



Independent
Evaluation
Office

United Nations Development Programme

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION COLOMBIA



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

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

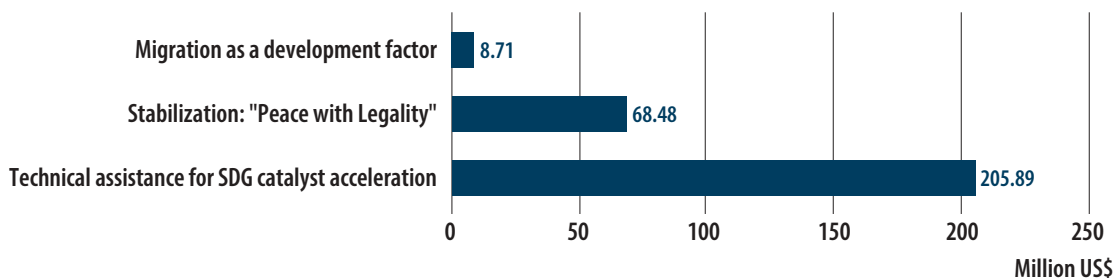
AETCR	Former Territorial Training and Reintegration Areas
CONPES	National Council for Economic and Social Policy
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organization
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
GIFMM	Inter-agency Group on Mixed Migratory Flows
GRES	Gender Results Effectiveness Scale
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IOM	International Organization for Migration
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PDET	<i>Programas de desarrollo con enfoque territorial</i> /Development Programmes with a Territorial Focus
RBLAC	Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SINA	National Environmental System
SMEs	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WFP	World Food Programme

Evaluation Brief: COLOMBIA

The Republic of Colombia, classified as an upper-middle-income country, faces significant inequalities that impede development and poverty eradication. Despite the country's wealth of natural resources and biodiversity, socio-economic disparities make Colombia highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Further, ongoing challenges from the armed conflict remain despite the 2016 Peace Accord with FARC, and issues such as rural poverty, environmental degradation and the COVID-19 pandemic have slowed progress. Colombia also faces pressures from large-scale migration, the ongoing pandemic and severe tropical storms.

The Country Programme Document (CPD) for the 2021-2024 period responded to the priorities agreed upon in the United Nations Development Cooperation Framework (UNDCF) for the 2020-2023 period. These CPD priorities were also aligned with Colombia's 2018-2022 National Development Plan, the UNDP Strategic Plan for 2018-2022, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Programme Expenditure by Outcome, 2021-2023



Findings and Conclusions

This evaluation highlights UNDP Colombia's strong strategic positioning, emphasizing its technical expertise and adaptability, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic and government transitions. It commends UNDP Colombia's innovative approaches to environmental safeguards, gender inclusion and intercultural methods, particularly their alignment with national priorities in deforestation-affected areas to support peacebuilding and sustainable development.

UNDP played a key role in reintegrating ex-combatants and promoting alternatives to illicit crop cultivation. However, budget constraints and slow implementation limited progress, especially in vulnerable regions. In managing migration, UNDP made notable impacts, such as issuing identification cards to Venezuelan migrants and supporting economic empowerment, though resource shortages limited the scale of these efforts.

UNDP's technical assistance contributed to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focusing on strengthening government capacities and promoting sustainable development. However, the evaluation noted that project dispersion and insufficient coordination between national and local entities weakened the overall impact. Despite these challenges, the evaluation concludes that UNDP has made significant contributions to addressing inequality and promoting peace. It recommends improvements in internal coordination and resource management in order to prevent project fragmentation.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. UNDP Colombia should develop a comprehensive theory of change for the new CPD. This theory of change should also include sub-theories of change for each specific outcome to be achieved and should be developed in a participatory manner with stakeholders.

Recommendation 2. UNDP Colombia must move towards adopting a strategic approach to its planning, shifting from a role predominantly focused on project administration and management to one that emphasizes the strengthening of public management capacities at both the territorial and national levels, as well as the strengthening of community capacities.

Recommendation 3. UNDP Colombia must effectively implement its new territorial strategy in order to re-establish a broader and more lasting presence in the less-developed regions of the country. This approach will ensure stronger engagement in these critical areas.

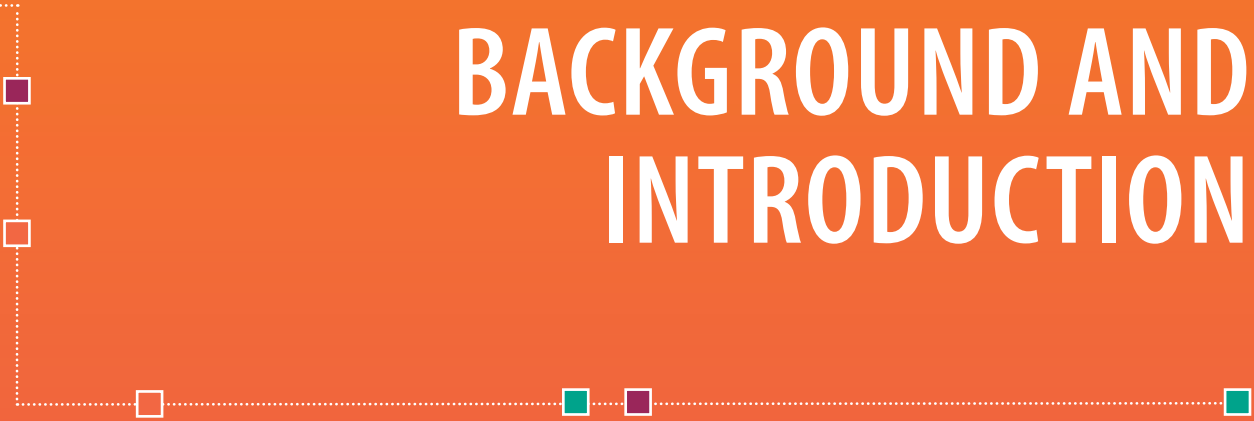
Recommendation 4. UNDP Colombia should undertake a review, simplification and improvement in the communication of its administrative procedures. This involves simplifying documentation, simplifying approval mechanisms, ensuring clarity of processes and providing adequate training for the staff involved. In turn, UNDP should establish a feedback and communication mechanism between project teams and management units to address issues in a timely manner. This should improve efficiency in contract delivery and project implementation, resulting in greater overall effectiveness of UNDP operations.

Recommendation 5. In order to strengthen the programme's monitoring and evaluation system, it is recommended that UNDP Colombia reviews and improves its system of indicators and ensures that projects are systematically evaluated. It is proposed that UNDP Colombia adopt a more balanced approach, including process evaluations, performance evaluations and impact evaluations on strategic issues. This will ensure that a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of the interventions is obtained.

Recommendation 6. UNDP Colombia should actively seek potential partnerships and diversify funding sources, seek alliances with key organizations interested in working together, improve public outreach, transparently present project results, and communicate the breadth and depth of its work. To take advantage of the opportunities, UNDP Colombia should strengthen its visibility and reinforce its role in long-term development initiatives in the territories.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION



This chapter presents the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation, as well as the methodology applied. It also describes the development context and the UNDP programme in Colombia.

1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP's contributions to national development priorities, as well as to assess the effectiveness of UNDP's strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts to achieve development outcomes. ICPEs are independent evaluations conducted under the general provisions contained within the UNDP Evaluation Policy.¹ The objectives of ICPEs are as follows:

- Support the development of the next UNDP Country Programme Document.
- Strengthen UNDP's accountability to national stakeholders.
- Strengthen UNDP's accountability to its Executive Board.
- Contribute to organizational learning and decision-making within UNDP.

This is the third country-level independent evaluation carried out by IEO in the Republic of Colombia (hereafter referred to in its short form, Colombia). Previous evaluations include the evaluation of development results carried out in 2007² and the ICPE conducted in 2018.³

This ICPE covers the work that UNDP has carried out within the framework of the Country Programme Document (CPD) 2021-2024, until December 2023. The scope of the ICPE includes a sample of UNDP activities in the country and interventions funded by various sources, including UNDP core resources, donor funds and government funds. The ICPE also reviewed strategies that began in the previous programming cycle and continued in the current one, in accordance with the evaluation mandate indicated in its terms of reference (Annex 1).

The ICPE is guided by four main evaluation questions (see Box 1). Among other areas of focus, the ICPE provided an opportunity to see how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the delivery of the intended country programme, as well as the extent to which UNDP's response to the pandemic contributed to the government's relief and recovery efforts. The ICPE's findings, conclusions and recommendations will serve as inputs for the development of the next UNDP CPD for Colombia.

BOX 1. Evaluation questions

1. What did the UNDP country programme intend to achieve during the period under review?
 2. To what extent has the programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives?
 3. To what extent has UNDP been able to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and support the country's preparedness, response, and recovery process?
 4. What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP performance and eventually, the sustainability of results?
-

¹ See <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>.

² The evaluation of the results of development activities used to cover two programming cycles, while the new ICPE methodology covers one cycle. http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/documents/ADR/ADR_Reports/ADR_Colombia.pdf.

³ The IEO conducted an independent evaluation of the national programme in 2018. <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/13781>.

The main recipients of the evaluation are the UNDP Country Office in Colombia (UNDP Colombia), the UNDP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC), the UNDP Executive Board, development partners, civil society organizations (CSOs), academic institutions and the Government of Colombia. The evaluation is also expected to provide inputs to other United Nations agencies and development stakeholders in the country.

1.2 Evaluation methodology

The ICPE was conducted in accordance with IEO-approved processes and methodologies (see Annex 2) and followed the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group.⁴ During the inception phase, the team (together with UNDP Colombia) identified and validated the list of all projects⁵ for this programme cycle and a sample of 29 projects (see Annex 9).

When selecting the sample, several criteria were used to ensure a balanced representation, including the programme's coverage, as it encompasses several thematic areas. Budgets were also taken into account (categorizing projects by size: small projects with a budget of less than US\$1,000,000; medium projects with budgets between \$1,000,000 and \$5,000,000; and large projects with budgets in excess of \$5,000,000). Geographical coverage was further considered to ensure that the evaluated projects were not limited to the national and urban sphere but covered various regions and departments. Both completed and ongoing projects were taken into account, as well as projects' degree of completion based on the status of their budgetary execution. This was done to ensure the inclusion of different types of programmes, such as joint programmes. Consultations were also held with UNDP Colombia to finalize the selection of projects for in-depth review.

The evaluation analysed the UNDP programme's effectiveness by assessing progress towards achieving outputs according to indicators and the extent to which these outputs contributed to outcomes. To better understand UNDP's performance in Colombia and the sustainability of its outcomes, the evaluation team examined the specific factors that have positively and negatively influenced the country programme. The team also assessed UNDP's abilities to adapt to changing contexts and to respond to national development needs and priorities.

In line with UNDP's gender mainstreaming strategy, the evaluation assessed the level of gender mainstreaming across the country programme and operations using the gender scorecard⁶ and the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES).⁷ Where available, collected data was disaggregated by gender and evaluated in relation to programme outcomes.

The evaluation was based on information gathered from different sources, which was cross-referenced at various points in the analysis. Information was cross-referenced with:

- A review of UNDP Colombia's strategic and programmatic documents, project documents and monitoring reports, evaluations, research work, output documents of the 2023 audit of the UNDP Office, the report of the previous programme evaluation and other relevant country-related publications (see Annex 8).

⁴ See United Nations Evaluation Group: <https://www.unesumption.org/document/detail/1914>.

⁵ N=145 projects comprising 420 project outputs.

⁶ The gender scorecard is an institutional tracking tool used to assign a rating to project outputs during the design phase and track planned spending on outputs that contribute to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. The gender scorecard does not reflect actual expenditures allocated to progress in this area. Since it is assigned by project output rather than by project reference number, a project may have multiple outputs with different gender scorecards. Gender scorecard ratings: GEN 0 (no discernible contribution to gender equality), GEN 1 (some contribution to gender equality), GEN 2 (significant contribution to gender equality), or GEN 3 (gender equality is a primary objective).

⁷ The gender scorecard is a corporate monitoring tool used to score project outcomes during the project design phase and to track planned expenditure for outcomes that contribute to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. The GRES classifies gender outcomes into five categories: gender-negative, gender-blind, gender-targeted, gender-sensitive and gender-transformative.

- An analysis of a sample of the portfolio of programmes and projects by programmatic area and region, which enabled a mapping of the projects implemented in relation to the objectives set out in the CPD (see Annex 9).
- Interviews with 200 people (99 women and 101 men) from UNDP and key stakeholders, including representatives from various government levels and sectors, the UN country team, development partners, CSOs and academic institutions. Interviews were used to collect data and assess stakeholder perceptions of the scope and effectiveness of programme interventions, determine factors affecting performance, identify strengths, and highlight areas for improvement within the UNDP programme (see Annex 7).
- Primary data collection on the ground was conducted between 21 July and 6 August 2023 in different territories of the country: Bogotá, Cali, Dabeiba, La Mojana, Llano Grande, Medellín, Riohacha, San Roque and Yumbo.

FIGURE 1. Summary of the Evaluation Methodology



The evaluation team reviewed the available Country Office audit and the reports from the 10 project evaluations conducted during the period.⁸ The team coordinated the fieldwork for this evaluation with the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI), as the Country Office audit and the ICPE were ongoing within six weeks of each other. The evaluation also assessed the private sector’s involvement.

The draft ICPE report underwent quality assurance through internal and external review processes before being submitted to the Country Office and the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC) for comments and identification of factual errors. The draft report was then shared with the government and other national partners for comment. An information meeting was held on 11 August 2023, with representatives from the main programme stakeholders. This meeting provided further opportunities to discuss the evaluation outcomes and ways forward for UNDP in the next cycle, including the management response submitted by UNDP Colombia.

⁸ These evaluations correspond to Outcome 1 (four evaluations) and Outcome 3 (six evaluations).

1.3 Challenges and limitations

Evaluation implementation was subject to some limitations associated with delays in the recruitment of consultants and preparation of the evaluation, which made it difficult to conduct interviews with those responsible for the programmes prior to the fieldwork. This necessitated reorganizing the evaluation agenda.

Data collection was interrupted by the ATLAS-to-Quantum transition, which created difficulties in accessing data from 2023. The evaluation team also did not have access to updated financial data to perform the relevant analyses until very late in the evaluation process.

During the initial interviews, the evaluation team noted that it was not possible to conduct the evaluation by using the traditional determination of outcomes and that it was important to consider the level of project outputs for a clearer understanding of outcomes. Project outputs were defined as the primary unit of analysis, and a sample size of 29 projects was selected. This methodological adjustment helped to address the limitation by offering a more detailed view of how individual project outputs contributed to broader outcomes.

1.4 Country context

Colombia has an estimated population of 52.2 million inhabitants as of 2023.⁹ The majority (77 percent) are concentrated in urban areas, and 15.3 percent are children aged between 10 and 19 years.¹⁰

It is also a country with a wide range of ethnic diversities, manifested in the presence of Afro, Black, Indigenous, Palenquero, Raizal and Rrom communities and peoples. These groups have been recognized as subjects of fundamental rights since the 1991 Political Constitution and inhabit both rural and urban areas.¹¹ In 2019, these ethnic groups accounted for 15 percent of the total national population.¹² They have historically experienced inequality, poverty and exclusion, as well as violence against rights defenders¹³ and forced displacement due to armed conflict and natural disasters.¹⁴

Economically, Colombia is classified as an upper-middle-income country with a growing economy, with an 11 percent growth in GDP in 2021 that slowed to 7.5 percent in 2022. The formal employment rate in the national labour market increased from an average of 39.8 percent in 2021 to 41.8 percent in 2022.¹⁵

The unequal distribution of wealth and opportunities has been a significant issue in the country. In 2022, monetary poverty stood at 36.6 percent, with extreme monetary poverty at 13.9 percent, underscoring the importance of addressing economic inequality. More than 18 million people were living in poverty in 2022; in municipal capitals, the monetary poverty rate stood at 33.8 percent, while in rural areas and dispersed population centres, it was 45.9 percent.¹⁶ Colombia's income inequality is also high; in 2020, its Gini index stood at 54.2. This economic disparity poses significant barriers to development and challenges to poverty eradication, the exercise of rights and democratic governance.

⁹ National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE). <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/demografia-y-poblacion>.

¹⁰ National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE). https://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/notas-estadisticas/ago_nota-estadistica-embarazo-020822_VF.pdf.

