and implement effective disaster risk reduction and response, including human displacement, in line with the Sendai framework
Agencies: UNDP, UNDRR, WHO, UNFPA, IOM, FAO, UN Women, UN-Habitat

Output 3.5
National and local capacities strengthened, and awareness increased for waste reduction and efficient waste management (chemical, water, municipal waste, hazardous waste, medical waste - including in rural areas)
Agencies: UNOPS, UNIDO, UN-Habitat

Output 3.6 Adverse impacts of the unsustainable farming practices in the lake/river watersheds reduced
Agencies: UNDP

Impact:

National development priorities:
- Justice and rule of law
- EU accession

Reform Package No 1: Governance (a) Strengthen mechanisms ensuring freedom of the press and of civil society organizations, (b) Increase the transparency and accountability of Government decision-making and build public sector capacity, (c) Ensure independence, accountability, and professionalism of judicial system

EU acquis chapters: 23. Justice and Fundamental Rights; 24. Justice, Freedom and Security

Regional frameworks: Western Balkans Action Plan

SDGs and SDG targets:
> Goal 5: 5.5, 5.c.
> Goal 10: 10.3
> Goal 16: 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.5, 16.6, 16.9, 16.a,
> Goal 17: 17.1, 17.3, 17.4, 17.6, 17.8

SDG accelerators:
1. Promoting national vision, social cohesion, trust building, civic engagement and evidence-based and participatory decision-making
2. Effective management of demographic dynamics and migration policy
3. Improved access to justice and fulfilment of human rights (especially women and child rights)
4. Strong rule of law and independent judiciary
5. Anticipatory, responsive, transparent and accountable governance including fiscal governance
6. Digitalization and innovation of public services and processes
7. Improving quality of municipal governance

Strategic Priority 3: Transparent and accountable democratic governance

Results	Performance Indicators	Baseline (year)	Target (2025)	Source/ MoV	Partnership
Outcome 4: By 2025, people in North Macedonia benefit from	4_10: Rule of Law Index (overall, on a scale from 0 to 1) *Custodian UN entity: UNODC*	0.53 (2020)	To be set by end of 2020	World Justice Project	National Partners The Parliament; Judicial Council;

improved rule of law; evidence based, anticipatory and gender-responsive policies; greater social cohesion; and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable and responsive institutions	4_20: Gender Equality index *Custodian UN entity: UN Women*	62 score points (GEI from 2019)[22]	65	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy EIGE	Prosecutorial Council and Academy for Judges and Prosecutors; Notary Public; Property Registration Office; Legal Aid Society; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Information Society and Administration; Ministry of Local Self Government; Ministry of Education, Customs Service, Public Security Directorate (Police/Border Police) Ombudsman; Women's Committee in Parliament; Parliamentary Commission on EOWM; Club of Women MPs; Anti-discrimination Commission; Equal Opportunities Commission; Civil Service Agency; Anti-corruption commission;
	4_30: Level of establishment of permanent national child rights coordinating mechanism *Custodian UN entity: UNICEF*	Weak	Established	Country CRC reports; Alternative report; UNICEF confidential CRC report, CRC concluding observations	
	4_40: The country has a system in place to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment *SDGs indicator: 5.C.1* *Custodian UN entity: UN Women*	No (2020)	Yes (2025)	Official Gazette of Republic of North Macedonia MoF(IFMIS)	

	4_50: Worldwide Governance Indicators[23]
	  a) Voice & Accountability
	  b) Political Stability & Absence of Violence/Terrorism
	  c) Government Effectiveness
	  d) Regulatory Quality
	  e) Rule of Law
	  f) Control of Corruption
	
	PAF: PAR 162
	Custodian UN entity: UNDP
		49.72 (2018)	To be set by end of 2020	World Bank	

	4_60: Open budget Index (Transparency) *PAF: PFM 7* *Custodian UN entity: UNDP*	Score (2019) 41/100 a)	>=45	Open Budget Survey	
	4_70: Percentage of official statistics aligned with EU acquis *Custodian UN entity: UNFPA*	67.1(2019)	95 (2027)	SSO	

---

improved rule of law; evidence based, anticipatory and gender-responsive policies; greater social cohesion; and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable and responsive institutions	4_20: Gender Equality index *Custodian UN entity: UN Women*	62 score points (GEI from 2019)[22]	65	<u>Ministry of Labour and Social Policy</u> <u>EIGE</u>	Prosecutorial Council and Academy for Judges and Prosecutors; Notary Public; Property Registration Office; Legal Aid Society; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Information Society and Administration; Ministry of Local Self Government; Ministry of Education, Customs Service, Public Security Directorate (Police/Border Police) Ombudsman; Women's Committee in Parliament; Parliamentary Commission on EOWM; Club of Women MPs; Anti-discrimination Commission; Equal Opportunities Commission; Civil Service Agency; Anti-corruption commission;
	4_30: Level of establishment of permanent national child rights coordinating mechanism *Custodian UN entity: UNICEF*	Weak	Established	Country CRC reports; Alternative report; UNICEF confidential CRC report, CRC concluding observations	
	4_40: The country has a system in place to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment *SDGs indicator: 5.C.1* *Custodian UN entity: UN Women*	No (2020)	Yes (2025)	Official Gazette of Republic of North Macedonia MoF(IFMIS)	

