



Independent
Evaluation
Office

United Nations Development Programme

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**



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INDEPENDENT UNDP PROGRAMME EVALUATION: BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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ACRONYMS

CERT	Computer Emergency Response Team
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EMIS	Energy Management Information System
ESCO	Energy Service Company
EU4MEG	EU for Municipality Environmental Governance
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
EU	European Union
GHG	Greenhouse gas
HEPEC	Historic Evidence of Programmatic Engagement and Cooperation
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MAKERS	The Meaningful Activism, Knowledgeable Engagement, and Responsible Solutions
MEG	Municipality Environmental Governance
MZ	Mjesna zajednica (the lowest administrative unit of local government)
NEET	Not in employment nor in education or training
POPs	Persistent organic pollutants
ReLOaD	Local Democracy in the Western Balkans
ROAR	Results Oriented Annual Report
RS	Republika Srpska
SALW	Small arms and light weapons
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
ToC	Theory of Change
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Country Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WHO	World Health Organization

Evaluation Brief: Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina is navigating a period of opportunity, with EU candidate status achieved in 2022 and efforts underway to advance key reforms and accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, institutional fragmentation continues to complicate legislative processes and reform implementation, leading to an oversized and inefficient public sector. The country faces persistent labor market challenges, including skills mismatches and high emigration, which affect economic prospects and regional development. At the same time, inequalities and demographic shifts add to the complexity of the development landscape.

UNDP has been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1996, supporting institutional strengthening, promoting sustainable economic growth, and fostering inclusive development while helping the country address its pressing priorities. It supports partners in Bosnia and Herzegovina in their pathways towards the SDGs, EU accession, and fulfilling the Paris Agreement commitments. UNDP's country programme for 2021–2025 is mainly focused on key national priorities, including sustainable, resilient, and inclusive growth; people-centered governance and rule of law; and citizen and community engagement for social cohesion.

FIGURE 1. Programme expenditure by thematic area, 2021-2024

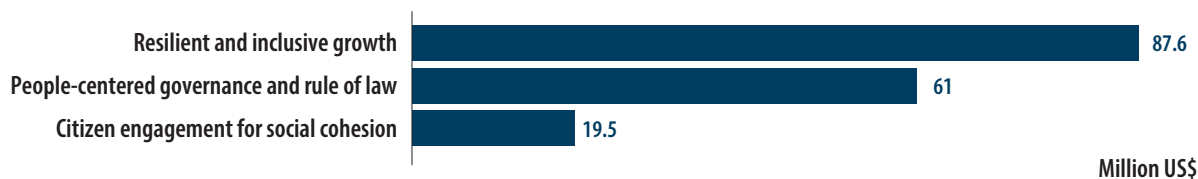


FIGURE 2. Country programme funding sources, 2021-2024



Findings and Conclusions

UNDP's programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina is closely aligned with national priorities, EU accession requirements, and the SDGs. By providing technical expertise and supporting policy development, legislative alignment, and institutional capacity-building, UNDP has contributed to reforms in governance, environmental sustainability, and local economic development. UNDP's ability to work across diverse institutional structures has positioned it as a trusted partner, capable of convening national and international actors and facilitating dialogue and cooperation between different levels of government and administrative entities. This has been instrumental in advancing policy alignment with international standards, harmonizing legislative frameworks, and supporting the implementation of reforms essential for the country's EU integration efforts.

UNDP's success in Bosnia and Herzegovina is built on its ability to forge strong, strategic partnerships that drive progress towards the country's development and EU priorities. By bringing together diverse actors—governments, municipalities, civil society, and international partners—UNDP has played a key role in fostering collaboration and driving Bosnia and Herzegovina's development forward. As a trusted partner of institutions at all levels of governance, UNDP has supported policy reforms, strengthened institutional capacities, and facilitated cooperation across the country's diverse and complex governance structures.

At the local level, partnerships with municipalities have been central to advancing inclusive governance, improving asset management and service delivery, and enhancing citizen engagement. By working closely with local authorities, UNDP has fostered practical solutions that align local efforts with broader national and international development goals. Engagement with civil society organizations has been critical in promoting social inclusion, gender equality, and community-driven development, while partnerships with donors, particularly the European Union, have been essential in mobilizing resources to address key priorities such as environmental governance and local economic growth.

UNDP's convening role has also been recognized in its work with the UN system and other development partners, facilitating collaboration on cross-cutting issues. However, opportunities remain to enhance coordination and maximize the collective impact of joint initiatives.

UNDP has demonstrated flexibility in adapting its approach to address shifting development priorities and emerging needs, building on past successes while introducing more integrated solutions. Efforts have evolved to combine energy efficiency, local governance, and environmental sustainability, reflecting a more systemic approach to tackling complex challenges. Digital transformation has emerged as a key area, with initiatives improving public service delivery and enhancing institutional resilience, such as the introduction of tools for e-governance and cybersecurity training.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. UNDP should deepen its efforts in energy efficiency by helping local governments to implement co-financing initiatives in the residential sector and to promote the use of the Energy Monitoring Information System (EMIS) and the Energy Service Company (ESCO) model, while encouraging the private sector to integrate best practices in energy management.

Recommendation 2. UNDP should further invest in sustainable management of protected areas and in environmental protection.

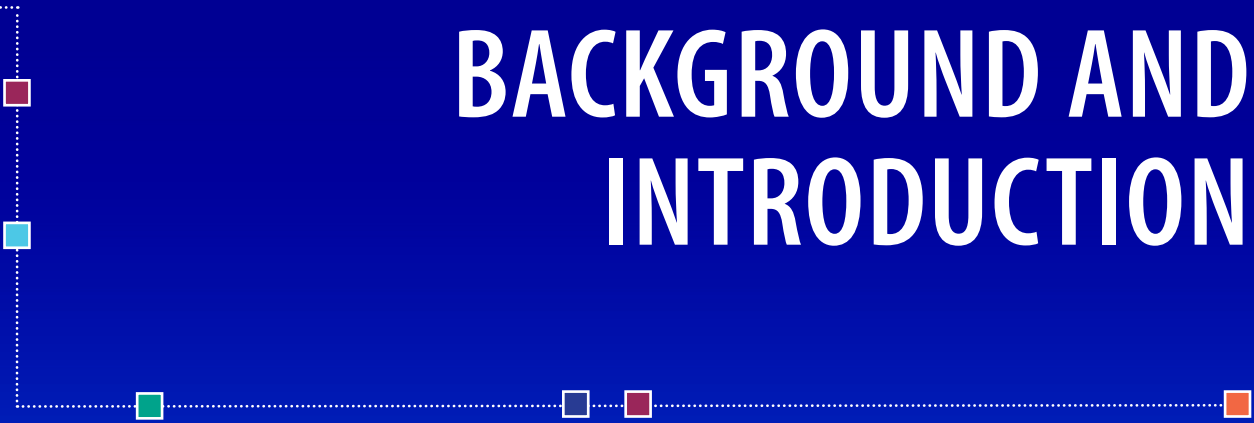
Recommendation 3. In line with best practices, UNDP should focus on enhancing sustainable economic development, including further development of a circular economy and the agriculture and tourism sectors, and create an enabling environment for innovation.

Recommendation 4. UNDP should build a strong and cohesive local governance portfolio that integrates efforts to promote local democracy, governance, and service delivery.

Recommendation 5. UNDP should intensify its arms control efforts by engaging with law enforcement institutions to address financial and operational capacities and improve the interoperability of established tools and databases within the wider safety and security framework.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION



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

1.1 Purpose, objectives, and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) in line with the UNDP Evaluation Policy.¹ The purpose of ICPEs is to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP's contribution to country development priorities, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP's strategy in facilitating and leveraging country efforts for achieving development results. The purpose of an ICPE is to: (i) support the development of the next UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD), (ii) strengthen the accountability of UNDP to country stakeholders, (iii) strengthen the accountability of UNDP to the Executive Board, and (iv) contribute to institutional learning, knowledge generation, and sharing.

IEO undertook the Independent Country Programme Evaluation of UNDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the programme cycle 2021–2025, building on the previous ICPE that was conducted in 2020.² The scope of the ICPE included the entirety of UNDP activities in the country, covering interventions funded by all sources, including UNDP core resources and donor and government authority funds. It also included any projects and activities from the previous programme cycle that continued or concluded in the current one, in accordance with the evaluation Terms of Reference (Annex 1). The ICPE was guided by four main evaluation questions (Box 1) and conducted in close collaboration with UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina, the government authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (RBEC). The ICPE aimed to provide a set of forward-looking recommendations as input to the new Country Programme Document development process for UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The primary audiences for the evaluation are the UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina country office, the RBEC office, the UNDP Executive Board, and the government authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

1.2 Evaluation methodology

The ICPE was conducted in accordance with the approved IEO process and adhered to all United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards.³ The evaluation utilized a theory-based methodology, by reviewing and updating the Theory of Change (ToC) presented in the CPD. The ToC was reconstructed and

BOX 1. Evaluation questions

1. To what extent has the UNDP country programme strategically addressed key development priorities and the needs of its main stakeholders, including those at risk of being left behind?
 2. To what extent was UNDP able to adapt its positioning and programmatic response to shifts in context and other changes in the operating environment, leveraging comparative strengths?
 3. To what extent were UNDP approaches and interventions successful in achieving the intended objectives of the country programme and contributing to broader, longer-term development goals?
 4. To what extent did internal and external factors influence UNDP's ability to deliver its programme efficiently and maximize contributions?
-