¹¹ Permanent Roundtable Consultation. Unified Proposal of Indigenous Peoples and Organizations to the NDP 2018-2022. January 2019.

¹² DANE (2019). AF_infografia_CNPV_indigenas (dane.gov.co).

¹³ While violence rates in Colombia are at their lowest in 70 years, there is great concern regarding the threats to and killings of human rights defenders, environmental defenders and community leaders.

¹⁴ National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE). <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/demografia-y-poblacion/censo-nacional-de-poblacion-y-vivenda-2018>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ DANE (2022c) Monetary Poverty. Press release. <https://www.dane.gov.co/files/operaciones/PM/cp-PM-2022.pdf>.

One of Colombia's greatest challenges is its efforts to systematically move towards ending the armed conflict, which began in 1964 with the creation of two guerrilla movements: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). After extensive national efforts, a Peace Accord was signed in 2016 between the government and the FARC. Numerous actions were taken to implement this agreement, resulting in the signing of the Framework Plan for the Implementation of the Final Agreement and the consolidation processes, which today constitute a historic process for Colombia.¹⁷ However, despite the initial progress, by the end of the Duque administration in 2022, only 30 percent of the provisions of the 2016 Final Peace Accord (FPA) had been implemented.¹⁸

This situation was further complicated by environmental degradation, rural poverty and socio-economic stagnation related to the armed conflict and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁹ In 2021, Colombia registered a low score of 17.4 percent for political stability and the absence of violence and terrorism, well below the Latin America and the Caribbean average of 56.9 percent.²⁰ This situation, as well as growing threats of violence against environmental, social and human rights leaders, further strained institutional frameworks and international cooperation, hindering progress in fulfilling the Peace Accord's commitments.²¹

Large-scale human movements have been a persistent challenge for Colombia. Between 2017 and 2021, over 223,366 victims of mass forced displacement were recorded. As of 2017, the regions most affected by these events were in the Pacific region, mainly Chocó and Nariño, followed by the border region of Norte de Santander, the Caribbean region and the Andean region, primarily Antioquia.

In 2021, a total of 82,846 people were displaced.²² Colombia is also the largest recipient of Venezuelans in the world and the second-largest recipient of refugee populations overall. As of December 2023, it was estimated that approximately 2.9 million Venezuelan migrants were living in Colombia. In response to this increase, Colombia has emerged as a global leader in migrant integration, establishing innovative standards in 2015 that include open policies to support the social and economic integration of Venezuelan migrants.²³

Despite progress, the country continues to face significant gender inequality issues.^{24,25} Although the creation of the Ministry of Equality and Equity represents an advancement on gender equality, Colombian women continue to face limited job opportunities, and gender-based violence, including sexual violence,

¹⁷ The Peace Accord contains 6 points: 1. Towards a new Colombian countryside: Comprehensive rural reform; 2. Political Participation: Democratic openness to building peace; 3. Ending the conflict; 4. Solution to the illicit drug problem; 5. Agreement on the victims of the conflict; 6. Implementation, verification and endorsement. See details in: Acuerdo Final.pdf (jep.gov.co).

¹⁸ OCHA (2023a) ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/situation-human-rights-colombia-2018-2022-report-international-coordination-groups-and-organizations-universal-periodic-review-colombia-2023>.

¹⁹ OCHA (2023b) ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/situation-human-rights-colombia-2018-2022-report-international-coordination-groups-and-organizations-universal-periodic-review-colombia-2023>.

²⁰ World Bank. Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism: Percentile Rank, Upper Bound of 90% Confidence Interval. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/PV.PER.RNK.UPPER>.

²¹ According to the INDEPAZ Observatory, since the signing of the Peace Accord in 2016, there have been 1,201 murders of social leaders and human rights defenders (HRD): 50 social leaders in 2022 and 188 in 2023, in addition to the assassination of 44 former FARC combatants in the last year. See details in: *Líderes Sociales, Defensores DE DD.HH Y Firmantes de Acuerdo Asesinados en 2023 – Indepaz [Social Leaders, HR Defenders and Agreement Signers Murdered in 2023 - Indepaz]*.

²² Joint Project for the Integration of Data and Statistical Estimates on Violations Occurring in the Context of the Colombian Armed Conflict, JEP-CEV-HRDAG. In: Final Report of the Truth Commission (p. 170). *Hay futuro si hay verdad [There is a future if there is truth] | Final Report of the Truth Commission (comisiondelaverdad.co)*.

²³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2023) Radiography of Venezuelan Migrants in Colombia. Cut-off point 31 December 2023. https://www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/sites/unidad-administrativa-especial-migracion-colombia/content/files/001127/56343_informe-distribucion-migrantes-venezolanos-diciembre-2023-ejecutivo.pdf.

²⁴ Higher female unemployment: in 2019, it stood at 13.6 percent as opposed to 8.2 percent for men; higher informal sector working (particularly among young women between 12-18 years of age and over 60); concentration in certain occupations (horizontal segregation) and also in the lower parts of hierarchical structures (vertical segregation) and a persistent wage gap. Women are almost three times as likely as men to have no income of their own: 27 percent and 10 percent, respectively. The difference is worse in rural areas, where the likelihood of a woman being in this condition is five times greater than that of a man. This is accompanied by poverty rates where, for every 100 men in poor households, there are 118 women. These labour and economic vulnerabilities are particularly serious for development in a context in which more women have become the main providers for Colombian households. See details in: DANE, UN Women (2020). *Informe mujeres y hombres: brechas de género en Colombia [Report on women and men: gender gaps in Colombia]*. Executive Summary p.9.

²⁵ National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE). <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/139-espanol/noticias/ultimas-noticias/1116-en-colombia-actualmente-hay-23312832-mujeres>.

remains a significant problem.²⁶ Several factors contribute to this, including cultural norms, social attitudes and the impacts of the armed conflict, which have reinforced their incidence and heightened the risks for women, girls and the LGBTQ+ community, particularly in conflict-affected areas of Indigenous territories. In 2021, there were 622 reported cases of femicide, and in 2022, there were 619 reported cases.²⁷

Two external factors had strong impacts on Colombia over the evaluation period: the COVID-19 pandemic and severe weather events. The pandemic had major consequences for public health, socio-economic indicators and businesses. In 2020, 10 percent of micro-enterprises closed, a notable increase from the average annual closure rate of approximately 3 percent in prior years.²⁸ This is a critical issue, as micro-enterprises comprise 89 percent of all businesses in the country. By 2021, some of these businesses had reopened or been replaced, although many continued to face challenges.²⁹ Prior to the pandemic, specifically in 2019, these businesses employed 14.5 million people, representing 29 percent of Colombia's population.³⁰ Post-pandemic employment rates reflect ongoing recovery, but full pre-pandemic employment levels have not yet been restored.³¹

Tropical storms and hurricanes affected several areas of the country, mainly along the Caribbean Coast, causing severe damage to the infrastructure and economy of the islands of Providencia and San Andrés, as well as the municipalities of Manaure and Uribia in La Guajira from 2021 to 2022.³²

Colombia is in a privileged geographical position from the perspective of natural resources, which is reflected in its high degree of biological diversity; it is one of the 17 most biodiverse countries in the world. It is estimated to be home to approximately 67,000 species, of which more than 9,000 are endemic plants, amphibians, birds, reptiles, mammals and fish.³³ Nevertheless, due to its biophysical conditions and high socio-economic inequality, Colombia is among the most vulnerable countries to climate change impacts. Note that Colombia is not a major contributor of greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for only 0.6 percent of global emissions. The main sources of emissions are deforestation (33 percent), the agricultural sector (22 percent) and the mining and energy sectors (10 percent).³⁴

The primary challenges to sustainable development in Colombia, as identified by the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2022 and shared by the United Nations Common Country Analysis (CCA), include: stagnant productivity; limited access to high-quality basic services; a large informal sector; population, territorial, ethnic and gender gaps; violence; the presence of illegal economies and organized armed groups in some remote regions with a weak institutional presence; the need for improved transparency; strengthened justice; and vulnerability to disaster risks and climate change.³⁵ These challenges encompass various structural and systemic issues, including economic productivity, governance, security and social inequality, along with specific gaps related to population, territory, ethnicity and gender.

²⁶ ACAPS thematic report: Colombia - GBV cases and response gaps, 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/acaps-thematic-report-colombia-gbv-cases-and-response-gaps-11-april-2023>.

²⁷ Informe Anual 2022 del Observatorio del Femicidio en Colombia [2022 Annual Report of the Observatory of Femicide in Colombia]. <https://observatoriofemicidioscolombia.org/attachments/article/512/Informe%202023-1.pdf>.

²⁸ National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Informe sobre el Dinamismo Empresarial en Colombia 2019.

²⁹ National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Boletín Técnico: Resultados de la Encuesta de Opinión Empresarial, Segundo trimestre de 2021.

³⁰ National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Censo General de Población y Vivienda 2018 and business statistics from 2019. International Labour Organization (ILO) Labour Market Trends in Colombia 2019.

³¹ Centre for Microenterprise Studies (CEM). In document: United Nations Colombia (2022), p. 54. "Documento estratégico de la ONU para candidatas y candidatos a la presidencia de Colombia 2022-2026 Una agenda común por Colombia" [UN strategy document for candidates for the presidency of Colombia 2022-2026 A common agenda for Colombia].

³² Recent hurricanes in Colombia (datosmundial.com).

³³ Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia: Home, <https://www.minambiente.gov.co/colombia-tiene-67-000-especies-de-fauna-y-flora-registradas>.

³⁴ UNDP Colombia, Avances y retos de Colombia en los acuerdos multilaterales sobre medio ambiente [Colombia's progress and challenges in multilateral environmental agreements]. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-08/undp_co_pub_avances_compromisos_colombia_acuerdos_ambientales_multilaterales_0.pdf.

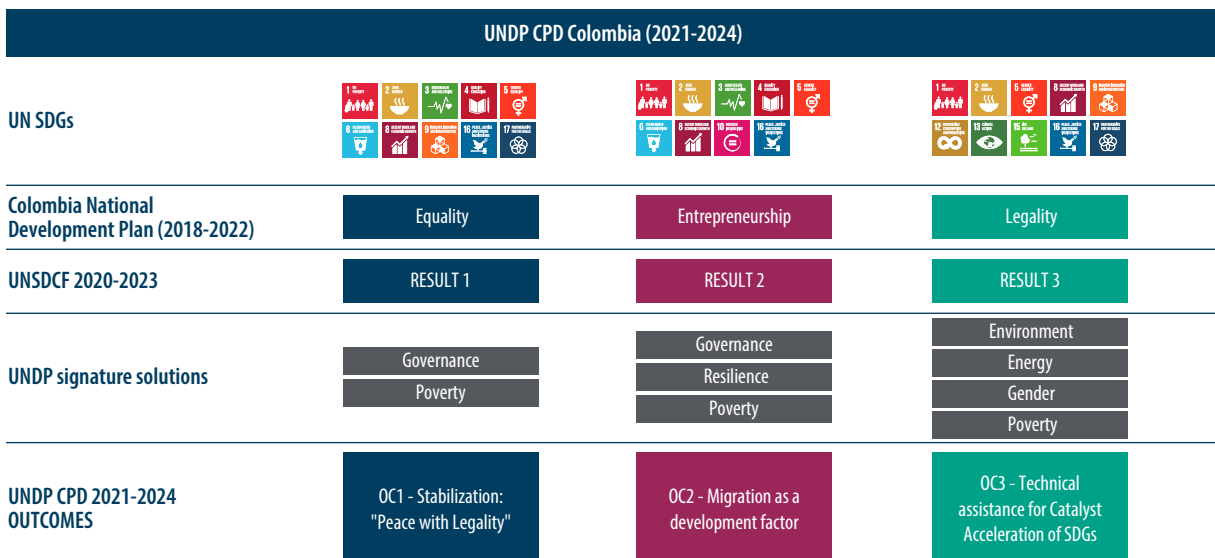
³⁵ National Planning Department (2019). Resumen Bases Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2018-2022 [Summary of Bases of the National Development Plan 2018-2022]. Page 6. Available at: <https://colaboracion.dnp.gov.co/CDT/Prensa/Resumen-PND2018-2022-final.pdf>.

1.5 UNDP in Colombia

The 2021-2024 CPD responded to the priorities agreed upon in the United Nations Development Cooperation Framework (UNDCF) 2020-2023, with commitments being made for the three Framework outcomes. These priorities aligned with the National Development Plan 2018-2022, the UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2022 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The country programme mandate also contributed to substantive and cross-cutting issues, including gender, intercultural and human rights approaches. Through these cross-cutting themes, UNDP supported national efforts to consolidate the government’s priority territories affected by violence and poverty, particularly in the most underdeveloped areas, through Development Plans with Territorial Focus (PDETs). This work facilitated the comprehensive reintegration of ex-combatants (Peace signatories) from the 2016 Final Agreement and aimed to reduce the socio-economic vulnerability of Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees and host populations. Additionally, it strengthened institutional technical capacities at the national and local levels in order to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

FIGURE 2. Alignment of UNDP CPD Colombia 2021-2024 Outcomes and Objectives



Source: UNDP IEO

The UNDP Colombia CPD was organized by thematic areas of work:

- a. Sustainable development;
- b. Poverty and inequality reduction;
- c. Democratic governance; and
- d. Peace, justice and crisis response.

As of December 2023, the UNDP Colombia office had 522 employees across the country, with a concentration in the capital, Bogotá. In terms of gender parity in its workforce, women represent 61 percent of the staff, with 67 percent of management positions being held by women.

TABLE 1: UNDP Colombia, Breakdown by Gender and Nationality, 2023

Nationality	Women	% of total	Men	% of total	Total
National (Colombia)	301	60%	200	40%	501
International	2	67%	1	33%	3
Not specified	15	83%	3	17%	18
TOTAL	318	61%	204	39%	522

Source: UNDP at a glance. <https://app.powerbi.com/groups/me/reports/3a3641d5-658d-4e4e-bea2-69c97b1d34b1/ReportSectionc8d125deee8ab35eaaab?experience=power-bi>

1.6 Theory of Change

Three strategic areas were defined during the evaluation period: Stabilization — “Peace with Legality” (Outcome 1); Migration as a Development Factor (Outcome 2); and Technical Assistance for SDG Catalyst Acceleration (Outcome 3). These areas were prioritized by the national government, reflected in the UNSDCF, and correlated with the 2021-2024 CPD.

Outcome 1 - Support for the policy of “Peace with Legality”, strengthening the implementation of PDETs, the reintegration of ex-combatants and support for the substitution of illicit crops.

Outcome 2 - Support for the socio-economic integration of Venezuelan migrants so that they are seen as a factor of development, reinforced by a humanitarian response that includes: access to health, education and welfare services; food and nutritional security; labour incorporation; and coexistence and citizen security.

Outcome 3 - Technical assistance to the acceleration of catalytic SDGs in priorities such as:

- **Territorial:** planning, risk and disaster prevention, climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- **Preservation:** Sustainable use of natural resources, sustainable production and consumption;
- **Food:** Nutritional security, gender equality and ethnic populations;
- **Orange economy:** Circular productive development and access to markets, entrepreneurship and employability for young people; and
- **Institutional:** Strengthening of surveillance and control organizations with jurisdictional functions, clarification and judicial and non-judicial investigation, and measurement of indicators and SDGs.

During the evaluation period, UNDP Colombia had 145 projects under implementation. Of these, 100 contributed to one outcome, 11 to two outcomes, and one to all three outcomes (Project ID 109981 - Estabilización y Paz Territorial). Thirty-one projects corresponded to Stabilization: “Peace with Legality” (Outcome 1); three projects to Migration as a Development Factor (Outcome 2); and 125 projects to Technical Assistance for SDG Catalyst Acceleration (Outcome 3) (see Annex 9 for a complete list of projects).

According to UNDP corporate systems, UNDP Colombia recorded budgets and expenditures for the three outcomes as follows:

- Outcome 1: Budget of \$86.7 million, expenditure of \$68.5 million;
- Outcome 2: Budget of \$15.9 million, expenditure of \$8.7 million;
- Outcome 3: Budget of \$315.9 million, expenditure of \$205.9 million.

Outcome 3 represented the largest share of the programme portfolio, accounting for 75.5 percent of the total budget and 72.7 percent of total expenditure.