	4_50: Worldwide Governance Indicators[23]
	   a) Voice & Accountability
	   b) Political Stability & Absence of Violence/Terrorism
	   c) Government Effectiveness
	   d) Regulatory Quality
	   e) Rule of Law
	   f) Control of Corruption
	
	PAF: PAR 162
	Custodian UN entity: UNDP
		49.72 (2018)	To be set by end of 2020	<u>World Bank</u>	

	4_60: Open budget Index (Transparency) *PAF: PFM 7* *Custodian UN entity: UNDP*	Score (2019) 41/100 a)	>=45	<u>Open Budget Survey</u>	
	4_70: Percentage of official statistics aligned with EU acquis *Custodian UN entity: UNFPA*	67.1(2019)	95 (2027)	<u>SSO</u>	

---

[22] The Gender Equality Index for the Republic of North Macedonia is calculated using the methodology of the EIGE and provides overview of the situation in 2015.
[23] There are 6 indicators (listed). It is suggested to use the percentile rank instead of governance score (it's more understandable and easier to follow). Instead of monitoring 6 different indicators it might be clearer to give the same weighting to all of them and use the arithmetic mean as an indicator value. Actual progress or decline in performance along different categories can be easily seen on the WB website should someone be interested in more detail.

4_80: Level of general satisfaction with public services at the local level, by, sex and place:
  a) Total
  b) Female
  c) Male
  d) Urban
  e) Rural
 	
SDG Indicator: 16.6.2 (no longer in the 2020 list of global indicators)
PAF: PAR 173 (similar indicator)
Custodian UN entity: UNDP
	(2020)
	
	a) 3.07[24]
	b) 3.12
	c) 3.02
	d) 3.09
	e) 3.05
		a) 3.5
		b) 3.6
		c) 3.4
		d) 3.5
		e) 3.5
			UNDP annual survey	Bureau for Regional Development;
				Regional Development Centers;
				UN entity for Youth and Sports;
				State Statistical Office;
				Local Self-governments;
				ZELS;
				Associations of Journalists;
				Media
				
				Participating UN Entities
				UNDP, UNODC, IOM, UNHCR, ILO, IOM, UN Women, OHCHR, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, UNOPS, UN-Habitat

4_90: The level of the alignment of the refugee protection and migration systems with the international and EU standards *SDG Indicator: 10.7.2* *Custodian UN entity: UNHCR, IOM*	Partially aligned (2020)	Fully aligned (2025)	EU Progress Report 2019	
4_100: Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive[25], by sex, age, disability and population group. https://www.scoreforpeace.org/en/methodology *SDG indicator: 16.7.2.* *Custodian UN entity: UNDP*	(2020) 19.8	25	UNDP citizens perception annual survey	

Assumptions: 1. There is political will to carry out economic and governance reforms; 2. There is political stability in the country to provide long-term vision and direction to the country; 3. The statistical systems are strengthened to monitor SDGs and for evidence-based policy-making; 4. Post-Covid-19 economic recession and its consequences on employment are well managed; 5. There is no fiscal crunch that could affect social protection especially in crisis situation arising out of Covid-19; 6. There is enough implementation and monitoring capacity; 7. MLSP and the Government has committed to conduct the GEI on regular basis; 8. It is expected that with the PFM reform the Government will introduce programme based budgeting and Integrated Finance Management Information System, which will enable tracking of allocations for gender equality; 9. There are no environmental crises; 10. Geo-political situation is calm; 11. There are enough resources, including external, to finance SDGs and national priorities.

---

24 This is the mean value of the general satisfaction of the citizens with the services provided by the municipality (on a scale from 1-5).
25 The indicator is currently measured per different methodology. The methodology will be changed with the next survey and baseline and targets revised accordingly.