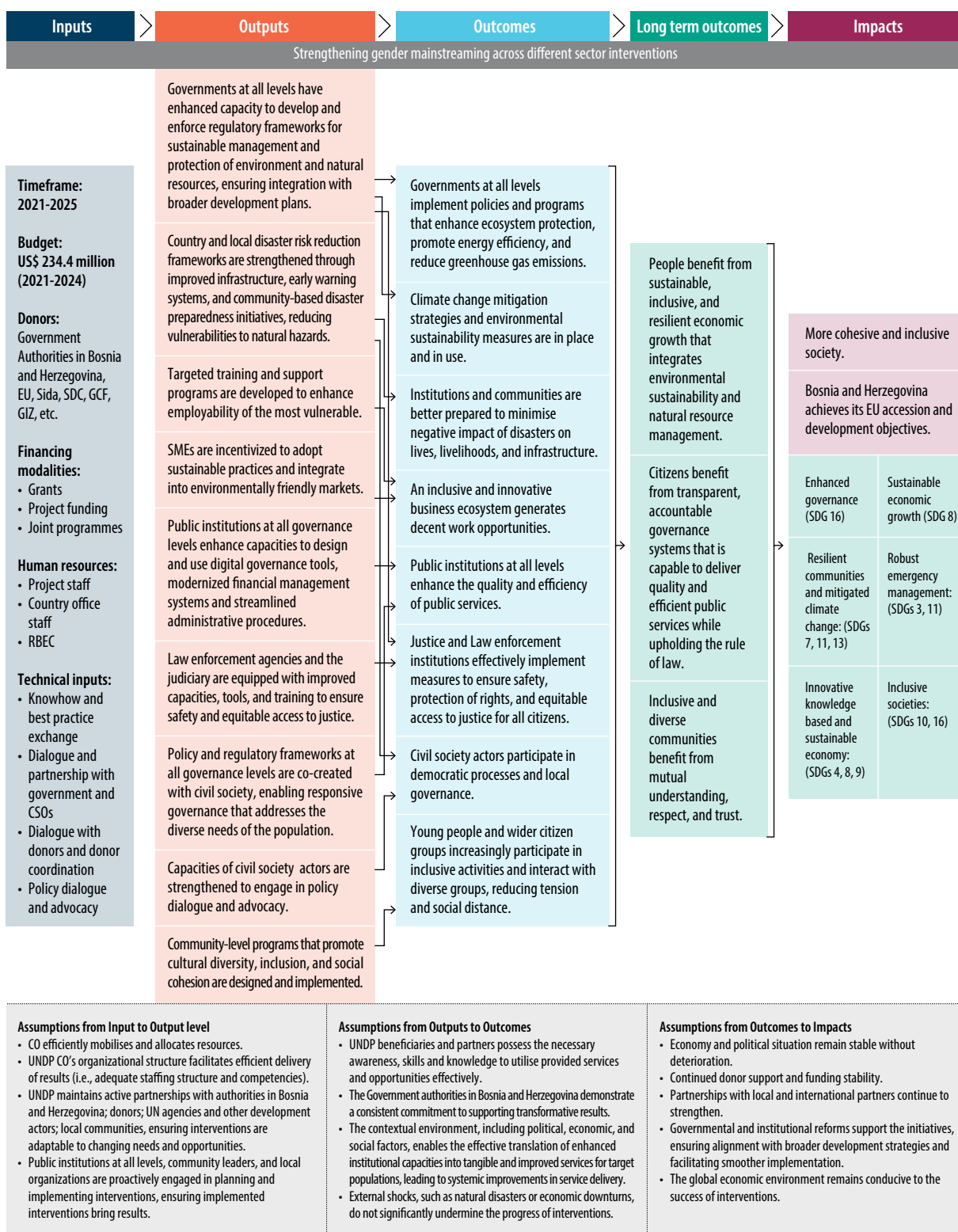
¹ See <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/evaluation-policy.pdf>.

² See <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/16966>.

³ See UNEG website, <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>.

finalized to ensure it accurately captured the programmes adaptations and logic during the review period. This reconstructed ToC served as the foundation for the subsequent assessment, providing a clear and comprehensive basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the interventions in achieving the intended outcomes (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. Reconstructed ToC of the UNDP Country Programme 2021–2025



The evaluation team collected and analysed qualitative data from primary and secondary sources to inform, triangulate, and cross-examine findings, conclusions, and recommendations. In addition to a document review (Annex 7), the evaluation team conducted semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, both online and in-person, with 100 (42 male; 58 female) internal and external stakeholders from different sectors and institutions, depending on their engagement with UNDP. This included UNDP personnel, government representatives, public institutions and civil servants at all levels, UN country team representatives, development partners, donors, civil society organizations, private sector and academia, and final beneficiaries (Annex 5). Field visits were conducted in the cities of Mostar and Banja Luka.

The evaluation assessed UNDP's performance using the reconstructed ToC and the CPD output and outcome framework, while considering two key parameters: (1) Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU accession aspirations and the SDGs; and (2) exogenous factors (e.g., the country's contextual issues, the COVID-19 pandemic, the global socio-economic and political context). The performance of the UNDP country office was scored for each indicator included in the evaluation matrix using a four-point scale and is presented in Annex 9.

Evaluation limitations

The evaluation process faced two primary challenges, which required careful consideration and adaptation by the evaluation team. The first challenge was the unavailability of some key respondents for in-person meetings during the field mission. To address this, the evaluation team extended the data collection period and conducted remote interviews. This approach not only allowed those unavailable respondents to participate but also enabled the inclusion of stakeholders from a wider geographical area. As a result, the evaluation benefited from broader stakeholder engagement and a more comprehensive range of perspectives. The second challenge involved constrained institutional memory within some partner organizations due to recent political and personnel changes. This presented a risk to the accuracy of the information being provided. To overcome this, the evaluation team reached out to former staff members both in and outside UNDP and to individuals who had long-term experience collaborating with UNDP in the past. These interviews provided the necessary historical context and insights, allowing the evaluation team to gather sufficient information to draw reliable findings and conclusions.

1.3 Country context

Bosnia and Herzegovina is an upper middle-income country situated in the Western Balkans, with a population of 3.5 million.⁴ The population shrunk by an estimated average of 25,000 people per year during the period 2013–2020⁵ as a result of emigration, population ageing, and a low fertility rate (estimated 1.177 in 2020).⁶ In the same period, the proportion of the population under 18 decreased from estimated 22.4 percent to 19.3 percent, while the proportion of the population over 65 increased from estimated 14.0 percent to 17.2 percent⁷ (Annex 3). This contributed to a significant increase in the country's age dependency ratio from 43 percent in 2013 to 50 percent in 2022.⁸ Today, the country is at an early stage of establishing a functioning market economy.⁹ Its fragmented internal market and large informal economy negatively affect the functioning of the market economy, together with a lack of cooperation among the various levels of government.¹⁰

⁴ Census 2013, <https://bhas.gov.ba/Calendar/Category/14>.

⁵ UNFPA BiH (2002), "The effects of population changes on the provisions of public services in Bosnia and Herzegovina," p. 4.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.DPND?locations=BA>.

⁹ EC, "Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023 Report," p. 63.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The country's labour market has been resilient to external effects, and unemployment declined from 17.5 percent in 2021 to 15.5 percent in 2022.¹¹ However, there is a high rate of youth unemployment (15–24 years), which stood at 30.1 percent in 2023 (33.2 percent for females).¹² This is marked by a mismatch of education curricula with labour market needs, the insufficient pace of job creation, and the high tax wedge.¹³ The share of youth not in employment nor in education or training (NEET) also declined.¹⁴ The latest available data show that around 17 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line.¹⁵ The COVID-19 pandemic caused an increase in poverty and food deprivation and worsened inequalities.¹⁶ The high rise of inflation (which reached 14 percent in 2022),¹⁷ particularly due to a rise in food and energy prices, further affects the living conditions of vulnerable groups and slowed down the achievements in poverty reduction.¹⁸

Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced substantial net emigration driven by economic factors that affect the long-term economic prospects of the country.¹⁹ It also saw a trend of internal movement of the population from poorer and less developed areas to richer ones and from rural to urban area.²⁰ Over the reference period, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a transit route for migrants (mostly from Afghanistan, Iran or Syria) moving towards the EU. The country also faced an influx of Ukrainian refugees, but only a few of them remained there.²¹

Bosnia and Herzegovina's Human Development Index was 0.78 in 2021, which puts the country in the high human development category.²² However, the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index was 0.677 in 2021, which means that there is a loss in human development due to inequality in health, education, and income distribution, but improvement is visible over the years (Annex 3). Social protection varies between the entities and across the cantons and municipalities, which also means that eligibility conditions for social assistance differ.²³

Bosnia and Herzegovina's Global Gender Gap Index score marked a slight decrease from 2020 (0.712) to 2023 (0.698). The country has a gender equality legal and policy framework, as well as institutional mechanisms, but there have been challenges in inconsistent implementation of these frameworks and a lack of effective monitoring. Women at risk of being left behind mainly belong to those living in remote and rural areas, women with disabilities, and women with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.²⁴ Women's representation in the Parliamentary Assembly has had a positive trend over the past decade, albeit it declined from 26 percent in 2021 to 17 percent in 2022.²⁵ Gender inequality is prevalent in political participation and decision-making due to an adverse political environment and cultural factors, which include beliefs about appropriate gender roles.²⁶ In the labour market, women are less active than men, and women's unemployment rate is higher than for men.²⁷

¹¹ Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Labour Force Survey, 2023.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ EC, "Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023 Report," p. 70.

¹⁴ NEET was 17.6 percent in 2022 (18.1 percent for females), which is significantly lower compared to 19.3 percent in 2021 and 21.8 percent in 2020. Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.ZS?locations=BA>.

¹⁵ World Bank estimation based on surveys for 2009–2014; UNDP, Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021.

¹⁶ Due to a worsened financial situation, 18.2 percent of respondents cut food consumption, of whom 62.7 percent belong to vulnerable groups. Source: UNDP, UNICEF (2022), Social Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Third Household Survey, p. 11.

¹⁷ EC, "Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023 Report," p. 65.

¹⁸ UN (2023), "Voluntary review: Implementation of agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals in Bosnia and Herzegovina," p. 49.

¹⁹ In 2020, Bosnia and Herzegovina was the country with the largest number of emigrants as a share of its population in Europe. Source: IOM – UN Migration Agency, "World Migration Report 2022."

²⁰ UNDP (2021), "Social Inclusion in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2020 National Human Development Report," p. 15. According to the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, total net internal migration in Republika Srpska in 2023 was 207, in Federation of BiH -41, and in Brcko District is -166.

²¹ EC, "Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023 Report."

²² See <https://data.undp.org/countries-and-territories/BIH>.

²³ UNDP (2021), "Social Inclusion in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2020 National Human Development Report," p. 70.

²⁴ UN Women (2021), "Country Gender Equality Profile of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina."

²⁵ See <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?locations=BA>.

²⁶ UN Women (2021), "Country Gender Equality Profile."