TABLE 2: Total Budget, Expenditure and Percentage Implementation by Outcome (2021-2023)

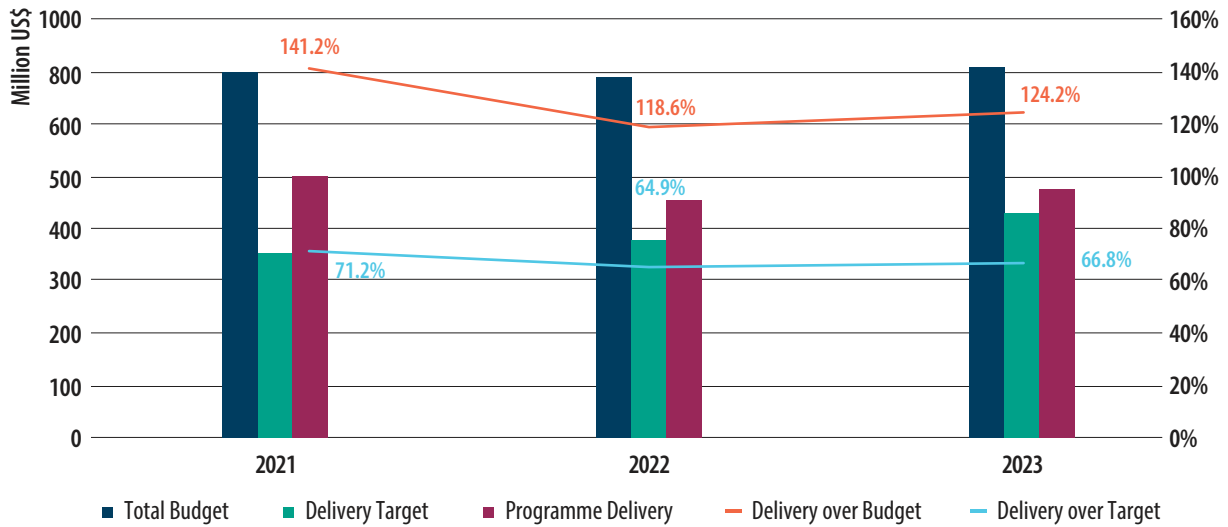
Description of outcomes	Budget (US\$)	Expenditure (US\$)	Rate of delivery
Outcome 1. Stabilization: "Peace with legality"	\$86,724,016	\$68,481,629	79.0%
Outcome 2. Migration as a development factor	\$15,910,177	\$8,705,156	54.7%
Outcome 3. Technical assistance for SDG catalyst acceleration	\$315,881,695	\$205,894,960	65.2%
TOTAL	\$418,515,889	\$283,081,745	67.6%

Source: PowerBI/ATLAS and QUANTUM. As of December 2023

Between 2021 and 2023, UNDP Colombia mobilized 98.3 percent of its funding from non-core sources, with only 1.7 percent coming from core funds. Government counterpart funding of programmatic costs accounted for the most significant share of UNDP Colombia's portfolio, followed by bilateral and multilateral funds and vertical trust funds.

During the evaluation period, UNDP executed 67.6 percent of the total budget (see Figure 3). However, it should be noted that UNDP Colombia exceeded the annual programme spending targets set by the regional office, achieving an average of 27.7 percent above the combined target for the 2021-2023 period.

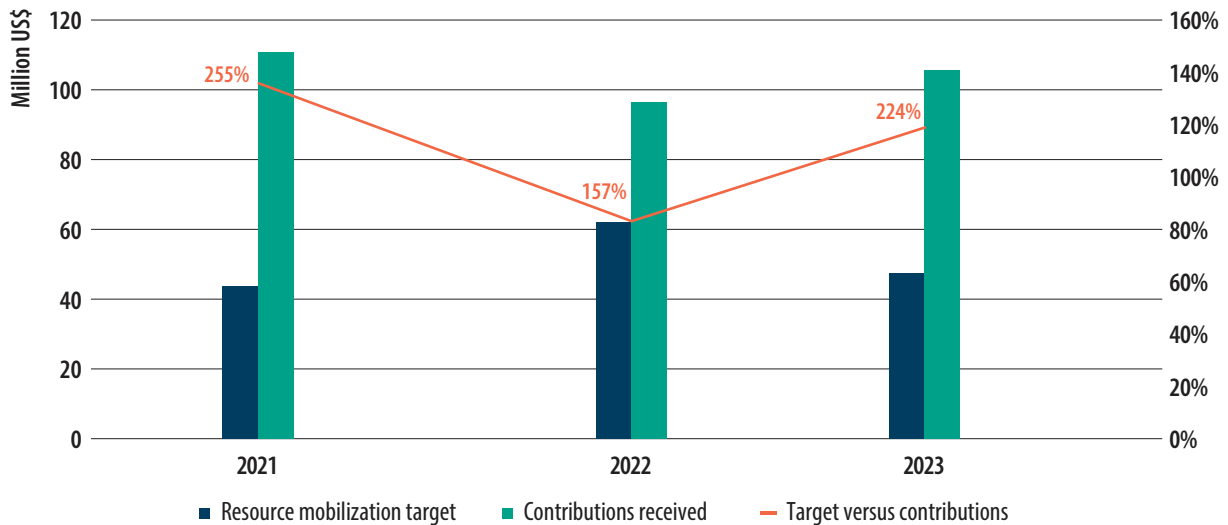
FIGURE 3: Budget, Targets Agreed with RBLAC, Expenditure, and Percentage Delivery (2021-2023)



Source: PowerBi/ATLAS and Quantum as of December 2023

The Country Office mobilized resources totalling \$111.6 million in 2021, \$97.2 million in 2022, and \$106.3 million in 2023, exceeding the annual targets set in the Integrated Work Plan as agreed with RBLAC by 155 percent (2021), 57 percent (2022), and 124 percent (2023), respectively (see Figure 4).

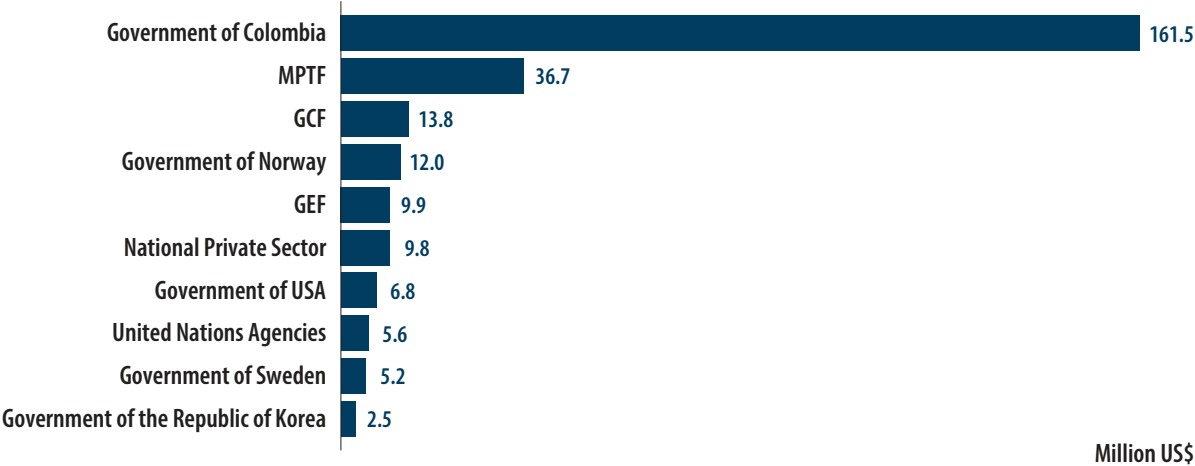
FIGURE 4: Resource Mobilization Target and Contributions Received (2021-2023)



Source: PowerBi/ATLAS and Quantum as of December 2023

As of December 2023, the main sources of funding for the UNDP Colombia programme were the Government of Colombia, the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Peacebuilding in Colombia, the Green Climate Fund, the Government of Norway, the Global Environment Facility, and others (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5: Main Sources of Financing in Terms of Total Expenditure (2021-2023)



Source: PowerBi/ATLAS and Quantum as of December 2023

In terms of responding to COVID-19, Phase 1 of the Socio-economic Response Plan required \$50.3 million, of which \$32.2 million was mobilized by the United Nations in Colombia, with \$17.1 million reprogrammed from other resources.³⁶ According to the Socio-economic Response Results Framework, UNDP mobilized the largest portion, exceeding \$18 million.

³⁶ Socio-economic Response Results Framework under the United Nations System Socio-economic Response Plan, 2020.

CHAPTER 2 FINDINGS



This chapter analyses the outcomes of the UNDP country programme in Colombia and examines the factors that influenced its performance and contributed to these outcomes. The evaluation is based on the results of the projects and other activities implemented by the Country Office, which were correlated with the outputs, outcomes and overall objectives of the 2021-2024 CPD.

2.1 Strategic aspects of design, management and other cross-cutting issues

2.1.1 UNDP Colombia's strategic positioning and added value

Finding 1: UNDP Colombia's added value and comparative advantages include its technical capacities and the application of innovative methodologies for the effective implementation of initiatives that contribute to achieving the SDGs.

During the programme cycle, the Government of Colombia recognized UNDP's added value, particularly in terms of its technical capacities, innovative methodologies and solid experience in delivering programmes in various development areas, such as peace, governance and the environment.³⁷

UNDP Colombia was also a relevant and strategic partner in terms of responding quickly and flexibly to COVID-19 and to changes in government.

During the evaluation period, UNDP advanced in investing in nature-based solutions, replacing large civil infrastructure projects from the previous government. This strategy simultaneously addressed multiple SDGs by incorporating elements from the peace agreement, promoting sustainable livelihoods, ensuring access to potable water and empowering vulnerable groups. UNDP prioritized municipalities under the PDET and areas with high deforestation, thus contributing to peace commitments. Nature-based solutions have focused on environmental challenges, particularly those related to climate change and ecosystem health, which are vital for building resilience. Additionally, UNDP supported the incorporation of national policies on environmental safeguards, gender and interculturality and developed a manual to standardize intercultural interventions, aligning with the Leave No One Behind principle.

Evaluation interviewees recognized UNDP's capacity-building approach at different government levels, noting stronger impacts at the national level compared to at the governorate and municipal levels. The Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) and UNDP services in support of the National Implementation Modality (NIM) helped achieve project goals and, to a lesser extent, strengthened the long-term capacities of local institutions, apart from in very limited cases.³⁸ The DIM modality was justified due to the fact that UNDP-delivered environmental projects were being carried out in complex and conflict-prone territories, where direct implementation was necessary.

³⁷ For example, the tool for territorial assessments using virtual reality images in cases of natural disasters or the viewer for mapped projects throughout the country. Unforeseen positive results were also achieved in the portfolio for the Sustainable Development Area, associated with methodology generation. These have been scaled up and taken on by the Ministry of Environment and have the potential to be replicated throughout the country, as described later in the report.

³⁸ For example, in projects executed in the Amazon, skills were transferred through workshops and lessons-learned sessions. Public institutions also noted attending UNDP Colombia-led courses with universities, aimed at institutional strengthening and capacity building for their officials. Rights holders reported enthusiastically integrating the newly acquired knowledge with their pre-existing practices. They acknowledged that these practices and knowledge had improved their quality of life, especially through the introduction of new, healthier, chemical-free foods.

The peace, governance and sustainable development portfolios were relevant and provided added value through differentiated approaches that focused on the territories, where UNDP was not simply an actor providing resources as a donor, but was also supporting rights holders. According to interviewees and available information, UNDP was a strategic partner in accessing territories, as well as in communicating and coordinating with different levels of government and community entities. Implementation partners noted that UNDP had facilitated their contact with public institutions, including the Ministry of Mines and Energy, the Ministry of the Environment and the Bank of the Republic.

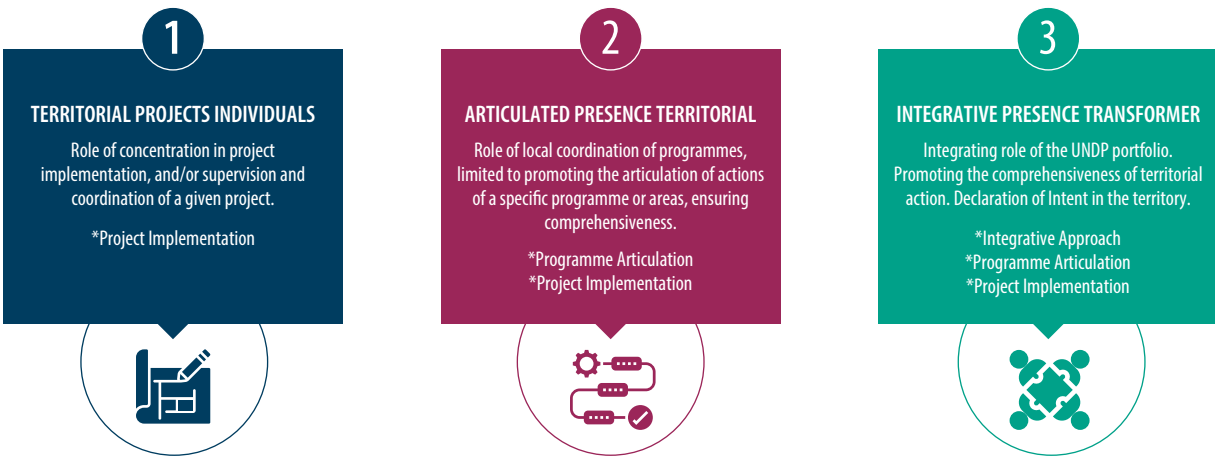
The sustainability of project results largely depended on institutions' capacities to continue the activities and maintain the results achieved during project implementation. Institutional staff continuity was a key factor in this regard. For example, in the Climate Resilience in La Mojana - Climate and Life project, much of the UNDP team that participated in the project continued to work on other projects in the region, thereby reducing uncertainty and retaining institutional knowledge and capacities.

Interviewees valued UNDP technical support, experience and knowledge of the country's territories. The UNDP team's visits to verify the roles played by Black communities, miners and farmers were also valued. In addition to being fundamental in Colombia, these issues are of interest to the national government, since peasants have been recognized as legal subjects.

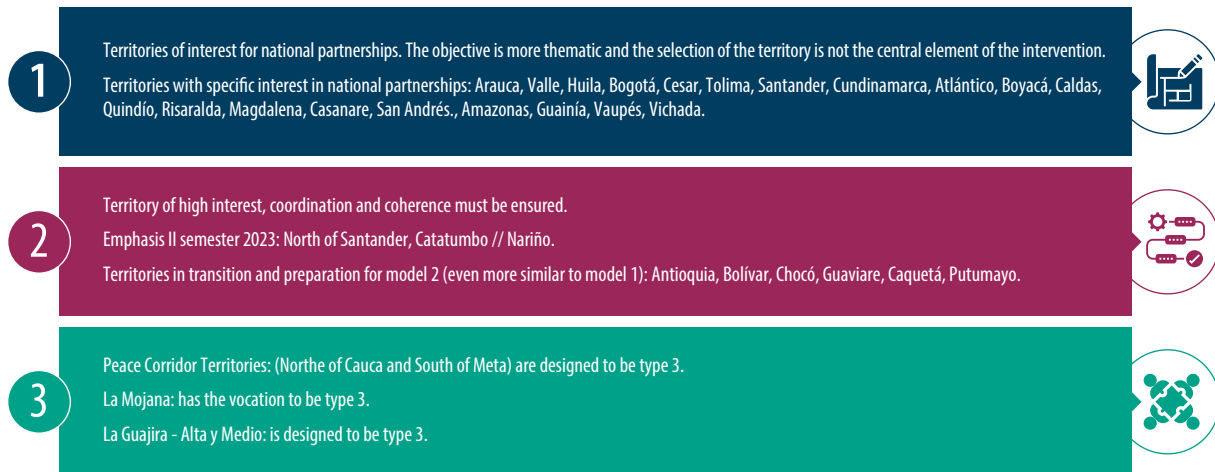
The evaluators noted that in order to strengthen local-level capacities, promote sustainability and replicate project results, UNDP Colombia sought to partner with local organizations that were familiar with the territory, experienced in developing related activities and committed to the intervention areas. This collaboration enabled teams to enter the territories and connect with potential stakeholders. Moreover, the diverse backgrounds of these partners enriched project intervention methodologies. However, interviewees considered UNDP's limited local presence as an impediment to its local actions.

During the data collection work in Colombia, the evaluators found that the Country Office was on the verge of finalizing a new proposal for a territorial presence, which included three deployment models (see Figure 6). However, the proposal was not implemented, confirming interviewee perceptions' regarding the limitations of local action when staff are based in the main cities and travel to the field.