Output 4.1
Advanced rule of law, access to justice and protection and promotion of human rights for all, especially those left behind by improved and gender responsive legal, policy and institutional frameworks and capacity building.
Agencies: UNICEF, UNODC, UN Women, UNHCR, IOM, OHCHR, ILO, UNOPS, UNDP, UNFPA

Output 4.2
Capacities of central and local governments strengthened to:
a) better plan, budget, monitor and track expenditure and leverage resources in a gender-responsive manner in support of accelerated sustainable development
b)improve design and efficient delivery of quality public services (targeting excluded groups, including refugee /migration management)
with improved social accountability and participation in decision-making.
Agencies: UNDP, UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR, UNFPA, UN Women, UNOPS, UNOPS, UN-Habitat

Output 4.3
Increased utilization of foresight and quality and disaggregated data for improved forward looking, evidence-based, results-oriented and transparent policy-making, responsive to the rights of women, men, girls and boys and vulnerabilities of the groups left behind, at all levels and in all contexts, including humanitarian
Agencies: UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM, UNDP, UN Women, UN-Habitat

Output 4.4
Social cohesion and trust improved through dialogue and meaningful participation by youth, women, ethnic and religious minorities, refugees, and other vulnerable groups.
Agencies: UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women, UNHCR, IOM, UN-Habitat

Output 4.5
Enhanced national and local capacities in asset recovery and countering corruption in public life through better enforcement of anti-corruption laws and preventive measures.
Agencies: UNODC, UNDP

ANNEX 6 – COMPARISON OF UNSDCF PRIORITIES AND THE DRAFT NDS, THE ERP AND THE PROGRAMME FOR WORK

The NDS defines six key strategic development areas. The table below correlates these six strategic areas with the three strategic priorities of the UNSDCF. As is immediately visible in the table, the UNSDCF and the NDS closely correlate, and each directly responds to the country's needs and priorities.

NDS Priority	Related UNSDCF Priority and Outcome
Sustainable, innovative and competitive economy.	Sustained and inclusive economic and social development. • Outcome 1: Improve living standards through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem.
Sustainable local and regional development that ensures cohesion.	Sustained and inclusive economic and social development. • Outcome 1: Improve living standards through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem.
Demographic revitalization and social and cultural development.	Sustained and inclusive economic and social development. • Outcome 2: Ensure universal access to rights-based quality social services, including healthcare, education, and necessary social and child protection, rooted in resilient systems.
Rule of law and good governance.	Transparent and accountable democratic governance. • Outcome 4: Enhance the rule of law, evidence-based and gender-responsive policies, social cohesion, and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable, and responsive institutions.
Secure, safe and resilient society.	Climate action, natural resources, and disaster risk management. • Outcome 3: Promote ambitious climate action, sustainable management of natural resources, and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster-resilient communities. Transparent and accountable democratic governance. • Outcome 4: Enhance the rule of law, evidence-based and gender-responsive policies, social cohesion, and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable, and responsive institutions.
Green transformation.	Climate action, natural resources, and disaster risk management. • Outcome 3: Promote ambitious climate action, sustainable management of natural resources, and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster-resilient communities.

The Economic Reform Programme Government Programme 2020-2022 (ERP).[62] Several areas of structural reform within the ERP correspond directly to UNSDCF priority areas. These include:

ERP Priority	Related UNSDCF Priority and Outcome

---

[62] https://finance.gov.mk/economic-reform-programme/?lang=en

Structural reform 1 – Enabling business environment and further integration in the EU single market – • Support to development of an innovation ecosystem.	Sustained and inclusive economic and social development. • Outcome 1: Improve living standards through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem.
Structural reform 2 – Ensuring stable and sustainable food supply – • Modernisation of post-harvest technologies and processes of agricultural products.	Sustained and inclusive economic and social development. • Outcome 1: Improve living standards through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem.
Structural reform 3 – Strengthen resilience to climate change and reduce environmental pollution – • Promotion of renewable energy sources. • Improvement of energy efficiency. • Establishment of wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure in accordance with EU requirements. • Establishing an integrated and financially self-sustainable waste management system.	Sustained and inclusive economic and social development. • Outcome 2: Ensure universal access to rights-based quality social services, including healthcare, education, and necessary social and child protection, rooted in resilient systems.
Structural reform 5 – Labour force efficiency improvement – • Further development of the qualification system. • Increasing the flexibility and security of the labour market. • Strengthening the quality of Primary Health Care. • Building, monitoring and evaluating human resources in health.	Transparent and accountable democratic governance. • Outcome 4: Enhance the rule of law, evidence-based and gender-responsive policies, social cohesion, and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable, and responsive institutions.
Structural reform 6 – Further implementation of the social reform package – • Enhancing the system for social inclusion of vulnerable groups.	Climate action, natural resources, and disaster risk management. • Outcome 3: Promote ambitious climate action, sustainable management of natural resources, and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster-resilient communities. Transparent and accountable democratic governance. • Outcome 4: Enhance the rule of law, evidence-based and gender-responsive policies, social cohesion, and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable, and responsive institutions.