²⁷ In 2020 women were 39.6 percent of the total active population, with an unemployment rate was 18.5 percent compared to 14.1 percent for men. Source: UN Women (2021), "Country Gender Profile," p. 37.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a complex constitutional structure and political system stemming from the Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended the 1992–1995 war. The country is divided into two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, and Brčko District as a separate administrative unit. The country's complex administrative system includes 13 constitutions, 14 legal systems (Bosna and Herzegovina level, two entities, an autonomous district, and 10 cantons), and over 150 ministries.²⁸ This makes legislative processes complicated and leads to an ineffective and oversized public sector. Recent reports of the EU and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe noted concerns with political issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the country continues to face ethnic divisions and political turmoil.²⁹

In the context of the EU accession process,³⁰ the country received candidate status in December 2022. To open EU accession negotiations, the country needs to fulfil 14 key priorities related to democracy/functionality, the rule of law, fundamental rights, and public administration reform.³¹ The government authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have taken some steps within accession negotiations to move forward on long-pending reforms in areas such as the judiciary and prosecutorial system, the fight against corruption, organized crime and terrorism, and migration management.³² However, there are numerous challenges when it comes to public administration reform, including fragmentation of the policy-making system, weak impact and quality of the analysis supporting policy proposals, low level of consultation with the public, lack of accountability of administration, lack of sufficient budgetary transparency, and lack of merit-based recruitment.³³ The World Bank's governance indicators show a downward trend, with the highest decrease recorded in the perception of government effectiveness,³⁴ followed by control of corruption³⁵ and rule of law.³⁶

Bosnia and Herzegovina ranks as the 27th most air polluted country in the world in 2023. The economy displays a high level of carbon and energy intensity, mostly due to high carbon dioxide emissions within the energy sector,³⁷ but also from agriculture, industrial processes, and waste. There has been progress in the transition to renewable energy sources, as the country almost reached its 40 percent target for 2020,³⁸ and it has since set a new 2030 target of 43.6 percent.³⁹ The country is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 36.8 percent below 1990 levels by 2030, as defined by its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) 2020–2030. Challenges remain in a lack of consistent approach in strategic planning and alignment with EU acquis (on air quality, industrial emissions, water and waste management), as well as in the implementation of its NDC and climate-change related strategies. The country has also faced more frequent and intense droughts, floods, and landslides.⁴⁰

²⁸ Dayton Peace Agreement, BiH Constitution, Article I.

²⁹ See <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/BIH>.

³⁰ Bosnia and Herzegovina applied for EU membership in February 2016 and the European Commission adopted its opinion on the application in May 2019. Source: EC (2019), "Commission Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union."

³¹ See https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/bosnia-and-herzegovina_en and https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-proposes-open-eu-accession-negotiations-bosnia-and-herzegovina-and-updates-progress-made-2024-03-12_en.

³² EC, "Commission report on progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina from March 2024."

³³ EC, "Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023 Report."

³⁴ From 39.81 percent in 2012 to 12.74 percent in 2022. Source: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators/interactive-data-access>.

³⁵ From 46.92 percent in 2012 to 25.94 percent in 2022. Source: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators/interactive-data-access>.

³⁶ The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index (2023) ranked the country at 75 out of 142 countries, indicating challenges in areas such as criminal justice, constraints on government powers, and absence of corruption. Source: <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2023/Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina/>.

³⁷ There was 20.122 million tonnes of CO₂ in 2022. Source: <https://www.iea.org/countries/bosnia-and-herzegovina/emissions>.

³⁸ The country achieved a 39.84 percent share of renewables in 2020. Source: Energy Community Secretariat (2022), "Bosnia and Herzegovina Annual Implementation Report."

³⁹ See https://www.energy-community.org/implementation/report/Bosnia_Herzegovina.html.

⁴⁰ On 3 October 2024 heavy rainfall in central Bosnia and Herzegovina (in particular, the Herzegovina-Neretva canton) caused the worst flooding since 2014.

1.4 The UNDP programme under review

UNDP has been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1996, supporting economic and social development, building resilience to crises, and improving the livelihoods of people.⁴¹ It supports partners in Bosnia and Herzegovina in its pathways towards the SDGs, the EU accession, and fulfilling the Paris Agreement commitments. The UNDP CPD for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2021–2025 was designed to contribute directly to three out of four strategic priority areas of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNSDCF) 2021–2025 and country priorities, i.e., sustainable, resilient, and inclusive growth (Outcome 1), people-centred governance and rule of law (Outcome 4), and citizen and community engagement for social cohesion (Outcome 5).

The estimated budget target for the CPD 2021–2025 was \$154.95 million.⁴² As of 31 July 2024, the country office has already exceeded the target and raised \$234.5 million, with an actual delivery rate of 72 percent (Table 1). The CPD project portfolio includes 80 projects under three outcomes, of which 47 percent are implemented under Outcome 1. The CDP portfolio includes projects started during the previous CPD, as well as an additional 14 regional or global projects.

TABLE 1. 2021–2025 Outcomes and Resources as of 31 July 2024 (in US\$ millions)

UNSDCF Priority Area	Country Programme Outcome (SDG goal)	Estimated Budget (2021–2025) ⁴³	Actual Budget (2021–2024)	Expenditure (2021–2024)	Actual delivery (2021–2024)
Priority Area 1. Sustainable, resilient, and inclusive growth	Outcome 1: By 2025, people benefit from resilient, inclusive, and sustainable growth ensured by the convergence of economic development and the management of environmental and cultural resources. (SDG: 11, 12, 15)	\$93.3	\$119.1	\$87.6	74%
Priority Area 3. People-centred governance and rule of law	Outcome 2: By 2025, people contribute to, and benefit from, more accountable and transparent governance systems that deliver quality public services and ensure rule of law. (SDG: 6, 16)	\$54.65	\$89.8	\$61.0	67%
Priority Area 4. Citizen and community engagement for social cohesion	Outcome 3: By 2025, there is stronger mutual understanding, respect, and trust among individuals and communities. (SDG: 16)	\$6.95	\$25.6	\$19.5	76%
Total CPD		\$154.9	\$234.5	\$168.1	72%
Regional projects			\$19.4	\$6.3	32%
Total			\$256.1	\$175.4	69%

Source: UNDP Quantum & Atlas, extracted on 31 July 2024

⁴¹ See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina>.

⁴² UNDP (2020), CPD for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2021–2025.

⁴³ Ibid.

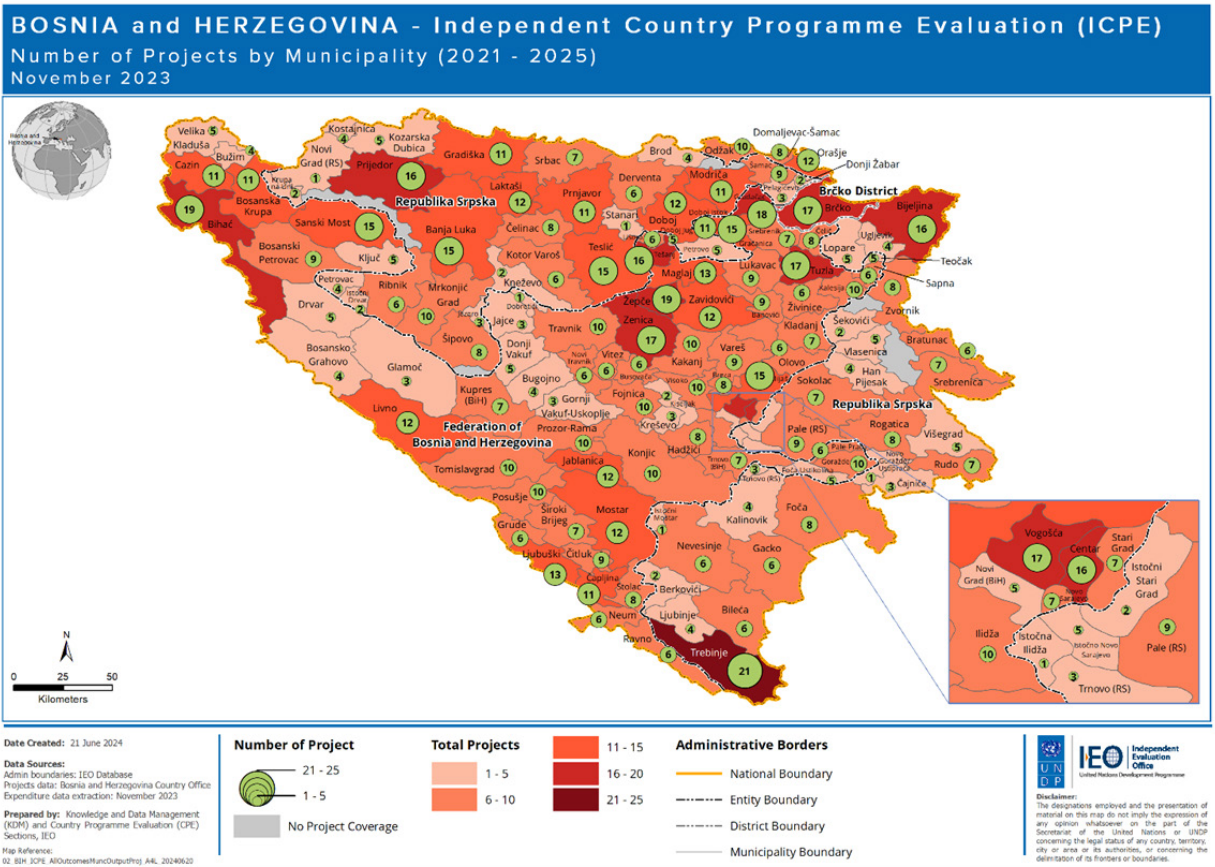
As per the reconstructed ToC for CPD 2021–2025 (Figure 3), UNDP intervened in several areas in support to country priorities and needs in almost all regions of the country (Figure 4). Within the *sustainable, resilient, and inclusive growth* (Outcome 1), UNDP aimed to achieve sustainable, inclusive, and resilient economic growth by integrating environmental sustainability into development strategies. This involved strengthening regulatory frameworks for managing natural and cultural resources, implementing climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, and promoting public-private partnerships to foster green and digital economies. Additionally, UNDP focused on enhancing employability for marginalized groups through vocational training, ensuring broad participation in the shift towards sustainable economic practices.