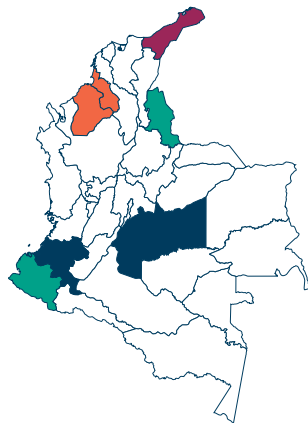
FIGURE 6: UNDP Colombia's Territorial Presence (Yet to be Implemented)



Source: UNDP Colombia, January 2024



Source: UNDP Colombia, January 2024



MODEL 2

- **Emphasis (semester II 2023)**
 North of Santander (Catatumbo) and Nariño

MODEL 3

- **Peace Corridor Territories**
 North of Cauca: Suárez, Santander de Quilichao, Buenos Aires and Caldono
 Sur del Meta: Mesetas, Uribe and La Macarena
- **La Mojana**
 Nechí, San Jacinto, Magangué, Achí, San Benito, San Marcos, Ayapel, Adad, Guaranda, Caimito, Majagual (Antioquia, Bolívar, Córdoba y Sucre)
- **Alta and Media Guajira**
 Uribia, Maicao, Manaure, Riohacha y Dibulla

Source: UNDP Colombia, March 2024

Finding 2: UNDP has positioned itself as a trusted partner with a number of national actors, mainly the government, CSOs and the private sector, and primarily at the local level. This is the result of UNDP Colombia's ability to adapt to an evolving national context and possible eventualities, especially the pandemic and the change in government administration.

UNDP is well-recognized for its best practices and mechanisms in highly complex areas in the Colombian context, such as research into resilient seeds for climate change adaptation, financial inclusion for vulnerable groups in the mining sector, sustainable value chains, and community participation as both executor and beneficiary. In the peace sector, UNDP excels in supporting economic ventures with peace agreement signatories and building CSO capacities to foster a culture of peace.

UNDP Colombia is also noteworthy for its work, developed jointly with Rosario University, on the collective and participatory construction of a model of intercultural dialogue with the Wayuu people in La Guajira as an exercise in democratic participation. This work involves elements of innovation, knowledge generation and strengthening dialogues and relations with other actors, such as Indigenous people and academic institutions.

UNDP Colombia's support for youth organizations and leaders in Buenaventura has likewise fostered organizational strengthening and introduced new methodologies, unleashing significant leadership potential in young people, for whom UNDP has become a valued reference point.

Despite the challenges inherent to coordinating actions in remote territories and to collaborating with local private organizations, UNDP played crucial roles in institutional coordination during the emergency response phase to COVID-19. UNDP's work not only helped to avoid duplication in leading the pandemic response, but also laid the groundwork for developing essential relationships during the stabilization phase.

Finding 3: UNDP actions in Colombia in response to the pandemic were aligned with the United Nations System plan, focusing on: i) support to health systems, ii) promotion of multisectoral crisis management, and iii) analysis of socio-economic impacts. Their effectiveness was illustrated by their rapid response, adaptability and ability to identify critical areas of intervention, for which UNDP's assistance was essential.

The United Nations System's socio-economic response to the COVID-19 crisis in Colombia was built on three fundamental pillars: i) focusing on equity and directing efforts to those most in need, guided by the Leave No One Behind principle; ii) strengthening the capacities of people and institutions; and iii) taking a multidimensional approach to address the pandemic's simultaneous impacts on all areas of development. UNDP Colombia's strategy emphasized overcoming the false dichotomies between protecting individuals, protecting the economy and empowering women and other vulnerable populations.

In response to the pandemic, UNDP focused its efforts on three priority areas: i) supporting health systems, ii) promoting multisectoral crisis management, and iii) conducting socio-economic impact analyses. The evaluation confirmed that UNDP supported the procurement of medical supplies and personal protective equipment, implemented technological solutions to expand remote health care delivery, improved health coverage for the most vulnerable populations, and worked with the private sector to foster entrepreneurship, generate employment and improve the digital capacities of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Additionally, UNDP developed multidimensional indicators to assess vulnerability and to promote gender-sensitive policies.

UNDP's response to the post-pandemic landscape was also noteworthy. UNDP created a portfolio of new projects, demonstrating its agility in quickly addressing emerging challenges. One flagship initiative in this portfolio was the Revive Colombia project, which focused on the country's socio-economic revival by simultaneously addressing recovery and development in response to the crisis.

Field visits validated the results of this project, with approximately \$17 million executed in the 2021-2022 period. This initiative not only protected the livelihoods of those groups most affected by the pandemic but also strengthened the social fabric of these communities. Through the Revive programme, 1,600 people were trained and employed, 48 community initiatives were implemented, 24 grass-roots social organizations were strengthened, and 17 urban vegetable gardens were maintained on agroecological routes. Regarding the private sector, the capacities of 1,500 micro- and small entrepreneurs were strengthened, sales increased in 1,050 programme-supported SMEs and 100 jobs were created in supported companies.³⁹

In 2022, the Stabilization and Peace portfolio implemented a series of rapid-impact projects that responded to human security needs and channelled private-sector support to address crises. The main programmes included a cash-for-data project in the municipalities of Bello, El Charco and Tumaco, focused on digital ownership and a community epidemiological surveillance strategy that benefited more than 161 people through training sessions in collecting, managing and disseminating data. At least 3,468 households indirectly benefited from support for vaccination processes, delivery of biosecurity elements, and guidance for the activation of care pathways in cases of vulnerable conditions. Another project developed environmental initiatives linked to economic value chains and public health initiatives in the territories of El Charco and Tumaco and in the Granizal area. This project benefited at least 230 people.

In the Peace and Poverty portfolio, the inclusion of Result 3.8, “Guarantee the continuity of the supply chain for essential and time-critical products and services, such as food, production and agricultural inputs, and non-food items, in coordination with the government,” strengthened the capacities of the office to interact with partners and contribute to the assessment and analysis of the COVID-19 situation to benefit socio-economic recovery. By creating this output with such close links to the pandemic context, it was possible to use the Country Office’s financial and technical resources to strengthen the portfolio of interventions related to the socio-economic crisis among the vulnerable population, including migrants and displaced persons.

It became evident that UNDP Colombia developed internal capacity within its team to address national needs, positioning itself to rapidly reactivate and coordinate economic actors, including the private sector, cooperatives and production projects. This approach placed greater emphasis on demand-driven incentives rather than supply-side solutions.

UNDP Colombia’s capacity to convene and innovate was key to launching the Frameworks for Life challenge, an open competition that harnessed the intelligence and collective action of grass-roots innovators, the scientific rigour of academia and the production capacity and scalability of industry. The challenge aimed to create solutions using open licences that would allow physical distancing without the need for quarantine or isolation at home while reviving the economy. UNDP Colombia led this challenge together with strategic partners such as the Vice-Presidency, the University School of Business Administration, the National Association of Entrepreneurs of Colombia, and the Makers Community in Colombia.

UNDP Colombia also innovatively adapted its working methodologies to the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to continue supporting the population, primarily in the most vulnerable regions. Quarantine measures and mobility restrictions necessitated shifting planned and ongoing face-to-face activities to remote modalities. This transition required significant effort from the UNDP team. In terms of

³⁹ Information reported on the UNDP Colombia website, available at <https://www.undp.org/es/colombia/projects/reactivacion>.

institutional strengthening processes, UNDP restructured the programme for virtual implementation, taking into account factors such as Internet access and the availability of mobile devices in order to communicate with rights holders and programme participants.

In the context of the crisis, and despite interventions adjusting to social distancing and remote operations, the opportunity arose to create new interventions that were better adapted to the context and needs of rights holders. One example was the creation of ‘community stores’ by the UNDP Colombia team working in rural areas. This intervention allowed the Country Office to continue supporting the communities with food supplies, economically empower women, strengthen their market links, and expand their Internet access. The modular community stores methodology has significant potential for scalability and customization based on the needs of the communities where they are installed.

The Country Office’s analytical capacities and territorial presence were utilized to develop interventions tailored to various local contexts, based on COVID-19 impact assessments. One such example was the ‘Socio-economic Assessment Analysis in Colombia’s Border Departments’, which included recommendations for plans addressing rural health, housing and drinking water, promoting the solidarity and cooperative economy, rural labour force formalization, social protection and guaranteed food rights. The UNDP strategy in Colombia to address the pandemic focused on the PDET municipalities, highlighting the need to gradually reduce the urban-rural gap, which was exacerbated by the pandemic.

2.1.2 Programme design and management aspects

Finding 4: UNDP Colombia’s design of the CPD was marked by several factors, including a changing political scenario, with an unprecedented transition between the last two administrations, a redefinition of priorities by the current government, and efforts to align with the 2020-2023 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). A weakness was that UNDP Colombia did not incorporate a clear theory of change as an element in the design of the CPD, both at the programme level and for each of its outcomes.

UNDP Colombia’s design of the 2021-2024 CPD was largely driven by the guidelines and priorities of the government in power at the time, which placed minimal emphasis on consolidating the Peace Accord and strengthening democratic institutions. This led to limitations in programming and available resources.⁴⁰ Additionally, the absence of explicit internal programme direction (theory of change), the government transition, shifting priorities and evolving state policies posed significant challenges for project planning and implementation.⁴¹ Further, in 2022, UNDP Colombia had to quickly adapt to the growing demands of a new government that was more focused on environmental initiatives, greater inclusion of marginalized groups and emphasis on decentralization and territorial strengthening.

The theory of change in the CPD did not meet the criteria for a robust theory that would allow for clearly demarcated strategies, results and expected impacts. This led to difficulties in understanding the interrelationships between these and their contribution to the desired results on the part of the different work areas of the office.⁴²

⁴⁰ See conclusions of the four evaluations of the Peace area portfolio.

⁴¹ For example, in the sustainable development portfolio, the country had a robust environmental institutional framework, including regulations, territorial environmental authorities and research institutes, which together provided a solid structure. The portfolio’s resources addressed gaps that the State could not fund, allowing for more efficient and transparent acceleration of key processes and capability transfer to the territory. However, the previous government’s agenda largely dictated UNDP’s work, ensuring that the programme responded to the government’s needs rather than to a broader analysis of national needs and priorities.

⁴² The absence of a robust theory of change was also confirmed by external actors and was reflected in the findings of the 2017-2021 evaluation of the Sustainable Peace project.

The approach taken when drafting the CPD, combined with the absence of a strong theory of change, resulted in a programmatic framework that lacked the necessary long-term vision for effective development planning and evaluation in the Colombian context, especially given the Peace Accord's 15-year implementation timeline.

This approach also resulted in limited ownership of the CPD among UNDP staff, as it was not widely recognized as a reference framework for the intended transformations during the period, including many projects carried over from previous years.

Finding 5: In terms of multi-stakeholder coordination, UNDP achieved positive results in inter-agency coordination and in dialogue with local and community organizations, although coordination with other UN agencies was maintained only in formal spaces and, on some occasions, UNDP was perceived more as a rival rather than as a strategic partner.

UNDP linked national and territorial processes. The Country Office worked with different ministries, playing a key role in strengthening and coordinating intersectoral agendas.

UNDP Colombia also played a key role in the transition between the governments of President Duque and President Petro, facilitating coordination and supporting entities during the change of national authorities in ministries and other government partners. UNDP was instrumental in facilitating dialogue and coordination between government institutions and civil society actors, for example, within the framework of the National Environmental Forum.

UNDP Colombia's capacity for coordinating with other agencies, funds and United Nations System programmes, as well as its experience in and expertise with international cooperation, was maintained at the level of formal spaces for the exchange of information. The evaluation team identified UNDP Colombia as an important coordinator of joint programmes. Nevertheless, UNDP Colombia did not identify other technical spaces where coordination revolved around methodological or thematic approaches, synergies, innovation or opportunities aimed at accelerating knowledge transfer and the implementation of proposals.

As a result, UNDP Colombia was perceived as a rival for donor funds rather than as a strategic partner and, according to some interviewees, this has not always been the case. This complexity was especially noticeable in gender equality initiatives and from the perspective of some donors, where competition sometimes overshadowed collaborative efforts. Nevertheless, coordination between UNDP and the agencies was, in some cases, positive, especially with the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and, to a lesser extent, with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The UN Verification Mission for the implementation of the Peace Accord was considered the best partnership by various development actors.

Finding 6: Areas with significant potential for improvement have been identified in the collaboration between UNDP Colombia and private-sector organizations. It is essential to move towards an earlier and fuller inclusion of the private sector in project formulation, as this would empower these organizations and enhance their capacity to offer comprehensive solutions in interventions.

One of UNDP's most notable strengths is its ability to contribute credibility, reputation, and trust. UNDP's vision has been crucial in establishing effective private-sector partnerships. During the evaluation, the team noted that the private sector recognizes that although other governmental and non-governmental organizations are available for collaboration, these potential partners lack the same level of credibility as UNDP. The private sector's willingness to collaborate is particularly significant in an economy with limited sources of development finance and a project pipeline heavily dependent on government funding.

Throughout the current CPD cycle, UNDP has carried out joint activities with the private sector through various cooperation mechanisms. These mechanisms have evolved into opportunities for maximizing impact and strengthening the sustainability of the project portfolio. Notable examples include the financial inclusion initiative and the development of loan products aimed at promoting the formal labour market integration of small- and medium-scale miners, as well as the transition of subsistence miners to other production activities. Private-sector organizations also provide skills that UNDP lacks internally, as demonstrated by its cooperation with the Society of Civil Engineers of Colombia.

However, the evaluation team also identified certain limitations. For example, several of the initiatives in which UNDP collaborates are of limited duration, and there is a need to improve the private sector's participation in project formulation in order to maximize their involvement and comprehensive understanding of their roles in supporting interventions. These gaps resulted in the loss of valuable opportunities for the private sector to understand its potential contributions.

Finding 7: Designed with the needs of its partners in mind, the UNDP programme demonstrated a lack of coherence between individual projects and the CPD results framework, operating from a project-specific rather than a broader logic.

UNDP implemented a wide range of projects to address various challenges in Colombian society. These projects were largely aligned with the priorities of the governments in power at the time rather than with national needs and priorities. As a result, UNDP adapted its programmatic offerings, including strategies such as peace and governance actions under Outcome 3, which diluted its contribution to Peace and Democracy despite similarities in objectives and operational logics. Additionally, UNDP executed numerous projects that did not follow common approaches, even when they were part of the same portfolio and implemented in the same territory. Consequently, UNDP was unable to generate synergies to achieve sustainable results, especially in projects that lacked continuity with previous thematic areas.

Although several projects achieved satisfactory results, some medium-term outcomes remained limited. This is evident in Component III of the Revive Colombia project, where short-term employment goals were met, but few beneficiaries secured long-term employment.⁴³ In addition, in cases such as the Supplier Development Programme, the evaluation team noted that beneficiaries lacked the necessary tools to replicate the programme with other suppliers, creating sustainability challenges.

One of UNDP's major challenges is the prevalence of short-term projects, mainly productive projects in the area of poverty reduction. As a result, interventions end before achieving the desired sustainability or effectively assisting the communities in need. Even when project designs have an adequate duration, other challenges arise in relation to the technical or administrative capacities of beneficiaries, a lack of resources and technology, and misalignment between administrative requirements and community dynamics, which hinder effective community participation. To ensure lasting impacts, adequate technical assistance and a planned close-out process with the target audiences — whether individuals, organizations or institutions — are required.

⁴³ This information was obtained from interviews conducted with both the project beneficiaries and the staff of one of the partners responsible for the training. The partners follow up with the graduates and evaluate their post-training job placement.

2.1.3 Gender and human rights

Finding 8: UNDP made progress in integrating a gender approach internally, achieving gender parity among its staff and developing essential tools for its projects and programmes. It implemented the Leave No One Behind principle, focusing on including women and vulnerable groups in public policy agendas, especially in terms of more untraditional environmental issues, and gradually incorporating this approach into its programme portfolio.

The evaluation team identified varying levels of success in the integration of gender into UNDP Colombia's projects. Projects aimed at consolidating peace and justice achieved gender-sensitive results by considering women's contributions to the processes of building, consolidating and maintaining peace, as well as by providing mechanisms to connect the population with specialized institutions. In contrast, the results of some Outcome 2 projects, which focused on the socio-economic integration of Venezuelan refugees and migrants and the issuance of identity documents, were considered gender-blind because their activities were limited to the socio-economic integration of Venezuelan refugees and migrants and the issuance of identity documents without, for example, incorporating other actions or elements that address the power relations underlying gender inequalities.