The Programme for Work of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia (2022-2024). [63] The Programme of Work and the UNSDCF correlate extremely well in their priorities. This is visible in the summary of the Programme for Work:

Programme of Work Priority	Related UNSDCF Priority and Outcome
Accelerated and sustainable economic growth with a better standard of living • Accelerating economic growth • Energy transition and sustainability • Modern infrastructure and connectivity • Environmental protection, green and sustainable development • Development agriculture • Sustainable tourism • Decentralization and balanced regional development	Sustained and inclusive economic and social development. • Outcome 1: Improve living standards through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem. Climate action, natural resources, and disaster risk management. • Outcome 3: Promote ambitious climate action, sustainable management of natural resources, and well-preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster-resilient communities.
Social inclusion and human capital development • Full support for all social categories • Education for the new time • Stable and modern health system • Young people in focus	Sustained and inclusive economic and social development. • Outcome 1: Improve living standards through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business ecosystem.
Rule of law and good governance • Rule of law, order, anti-corruption and security • Modern administration, digitalized services - the citizen comes first	Transparent and accountable democratic governance. • Outcome 4: Enhance the rule of law, evidence-based and gender-responsive policies, social cohesion, and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable, and responsive institutions.
Promoting democracy and freedom • Dealing with disinformation • Civil society • Support for democratic reforms in the media sector • One society, equal for all • European culture • Active population, sports and recreation for all citizens	Transparent and accountable democratic governance. • Outcome 4: Enhance the rule of law, evidence-based and gender-responsive policies, social cohesion, and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable, and responsive institutions.

---

[63] https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/programa/2022-2024/programme_of_the_government_2022-2024.pdf

TERMS OF REFERENCE

UNSDCF EVALUATION

North Macedonia **2024**

Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF, from now on) is a key strategic document that guides the work of all UN agencies working in the country in the period of five years from 2021 to 2025. Based on a comprehensive contextual analysis and anchored in the national development priorities, the document builds on past cooperation between the UN and the Government forming a foundation for close partnership between national and international partners for the achievement of national development priorities framed around Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the country's human rights commitments. It was developed in close cooperation with the Government, following an extensive consultations process with a large number of national and international partners in society as a whole.

As outlined in the UNSDCF, an independent terminal evaluation will be carried out in the penultimate year of its cycle. The evaluation will be participatory and will gauge the influence of UNSDCF on the lives of the people, especially the vulnerable groups, who will be interviewed during the evaluation process. The key audience of the CF Evaluation is the UNCT, the Government, the development partners and the general public.

Background - COUNTRY CONTEXT AND UNSDCF HIGHLIGHTS

North Macedonia is an upper-middle income and a high human development index country (0.770 in 2021), with population of 1.8 million (2021), down from 2.02 million in 2002.

Since the start of the EU accession process in 2001, North Macedonia has demonstrated different levels of success in implementing reforms, but an uncompromised commitment to the Euro-Atlantic integration. The country is yet to deliver on the final precondition to start negotiations, a constitution change, that proved politically challenging. The long delays with the start of the EU accession negotiations have decreased the popular support for the EU integration and deepened political polarization of society.

United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UN SDCF) 2021-2025

The United Nations in North Macedonia implements its activities in alignment with the country's development priorities, human rights and gender equality commitments, the EU accession agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Agenda 2030. In the period of five years, UN will focus on **three strategic priorities** in North Macedonia including and **four outcomes,** strongly anchored in the principles of Leaving no one behind, human rights, gender equality and sustainability.

1. **Purpose and Objectives**

The final evaluation of the UNSDCF 2021-25 is an external, independent, stand-alone exercise, whose broad purpose is to **support greater learning** about what works, what doesn't and why, gauging the performance of the Outcome Groups and their accomplishments under each of the four outcomes in order to inform the design of the new UNSDCF 2026-2030. The evaluation will produce an independent assessment of the achievements, their relevance, challenges and lessons learned from the implementation of the Partnership, to inform the key stakeholders and secure accountability of the UN system.

The **objectives** of the evaluation are as follows:

1. To assess the **contribution of the UNSDCF to national development results** through evidence-based judgements on issues and inputs of stakeholders using evaluation criteria (relevance and accountability).
2. To identify **factors that have affected the CF's contribution**; explaining the reasons for such performance; and identifying the enabling factors and bottlenecks (learning).
3. To assess the **effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability** of the UNCT North Macedonia support (learning and continuity) and reach conclusions concerning the contribution across the scope being examined.
4. To provide **clear and actionable recommendations** for improving the UN system's contribution to national development priorities especially for incorporation into the new UNDSCF programming cycle. This should include advice on the suitability of indicators and other verification tools used to measure progress towards outcomes and outputs.