Under *people-centred governance and the rule of law* (Outcome 2), UNDP aimed to strengthen governance systems by promoting transparency, accountability, and the delivery of quality public services. Efforts focused on co-creating regulations and policies with civil society, implementing digital governance and financial management systems, and reforming public institutions to streamline services. Additionally, law enforcement and judicial capacities were enhanced to ensure equitable access to justice and uphold the rule of law.

Under the *citizen and community engagement for social cohesion* (Outcome 3), UNDP aimed to foster inclusive and diverse communities as well as mutual understanding, respect, and trust. This involved creating platforms for civil society and youth to actively participate in decision-making, while enhancing their capacity for policy dialogue, and implementing community programmes promoting cultural diversity and social cohesion.

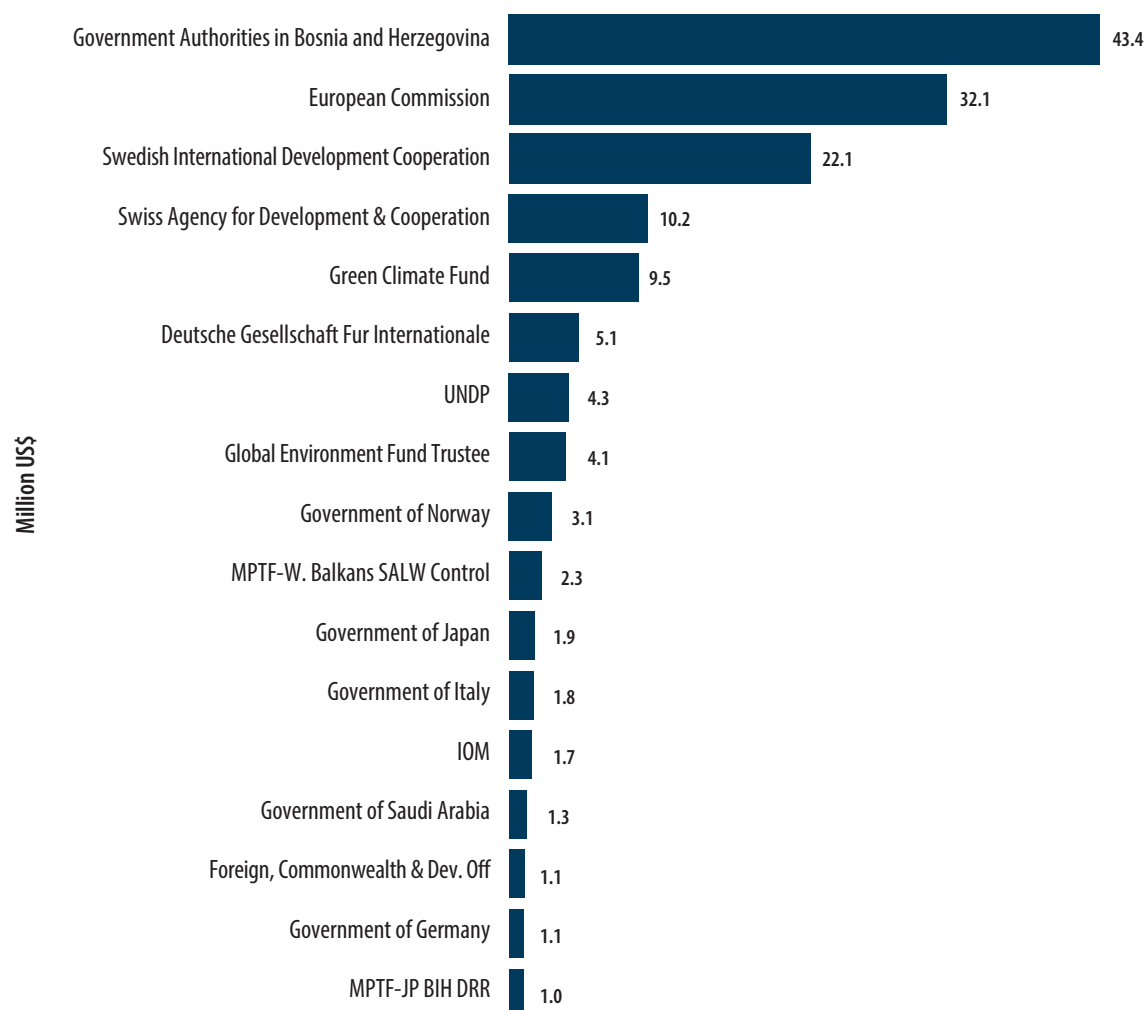
Across all these areas, UNDP cooperated with diverse partners from governments at all levels, civil society organizations, media, universities, business support organizations, and the private sector for the implementation of CPD’s projects, including such UN agencies as UNEP, FAO, ILO, IOM, UNICEF, UN-Women, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, and WHO.

FIGURE 4. Distribution of UNDP projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Almost 95 percent of the projects were implemented by Direct Implementation Modality, 40 percent of which were implemented at the local level.⁴⁴ The CPD was gender sensitive, with 88 percent of projects classified under the GEN2 gender marker.⁴⁵ Analysis of the programme expenditure by fund source shows that 63 percent of the portfolio was funded by bilateral and multilateral donors between 2021 and 2024. The government authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina were the top contributor during the CPD, followed by the European Commission and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5. Top Programme Funders 2021–2024



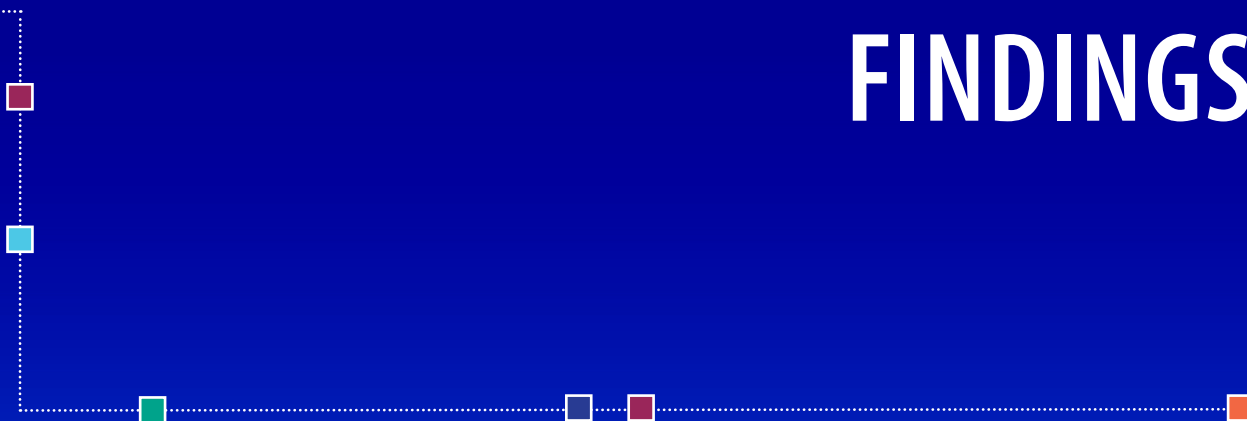
Source: UNDP Quantum & Atlas, extracted on 31 July 2024

⁴⁴ Based on UNDP PowerBi project database from March 2024.

⁴⁵ Gender equality is not the main objective of the expected output, but the output promotes gender equality in a significant and consistent way. Source: <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/tr/Annex-9.pdf>.

CHAPTER 2

FINDINGS



This chapter presents the results of the programme and contribution analysis, along with the assessment of operational and cross-cutting issues. The findings are organized into three chapters, in line with the key evaluation questions and criteria:⁴⁶ (1) UNDP's strategic and programmatic responsiveness; (2) UNDP's contributions to programme objectives and sustainable development results; and (3) main factors, including strategies, approaches, and cross-cutting aspects that influenced UNDP's performance and broader adoption of results.

2.1 Programme responsiveness

Finding 1. UNDP's strategic efforts to support legislative and institution building needs and priorities were strategically aligned with and responsive to country priorities, the SDG framework, and the country's EU accession goals.

In alignment with Bosnia and Herzegovina's country development priorities, the SDG framework,⁴⁷ and EU accession aspirations,⁴⁸ UNDP continued to play a critical role in supporting governance, legislative, and institutional reforms over this CPD, building on results achieved in the previous cycle. The organization helped the drafting of over 70 new or revised policy and regulatory frameworks, ensuring they meet international standards and facilitate progress towards EU membership. As evaluation evidence reveals, notable UNDP contributions in areas such as governance reform, environmental sustainability, and rule of law have been relevant and effective from two perspectives: (1) integrating the evidence on needs and priorities; and (2) ensuring that policy-making was done through collaborative efforts with governments at all levels, civil society, and other relevant actors, as also corroborated by interviewed stakeholders.⁴⁹ Illustrative examples of such efforts include supporting the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina's SDGs Financing Framework,⁵⁰ Climate Change National Adaptation Plan, the Blueprint for Gender Responsive Just Transition, and other key legislation on air protection, local self-governments, cybersecurity, agriculture, etc.

Interviewed stakeholders consider UNDP to be strategically positioned with both the governments (at all levels) and donors to assist and steer reforms. UNDP successfully leveraged openings with the governments, combining and leveraging its procurement efficiencies with advocacy and technical assistance to reforms across all sectors. Its neutral role has been considered by stakeholders as essential in facilitating cooperation and ensuring the effective development and implementation of these frameworks. This collaborative approach has not only promoted dialogue but also enhanced the alignment of policies across different levels of government, which is a considerable value added, given the complex political structure in the country. Stakeholders view UNDP's support in developing key policies and legislation as crucial in overcoming Bosnia and Herzegovina's prolonged period of stagnation in governance reforms, helping to advance the country's EU accession efforts. This strategic alignment has also reinforced the impact and relevance of UNDP's interventions, ensuring they are responsive to the country's evolving needs.

⁴⁶ The criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability – are addressed within the four KEQ and the sub-questions, in accordance with the Performance Rating System. Details and results of the Performance Rating are presented in Annex 6.

⁴⁷ See <https://zamisli2030.ba/sdgs-framework-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>.

⁴⁸ See https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/bosnia-and-herzegovina_en.