UNDP Colombia has been systematically integrating a gender approach into its initiatives, contributing to more inclusive and sustainable development. For example, in line with UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, UNDP collaborated with other UN agencies such as FAO, WFP and the UN Verification Mission in Colombia to empower women peacebuilders and human rights defenders.

UNDP Colombia also established linkages between women, peace and the environment, incorporating the concepts of peacebuilding, environmental autonomy and systems of care into its programmes. This included both the responsibility to protect and nurture life on the planet and the collection of data to measure the impact of climate change on women. The environmental portfolio emphasized a gender approach with practices that prioritized women's participation and their access to benefits such as credit and seed capital. Key components included a budgeted gender plan, empowerment practices and the promotion of women to leadership positions in project governance.

UNDP leveraged its capacity to identify gender issues within initiatives related to peace, economic empowerment, the environment, infrastructure development and rural economic development. However, gender mainstreaming varied across project portfolios. Some projects had clear action plans, while others lacked detailed information on how gender considerations were to be addressed during project implementation. There was notable integration of a gender perspective into the Dabeiba (Antioquia), La Guajira and La Mojana projects.

In addition, UNDP Colombia has been committed to strengthening local social organizations and supporting ethnic communities, with an emphasis on community participation and empowerment through innovative and culturally relevant methodologies. The organization collaborated effectively with various partners, including civil society, different levels of government, and local social organizations, to ensure the inclusion of vulnerable populations. As noted in the project's mid-term evaluations, special attention was given to adopting an ethnic approach and adapting the programmes to the particular cultural and communicative characteristics of the communities.

UNDP contributed to improving the quality of life of vulnerable groups, such as the rural population, Afro-descendants, indigenous communities and women-headed households, through projects addressing gender equality, poverty alleviation, job creation and access to drinking water.

While the global mandate emphasizes women and girls, UNDP Colombia adopted a broader view of gender, incorporating the intersectionality of identities. UNDP Colombia's gender strategy supported diversity, including LGBTQ+ issues and non-violent masculinities, and considered factors such as age, class, ethnicity, race and disability in its transformative actions. The evaluation team also found that UNDP employed methodologies to strengthen stakeholders' capacities to enjoy their rights, empower actors as community leaders and promote project ownership. This approach was exemplified in the mid-term evaluation of Infrastructure for Development, which highlighted improvements in organizational strength, community engagement, trust restoration, social fabric, cohesion, and human capital.

In collaboration with the private sector and the national government, UNDP has been working with the Ministry of Labour on the Gender Equality Seal since 2013. This partnership laid the groundwork for the subsequent launch of the *Equipares* Programme in 2021, which targets the public sector and small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to promote gender equality in the workplace. The *Equipares* Programme certifies companies that meet specific gender equality criteria, thereby recognizing their efforts to foster inclusive environments. Building on this framework, the Country Office focused on the Gold Seal in Gender and Investment, aligning with the recommendations of the 2018 gender strategy evaluation.

Although gender equality and women's empowerment are considered an important part of the UNDP Colombia programme, there are still gaps in terms of its daily action planning. For instance, the CPD makes only a general reference to the challenges of gender equality and women's empowerment and how to address them in the territory. The incorporation of these challenges is largely determined by the initial assessment conducted during the design of each programme or project. Recently, UNDP Colombia has made progress in gender issues, particularly following the inclusion of a gender specialist on its team.

From an internal management perspective, and in response to UNDP's new strategic plan (2022-2025) and gender equality strategy (2022-2025), UNDP Colombia has significantly strengthened its gender portfolio. In mainstreaming gender in 2022, the Country Office committed to reviewing its gender portfolio and developing the 'Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for Transformation and Equality in Times of Change 2023-2025', establishing a gender action plan, and hiring a specialist to, among other things, provide technical assistance in order to mainstream a gender approach into all programmatic portfolios.

UNDP Colombia also prepared, in accordance with UNDP's internal policies at the global and regional levels, the 'ABCs of Gender Mainstreaming: A practical guide to owning and applying a gender focus in production projects'⁴⁴ aimed at promoting gender equality in staff recruiting processes. The Country Office also established the Gender Core Group, an expanded group of gender focal points in each programme area, and implemented the 2023-2025 gender training plan for staff.

UNDP Colombia also developed a guide for integrating gender into the planning, formulation and design of projects and activities, which continues to be used by the project evaluation committee. The guide helps to ensure that projects have the potential to transform power relations and apply a gender approach to assess the situation of women in relation to men, as well as identify contexts of power dynamics and inequality gaps in order to propose actions with specific mitigation measures. UNDP also created the Gender Checklist for use when drafting project documents (PRODOC), which includes guiding questions and provides definitions of commonly used basic concepts.

⁴⁴ UNDP Colombia, ABC de la transversalización del enfoque de género: Guía práctica para la apropiación y aplicación del enfoque de género en proyectos productivos [UNDP Colombia, ABC of Gender Mainstreaming: A practical guide to owning and applying a gender focus in production projects], 2022.

According to the gender scorecard, approximately 64.7 percent of programme expenditure (\$183.1 million) was allocated to outputs that had gender equality as a significant objective (GEN2), and 5.2 percent (\$14.7 million) to outputs that had gender equality as a primary objective (GEN3). The outputs of the GEN3 project covered all three outcomes. Meanwhile, 29.2 percent (\$82.6 million) was allocated to outputs that were expected to contribute to gender equality in a limited way (GEN1), and only 1.0 percent (\$2.7 million) was allocated to outputs that were not expected to contribute to gender equality at all (GEN0).

2.1.4 Management aspects

Finding 9: Partners faced significant difficulties in complying with UNDP Colombia’s administrative and financial procedures, which caused delays, confusion, and detracted from operational efficiency.

During the evaluation period, UNDP Colombia’s bureaucratic and complex financial and administrative processes were characterized by a lack of systematization, documentation and communication. As a result, partners, donors and beneficiaries felt that the Country Office’s financial and administrative procedures affected the organization’s operational effectiveness.

The evaluation found that these challenges were exacerbated by the difficulties of the Quantum system, implemented in January 2023, which represented a risk to the organization’s reputation. In addition, the Country Office staff had to learn how to effectively implement the programme portfolio, especially in the case of vertically funded projects, as these were affected by factors beyond UNDP Colombia’s control. The Country Office reached a unanimous agreement on the need to simplify administrative procedures to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of inter-agency collaboration.

UNDP’s administrative processes were further hindered by a lack of understanding on the part of external partners, resulting in delays in the implementation of some projects. This misalignment and lack of mutual understanding between UNDP and its partners proved to be a significant barrier to achieving more efficient and effective project results.

Finding 10: UNDP Colombia suffered a loss of presence and prominence at the territorial level due to its withdrawal and the significant changes in its territorial strategy. Significant challenges arose in terms of influencing policy, decision-making and programmatic efforts at subnational levels, such as departmental governments and municipalities.

Interviewees noted that the closure of UNDP’s territorial offices in Colombia was a factor that weakened both UNDP’s presence across the country and the impact of the Country Office on various local actors, such as the Regional Autonomous Corporations and municipalities. UNDP’s centralized presence during this evaluation period revealed the Country Office’s limited capacities to operate effectively in the territories, as staff deployments were often in or from Bogotá. This contrasted with the previous programmatic cycle, which was characterized by a strong UNDP territorial presence — the strongest within the UN system.⁴⁵ This situation meant that the impact and ownership of the UNDP portfolio were greater in the central-level institutions, despite the fact that a large proportion of project activities were being implemented at the territorial level. A combination of factors influenced this decision: political reasons, the need to safeguard organizational resources and, quite possibly, limitations in adequately communicating the territorial strategy to government agencies.

⁴⁵ Evaluation of UNDP Support to Peacebuilding in Colombia. <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/6475>. World Bank Colombia Overview. IOM Colombia: Response to the Venezuela Crisis. <https://crisisresponse.iom.int/response/colombia-crisis-response-plan-2023-2024>.

The portfolio was located in the country's most disadvantaged regions, including Bolívar, Chocó and La Guajira, which are home to the country's greatest biodiversity and climate vulnerabilities and which have been affected by the conflict from the perspectives of peace and stability. The PDET municipalities, which were prioritized in the National Development Plan, were the areas demonstrating the greatest lag in the country and also accounting for approximately 82 percent of Colombia's deforestation. The sustainable development portfolio prioritized the involvement of vulnerable groups, conflict zones and sensitive sectors. For example, the Sustainable Amazonia for Peace project promoted opportunities for peace and reconciliation for post-conflict actors through bio-trade initiatives that focused on innovation. The testimonies gathered during the evaluation revealed that, in some cases, UNDP Colombia was the only actor in those territories and that its participation was temporary, intermittent and heavily dependent on directives from the Bogotá office.

The establishment of UNDP territorial contact points, following the closure of the territorial offices, facilitated the coordination of national and local programmes. UNDP played a key role in integrating national agendas at the territorial level, where it implemented most of its programmes. In some areas, such as the interior of La Mojana, UNDP was the only institutional presence serving these populations. Notable coordination occurred between some projects, promoting integrity and synergies. The environmental portfolio was particularly noteworthy in this regard, with emblematic solutions addressing gender inequality and poverty.

However, challenges remained in decentralizing programming and incorporating substantive elements of local dynamics, which could have strengthened UNDP's leadership in local decision-making. Efforts to build a new territorial strategy (see Figure 6), aligned with resource availability, the demands of key actors, and the context, were also noteworthy. Nevertheless, the evaluation team did not find evidence of the effective implementation of this during its fieldwork.

2.1.5 Monitoring and evaluation

Finding 11: UNDP Colombia strengthened its monitoring and evaluation role during the current CPD cycle. The Country Office coordinated different databases, developed the GIS project viewer and conducted comprehensive decentralized evaluations of its most emblematic projects in each area of work. There are, however, still delays in defining the SMART indicators included in the CPD and updating the systems to 2023, and there is limited use of information for decision-making.

The clear relationship between the country programme indicators and the UNSDCF resulted in a distortion in the way that CPD outcomes were measured due to the broad level of aggregation in the UNSDCF (see Annex 9). For example, the goal of reducing poverty at the national level was overly ambitious under the previous government administration, given the nature of the cooperation in the country and within UNDP.

Compliance with the key outcome indicators at the output level was assessed based on meeting the targets in the CPD (2021-2024). However, these indicators were poorly defined and updated, and many projects had low budget execution rates. In terms of progress on environmental indicators under Outcome 3, UNDP exceeded the target for greenhouse gas reductions, while the most recent report showed an 8 percent increase in deforestation.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, shortcomings were identified in the reporting of these indicators, as no updated information showing progress over the 2021-2024 period was shared. The average delivery

⁴⁶ Partnership in Action 2023. <https://pia2023.ndcpartnership.org/unlocking-colombias-climate-potential-long-term-collaborations-and-transformative-climate-actions/>. UNDP Climate Promise Progress Report Special Edition: NDCs and Inclusivity, 2020. https://climatepromise.undp.org/sites/default/files/research_report_document/Climate%20Promise%20Progress%20Report%20-%20November%202020.pdf.

rate was 60 percent, with 45 projects achieving an execution rate of more than 70 percent; 8 projects were financially closed, 27 were operationally closed, and 88 were still in progress. These issues raised concerns regarding the effectiveness of financial resource management.

Although approved by all the relevant entities, the decentralized evaluation plan for the 2021-2024 programming cycle included only project evaluations, except for an evaluation of the transitional justice portfolio related to Outcome 3.⁴⁷ Of these evaluations, the Country Office completed 16 out of 23 planned evaluations (70 percent); one was delayed (4 percent); three were still in the pipeline (13 percent); and three were cancelled (13 percent).⁴⁸ The Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC) provided justifications for the cancelled evaluations. Regarding quality, IEO evaluated 14 of the 16 completed evaluations. Of these 14 decentralized evaluations, 29 percent were rated as satisfactory, 43 percent as moderately satisfactory, and 29 percent as moderately unsatisfactory.⁴⁹ This analysis indicates that the Country Office has a decentralized but unbalanced evaluation plan that is primarily focused on projects and immediate results, with moderately satisfactory quality evaluation reports.

2.2 Outcome 1 - Stabilization: “Peace with Legality”

Outcome 1 of UNSDCF: Stabilization: “Peace with Legality”

UNDP CPD Outcome 1: Stabilization: “Peace with Legality”

Corresponding outputs:

Output 1.1: FARC women and men ex-combatants and their families have access to a comprehensive and effective reincorporation process per their needs supporting government efforts.

Output 1.2: Communities in territorially focused development programmes (PDET) municipalities prioritized by the Government improve their quality of life through the design and implementation of ad hoc job creation and livelihoods initiatives within the PDET framework, with a gender perspective.

Output 1.3: Illicit crops substituted with agricultural, livestock, economic, artisanal, industrial and service activities are focused on sustainable alternative development, as support to Colombian government efforts.

UNDP has been actively involved in supporting national and international cooperation efforts to achieve peace through various initiatives. UNDP’s approach in Colombia includes a combination of strategies aimed at promoting peace, reconciliation and the rule of law.

The Peace Accord, which ended a war with one of the continent’s oldest and largest guerrilla groups, has opened up avenues for significant changes in the political context, participation, local development and transitional justice. However, violence has not ceased; there has been a reconfiguration of non-state armed actors and an increase in violence in some regions of the country. Human rights defenders, grass-roots

⁴⁷ Final evaluation of the results of the initiatives related to improving institutional capacity to guarantee the rights of victims. <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/12745>.

⁴⁸ UNDP Colombia Evaluation Plan 2021-2024, Evaluation Resource Center, as of February 2024. <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/units/194>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

leaders and former FARC combatants have been the main targets of this renewed wave of violence. During the 2018-2022 administration, efforts to alter the Peace Accord and a lack of government commitment hindered its implementation. Nevertheless, several public agencies were deployed to marginalized areas to implement the agreement, and various UN agencies joined in this collective effort.

In 2018, Colombia approved the National Council for Economic and Social Policy (CONPES) document 3932 titled 'Guidelines for Coordinating the Framework Plan for Implementation of the Final Agreement (FIP) with the Instruments for Planning, Programming and Monitoring of Public Policies at National and Territorial Levels',⁵⁰ which was approved in compliance with the provisions of point 6.1.1. of the 'Final Agreement for Ending the Armed Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace'. The final FIP includes 501 indicators at an estimated cost of 129.5 billion pesos (2016 prices). As the name implies, this policy document establishes the guidelines for linking the commitments outlined in the FIP with instruments for planning, programming and monitoring public policies and their associated resources in order to promote sustainability in the peacebuilding measures to be undertaken between 2017 and 2031. In addition, it defines the mechanisms and sources of information to be used in monitoring the resources invested in implementing the final agreement and tracking progress, in line with a policy of transparency during the peacebuilding process.

Progress in implementing the Peace Accord is due to the collective efforts of multiple public, international and community institutions that have undertaken various actions in line with their respective mandates.

In this context, UNDP implemented a total of 30 projects and 89 project outputs as part of Outcome 1, with a budget of \$86.7 million (compared to an estimated \$39.0 million at the start of the cycle) and expenditures of \$68.5 million (see Table 3 and Figure 7). Output 1.1. Reintegration of Ex-combatants was the main recipient of allocated resources, followed by Output 1.2. Support for the Implementation of Initiatives in the Development Plan with Territorial Focus (PDET).