2. Scope

The evaluation will cover the three and half years of implementation covering the period of January 2021-June 2024. Looking into the UNSDCF 2021-2025 and cover contributions of all sub-outputs by the UNCT including those of the non-resident agencies. It will also examine the cross-cutting issues and the global UN programming principles and normative work, focusing on LNOB, especially where UNCT has established working groups (e.g. gender equality and empowerment of women, human rights, disability inclusion, youth, accountability etc.)

In terms of programmatic scope, the evaluation will target the 4 outcomes of the CF2021-2025. It will not evaluate the individual programmes nor activities of UN agencies. However, the evaluation team could suggest any specific thematic areas for specific review, if necessary, after consultation with stakeholders.

The evaluation will also consider emerging issues, such as, the COVID-19 pandemic and energy crisis (e.g. the UNCT's responsiveness, adaptation and reprioritization) and operation (e.g. methods for managing stakeholder participation and inclusiveness).

Following the analysis of the scope of coverage of UNSDCF implementation across the country (desk review) assessing the geographical reach achieved by UNSDCF interventions, the evaluation will target the national and selected sub-national levels of the country. Consultations between the evaluation team and the UNCT will identify the sub-national areas to be visited.

Considering that the UNSDCF evaluation will coincide with some agencies' specific country-programme evaluations, this evaluation will also benefit from data collection carried out as part of the agency-specific programmes' evaluation and the findings of these evaluations.

3. Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The UNSDCF evaluation will focus on key evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, coordination, sustainability, and orientation toward impacts, within a multiagency context coordinated by RCO in One UN spirit. The final evaluation questions and the evaluation matrix will be finalized by the evaluation team upon agreement with the Evaluation Manager (and Evaluation Reference Group) in the Inception Report.

Relevance and adaptability

1. To what extent the UNSDCF strategic priorities are consistent with country needs, national priorities, the country's international and regional commitments, including on EU accession, Agenda2030, leaving no one behind, human rights, environment, and gender equity?
2. How resilient, responsive and strategic the UNCT was in addressing emerging and emergency needs especially those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups, in the context of interconnected and consecutive crises (COVID-19 pandemic and energy/food prices crisis)? To what extent was it able to reprioritize/adapt its support to provide timely assistance to the country and to ensure the achievement of the UNSDCF outcomes/intermediate outcomes?
3. Are the UNSCDF outcomes, outputs and performance indicators with baseline and targets measurable and relevant? To what extent did the UNSDCF build on a sound gender and human rights analysis?

Effectiveness

1. To what extent the UNCT contributed to, or is likely to contribute to the achievement of the outcomes defined in the UNSDCF, both intended and unintended?
2. How much has UNSDCF contributed to strengthening the national capacities and key institutional, behavioral and legislative changes that are critical for catalyzing progress towards the UNSDCF desired impact, including on gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability.
3. What have been the benefits for the people targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized population?

Efficiency
1. What is the extent to which the UNCT had established and implemented clear procedures with partners to ensure contribution to the achievement of the defined outcomes with the adequate number of resources (funds, expertise, time, administrative costs, etc.)? The evaluation will assess the relationship of the inputs, both financial and human resources, to the results achieved.
2. To what extent has the UNSDCF collectively prioritized activities based on demand-side needs rather than on the availability of resources (supply side), and how adequately has it facilitated the effective reallocation of resources to emerging needs and priorities?

Coherence and Coordination
1. Post UN reform, to what extent have UN agency programs and work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from the UNSDCF both in design and implementation?
2. To what extent did the post reform Resident Coordinator office's roles and responsibilities enable positive UNCT's joint convening power and better coherence of the country team?
3. To what extent did the UNSDCF promote complementarity, harmonization and coordination among the UN agencies and with other key development partners to maximize results?

Sustainability and Impact
1. Assess to what extent the UNSDCF results are sustainable and what is the likelihood that progress towards the SDGs is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time?
2. To what extent have UN interventions stemming from the UNSDCF strengthened systemic and individual resilience and contributed to reducing vulnerability against shocks and crises?

4. **Evaluation Approach and Methodology**

The evaluation will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including document reviews, analysis of quantitative secondary data, individual interviews with key informants and focus groups or other types of discussion to collect data. The Independent External Evaluators shall be guided by Annex 1 (standard methodology section) of Appendix 2 (Terms of reference) of the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines - Engl - Revised July 2022 to develop the evaluation methodology. They shall also develop the necessary tools to collect data and information to answer the overall evaluation questions.

Validation

The data collected should be subjected to a rigorous quality assurance for validation purposes. The UNSDCF evaluation will use a variety of validation methods to ensure that the data and information used, and conclusions made carry the necessary depth. Triangulation of information sources and findings improved validity, quality and use of evaluation.