⁴⁹ For instance, UNDP supported the drafting of key legislation, including the Law on Wine, the Draft Law on Cybersecurity (FBiH), the Draft Law on Air Protection (FBiH), and the Draft Law on Climate Change (RS), as well as amendments to the Law on Environment (FBiH) and the Rulebook on Management of Waste Containing POPs (RS). UNDP also assisted with the Climate Change National Adaptation Plan, aligned with entity strategies for energy consumption investments, and contributed to the National Building Renovation Strategy, and the draft Public Procurement Strategy for 2024–2028, which is now pending adoption by the Council of Ministers. Additionally, UNDP helped develop Agriculture and Rural Development Strategies, the Pesticide Container Management System, and supported country security strategies, such as on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Strategy for Countering Organized Crime and Terrorism.

⁵⁰ See https://zamisli2030.ba/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/BiH_SDG_Financing-Framework-for-gov-adoption-2023.pdf.

UNDP complemented its policy advisory with institutional capacity-building initiatives at all levels of government, but also across civil society. As cited by stakeholders, such support has been relevant and responsive to the need to foster transparent and inclusive governance, improved public services and mechanisms for evidence-based decision-making, and for increased citizen engagement. These initiatives have enhanced the alignment of Bosnia and Herzegovina's policies with EU standards, driving sustainable development and reinforcing UNDP's role in facilitating the country's EU integration.

2.2 UNDP's contributions to programme objectives and sustainable development results

Inclusive growth and environment (Outcome 1)

UNDP's work under Outcome 1 focused on promoting resilient, inclusive, and sustainable growth in Bosnia and Herzegovina through interventions that integrated economic development with environmental management, including biodiversity conservation, pollution reduction, and climate change resilience. Additionally, UNDP supported climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, energy efficiency, green and circular economy initiatives, and capacity-building activities to equip young people with 21st century skills.

Protected area management

Finding 2. UNDP's efforts in protected area management have been relevant but fragmented, limiting their effectiveness. Despite advocacy, the draft Law on Environmental Protection is yet to be adopted, and the limited alignment between climate resilience and financial sustainability strategies and mechanisms further impedes the potential for systemic change.

UNDP has been invested in a range of protected areas management initiatives across Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2002.⁵¹ These efforts have included the development of nine protected area management plans, each incorporating climate change considerations for the first time; the advocacy for integrating climate resilience measures into the draft Law on Environmental Protection; and the creation of Forest Fire Action Plans for six Protected Areas to address the increasing risks posed by climate change.⁵²

UNDP initiated discussions with stakeholders to explore ways to improve the financial sustainability of protected areas through sustainable tourism initiatives, such as public-private partnerships for parking services at Una National Park and outreach activities for private sector engagement in Ozren Nature Park. In addition, UNDP has spearheaded targeted ecological interventions, such as the reintroduction of alpine newts into Prokoško Lake and the planting of spruce species to mitigate climate impacts on vulnerable species.⁵³

All of these efforts aimed to collectively foster a transformative shift towards climate-resilient and financially sustainable protected area management. Emerging results show an increase in the awareness of protected area management authorities on the potential of improving financial sustainability of protected areas through sustainable tourism development. However, document review and stakeholder interviews suggest that while these initiatives have addressed important issues of relevance for the protected areas, they have been fragmented, one-off, and small scale without much integration, which limits their potential to contribute to long-term systemic change. For example, while the nine management plans incorporate climate considerations, these efforts are not sufficiently aligned with broader financial sustainability

⁵¹ See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/spa-project>.

⁵² UNDP (2024), "Results Oriented Annual Report 2023."

⁵³ This is evident from desk review and interviews.

strategies. Similarly, although public-private partnerships have been explored, the absence of established financial mechanisms such as eco-taxes or entrance fees across all protected areas undermines their potential for long-term viability. Interviewed stakeholders indicate that the lack of these financing mechanisms poses challenges in securing sufficient financial resources for the management of protected areas.

Persistent organic pollutants (POPs)

Finding 3. UNDP has made important contributions in introducing regulations and developing policies to manage POPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as demonstrating on-the-ground interventions to identify and address the contaminated sites. Further reduction of POPs has been limited by slow adoption and enforcement of legislation and lack of financing to address this issue.

UNDP has done some pioneering work in the area of reducing POPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These efforts have included the development of the new legislation and policies on POPs, the inventory of POPs, the pesticides containers pilot, management of POPs from industrial zones, integration of green chemistry principles and preparation for company audits, as well as capacity-building activities.

The evaluation found satisfactory progress in this area.⁵⁴ UNDP contributed to mainstreaming POP-related legislation into the harmonization process of the Bosnia and Herzegovina's environmental law, in line with the country's obligations under the Stockholm Convention. This resulted in adoption of three rulebooks in Republika Srpska,⁵⁵ while adoption of other supported legislative proposals is still pending.⁵⁶ UNDP handed over the GIS platform with inventory of POPs stocks⁵⁷ (in testing phase) to relevant authorities, which should guide prioritization efforts in this area. Emerging results show the establishment of a system for POP management through development of a draft strategy on 'Introduction of the Container Management System' in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and increased levels of awareness of the responsible stakeholders on the best practices for the management of POPs from Slovenia.⁵⁸ However, UNDP efforts to design the remediation and recultivation plan for the 'INCEL' Business Zone has not achieved tangible results, as its implementation is limited due to financial constraints of private actors and concerned authorities.⁵⁹

These efforts have contributed to increasing awareness and capacities of various stakeholders in managing hazardous waste, but have been challenged by several factors. Regarding the INCEL, this includes weak enforcement of the legislation that regulates the 'Polluter Pays' principle, the slow adoption of drafted POPs legislation, and the lack of an incentive mechanism to ensure the replicability of the green chemistry initiative in the manufacturing industry, as confirmed by interviewed stakeholders. There is also no long-term solution for the disposal of POPs identified through the inventory,⁶⁰ though UNDP has started discussions with other stakeholders to resolve this issue.⁶¹

⁵⁴ This finding is in line with the mid-term evaluation report of project "Environmentally Sound Management of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in industrial and hazardous waste sectors." Source: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/detail/21513>.

⁵⁵ Rulebook on Managing Waste Containing POPs, Rulebook on Managing Medical Waste, and Rulebook on Managing Electric and Electronic Waste.

⁵⁶ This refers to the following drafts documents: Decision on Implementation of the Stockholm Convention, Instruction for Customs Officers on Handling Goods Containing POPs, FBiH Decree on POPs, and Brcko District Decree on POPs.

⁵⁷ Inventory of POPs identified 334.5 tons of POPs in BiH according to the mid-term evaluation of project "Environmentally Sound Management of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in industrial and hazardous waste sectors."

⁵⁸ Interviewed stakeholders highlighted that UNDP has contributed to the collection of almost 15 tonnes of pesticide packaging by end of 2023, and to the introduction of green chemistry principals in 13 manufacturing companies.

⁵⁹ This business zone is established on the site of the former industrial complex INCEL Banja Luka Cellulose Factory. The majority of the zone is private property, and implementation of this plan would require around €4 million.

⁶⁰ There are no financing modality governments committed to disposing the PFOS stockpiles identified through the inventory.

⁶¹ See <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/15008?tab=management-response>.

Energy efficiency

Finding 4. UNDP's continued contributions have laid a strong foundation for energy efficiency in Bosnia and Herzegovina, spanning public infrastructure, residential housing, and the private sector, as well as enhancing energy management via the Energy Management Information System. A lack of cohesive legal framework for the Energy Service Company (ESCO) model and legal definition of energy poverty, together with limited financial capacities at the local level, hinder the potential for wider scale-up of results in this area.

In line with ICPE recommendations from the previous cycle,⁶² UNDP's work in Bosnia and Herzegovina has focused on addressing climate change by promoting energy efficiency to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A central aspect of this strategy has been on improving energy efficiency of public buildings mainly through the grant co-financing modality since 2013.⁶³ Through more than 70 energy efficiency infrastructure projects over 2021–2022,⁶⁴ UNDP contributed to improvements in the energy performance of retrofitted public sector buildings and also better working and living conditions for all users of these buildings.⁶⁵ UNDP's contribution included the scaling up of these investments by facilitating implementation of the National Investment Framework for Low-Carbon Public Buildings,⁶⁶ with options for co-financing investment for buildings that face financial barriers.⁶⁷ However, the main concerns raised by the interviewed stakeholders are lack of an exit strategy and approach to phase out assistance, and limited local government capacity to implement such types of infrastructure projects without UNDP support.

UNDP also made efforts to establish a sustainable financing system for energy efficiency infrastructure projects in the public sector. This includes the introduction of the Energy Service Company (ESCO) model,⁶⁸ and ongoing efforts to develop a revolving fund and to support loans from international finance institutions for implementation of energy efficiency measures. As per UNDP data, the ESCO model mobilized around \$2 million⁶⁹ for energy retrofitting in public buildings such as schools and police stations.⁷⁰ Interviewed stakeholders consider the model as an innovative UNDP contribution, as the ESCO market did not exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina prior to UNDP support in this area. They also highlighted that it is not precisely defined in legislation, which leaves room for interpretation on how ESCO could be contracted. In addition to the ESCO model, UNDP has strengthened energy management in public buildings through the deployment of the Energy Management Information System (EMIS).⁷¹ This software enables the monitoring of energy consumption, costs, and emissions, providing a vital tool for data-driven decision-making and enhancing the efficiency of public sector energy investments, as corroborated by interviewed stakeholders. EMIS is now operational in nearly 4,000 public sector buildings.⁷²

⁶² One of the recommendations of the ICPE 2015–2019 was that “Further expansion of the environment and energy sector should be a major focus of the office during the next planning cycle, including maintaining UNDP's strong position in climate and energy efficiency support. UNDP should take the initiative to help government authorities develop long-term strategies and financial plans for addressing the acute air pollution problems in the country.”

⁶³ Swedish Embassy grants with government co-financing.

⁶⁴ Since 2013, UNDP contributed to energy retrofitting in 262 public buildings and 13 public lighting systems throughout the country as a result of the Green Economic Development project. Source: <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/ged-project>.

⁶⁵ Energy consumption savings was 59 percent in 2021 and 53 percent in 2022. Source: UNDP (2022), “Green Economic Development Project – 3rd Phase, Activity Report for 2021”; UNDP (2023), “Green Economic Development Project – 3rd Phase, Activity Report for 2022.”