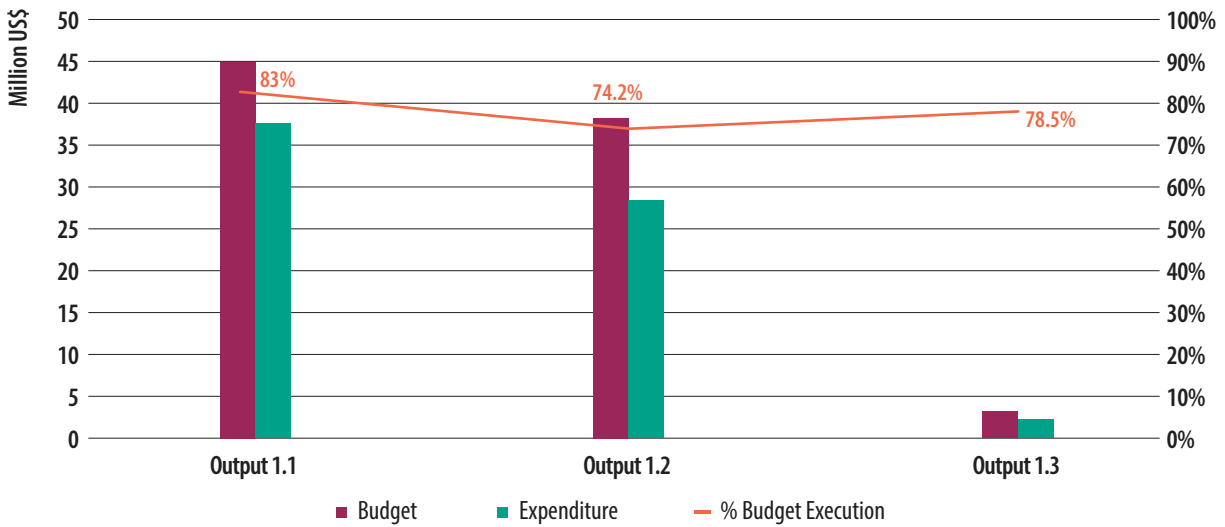
TABLE 3: Budget and Expenditure by Output for Outcome 1 (2021-2023)

Outputs	# Project Outputs	Budget US\$	Expenditure US\$	% budget executed
Output 1.1	30	\$45,288,721	\$37,596,773	83.0%
Output 1.2	54	\$38,260,120	\$28,393,424	74.2%
Output 1.3	5	\$3,175,175	\$2,491,433	78.5%
	89	\$86,724,016	\$68,481,629	79.0%

Source: ICPE Colombia, Table of Projects, as of December 2023

⁵⁰ CONPES is the high-level formal arena for defining public policy in Colombia.

FIGURE 7: Change in Budget and Expenditure for Outcome 1, 2021-2023



Source: ICPE Colombia, Table of Projects, as of December 2023

Finding 12: In terms of the effectiveness of UNDP’s main results for Outcome 1, it is worth noting the significant contribution to Peace Accord implementation that the reintegration of ex-combatants represents. These efforts have been essential for achieving sustainable peace. Additionally, the continuity of the transitional justice portfolio aims to support the Integral System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Repitition. Another key achievement is the generation of trust among institutional actors. In terms of challenges, the adverse circumstances of the Colombian government in certain thematic areas, such as transitional justice, the difficulties in ensuring the sustainability of the achievements made, and the limited progress in illicit crop substitution, should also be noted.

One of UNDP Colombia’s greatest achievements during the evaluation period was building upon and, to some extent, continuing existing achievements in areas related to implementing the Peace Accord, sustainable peace and transitional justice, which had been designed and implemented in the previous period.⁵¹

Following the signing of the Peace Accord, UNDP established cooperation commitments to implement several of its clauses and measures, focusing largely on the socio-economic reintegration of former FARC combatants (signatories). In accordance with the parties’ demands and in support of the verification mission, UNDP achieved consistent results within the reintegration portfolio, as evidenced by progress reports, evaluations and interviews with key actors.⁵² By the end of 2022, UNDP had helped 7,643 ex-combatants benefit from employment and improved living conditions.

⁵¹ The ICPE 2015-2020 noted that “UNDP had contributed to the key priorities of the transition towards peace and stabilization defined in the Peace Agreement. A notable contribution of UNDP was the implementation of programs for the Government and the international community in areas with a presence of the FARC. The bridging role that UNDP played between the Government and affected communities contributed to the processes of reintegration and community dialogue, which are fundamental for peace in Colombia. UNDP found a key space in the process leading to the Peace Agreement and its implementation” (Independent Country Programme Evaluation Colombia, UNDP, p. 38). It should be noted that although the results formally fall under Outcome 3 (Output 3.5), the progress and programmatic results in transitional justice were analysed in the context of Effect 1, either due to thematic affinity or due to the internal programmatic organization of UNDP Colombia, where peace-related issues under Output 3.5 are managed by the same programmatic area responsible for Outcome 1.

⁵² In the context of an agency with too many projects, more coherence was perceived in the peace area, which was also favoured by the fact that portfolios such as “reintegration” had precise guidelines established by the parties in the Implementation Plan for the Peace Accord and the UN Verification Mission.

The socio-economic reintegration strategy for FARC signatories followed a community-based, gender-sensitive, ethnic, and population-based approach. Two components — social and economic — were addressed in 15 of the 23 former territorial training and reintegration centres (AETCRs) operating at the time. A production-focused approach was promoted in agreement with the signatories, ex-combatants and neighbouring communities. They received economic incentives to initiate and implement their projects, as well as technical support for productive, commercial and organizational issues based on the solidarity economy. They were also provided with continuous training in care, gender, new masculinities and the adaptation of spaces to redistribute care tasks and increase women’s participation in all socio-economic reintegration activities. The result was the provision of resources and tools to reintegrate people and communities surrounding the 15 selected centres.⁵³

In coordination with other UN entities, UNDP worked on these processes with financing from the Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Peacebuilding in Colombia, which sought to ensure the sustainability of these initiatives in compliance with the Peace Accord.

The external evaluation of the reintegration portfolio noted that the way in which UNDP conducted processes generated levels of trust among the actors, which resulted in speedy consultation processes on the functioning of the AETCRs (Former Territorial Training and Reintegration Spaces), the formulation of production projects, and their implementation. This efficiency, combined with UNDP technical and administrative support, contributed to achieving the goals, as recognized by project beneficiaries.^{54, 55} According to available progress reports on indicators, the goals set for 2022 in terms of reintegration (Output 1.1) were also met.

Various stakeholders and evaluations⁵⁶ highlighted UNDP support for the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Truth Commission, and transitional justice implemented by the Unit for the Attention and Integral Reparation of Victims. This demonstrated UNDP’s flexibility in managing time and institutional dynamics with limited resources, in alignment with the previous CPD.⁵⁷ UNDP’s experience in transitional justice was particularly effective in implementing Point 5 of the Peace Accord between the national government and the FARC-EP, with actions carried out through the various projects that made up this portfolio. For example, UNDP Colombia launched initiatives for the Integral System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Repetition, which provided technical, financial and political support for the implementation of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (including the Peace Tribunal, Executive Secretariat and the Investigation and Indictment Unit of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace); the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition; and the Unit for the Search for Missing Persons. UNDP also supported the Collective Reparation Programme for Victims of the Armed Conflict, led by the Victims Unit.⁵⁸ Despite facing numerous challenges, UNDP Colombia coherently and systematically strengthened the institutional frameworks specializing in these areas.

⁵³ In line with the “National Policy for the Social and Economic Reintegration of Former FARC-EP Members” (CONPES 3931).

⁵⁴ Final Evaluation Report of the UNDP Reintegration Portfolio. 2022.

⁵⁵ Together with the external evaluation of the reintegration portfolio, the evaluation of the partnership with Norway also highlights support for community organizations close to the AETCR and signatories, as well as the implementation of integration initiatives with an environmental perspective (e.g. production alternatives as mechanisms to reduce pressure on natural resources or contribute to solid waste management), cultural relevance (in accordance with practices and safeguards in Indigenous communities), and specialized technical assistance components in human security issues (with local consultants). At the start of 2019, and with the support of the Norwegian Embassy, a joint strategy was consolidated between the national government and UNDP to accelerate the entry of people into the process of reintegrating into the collective production project pathway. This strategy aimed to support the identification and formulation of production projects. The initiative was carried out in coordination with the territorial contact points of the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, the National Reintegration Council FARC component, and UNDP territorial contacts.

⁵⁶ The evaluation of the UNDP Transitional Justice Programme Portfolio recognizes UNDP’s coordinated and coherent response in this area to the major challenges that arose as a result of the Peace Accords.

⁵⁷ In the actors’ views, the support was less effective in relation to the Victims Unit, mainly due to the lower relevance and funding of the Unit during the period covered by the evaluation.

⁵⁸ Evaluation of the UNDP Transitional Justice Programme Portfolio, 2022.

The evaluation identified strong efforts to implement the Peace Accord at the territorial level, building on the work of the previous CPD and enhancing the capacities of those involved in collective reparation processes.

Interviewees and previous evaluations noted the support for truth and historical memory initiatives, as well as efforts to search for, to identify and to return missing persons to their families. This work focused primarily on victims and their right to truth, justice and reparations.⁵⁹

Finally, interviewees acknowledged UNDP Colombia's efforts to create environmental conditions conducive to sustainable peace. In particular, the Paz Sostenible project strengthened local capacities to promote peaceful and inclusive communities from a territorial perspective with a rights-based approach. This project was based on civil society's participation and ownership as protagonists and responsible actors in the territory, favouring the participation of excluded groups such as women, ethnic and racial groups, and young people. The project was implemented along three strategic lines: Arquitectura para la paz y el desarrollo nacional; Diálogo social y participación para el logro de la Agenda 2030; and Convivencia, reintegración y reconciliación.

Finding 13: In the period under evaluation, UNDP Colombia did not fully address the sensitive issue of illicit crops because the previous government's strategy had compromised the safety of environmental leaders and project implementers. UNDP's role was limited to following government policy without taking an active position on this issue.

The previous government, with military involvement, had implemented a strategy focused on controlling and patrolling forests and protected areas. At that time, the government opposed the approach of incorporating peace actors into the management and sustainable use of the territories. According to testimonies gathered during the evaluation, which were cross-referenced with secondary information, this strategy created a scenario of risk and specific threats to social and environmental leaders in Colombia's most complex regions.

Currently, a new approach promotes a greater state presence in the territory through service provision and the active and empowered participation of communities. The evaluation concluded that the CPD did not prioritize the implementation of comprehensive rural reform, which is a highly sensitive issue in the context of the peace processes. An intended shift in drug policy was highlighted, creating an opportunity to reduce the impact on issues such as the fumigation of illicit crops. These initiatives required UNDP assistance and were considered strategic due to the significant opportunities lost and the risks associated with strengthening territorial development and mitigating environmental, social and economic impacts linked to the sustainability of the measures and the protection of the civilian population.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Evaluation of the UNDP Transitional Justice Programme Portfolio, 2022.

⁶⁰ See details in: Líderes Sociales, Defensores De Dd.Hh. Y Firmantes de Acuerdo Asesinados en 2023 [Social Leaders, HR Defenders and Accord Signatories Murdered in 2023] – Indepaz.

2.3 Outcome 2 - Migration as a development factor

UNSDCF Outcome 2: Migration as a development factor

UNDP CPD Outcome 2: Migration as a development factor

Corresponding outputs:

Output 2.1: Venezuelan migrants, returned Colombian populations and host communities have access to labour market and entrepreneurship options offered by the government and other actors through a coordinated action of the labour, trade and industry, tourism and foreign relations sectors, among others.

Output 2.2: Venezuelan migrants, returned Colombian populations and the host communities in municipalities and localities prioritized by the government, enjoy favourable environments in terms of coexistence, citizen security and risk of gender-based violence through the combined action of government institutions and non-governmental actors.

Colombia is a transit country for people in situations of human mobility. As of December 2023, it was hosting 2,295,099 migrants and refugees from Venezuela who wished to remain in Colombia.⁶¹ UNDP is committed, through its country programme, to supporting the economic integration of migrants, the host population and returned Colombians, as well as providing comprehensive care in education, health, family welfare and housing.

During the programme cycle under review, UNDP Colombia's role was to map local-level actors, identify strategies for joint coordination with the United Nations System and establish alliances with institutions and non-governmental organizations to promote the implementation of its commitments.

The budget and expenditure for Outcome 2 were very low compared to other country programme initiatives. In total, three projects and four project outputs were implemented with a total budget of \$15.9 million (3.8 percent of the total country programme budget) and expenditure, as of December 2023, of \$8.7 million (3.1 percent of total ICPE expenditure), representing a delivery rate of 54.7 percent for the period.

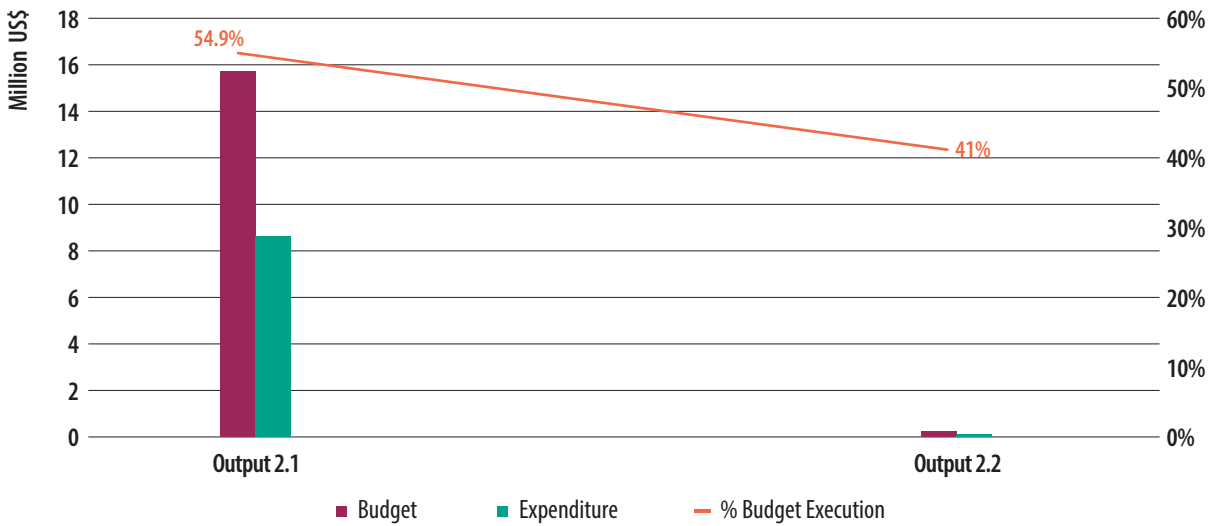
TABLE 4: Outcome 2 - Breakdown of Budget and Expenditure by Output (2021-2023)

Outputs	# Project Outputs	Budget US\$	Expenditure US\$	% budget executed
Output 2.1	2	\$15,645,196	\$8,596,428	54.9%
Output 2.2	2	\$264,981	\$108,728	41.0%
	4	\$15,910,177	\$8,705,156	54.7%

Source: ICPE Colombia, Table of Projects, as of December 2023

⁶¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2024) Radiography of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. Cut-off December 2023. Available at https://www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/sites/unidad-administrativa-especial-migracion-colombia/content/files/001127/56343_informe-distribucion-migrantes-venezolanos-diciembre-2023-ejecutivo.pdf.

FIGURE 8: Change in Budget and Expenditure for Outcome 2, 2021-2023



Source: ICPE Colombia, Table of Projects, as of December 2023

For context, it should be noted that between 2020 and 2021, this outcome involved the execution of \$414.1 million across the United Nations System with the involvement of 12 agencies.⁶² According to the latest reports from the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, the agencies with the most consolidated work in this area were WFP, IOM and UNHCR.

Finding 14: In terms of the effectiveness of Outcome 2, UNDP Colombia was able to meet the goals it committed to in the Cooperation Framework through the agile and rapid design and printing of identification cards. However, UNDP's contributions had the potential to implement economic empowerment initiatives related to the humanitarian/development nexus, and its results were limited by the small scale of its support and challenges in the disbursement of funds, attributable to the agency's incipient approach to migration.

During this programme cycle, UNDP promoted the participation of migrants in Colombia and their economic empowerment by:

- a. Providing technical advice for the design of identification cards (Temporary Protection Permits), purchasing printers for the production of millions of cards and transporting and delivering these identification cards;
- b. Identifying strategies to establish joint coordination mechanisms, creating alliances with a wide range of institutions and non-governmental actors (such as the different geographical chambers of commerce), and promoting migrant enterprises; and
- c. Implementing the Ruta Recorred initiative to mitigate individual employability barriers for the migrant population, particularly in Riohacha and Maicao.

In addition, given UNDP's experience in entrepreneurship and assistance to vulnerable populations, the Country Office contributed to formalizing mechanisms that could help operationalize migrants in different territories and provide them with financial education and training to develop entrepreneurial skills.

⁶² FAO, ILO, IOM, UN Habitat, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNODC, UNICEF, UN Women, WFP and WHO.