12.1.1 Evaluation limitations and challenges

While the methodology envisions incorporating CPE findings to the best possible extent, it is expected that the UNSDCF evaluation would face the challenge of overcoming the individual agency perspectives and extracting a broader view necessary for this assessment. In that respect the evaluation team may face obstacles in distinguishing the data relevant for the overall UNSDCF assessment from the individual CPE datasets focusing on agency results and supplementing them with the additional relevant sources of information. This may be partially overcome by a careful

analysis of the UNCT Joint Work Plan achievements (containing detailed output results directly linked to the UN and partner interventions) in comparison to the overall structure of the UNSDCF outcome results.

An important limitation, as identified in the UNSDCF Mid-term review, would be availability of quantitative data for analysis for some of the indicators.

Another limitation that needs to be considered is the new Government that should be established after the elections in May 2024. The composition and the dynamics of electing the Government may influence the evaluation process, but that could be overcome by interviewing contacts at the ministries at operational/programme level.

5. Management Arrangements

This section provides a summary of responsibilities for the conduct of the Evaluation while the detailed description of roles can be found in annex B of Appendix 2 (Terms of Reference) of the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines-revised September 2021.

- **The Resident Coordinator/ Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)** is responsible to initiate the UNSDCF evaluation, designate Evaluation Manager (EM), support the Evaluation Steering Committee during the various stages of evaluation.
- **Evaluation Manager (EM)** oversees the whole process, collaborates with UNCT and other partners, ensures quality control, facilitates dissemination, and leads the development of the management response.
- **Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC),** comprising of agencies representatives at technical level, i.e. the current MEL group representatives support the evaluation process, guide the Evaluation Team, prepares the stakeholders mapping and facilitate access to stakeholders and information, reviews evaluation deliverables, drafts a management response, and ensures dissemination of results.
- **Development Coordination Office (DCO)** supports RCO/UNCT, reviews and approves TOR, oversees evaluation independence and quality, leads dissemination efforts, ensures accountability mechanisms, and synthesizes findings for feedback.

The evaluation will be carried out with full logistical support of the UN agencies and with the administrative support of the UNRCO.

Inclusion of national partners and transparency will be secured through interviews during the evaluation process, as well as by presenting and discussing the Evaluation Report with the Joint Steering Committee.

The evaluation manager will supervise the evaluators. The Team Leader of the evaluation team will report to the Evaluation Manager with whom he/she should discuss any technical and methodological matters. All draft and final outputs, including supporting documents, analytical reports and raw data should be provided to the Evaluation Manager in the electronic version compatible with Word for Windows.

The first draft of the report will be circulated by the evaluation manager to all partners for a two-week review. Comments from stakeholders will be presented to the Team Leader of the evaluation by the Evaluation Manager for its integration into the final reports as appropriate or to document the reasons if a comment has not been included.

Composition and responsibilities of the evaluation team

The **international evaluation team leader** (45 working days in will lead the entire evaluation process, working closely with UNCT. He/she will conduct the evaluation process in a timely manner and communicate with the EM on a regular basis and highlight progress made/challenges encountered. The team leader will be responsible for producing high quality inception report and the draft and final evaluation reports in standard English (both the Evaluation Brief and Executive Summary of the Evaluation Report will need to be translated in Macedonian at the cost of UNCT).

The specific tasks include:
- Developing an inception report and details the design, methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis criteria for selection of projects, required resources), and work plan of the evaluation team;
- Directing and conducting the research and analysis of all relevant documentation;
- Deciding on the division of labor within the evaluation team and coordinating tasks within the TORs;
- Overseeing the preparation of the report, ensuring its quality, and leading the analysis of the evaluative evidence;
- Overseeing the administration and analysis of the results of the data collection exercise;
- Drafting the evaluation report and coordinating the inputs from team members;

- Preparation for meetings with the UNCT and other stakeholders to review findings, conclusions and recommendations;
- Leading the stakeholder feedback sessions, briefing the UNCT on the evaluation through informal sessions and finalizing the report based on feedback from the quality assurance process;
- Delivering the final evaluation report.