⁶⁶ This framework was adopted by the two Entities and at Bosnia and Herzegovina level, and it is currently under implementation in both entities, with support of UNDP.

⁶⁷ UNDP support includes an integrated package of policy, regulatory, technological, informational, financial, and managerial solutions designed to address country-specific risks and barriers to investment. UNDP defined minimum technical, financial, socio-economic, and environmental requirements for buildings to receive Green Climate Fund funding for co-finance investment. See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/low-carbon-project>.

⁶⁸ UNDP supported development of procurement and legislative documentation for ESCO projects, but also conducted trainings for building the capacities of SMEs to compete for ESCO contracts.

⁶⁹ The first Energy Performance Contract for ESCO projects was signed in 2022, with co-financing from the Environmental Fund of the Federation of BiH, for the refurbishment of four public buildings. See more at UNDP (2024), “Terminal Evaluation report of Project: Catalyzing Environmental Finance for Low-Carbon Urban Development.”

⁷⁰ These four public buildings (three schools and one police station) are located in three municipalities (Kalibunar, Vitez, and Busovaca).

⁷¹ UNDP has provided support to institutions in BiH in using EMIS since its establishment in the country in 2013.

⁷² UNDP (2022), “Interim Evaluation of UNDP/Green Climate Fund Project: Scaling-up Investment in Low-Carbon Public Buildings (LCPB Project).”

UNDP's efforts in the residential sector focused on laying the foundation for decarbonization. This included conducting energy efficiency studies in 36 local governments⁷³ and developing 42 financial mechanisms⁷⁴ to co-finance improvements in residential buildings. Pilot projects in Sarajevo and Tuzla Cantons⁷⁵ replaced outdated heating systems in 506 households with energy-efficient alternatives and have demonstrated significant energy savings.⁷⁶ However, broader scale up of these approaches is yet to materialize, largely due to the high co-financing demands on households, which remains a key barrier, especially for low-income families. Interviewed stakeholders highlighted that these pilots have been successful, but residents of individual and collective buildings still need these types of support to fight energy poverty. These interventions were further revised to make them more gender responsive.⁷⁷ Within the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector, UNDP supported decarbonization in 20 carbon-intensive SMEs, resulting in a reduction of 3,804 tons of CO₂ emissions annually and the creation of 390 green jobs.⁷⁸ While efforts to establish green credit lines for SMEs have been initiated, these are still in the embryonic phase, requiring further consideration on how more businesses can benefit from energy-efficient solutions.

Overall, the evaluation found that UNDP's energy efficiency interventions have added value to Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts to meet key EU directives, including the Energy Efficiency Directive,⁷⁹ Energy Performance of Buildings Directive,⁸⁰ and Renewable Energy Directive.⁸¹ Local government co-financing for energy efficiency projects increased from 20 percent to 75 percent,⁸² reflecting greater awareness of energy investments and UNDP's success in unlocking government funds for these initiatives. However, energy poverty aspects have not been widely applied in energy efficiency intervention in residential buildings. The challenge has been the absence of a systematic approach to defining energy poverty, which is a shortcoming of the legal framework in the country.

Environment and climate change

Finding 5. UNDP support has contributed to Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress in fulfilling its international climate change obligations related to reporting and development of the policy framework. However, the process is hindered by the diverse governmental structures in the country.

UNDP support to Bosnia and Herzegovina to fulfil its international climate change obligations has partially achieved the intended results. Building on the work of the previous cycle,⁸³ progress is evident in the adoption of the Climate Change National Adaptation Plan⁸⁴ and the country's Fourth National

⁷³ Within these 36 energy efficiency studies, UNDP analysed the status of 13,857 objects (single houses and multi-dwelling buildings) out of the total 408,768 housing objects. Each study included a baseline inventory of the overall housing stock, current energy needs of residential buildings, proposed energy efficiency measures for the residential sector with the amount of investment required, economic evaluation indicators, and expected greenhouse gas emission reduction. UNDP also directly targeted 36 municipalities and cities that had developed or were in the process of development of Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans and expressed commitment to improvements of energy efficiency and reduction of local air pollution.

⁷⁴ UNDP (2024), "Final evaluation of the project 'Decarbonisation of Residential Sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina'"

⁷⁵ Sarajevo and Tuzla are among the most air polluted cities in the country.

⁷⁶ As per the UNDP Green Deal final project review, this resulted in energy savings of 32.56 percent; financial savings of 17.95 percent; and CO₂ emissions decrease of 63.24 percent on an annual basis, which amounts to 9.4 tonnes of CO₂ over the estimated project lifetime of 20 years.

⁷⁷ As per a request of donor, in 2023 UNDP conducted a revision of the Project Document of the 'Decarbonization of Residential Sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina' with the aim of making the existing performance indicators more qualitative and suitable for tracking progress in the gender focus of the project.

⁷⁸ UNDP (2023), "Inclusive Decarbonization Activity (IDA), Final report."

⁷⁹ See https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-targets-directive-and-rules/energy-efficiency-directive_en.

⁸⁰ See https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficient-buildings/energy-performance-buildings-directive_en.

⁸¹ See https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/renewable-energy/renewable-energy-directive-targets-and-rules/renewable-energy-directive_en.

⁸² This is corroborated by interviewed representatives of donor, governments in BiH, and UNDP staff.

⁸³ UNDP has been a long-term partner of the government authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in climate change mitigation and adaptation policy development and reporting. In the previous cycle, with UNDP support, the country has adopted the First Biennial Update Report, the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, and the Third National Communication Report with the Second Biennial Unit Report. Source: UNDP (2020), ICPE 2015–2020.

⁸⁴ See <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/NAP-Bosnia-and-Herzegovina%20.pdf>.

Communication.⁸⁵ Its preparation, however, was challenged by a long negotiation process on the alignment of the country's greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets with the requirements of the Energy Community.⁸⁶ UNDP supported development of the Environmental Information System, which provides a basis for the Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification System and GHG inventories. However, the evaluation found that it is not yet fully operationalized⁸⁷ due to the lack of adoption of the draft laws and regulations to formalize the collection, management, and sharing/reporting of data among the various institutions involved.⁸⁸

UNDP contributed to mainstreaming gender-sensitive consideration into climate change reporting,⁸⁹ and also to inclusion of the climate change perspective in the 4th Gender Action plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, there is a lack of government knowledge and expertise in implementation of gender responsive climate interventions, as confirmed by interview stakeholders.

Interviewed stakeholders suggest that there is also a need for a more integrated and top-down approach to energy and climate policy development at all levels. For illustration, UNDP supported development of 40 local Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans, which do not fully align with the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP), which is in the process of being drafted. This lack of alignment between local and national plans might hinder future reporting and achievement on the 2030 climate and energy targets defined by the NECP. The evaluation found that sustainability in preparation of these policies is not ensured, due to weak government capacity to lead these policy development processes, as well as a lack of coordination and cooperation among institutions at all levels.

In accordance with UNDP's global strategy for environmental justice, the organization also contributed to the development of a framework for identifying and reporting on environmental human rights violations in BiH, and the training of judges and prosecutors in environmental criminal law.⁹⁰ Interviewed stakeholders suggested that further support in this direction is needed, as environmental justice is a new area in the country that has not been fully developed, and which requires increased collaboration among various institutions on this matter (e.g., prosecution, court, and police). This remains a key challenge.

Rural development

Finding 6. UNDP has made a notable contribution in the development of a Bosnia and Herzegovina level strategic framework for rural development. Its investments in promoting a circular economy and improving SME competitiveness for sustainable and resilient growth has yielded varied results.

The adopted Bosnia and Herzegovina level document "Strategic Plan for Rural Development for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023–2027"⁹¹ stands as a landmark achievement in UNDP's efforts to define country priorities in this area, which will guide the gradual alignment of BiH agriculture and rural development with EU standards. This document has also been preconditioned for new EU investments in this area. This strategy was adopted by the Council of Ministers⁹² and is expected to be adopted by the parliament in 2024 due to significant interest from all governments, as confirmed by interviewed stakeholders. However, the evaluation found little progress towards the creation of a circular economy enabling environment, with

⁸⁵ See https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/FNC%20BiH_ENG%20fin.pdf.

⁸⁶ Final Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Fourth National Communication and Third Biennial Update Report Project.

⁸⁷ The document review indicate that EIS has been handed over to the respective Funds for Environment in both Republic of Srpska and Federation of BiH for operationalization and use, but the system is still in its early stages of operationalization. This is corroborated by interviewed stakeholders.

⁸⁸ UNDP (2024), "Terminal Evaluation Report of Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency Project."

⁸⁹ See https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-02/report_on_mapping_the_gender_component.pdf.

⁹⁰ See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/eco-justice-project>.

⁹¹ See <https://ekonsultacije.gov.ba/legislationactivities/downloadaddocument?documentId=1025102>.

⁹² The Council of Ministers is a body of executive authority of Bosnia and Herzegovina, exercising its rights and carrying out its duties as governmental functions, according to the Constitution, laws, and other regulations.

some results in promoting dialogue on circular economy under the Green Transition Partnership Platform⁹³ and drafting the Circular Economy Roadmap, albeit its adoption is pending. This is a critical area considering the need of the country to align with the EU Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.⁹⁴

Building on the work of the previous cycle in improving rural livelihoods, UNDP continued its long-term project of the Via Dinarica tourism destination,⁹⁵ resulting in attracting more than 92,000 tourists, generating 95 new jobs, and promoting this destination on the global tourism map.⁹⁶ The sustainability of Via Dinarica is dependent on UNDP's ongoing focus on building sustainable tourism infrastructure and services, and the involvement of the local community in creating new tourism offers along Via Dinarica trails.

UNDP's investments in strengthening SMEs⁹⁷ in their competitiveness and application of innovative solutions towards a green economy showed mix results. Its technical support and grants to improve the capacity of SMEs partially contributed to enhancing their competitiveness, improving business support service, and achieving energy savings (Finding 4). As per UNDP data, 425 companies improved their competitiveness or applied sustainable growth and resilience principles in their business operation, and 17 innovative and scalable solutions were developed and applied for circular and green economy in the period 2021–2023.⁹⁸ Stakeholders noted that implementation of the BiH green scheme as the model of sustainable tourism development and certification was a value added of UNDP's EU4Business⁹⁹ project, with the potential of sustainability.¹⁰⁰ The EU4AGRI¹⁰¹ project for the first time enabled agri-businesses and farmers to access EU funds. Interviewed stakeholders also confirmed that this investment changed agri-businesses and the perception of farmers to view agriculture activities as a business. It has also increased their knowledge of EU requirements that could be used in future application for EU funds. The results are also evident in terms of improvement in their primary production, digitalization of business, and processing and marketing of agri-food products.