In terms of challenges, this was a small portfolio, representing only 3.8 percent of the total CPD budget. Three project outputs were implemented with an overall low delivery rate of 57.12 percent. Furthermore, the budget and expenditure for the migration pillar decreased over time, focusing on specific initiatives that did not favour achieving results at the outcome level.

According to information gathered through primary data collection and cross-referencing, the low delivery rate indicates a lack of prioritization of interventions for this outcome. There is inconsistency between the objectives in the area of migration and the overall ambitions, emphasizing a disconnect with the priorities outlined in the national programme. This mismatch was exacerbated by UNDP Colombia's organizational limitations and lack of experience, which hindered progress in developing substantive proposals to address the migration crisis in conjunction with other partners. Consequently, establishing solid connections between humanitarian aid and development remains a challenging and unresolved task for UNDP Colombia, falling far short of its own expectations.

UNDP Colombia's participation in migration issues was viewed as contributing to the humanitarian aid/development nexus by focusing on identification cards as an accelerator for the socio-economic integration of migrants. However, the actions implemented required a more precise strategy, which UNDP's capabilities within this CPD. Changes in UNDP Colombia's territorial strategy, particularly in border areas, also affected the results achieved in this outcome. These challenges arose not only due to limited resources, but also because of the scale of the intervention, which extended beyond humanitarian response, and because this was an area in which the Colombia Office had no prior experience. Effectively addressing migration and development in these regions requires highly specialized skills that are difficult to transfer.

Although UNDP made progress in Outcome 2 on creating initiatives for the socio-economic inclusion of the migrant population, largely drawing on previous experience with similar initiatives for vulnerable populations, there was no evidence that a structured, organic or coherent strategy was implemented to achieve sustainable results at the outcome level.

Finding 15: No significant changes were observed in terms of territorial cooperation between UNDP and government actors. There was a limited government response in the priority territories, along with poor coordination of actions and notable disparities in the levels of presence, coordination and systematic responses to the migrant population.

The implementation process for the Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelan Migrants, which aimed to grant formal status to 1.8 million people and restart mixed extra-regional and continental migratory flows, faced a notably slow and challenging start. Records indicate that over 130,000 people crossed the Darién Gap border with Panama in vulnerable conditions, lacking adequate protection. According to Migration Colombia, by 2021, only 540,000 Temporary Protection Permits had been approved, 400,000 had been printed, and only 240,000 had been distributed.⁶³ However, by the end of 2022, more than 1.4 million permits had been delivered.⁶⁴

Since the creation of the Inter-agency Group on Mixed Migration Flows (GIFMM) at the end of 2016, efforts have been made to coordinate responses to the needs of refugees, migrants, returnees and host populations, complementing government efforts. In recent years, under GIFMM leadership, Colombia has continued to play a strong role in the Regional Inter-agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and

⁶³ Cited in United Nations (2022). Informe Anual de Resultados 2021. Marco de Cooperación para el Desarrollo Sostenible en Colombia (2020-2023) [Annual Performance Report 2021. Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in Colombia (2020-2023)].

⁶⁴ United Nations (2023). Informe Anual de resultados 2021. Marco de Cooperación para el Desarrollo Sostenible en Colombia 2020-2023 [Annual Performance Report 2022. Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in Colombia 2020-2023].

Migrants from Venezuela, focusing on the assistance, protection and integration of refugees and migrants from Venezuela and the implementation of the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan. Despite these efforts, the government's response has remained weak, leaving many initiatives largely in the hands of the UN agencies in Colombia, with limited participation from UNDP.

2.4 Outcome 3 - Technical assistance for SDG catalyst acceleration

UNSDCF Outcome 3: Technical assistance for SDG catalyst acceleration

UNDP CPD Outcome 3: Technical assistance as an accelerator for achieving the catalytic Sustainable Development Goals

Corresponding outputs:

Output 3.1: The Government and territorial entities strengthen their capacities to accelerate the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Output 3.2: Government institutions strengthen capacities and implement strategies to promote production, sustainable consumption, and preservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

Output 3.3: The Government, through the national 'orange economy' policy and the 'Sacúdete' strategy, strengthens capacities to consolidate the entrepreneurial ecosystem, innovation, cultural transformation, productive inclusion, and formal employment to support government efforts.

Output 3.4: Surveillance and control institutions, with jurisdictional, judicial and non-judicial functions, strengthen their capacities to attend to prioritized populations and justice administration with gender and differential approaches.

Output 3.5: Territorial governments, particularly municipalities under categories 5 and 6, design, implement, and effectively monitor their planning tools in accordance with government guidelines, considering gender and differentiated approaches.

Output 3.6: Preserve the ability of the most vulnerable and affected people to meet the basic needs caused by the pandemic through productive activities and access to social safety nets and humanitarian assistance in coordination with the government.

Output 3.7: Ensure continuity and safety from the risk of infection of essential services (health, water and sanitation, food supply, among others) for population groups most exposed and vulnerable to the pandemic in coordination with the government.

Output 3.8: Secure continuity of the supply chain for essential commodities and services such as food, time-critical productive and agricultural inputs, and non-food items in coordination with the government.

Under Outcome 3, a total of 124 projects and 327 project outputs were implemented with a budget of \$315.9 million (75.4 percent of the total programme budget) and an expenditure of \$205.9 million (72.7 percent of total programme expenditure), representing a delivery rate of 65.2 percent (see Table 5).

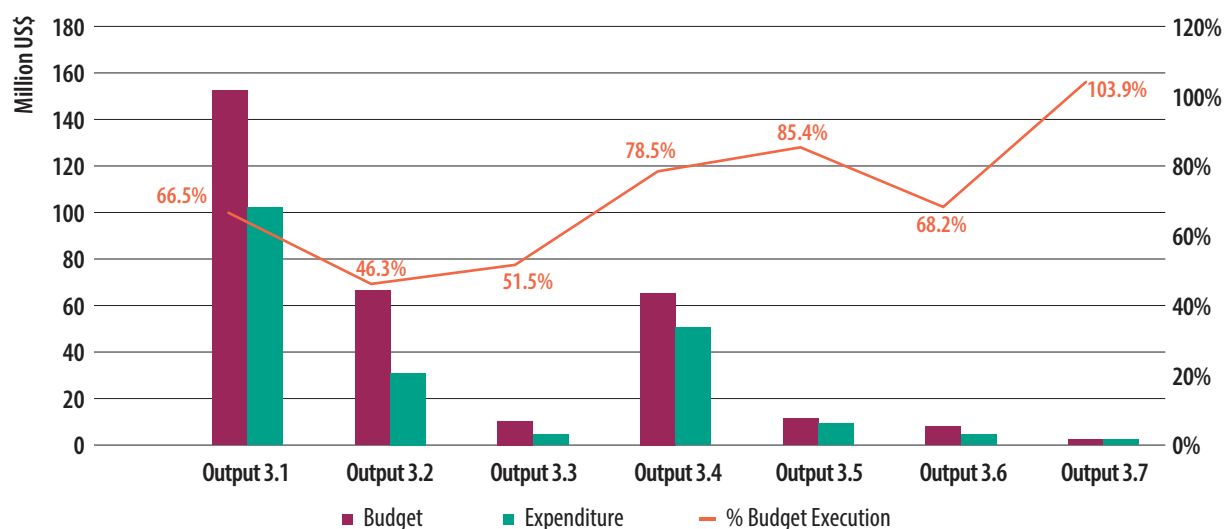
TABLE 5: Outcome 3 - Breakdown of Budget and Expenditure by Output (2021-2023)

Outputs	# Project Outputs	Budget US\$	Expenditure US\$	% budget executed
Output 3.1	207	\$153,090,434	\$101,773,285	66.5%
Output 3.2	16	\$66,557,027	\$30,823,843	46.3%
Output 3.3	8	\$10,093,479	\$5,202,439	51.5%
Output 3.4	60	\$65,075,195	\$51,079,115	78.5%
Output 3.5	25	\$11,640,912	\$9,939,318	85.4%
Output 3.6	7	\$7,602,587	\$5,183,714	68.2%
Output 3.7	4	\$1,822,062	\$1,893,247	103.9%
	327	\$315,881,695	\$205,894,960	65.2%

Source: PowerBi/ATLAS and Quantum as of December 2023

Regarding the Sustainable Development portfolio, 76 percent of the projects operate with budgets of less than \$5 million, meaning that just two projects account for 50 percent of the portfolio’s total budget (Amazonia Sostenible para la Paz and Mojana). Projects with budgets under \$1 million are one-off interventions, such as developing plans or designing project preparation grants. The portfolio is notable for its inclusion of domestic sources of financing (31 percent) in addition to traditional vertical trust fund sources, such as the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund.

FIGURE 9: Change in Budget and Expenditure for Outcome 3 (2021-2023)



Source: PowerBi/ATLAS and Quantum as of December 2023

In March 2018, the Government of Colombia approved the national public policy document, CONPES 3918, titled 'Strategy for Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Colombia'.⁶⁵ This strategic document established guidelines and actions for implementing the United Nations '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. Based on this CONPES, a report titled 'Global and National Framework for Monitoring the SDGs: An Evaluation of the Colombian Framework'⁶⁶ was developed. This report focused on implementing the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets globally, with an emphasis on comparing the global monitoring framework with Colombia's national framework.

It is important to note that Output 3.1 is the central component of Outcome 3, as its main objective is to strengthen the capacities of the government and territorial entities to accelerate the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. This is reflected in Table 6, where Output 3.1 represents the most significant share of the total expenditure for Outcome 3, accounting for 66.5 percent of the executed budget. Moreover, Output 3.1 comprised the largest number of projects (78). This concentration of resources and projects on Output 3.1 underscores its strategic importance in achieving the country programme's objectives.

Output 3.4 is the second most significant in terms of its share of the executed budget. It focuses on strengthening oversight and control institutions and promoting protection measures for victims and witnesses through the Special Jurisdiction for Peace processes. Through its projects, it aims to improve access to justice, local security and coexistence, with a rural focus. Additionally, it supports the territorial presence of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to facilitate effective communication with stakeholders and the adoption of protection measures for those affected by peace processes. This output includes 23 projects, with an executed budget of \$65.1 million.

The remaining outputs addressed equally crucial areas. For example, Output 3.6 focused on collaborating closely with the government to preserve the capacities of those most vulnerable to the pandemic, ensuring that they could meet their basic needs through productive activities and access to social safety nets and humanitarian assistance. Similarly, Output 3.3 was designed to improve government capacities to strengthen the business environment, foster innovation, promote cultural transformation, enhance productive inclusion and stimulate the creation of formal employment. These outputs had relatively smaller numbers of projects and more modest budgets. Output 3.8 did not have a project portfolio.

Finding 16: The technical assistance for the SDG catalyst acceleration portfolio was the broadest in the CPD, as it aimed to provide technical assistance as a catalytic accelerator for achieving the SDGs (SDG 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15 and 16). Three indicators are directly related to the environmental area: indicator 12 relates to responsible consumption, indicator 13 relates to climate action, and indicator 15 relates to terrestrial ecosystems. In terms of effectiveness, UNDP Colombia met only 47 percent of the outcome indicators, with gaps in meeting the set objectives in most cases. Regarding the effectiveness of the environmental portfolio, UNDP Colombia achieved 78 percent of the outcome indicators, with two of the three indicators exceeding their established targets (see Annex 10).

The sustainable development portfolio was considered mature and, in most cases, on track for project closure. More than 50 percent of the projects had been under implementation for over three years, with nearly half achieving implementation levels between 50 and 80 percent and 23 percent exceeding 80 percent implementation.

⁶⁵ CONPES Document 3918. <https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/es/modalidades/documento-conpes-3918-estrategia-para-la-implementacion-de-los-objetivos-de-desarrollo>.

⁶⁶ UNDP Colombia. GLOBAL AND NATIONAL SDG MONITORING FRAMEWORKS: An assessment for Colombia, 2023. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-02/undp_co_pub_Global_local_SDG_monitoring_framework_eng_Feb21_2023.pdf.

Projects in the sustainable development portfolio had an average implementation timeframe of five years, with over 50 percent exceeding the three-year mark. Two out of 10 projects were completed during the 2021 – 2024 programming cycle, while eight were still ongoing. Twenty percent of projects had requested an extension; further extension requests are anticipated as deadlines approach.

Finding 17: UNDP’s support to Colombia has enabled the country to advance towards achieving specific goals and indicators aimed at meeting Colombia’s international commitments,⁶⁷ demonstrating the relevance of its actions. In addition, UNDP support has been instrumental in improving the State’s capacity for reporting, management and overall responsiveness, thereby facilitating the implementation of these conventions at the national, regional and local levels.

UNDP was instrumental in accelerating the implementation of specific objectives stemming from Colombia’s international commitments on climate change, biodiversity and land degradation. National sectoral policies, such as the National Biodiversity Policy and the National Climate Change Policy, were derived from these commitments. Beyond project delivery, UNDP took on an advocacy role in public policy, coordinating dialogue between the State and civil society, and, in some cases, facilitating the delivery of national resources. The environmental portfolio was aligned with the 2018-2022 National Development Plan and addressed its four lines of action.

Institutionally, Colombia was recognized for its strengths in the design of its National Environmental System (SINA), which integrates competencies and roles at various levels. The UNDP portfolio focused on key actors within SINA, led by the Ministry of Environment, and included the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies, the Adaptation Fund, and the Alexander Von Humboldt Biological Resources Research Institute.

The main challenges facing the National Environmental System (SINA) were operational and budgetary, particularly its limited capacity to mobilize financial resources from the central government, which hindered the acceleration of national policy implementation at the territorial level. In this context, UNDP’s contributions and impacts were decisive in only a few specific cases, such as the mobilization of State resources for the La Mojana project. Unlike other sectors, the environmental sector primarily relies on funding sources outside the general national budget, which contributed only 21 percent of SINA’s total public resources.

Despite not being the largest source of funding, the national budget was the main source for many of the entities within SINA, leaving them financially vulnerable. Even some of the Regional Autonomous Corporations with lower own-funding were significantly dependent on the national budget. In this context, the experiences of the Biodiversity Finance Initiative and the Integrated National Financing Frameworks helped create conditions to accelerate the environmental financing agenda, providing reasons to mobilize resources and support for the monitoring and evaluation of their efficient management.

Finding 18: UNDP’s interventions were characterized by their relevance, driven by the active participation of stakeholders in sustainable development projects, from design through implementation. The selection of topics, areas of intervention and beneficiaries was based on technical criteria and focused on integrated development. Although UNDP developed a robust portfolio, drawing on its long experience and understanding of local dynamics, budget execution focused mainly on Antioquia and Bogotá, areas not identified as the most vulnerable to deforestation, which was one of the current government’s objectives.

⁶⁷ During the 2021 - 2024 period, UNDP continued its long-term policy of supporting Colombian institutions’ compliance with the Convention on Biological Diversity through the implementation of the Nagoya - Ruala Protocol, and with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change through the Paris Agreement (2015). During this period, it also supported the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

The relevance of the portfolio and the approaches UNDP deployed gained greater significance with the new government's clear agenda for biodiversity protection and climate change adaptation. The programme aimed to quantify its contributions to reducing deforestation, aligning with the current government's objectives.

The programme was also aligned with the La Niña Recovery Plan within the framework of Decree 2113 of 2022, which required an assessment of damages, losses, impacts and needs. UNDP's intervention supported the assessment at the request of the Adaptation Fund.

Approximately 53 percent of the portfolio focused on four key components, suggesting consistency in intervention approaches. The portfolio projects, especially those funded by vertical funds, included components dedicated to strengthening or updating regulatory frameworks, as well as building human and institutional capacities at different intervention levels. Components related to knowledge management and communication were also included.

UNDP Colombia has been addressing financial sustainability through the Biodiversity Finance Initiative. The portfolio was considered weak in terms of progress in implementing economic instruments and innovative financing mechanisms. The major milestone identified during the period was related to financial inclusion and credit facilities under the Global Opportunities for Long-term Development of the Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining Sector (GEF GOLD) project.

The portfolio provided opportunities to promote innovation in mobilizing government funding, climate finance and private-sector resources. Resource mobilization was a priority for the national government, which had recently created the Fund for Life. The Colombia Inheritance programme closed financially, having mobilized \$245 million over 10 years.

The current national government expressed strong interest in making adaptation a more ambitious agenda and addressing it at the international level, promoting it more widely, and focusing on the issue of climate change adaptation in highly vulnerable Latin American countries. However, political negotiations were complex due to the concept of 'highly vulnerable', which would have implications for countries like Colombia in terms of negotiating international financing for climate adaptation, given its classification as a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



This chapter presents the conclusions of the evaluation on UNDP's performance and contributions to development results in Colombia, the recommendations, and the management response.