12.1.2 *The national consultant(s) will contribute to the evaluation process substantively through data collection and analysis. Team members will share responsibilities for conducting the initial desk review and the field phases of the evaluation and provide substantive inputs to the inception report, the presentation of preliminary findings as well as to the draft and final reports. The local expert or experts will be engaged as soon as the selection of the international expert is concluded. Specific profiles of the local experts will be agreed upon with the international expert, taking into high consideration the gender aspect and ensure female representation among the evaluators.*

Required skills and experience:

International evaluation team leader
- At least a master's degree in a relevant field (international development, economics, political science, governance, social sciences or a related field);
- At least 10 years of working experience in evaluation of UN's strategic documents and UN agency country programmes;
- Previous experience with regional organizations and the UN system;
- Experience with participatory approaches, organizational assessments partnership strategies and capacity development;
- Knowledge of relevant human rights issues and ability to identify related problems in their political, ethnic, racial, gender equality and socio-economic dimensions;
- Ability to facilitate, evaluate and integrate information from a variety of sources and assess the impact on human rights and gender equality. Ability to incorporate gender perspectives in all aspects of the evaluation report;
- Regional expertise in the region of the Western Balkans;
- Proven experience as an evaluation team leader with ability to lead and work with other evaluation experts;
- Facilitation skills and ability to manage diversity of views in different development contexts;
- Ability to produce well written reports demonstrating analytical ability and communication skills
- Excellent command of English.

National Team Member(s)
- At least a master's degree in a relevant field (international development, economics, political science, governance, social sciences or a related field);
- Minimum five years of relevant professional experience. Previous work with UN would be advantage;
- Strong data collection and analysis skills; Prior experience in working with multilateral agencies;
- Strong experience and knowledge in the UN programming principles including leaving no one behind LNOB, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, disability inclusion; environmental sustainability and resilience, and accountability;
- In-depth knowledge and strong research record of country socio-economic development and environment context;
- Excellent timely delivery and time management;
- Process management skills such as facilitation skills and ability to negotiate with a wide range of stakeholders;
- Technical competence in undertaking complex evaluations which involve use of mixed methods;
- Knowledge of UN role, UN reform process and UN programming at the country level, particularly UNSDCF;
- Excellent command of English and Macedonian. Fluency in Albanian would be an asset.

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'. The selected consultants are required to clearly identify any potential ethical issues and approaches to the evaluation, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the evaluation process in their proposal.

6. Evaluation Process and Timeline

The process of evaluating the UNSDCF should include the following:

- Preparatory phase – including a review of the TOR, preliminary desk review of existing relevant documents (including, but not limited to, recent country programme evaluations, thematic evaluations and assessments, etc.) meetings with the UNCT and a gap analysis, meetings with evaluators of recent UN agencies' evaluations; the phase should conclude in the production of an Inception Report.
- Implementation phase – conducting the evaluation, which would include meetings with relevant stakeholders.
- Finalization phase – development of the final evaluation report and coordination with the UNCT for its finalization.

The final plan for conducting the evaluation will be outlined in the inception report, but it is expected that the final Evaluation Report should be delivered by September 2024 and the findings and recommendations presented to the key counterparts by end-September 2024.

Tentative Evaluation schedule

Activities/Tasks	Tentative timing	Place	Responsible Party
Documents and stakeholder mapping	By end April 2024 (ongoing)	Home-based	EM
Initial meeting and discussions with UNCT	Beginning of May 2024	MTeams	ESC members, with UNCT support
Full desk review and gap analysis	By end of May 2024	Home-based	Evaluation team leader
Drafting Inception Report, outlining evaluation design, initial synthesis and detailed additional data collection plan	By mid-June 2024	Home-based	Evaluation team leader and EMT members
Comments to the Inception report	By 21 June 2024	Home based	EM and ESC
Final Inception Report	By 28 June 2024	MTeams	Evaluation team leader
In-country field mission for interviews with stakeholders and additional data collection	During first half of July 2024	Skopje	Evaluation team members with EM
First draft of full evaluation report (max 60 pages excluding the Executive summary and annexes)	By mid-August 2024	Home-based	Evaluation team leader
Feedback from the UNCT	By end of August 2024	Home -based	EM
Finalization of second draft, following feedback from UNCT and	By 13 September 2024	Home-based	Evaluation team Leader
In-country workshop for Presentation of the Final Evaluation findings and recommendations	By 20 September 2024	Skopje	Evaluation team members

Management Response endorsed by UNCT and submitted to DCO HQ	By end of October 2024	Skopje	EM supervised by ESC
Report distributed and published along with the Management Response on DCO evaluation database	By end of November 2024	Skopje/NY	EM / DCO HQ

7. Evaluation Deliverables

The evaluation Team will deliver the following:

An Inception Report (between 10 and 15 pages, excluding annexes), which would—at minimum—clearly outline the purpose and scope of the evaluation, the main issues to be examined, preliminary analysis of ToC, the evaluation criteria, the questions used to assess performance, and a tentative list of interviews to be arranged or plans for filed visits, and evaluation methodology, including sources, tools and methods for data collection and evaluation matrix (Annex B).

- An evaluation report (draft and final version) (max of 60 pages excluding the Executive Summary and Annexes), covering the issues outlined in the terms of reference and inception report including evaluation findings and conclusions, lessons and recommendations. A Power Point presentation of key findings, lessons and recommendations for the government counterparts and other stakeholders.