Despite these achievements, most of the interviewed stakeholders noted that the eligibility criteria for grant applications were not equally favourable for different sizes of agricultural holdings, as meeting the criteria was particularly challenging for small-sized agricultural holdings.¹⁰² This design issue limited the focus and potential to achieve wider results. However, the evaluation notes that UNDP's efforts in supporting agriculture development have raised the knowledge of ministries' representatives on the implementation of public calls. For illustration, the software for grant management that was produced for managing UNDP calls as part of the EU4AGRI project has been in the testing phase, to be handed over to the Ministry of Agriculture in Republic Srpska to manage their grants. Challenges such as COVID-19, the lack of capacity of businesses to transition towards a green economy, and the weak absorption capacities of agri-businesses to prepare applications for funding all hinder the full realization of transformative potential and the transition towards a sustainable and green business model.

⁹³ This programme aims to establish a systemic approach to decarbonization and resilience to climate change, and to support the transition to renewable energy sources and a circular economy. Source: <https://balkangreenenergynews.com/federation-of-bih-launches-five-year-strategic-green-transition-programme/>.

⁹⁴ See https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/green_agenda_for_the_western_balkans_en.pdf.

⁹⁵ This project is an example of an integrated approach to project implementation as it includes topics such as biodiversity, climate change, tourism, governance, social cohesion, and regional cooperation. Project website: <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/viadinarica>.

⁹⁶ This was achieved by marking more than 800 km of the Via Dinarica trails in rural areas, developing the accommodation capacity in the mountain areas in BiH (over 1,000 beds), improving the offerings of outdoor tourism service providers, etc.

⁹⁷ SMEs from agri-food and rural development, entrepreneurship, tourism, and export-oriented sectors.

⁹⁸ UNDP has supported 449 companies to mitigate the impact and recover from the COVID-19 crisis. Source: UNDP (2024), "CPD Outcome and Output Indicators."

⁹⁹ See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/eu4business>.

¹⁰⁰ The proposed certification model is embedded in the legislation of Republika Srpska.

¹⁰¹ See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/eu4agri-modernizing-agri-food-sector-bosnia-and-herzegovina-thriving-rural-areas>.

¹⁰² Document review shows slow utilization of funds for the agri-food sector during the first two years of project implementation linked to weak capacities of final beneficiaries to absorb the funds and prepare applications based on EU standards, as well as to meet co-financing requirements (35 percent). To overcome these issues, UNDP has been providing technical assistance to targeted beneficiaries.

ICPE Bosnia and Herzegovina (2020) recommended that new ideas to support SMEs and entrepreneurship should be tested. In response, UNDP launched some novel approaches that resulted in the opening of the Science and Technology Park in Banja Luka,¹⁰³ STEM laboratories and science cabinets in schools,¹⁰⁴ institutionalization of the entrepreneurship curricula in 50 high schools,¹⁰⁵ and the establishment of financial support mechanisms in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and advisory support in Republika Srpska (RS) to start-ups and young entrepreneurs. These efforts have contributed to addressing digital skills shortages, along with the knowledge and abilities needed for further economic growth. However, these interventions are in the early phase of development and will require long-term support to make a meaningful difference to the economy.

Disaster risk reduction and management

Finding 7. UNDP efforts in disaster risk reduction and management have been small but important in laying foundations for setting up a legal and institutional framework and improving vertical, intersectoral, and horizontal coordination.

Since the devastating floods in 2014, UNDP has supported the country in building its flood risk management system at all levels of governments. UNDP's support in this area has shrunk compared to the previous CPD period, as the focus shifted from disaster recovery to prevention, resilience, and risk reduction.¹⁰⁶ This investment was sufficient for the development of an integrated disaster risk management model at a local level, and the initiation of a bottom-up approach at the higher levels of government. UNDP's efforts contributed to the establishment of 10 functional local-level disaster risk reduction (DRR) platforms that serve as coordination mechanisms and build capacity of local municipalities to mainstream DRR into local policies and strategies.¹⁰⁷ The platforms utilized UNDP's Disaster Risk Analysis System¹⁰⁸ to conduct risk assessments, resulting in 10 integrated risk assessments covering key sectors, such as civil protection, social and child protection, agriculture, health, and education. In addition, UNDP contributed to the development of DRR action plans for social institutions, such as schools and social work centres. The evaluation found that UNDP's interventions have been gender responsive¹⁰⁹ and have contributed to bringing about a shift in stakeholders thinking and behaviour towards DRR challenges and the need for and importance of a cross-sectoral approach in targeted local governments.

However, further integration of cross-sectoral DRR measures into local development strategies and/or action plans of other local municipalities remained uncertain in the absence of concrete legislative basis (e.g., legal recognition of DRR platforms) and stable sources of finance, as corroborated by interviewed stakeholders. Since February 2024, UNDP has started to work on addressing these issues by supporting authorities in drafting legislation and the institutional framework needed for the establishment and functioning of DRR platforms at each level in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Interviewed stakeholders welcome, UNDP's work on scaling up these DRR models horizontally through replication at the local level, and ensuring system-level

¹⁰³ UNDP directly supported the development of the institutional framework, operational setup, and capacity-building for the Science and Technology Park stakeholders, as well as the financing plan, detailed construction and furnishing designs for the park building, and technical revision of the designs. Funding was provided by the Italian Fund for Innovative Projects and the Development Bank of the Council of Europe.

¹⁰⁴ Over 6,500 young people gained 21st-century skills in 2023 through innovative education infrastructure such as 4 STEM laboratories and 25 science cabinets in primary and secondary schools.

¹⁰⁵ UNDP (2023), "Annual Progress Report 2023 of the project Economic Governance for Growth (Phase 2)."

¹⁰⁶ UNDP investment in disaster risk reduction reform was very limited during the CPD period, with a total investment of \$1.8 million. An additional \$1.7 million was invested for housing in flood-affected areas, as a continuation of support from the previous CPD, which was gradually phased out.

¹⁰⁷ See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/disaster-risk-reduction-sustainable-development-bosnia-and-herzegovina>.

¹⁰⁸ See <https://drasinfo.org/public>.

¹⁰⁹ UNDP contributed to the development of action plans on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Gender Based Violence in Emergencies.

changes through vertical and inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration in DRR preparedness and response. Meanwhile, UNDP has also worked on upgrading the Disaster Risk Analysis System, which is critical for risk assessments and local development planning.

Governance and Rule of Law (Outcome 2)

In response to Bosnia and Herzegovina's development and EU accession needs, UNDP initiatives under Outcome 2 focused on enhancing governance, rule of law, and public service delivery by integrating SDG Frameworks into national planning and by aligning public financing with sustainable development goals. Key efforts included advancing digital transformation, promoting gender equality in public administration, supporting judiciary and law enforcement in areas such as cybersecurity and environmental law, and collaborating with government bodies on crisis management, environmental governance, and infrastructural development.

Support to the SDGs

Finding 8. UNDP's long-term support has been critical in the evolution of the SDG Council from a dependent body to a self-sustaining, independent entity. Through strategic planning, capacity-building, and continuous engagement, UNDP has facilitated progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina's alignment with the SDGs, ensuring that the Council can independently drive future initiatives.

UNDP's strategic support for the establishment and sustainability of the Council for Monitoring the Implementation of SDGs in Bosnia and Herzegovina¹¹⁰ (hereinafter: the SDG Council) since 2017, and the help in creation of the institutional architecture to implement the SDG Framework via the existing strategic planning and development management system in the country, from the state to the local level, has highlighted the benefits of long-term, stable assistance with a gradual phase-out. Initially, UNDP's hands-on approach was crucial in institutional building, facilitating political processes and garnering the support needed to establish and gain functionality of the Council – an achievement that stakeholders confirm would not have been possible without UNDP's involvement. During this phase, the organization provided essential logistical support, allowing the Council to operate despite limited budgets and resources.

As the SDG Council gained capacity, UNDP shifted its role to that of an observer and supporter, allowing the Council to independently manage its initiatives, a move that was praised by stakeholders. UNDP's convening role was also acknowledged as essential in bringing members together, ensuring effective coordination, and aligning strategic documents with the SDGs through a Regulatory Impact Assessment. This process led to the creation of an SDG Framework, adopted by the Council of Ministers, and integrated into development strategies across entities, Brcko District, cantons, and municipalities. UNDP also developed an SDG financing framework, outlining resource needs and mechanisms to achieve the 2030 targets. UNDP's support ensured that the priorities from the SDG Framework are mainstreamed into development strategies at all government levels, which are then implemented through mid-term and annual institutional work plans and in this way aligned with budgets.

Stakeholders emphasised UNDP's role in localizing the SDGs, engaging municipalities and local communities, and contributing to the alignment of development strategies in nearly 34 percent of local governments with the SDG Framework – all of which resulted in an increased number of SDG Business

¹¹⁰ See <https://zamisli2030.ba/sdgs-framework-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/monitoring-and-reporting/>.

Pioneers (companies and local governments).¹¹¹ As per UNDP data, the number of applications for the Business Pioneers Award has been growing over the years, focusing on decarbonization, productivity, and the creation of new decent jobs.¹¹² UNDP also facilitated regional cooperation and supported the presentation of two Voluntary National Reviews, which helped the country to promote its progress on the international stage and enhanced collaboration with the private sector on SDG alignment.¹¹³

Despite initial challenges in formalizing the Council due to its non-official status, it has made significant progress, which would not be possible without UNDP support as per stakeholders. At the time of the evaluation, the Council has advanced significantly in its institutionalization, making it possible to act independently and to coordinate with all relevant actors. This progress has been highly praised by all relevant stakeholders, who noted that its functioning as a coherent joint body is an example of good practice, particularly given the governance complexities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Digital transformation

Finding 9. UNDP's digital transformation efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina have delivered notable advancements, particularly in such areas as digital governance and public consultation tools, despite being hampered by fragmented approaches and challenges related to complex governance structures and varying levels of institutional readiness. While these efforts have shown significant potential, ongoing issues such as weak institutional capacity, interoperability problems, and a lack of cohesive strategy continue to impede broader systemic progress.