3.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1: UNDP Colombia is recognized for its technical capacities and its commitment to overcoming inequalities in the country, building peace and adapting to the challenges of a complex and changing national context, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic and the change in government administration. UNDP Colombia established effective collaboration in technical assistance, particularly with the national government and local and community organizations, demonstrating its versatility in unifying different sectors, addressing highly sensitive issues and reaching less accessible areas of the country with a culturally relevant approach.

UNDP Colombia's primary added value was its high-level technical capacity to implement and complement government initiatives. Its dedication to serving the most underserved and vulnerable communities reflects the team's deep commitment to fostering inclusion and empowerment, which is crucial for promoting equality and inclusion in Colombia through high-quality proposals.

UNDP Colombia succeeded in building trust with national authorities and civil society actors, providing a support role to the national government and acting as an interlocutor and facilitator for dialogue on national policies and priorities.

UNDP Colombia systematically incorporated a gender equality approach into its initiatives, initially focusing on internal aspects, and made progress towards gender mainstreaming in the design and implementation of its projects and programmes. It also achieved gender parity within the Country Office, in line with the UNDP Strategic Plan (2022-2025) and the UNDP Gender Equality Strategy (2022-2025). Additionally, UNDP successfully brought women's participation in less visible issues onto the public policy agenda and prioritized support for vulnerable populations, including people living in extreme poverty, displaced persons, indigenous people, Afro-descendants and women-headed households, under the Leave No One Behind principle.

UNDP Colombia's response to the COVID-19 crisis demonstrated its capacity to address relief, recovery and resource mobilization for development simultaneously. UNDP not only demonstrated its crisis response abilities but also established a solid foundation for coordinating with national institutions and collaborating in subsequent phases of stabilization and in the transition between national administrations.

Conclusion 2: During the current programme period, UNDP Colombia managed to exceed the programmatic goals agreed with RBLAC in each year. However, a dispersion of projects reduced the efficiency of its work, with weak internal coordination and inter-institutional relations at the national level, especially with the United Nations System.

The most notable results of the peace with legality portfolio (Outcome 1) related to the continued support for Peace Accord implementation (2017-2031), the reintegration of signatories, and the support for institutions related to transitional justice, all within an adverse government context that resulted in limited resources for these efforts. The main achievement in this area was to strengthen and consolidate previous years' accomplishments in maintaining the implementation of the Peace Accord and its action plan at a general level despite challenges in strengthening the PDETs and implementing comprehensive rural

reform. Beyond the indicators, UNDP made progress in facilitating intercultural dialogue and strengthening the capacities of young people and populations from territories that have been historically excluded in the country.

Migration issues (Outcome 2) represented a field in which UNDP traditionally has limited experience or comparative advantage, resulting in a shortfall in meeting initial expectations. Nevertheless, there were notable strengths in promoting economic autonomy and integration of migrants through the creation, formalization and strengthening of businesses, as well as in coordination with the private sector. These efforts, though still in the early stages, provide demonstrative examples of continuity and sustainability.

Regarding the technical assistance for the catalytic acceleration of the SDG portfolio (Outcome 3) in general terms and taking into account the ambition of the two environmental indicators (reduction of deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions), the extent of its contribution to achieving the two final objectives of the CPD remains unclear. One important area of progress was the inclusion of peace, environmental, welfare and human rights issues in some of its projects.

An identified weakness was the dispersion of projects, particularly within the sustainable development portfolio, which accounts for most of the programme's resources. In addition, UNDP's coordination spaces with other United Nations agencies were not fully leveraged to establish reciprocal relationships for exchange and coordination. Instead, these spaces were adapted to the more formal aspects of project management.

During the 2021-2023 programme cycle, UNDP exceeded its annual targets as set out in the Integrated Work Plan and as agreed with RBLAC, contributing to regional goals. UNDP achieved an average of 24.7 percent above the combined target for the 2021-2023 period.

Conclusion 3: Despite aligning with the 2020-2023 UNSDCF, the CPD had a programme design. UNDP Colombia did not fully reflect or operationalize its theories of change internally, creating a barrier to programme planning, outcome achievement, and monitoring. There was also no clear prioritization of key areas, and changes in territorial working approaches limited effective programme delivery.

The political context and the new format of the UNSDCF were decisive factors in shaping the design of the CPD in Colombia. The CPD, in its priorities and language, aligned with the government's priorities. However, UNDP Colombia did not have a consistent theory of change for its overall performance or for its various results. There was no reflection, contextualization or operationalization of these priorities at the programmatic area level, leading to missed opportunities for strategic vision, synergies between areas, and the generation of outputs more closely aligned with the needs of the target population.

This situation has hindered UNDP's planning and accountability. The limitations of the current planning and delivery system have become apparent, resulting in short-term projects, a reliance on public resources and the interruption or reduction of institutional strengthening work with some partners.

An important aspect of this lack of long-term vision was the change in the way UNDP worked in the territories. For years, UNDP Colombia's presence in the territories had been a key factor in programme implementation. The reduced territorial presence in this CPD created a significant gap in terms of coordination with, and the participation of, subnational actors in the portfolio, decreased visibility in specific areas, and in a lack of coherence with UNDP's mandate and direction in Colombia.

UNDP Colombia had previously innovated through its territorial offices located in strategic departments of the country. This strategy was consolidated with donors and even inspired other United Nations System agencies. The current strategy, however, has been reduced to the presence of a 'Territorial Liaison', whose role is primarily administrative and logistical, leading to an underutilization of local capacities. This shift resulted in more centralized implementation and limited the organization's ability to influence subnational public policies (governments and municipalities) and its ability to keep decision-making close to the people and their challenges. However, the design of a new territorial strategy is a promising development, as it could strengthen UNDP Colombia's presence in the territories in the future.

Conclusion 4: One of the barriers to programme implementation was programme management, which was characterized by complex and slow administrative procedures. The introduction of the Quantum system further complicated processes, creating confusion and delays in financial and administrative management. The breadth of the programme portfolio — with projects not necessarily related and/or complementary to each other — was also an obstacle, as were problems in decision-making, internal communication and a complex organizational climate, all of which affected the efficiency, relevance and coherence of delivery.

Although the implementation of the Quantum system has caused delays, which have been perceived as complex by UNDP Colombia's partners, this represents only one aspect of the broader issue. Implementing partners, other counterparts, donors and project managers perceived UNDP Colombia's administrative procedures as overly complicated due to additional steps introduced to these processes. The lack of clarity and understanding of these procedures, even among UNDP Colombia personnel, contributed to setbacks and delays in the execution of some important projects.

The need to strengthen linkages between different UNDP areas was identified as a critical management challenge. The internal perception of the institution as hierarchical, with long timeframes for obtaining approvals, sudden decision changes and limitations in internal communication, was systematically highlighted in this evaluation.

3.2 Recommendations and management response

The following recommendations are provided to support UNDP’s contribution to Colombia’s development priorities. They cover key elements of UNDP’s performance during the current programming cycle that could be improved and recognize changes in the external context that may influence the design of the next country programme.

RECOMMENDATION 1. 

UNDP Colombia should develop a comprehensive theory of change for the new CPD. This theory of change should also include sub-theories of change for each specific outcome to be achieved and should be developed in a participatory manner with stakeholders (Conclusion 3).

This theory of change should ensure that strategies and activities are aligned with the outcomes envisaged in the Cooperation Framework and, at the same time, respond to the country analysis and the agency’s wider mandate. To this end, it is essential that, in the CPD formulation exercise, UNDP should not only consider the theory of change agreed at the UNSDCF level but should also incorporate a more precise theory of change, in accordance with its mandate, the country analysis and its capacities and resources. In addition, these theories of change should be openly shared and discussed with the country team through participatory and relevant methodologies, in collaboration with the government and all stakeholders. This, in turn, will facilitate the design of indicators, as well as effective monitoring and evaluation throughout implementation to ensure that the necessary adjustments are made and the desired results are achieved. It is recommended in this regard that UNDP incorporate the indicators derived from the UNSDCF into its own indicators, which can more accurately measure the expected outcomes of its actions.

Management response: Fully accepted 

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.1 Conduct participatory workshops with partners and stakeholders to gather their concerns and suggestions.	September 2024	Representation SSU		Initiated
1.2 Include partner inputs in the new CPD so that they are reflected in the UNDP strategy.	September 2024	Representation SSU		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 2. 

UNDP Colombia must move towards adopting a strategic approach to its planning, shifting from a role predominantly focused on project administration and management to one that emphasizes strengthening of public management capacities at both the territorial and national levels, as well as strengthening of community capacities. (Conclusion 3).

In particular, in order to focus more on capacity building, it is recommended that UNDP develop a resource mobilization strategy that is visible and shared by the teams, which includes standards to be applied in each negotiation, and which forms the basis for decisions regarding which negotiations to pursue and which not.

Management response: Rejected



Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
Recommendation not accepted				

RECOMMENDATION 3.



UNDP Colombia must effectively implement its new territorial strategy in order to re-establish a broader and more lasting presence in the less-developed regions of the country. This approach will ensure stronger engagement in these critical areas (Conclusion 4).

It is recommended that progress be made in implementing the new territorial strategy. To this end, it is also important to review the project financing strategy, synergies with other agencies and cooperating partners, and the mobilization of new resources that will enable the implementation of a territorial strategy that is more systematic and consistent with institutional priorities. For its financial sustainability, it is recommended that UNDP establish a cost-sharing mechanism across the programmatic areas and projects implemented in the priority territories. In addition, it is recommended that, during the project negotiation and formulation phase, local staffing and operating costs be budgeted in line with project needs.

Management response: Fully accepted



Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Implement and follow up on UNDP's Territorial Deployment Models, improving the articulation and relevance of UNDP's work in prioritized territories.	June 2025	Representation SSU Programmatic Areas Territorial personnel Operations Acceleration LAB		Initiated
3.2 Strengthen local capacities for governance and territorial development planning, contributing to UNDP's strategic positioning in these prioritized territories.	September 2024	Representation SSU Programmatic Areas Territorial personnel		Initiated

3.3 Promote partnerships that enable the financing and strategic positioning of UNDP as a key partner in territorial development.	December 2024	Representation SSU Programmatic Areas Territorial personnel		Initiated
3.4 Promote and influence the incorporation and financing/co-financing of personnel in the territory during the formulation phase of new projects (project evaluation committee). Follow up through a dedicated mechanism and strengthen the capacities of personnel in the territory.	December 2024	Representation SSU Programmatic Areas Territorial personnel Service Center Human Resources		Initiated
3.5 Territorialize UNDP thought leadership products to contribute to the strategic positioning of UNDP as a relevant actor in the territory.	October 2024	Representation SSU Territorial personnel Communications		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 4. 

UNDP Colombia should undertake a review, simplification and improvement in the communication of its administrative procedures. This involves simplifying documentation, simplifying approval mechanisms, ensuring clarity of processes and providing adequate training for the staff involved. In turn, UNDP should establish a feedback and communication mechanism between project teams and management units to address issues in a timely manner. This should improve efficiency in contract delivery and project implementation, resulting in greater overall effectiveness of UNDP operations (Conclusion 4).

To achieve effective simplification, it is essential for UNDP to conduct a thorough review of its administrative procedures and identify areas that can be simplified without compromising the quality and integrity of its operations. This may involve eliminating unnecessary steps, such as an excessive number of approvers for the same process, reducing required documentation or streamlining workflows to minimize processing times. In addition, UNDP must ensure that all relevant staff receive the necessary guidance to understand and effectively implement these simplified procedures. This includes providing ongoing training for proper dissemination of corporate policy updates on the new Quantum system and any other project management software and tools.

In addition, to improve communication and cooperation between project teams and administrative units, UNDP Colombia should consider establishing a project management system that facilitates real-time interaction and tracking of administrative processes (or improving the use of existing systems, starting with Quantum). This would allow project teams and management to know the status of contracts and project implementation, facilitating early identification of potential problems and timely corrective action. Regular feedback and open communication among all stakeholders are essential to proactively address challenges and ensure efficiency in all project phases.

It is also recommended that there be more systematic raising of issues with the organization’s headquarters and advocating for and implementing measures to adjust the organization’s financial-administrative systems to the challenges and lessons learned from this implementation period.

Management response: Fully accepted



Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Conduct a review of processes to map and identify areas for improvement and ensure compliance with the Program and Operations Policies and Procedures.	January 2025	Operations		Initiated
4.2 Conduct training and workshops for personnel to simplify processes and ensure clear information.	January 2025	Operations		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 5.



In order to strengthen the programme’s monitoring and evaluation system, it is recommended that the system of indicators be reviewed and improved, and that systematic project evaluations be ensured. It is proposed that UNDP Colombia adopt a more balanced approach, including process evaluations, performance evaluations and impact evaluations on strategic issues. This will ensure that a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of the interventions is obtained (Conclusions 2 and 3).

There is a need to improve the planning, management and monitoring system. This improvement should focus on adapting more effectively to different contexts, actively involving teams, groups and beneficiaries in the processes, and using monitoring efforts for continuous improvement and learning. It is essential to move from a predominantly project-focused and results-based approach to a long-term learning and impact perspective. This new approach should aim to create lasting effects on territories, communities and individual lives, ensuring accountability and significant progress in various areas of development.

UNDP should define and design SMART indicators to facilitate the results measurement process and contribute to decision-making in changing contexts (see Recommendation 1). It should also enrich the indicators with dimensions related to gender equality, as this would allow a more complete measurement of the impact of initiatives and programmes. These should be incorporated from the very design of projects, with their respective activities, budget allocation, baseline and verification mechanisms.

It is essential to apply the strategic vision of enhancing a gender transformative effect without dispersing attention across many factors that could divert from the core objectives of each project initiative.

It is essential to promote the implementation of long-term impact assessments that will allow for continuous monitoring of the effects of projects on communities and individuals. While it is recognized that the availability of funds may be a constraint in conducting such assessments, it is important to understand that this strategy will improve informed decision-making and strengthen UNDP Colombia’s ability to attract funding by demonstrating a long and solid track record in the communities.

In this sense, it is essential that UNDP Colombia focus on training and strengthening internal capacities in evaluation, thus ensuring that its staff are trained to carry out these evaluations as partners and prepare and update the documentation prior to the evaluation processes.

Management response: Fully accepted



Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
5.1 Ensure that the evaluation plan for the new CPD includes process evaluations relevant to the office.	September 2024	Operations SSU Programmatic Areas		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 6.



UNDP Colombia should actively seek potential partnerships and diversify funding sources, seek alliances with key organizations interested in working together, improve public outreach, transparently present project results, and communicate the breadth and depth of its work. To take advantage of the opportunities, UNDP Colombia should strengthen its visibility and reinforce its role in long-term development initiatives in the territories (Conclusions 1 and 4).

One critical factor for the success of the UNDP Colombia programme is private sector participation. It is recommended that UNDP review its policies and procedures in order to reduce response times and allow for mutually beneficial agreements and opportunities. There is also a need to incorporate private sector actors into project formulation and design processes in order to ensure commitments and co-financing within the framework of PRODOC development in areas critical for the CPD.

UNDP is the most visible agency working in the area of development financing in Colombia, with the highest profile. UNDP could accelerate this agenda, supporting arguments for resource mobilization and assisting in the monitoring and evaluation of its efficient management.

Management response: Fully accepted



Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
6.1 Creation and activation of the Sustainable Finance Group within the office to consolidate the development finance portfolio.	December 2024	Development Economist Acceleration LAB		Initiated
6.2 Expand the dissemination and communication of the activities and results of development financing programmes with public and private stakeholders.	December 2024	Development Economist Acceleration LAB		Initiated
6.3 Build the capacity of territorial teams on the financing for the development agenda.	December 2024	Development Economist Acceleration LAB Territorial Leader		Initiated

ANNEXES

Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/23965>

Annex 1. Terms of Reference

Annex 2. Evaluation Matrix

Annex 3. Reconstructed Theory of Change

Annex 4. Country Description

Annex 5. Country Office Description

Annex 6. Maps

Annex 7. Documents Consulted

Annex 8. List of Projects

Annex 9. Country Description

Annex 10. Matrix of Outcome and Output Indicators Reported by the Country Office

Annex 11. Programme Outcome Ratings by Country

Annex 12. Audiovisual Material for Dissemination



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