•

8. Application

Interested candidates shall submit documentations demonstrating why they are the best-suited to carry out the above task. This should include:

International Team Leader	• Latest CV and sample of previous works. • A brief outline of the strengths and expertise highlighting directly relevant experiences to the assignment, including experience and knowledge in the UN programming principles (LNOB, human rights, GEWE, environmental sustainability and resilience, and accountability) • Approach to work/suggested methodology and work-plan • Financial Proposal (inclusive of expenses related to travels and DSA)

9. Payments

Payments are tied to deliverables upon approval of the Evaluation Manager on the satisfactory completion and will be as follows:

No.	Deliverables/Outputs	Target Due Dates	Payment
2	Satisfactory completion of the inception report	End June 2024	30 %
3	Submission of the draft report	Mid August 2024	30 %
4	Submission and approval of final report and PPT presentation	20 September 2024	40 %

10. Administrative Issues

The international consultant will be responsible for own travel arrangements cross-country. No additional costs outside of the scope of this TOR will be covered. The consultants will have to possess their own laptop and other technical equipment to complete the assignment. The documents produced during the period of this consultancy will be treated strictly confidential and the rights of distribution and/or publication shall solely reside with the UN.

Annex A: Preliminary list of reference documents

The preliminary list of documents for the desk review and secondary data collection includes:

- United Nations – North Macedonia Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025
- United Nations Common Country Assessment
- National Development Strategy
- Voluntary National Review 2020
- UNCT Joint Work Plans 2021-22-23-24
- United Nations Country Results Report 2021-22-23
- Business Operations Strategy and the associated annual business operations plans
- United Nations Communication Strategy 2021-2025 and the associated annual communication plans
- United Nations Resource Mobilization Strategy for 2021-2025
- Agency-specific country programme evaluations and joint programme evaluations conducted by the United Nations entities during the UNSDCF 2021-2025 cycle
- North Macedonia UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecards and the associated work plans and annual reports
- North Macedonia UNCT Accountability Scorecard on Disability Inclusion
- North Macedonia UNCT Youth 2030 Scorecard
- Reports of Human Rights Treaty bodies and mechanisms concerning North Macedonia

ANNEX 8: TEAM COMPOSITION

The independent Evaluation Team comprised one international team leader and one senior evaluation expert. The team had ample collective knowledge of the national context and demonstrated high technical capacities in the core areas of UN work in North Macedonia.

Considering the ongoing evaluations, such as UN Agencies' country programme evaluations, the evaluation coordinated and cooperated with these teams to the extent possible, especially in exploring opportunities to participate in the same meetings with stakeholders and to discuss lessons learned and preliminary findings.

The evaluation expert worked closely with the team leader (TL), who was responsible for the evaluation.

Inception phase:

The Team Leader oversaw the work and took the lead in analysing, reconstructing, and fine-tuning the Theory of Change and the overall UNSDCF intervention logic. Based on this, the TL proposed the evaluation methodology, including the Evaluation Matrix, preparation of evaluation questions, analysis of indicators, and the overall intervention logic within the UNSDCF.

The TL analysed the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets for North Macedonia, policy papers on socio-economic development, governance, delivery of social services, gender mainstreaming, resilience, environmental protection, and other common readings. The TL also analysed the documented work of the UNCT/UN Agencies, key deliverables, and obstacles, while reviewing joint UN initiatives.

The Evaluation Expert assisted in designing interview guides and data collection tools, analysing judgement criteria, providing evidence under indicators, and analysing existing analytical documents, legal and policy frameworks relevant to UNSDCF and SDGs. The EE also reflected on the key areas of success or underperformance concerning particular SDGs and UNSDCF indicators.

The Team Leader finalised and submitted the Inception report on behalf of the Evaluation Team.

Field phase – primary data collection:

The TL and EE interviewed key stakeholders from UN Agencies/UNCT, the Government of North Macedonia, other public institutions, and stakeholders at the national and local levels, along with international development partners. The EE organised and conducted focus group meetings.

The Evaluation Team also organised online meetings with stakeholders to complement the in-person data collection.

The Evaluation Team members worked closely with UN colleagues to ensure that all crucial stakeholders were contacted and that both in-person and online interviews were organised and conducted. The team members prepared comprehensive minutes from key informant interviews (KII) and group meetings, as well as from focus groups under various outcomes.

Synthesis phase:

The TL led the writing of the synthesis report, drawing on inputs from the field phase. The TL also focused on lessons learned and strategic recommendations for the future. The EE led the work of synthesising the collection of evidence under indicators and judgement criteria into final and nuanced answers to the evaluation questions (EQs) and contributed to the report's outline and possibly its writing.