UNDP's digital transformation efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina were dispersed and institution specific, resulting from institutional demand and funding availability, which also reflects the country's fragmented digitalization efforts. UNDP's support spanned policy development, but with emphasis on experimentation with e-services and tools for policy consultations and citizen participation, social assistance, local services, digitization of businesses, and cybersecurity. The organization's contributions to policy and legislative development have laid the groundwork for digital governance reforms. The Digital Transformation Toolkit in the public sector and a Digital Transformation Roadmap and Action Plan,¹¹⁴ the Sarajevo Canton's 'Vision of Digital Governance 2.0' in 2021, as well as support to the drafting of the 'Law on Electronic Management of the FBiH' have all been critical in laying foundations for structured digital transformation efforts. According to stakeholder feedback, these investments have the potential to enhance electronic communication and interoperability. However, delays in the adoption of the Law on Electronic Management have limited the institutionalization of these efforts thus far. The FBiH's e-Cabinet System¹¹⁵ and the new solutions¹¹⁶ that UNDP helped introduce have been considered by stakeholders as significant contributions in improving public consultation and citizen engagement mechanisms, thereby streamlining decision-making processes. Although some of these tools await full deployment due to administrative decisions at relevant government levels, they show potential for broader use and scale up.

¹¹¹ Private sector development in line with SDG goals was promoted within the projects 'SDG Roll-out Support and Private Sector Engagement' and 'Translating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina into sustainable and inclusive growth.' These projects supported third, fourth, and fifth generation of SDG Business Pioneers.

¹¹² Seventy-five companies with 106 applications in 2021, 85 companies with 103 applications in 2022, 114 companies with 180 applications in 2023.

¹¹³ See <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/bosnia-and-herzegovina/voluntary-national-reviews-2023>.

¹¹⁴ See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/publications/toolkit-planning-digital-transformation-public-sector>.

¹¹⁵ The E-Cabinet is a custom-made solution based on international practices from UNDP Serbia's e-Parliament project.

¹¹⁶ The Public Consultations 2.0 platform, which serves as an online public consultation platform, was used by the Directorate for European Integration of the Council of Ministers for consultations with CSOs and the interested public for the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance III programmatic documents (<https://ipa-konsultacije.dei.gov.ba/en>); the eCitizen portal which enables transparent communication between citizens and local governments, where citizens can participate in public hearings, send complaints and questions, and track the work of the local council (<https://www.ecitizen.ba/>); the open data portal of the City of Prijedor (<https://www.urbanlab.ba/>), which is a new method for community-led urban public spaces transformation, and which includes digital consultations through the custom-made platform, etc.

In the area of social assistance, UNDP's digital transformation contributions added important value as suggested by interviewed stakeholders. The E-maternity service (e-Porodilja)¹¹⁷ was widely praised for its efficiency, improving the registration and distribution of allowances for new mothers.¹¹⁸ Similarly, the E-assistance system played a key role in facilitating the rapid distribution of €50 million in energy subsidies to 154,000 vulnerable households within two months,¹¹⁹ as part of the EU Energy Support Package.¹²⁰ This was made possible by a UNDP-supported database that connected various governmental and institutional databases to improve interoperability. Furthermore, the planned introduction of a digital social card is expected to improve fund allocation, provide accurate data on family needs, and enhance access to benefits.

At the local level, UNDP's efforts to enhance service interoperability have focused on improving data sharing and utility management systems. In Sarajevo Canton, in line with the Vision of Digital Governance 2.0, a digital platform for cantonal enterprises has been a key step forward. Similarly, tools such as the communal e-networks and the Energy Monitoring Information System were developed to improve utility management (Finding 4). However, many of these tools remain only partially implemented due to procedural delays and infrastructure gaps. In cities such as Banja Luka¹²¹ and Goražde,¹²² the lack of scanners and slow adoption of electronic signatures¹²³ have hindered the full use of digital systems. Resistance from civil servants and citizens to move towards paperless communication has further limited the effectiveness of these tools, as noted by stakeholders.

UNDP efforts in supporting broader business digitalization remain relatively small compared to other donors and have been rather scattered, mainly due to limited resources. Efforts included the introduction of the self-assessment tool Digital Pulse,¹²⁴ which, as per UNDP data, helped over 400 SMEs assess their digital readiness.¹²⁵ Furthermore, UNDP data reports that over 100 companies enhanced their digital business capacities through working with business development support organizations supported by UNDP,¹²⁶ but this data could not be corroborated by external sources.

Overall, the evaluation findings suggest that digital transformation initiatives encounter a variety of challenges across policy implementation, including bureaucratic delays, infrastructure gaps, weak institutional capacity, poor accessibility and availability of digital tools and infrastructure, and a lack of institutional understanding and readiness to embark in service interoperability, which is a sensitive issue within the country's complex political and administrative structures. According to stakeholders, UNDP is also not strategically positioned to lead digitalization efforts, as other donors such as the World Bank are more focused and have more leverage in supporting government initiatives. UNDP encountered challenges to secure continued funding,¹²⁷ and stakeholder feedback also suggests that UNDP's policy support is not always strategic or cohesive, often consisting of multiple fragmented initiatives rather than a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach to digital reforms.¹²⁸

¹¹⁷ See <https://federalna.ba/trenutni-status-prijava-u-aplikaciji-eporodilje-za-jednokratnu-podrsku-od-1000-km-za-novorodencad-u-2024-godini-hmjmn>.

¹¹⁸ E-Porodilja service is used by new parents to apply for a one-time benefit for a newborn child in the amount of 1,000 KM (approx. \$535) per child provided by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. As of 27 June 2024, 5,175 applications have been submitted through this platform.

¹¹⁹ Data obtained from the FBiH Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

¹²⁰ See https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/bosnia-and-herzegovina/campaign-connected-through-good-eu-allocated-70-million-euro-citizens-bih-through-energy-support_en?s=219.

¹²¹ This was implemented as part of the Project for Improving Performance of Local Services, which aims to support local governments to increase their level of transparency and accountability in managing publicly owned goods. See <https://banjaluka.net/banjaluka-dobila-program-za-elektronsko-upravljanje-dokumentima/>.

¹²² See <https://gorazdeonline.com/grad-gorazde-dobio-novu-opremu-i-softver-za-uspostavu-digitalne-osnove/>.

¹²³ Electronic signature was introduced across the Bosnia and Herzegovina level on 1 July 2024. See <https://www.biometricupdate.com/202407/bosnia-and-herzegovina-digital-id-agency-refutes-claim-it-overstepped-authority>.

¹²⁴ See <https://www.digitalnaekonomija.ba/bs-Latn-BA>.

¹²⁵ See <https://open.undp.org/projects/00126505/results>.

¹²⁶ See <https://open.undp.org/projects/00126505/results>.

¹²⁷ UNDP's digitalization efforts were initially supported by UK funding, which was later discontinued, and thus required UNDP to refocus attention on a few key priority areas.

¹²⁸ This is mainly due to the country's fragmented institutional set up whereby each level (entity, canton, and municipality) works independently on these issues.

Cyber security

Finding 10. UNDP's support to cyber security has contributed to advancements in regulatory framework, establishment of Computer Emergency Response Teams, and raising public awareness on IT and cybersecurity. Fragmentation of efforts remains a key challenge due to the complex governance structure and coordination issues among institutions.

UNDP's support to cyber security has been a relatively new area for both UNDP and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in high demand by the Council of Ministers, the Independent System Operator, the Federal Police, the Republika Srpska Ministry of Interior, and the Agency for Civil Service. UNDP successfully leveraged international donor interest, particularly from German funds, to achieve tangible results. While some fragmentation of efforts has been observed, this can be attributed both to the initial phase of support aimed at raising awareness and piloting responses, as well as to the inherently complex governance system for cyber security in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This fragmentation also reflects the coordination challenges across multiple stakeholders and institutional layers within the country's governance structure. UNDP's efforts have contributed to developing a regulatory framework in the country, leading to the draft law on cybersecurity of the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, draft law on cybersecurity in the FBiH,¹²⁹ and the draft policy on information security for the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, all currently pending adoption. Efforts have also been made to institutionalize cyber security training in the public sector in cooperation with the Agency for Civil Service, including the Cyber Hygiene e-learning course, which is an important precondition for employment in the public sector, as stakeholders noted.

UNDP is currently working on establishing Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) in the FBiH, and a CERT for BiH institutions, while it is helping Republika Srpska, which already has a CERT, with activities to improve CERT's work and strengthen its capacity. Progress was initially slow, but more activities are now underway, with FBiH seeking a roadmap for CERT establishment, and similar processes are in motion for Republika Srpska. However, the complexity of state-entity relations limits cohesive action at the Bosnia and Herzegovina level, where ministries lack authority to direct cybersecurity measures across entities. Another notable success has been the launch of a pilot joint Master's programme in cybersecurity, engaging key universities,¹³⁰ with the first cohort starting in September 2024. In parallel, UNDP has provided IT training for public servants and launched initiatives to address cybercrime prevention and awareness, especially targeting youth. These initiatives were highlighted as examples of UNDP's strategic focus on building institutional capacity and raising public awareness on cybercrime.

Local governance

Finding 11. UNDP's contributions to municipal asset management and public procurement have led to increased revenues and better service delivery in targeted municipalities. Scale-up potential of the established models is constrained by long-standing, unchanged legislative, institutional, and financial frameworks, which continue to limit the potential for broader systemic transformation in local governance.

UNDP has played a crucial role in enhancing governance capacities at various levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a strong focus on improving the quality and accessibility of public services. Evaluation findings reveal that UNDP's interventions have generated important results, particularly in the areas of asset management, public procurement, and public service delivery.

¹²⁹ See <https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/bs/utvrden-nacrt-zakona-o-informacionoj-sigurnosti-fbih>.

¹³⁰ E.g., the University of Sarajevo, Dzemal Bijedic University in Mostar, University of Mostar, the University of Banja Luka, and the University of Tuzla.

UNDP's key achievement in asset management has been the modernization of practices in 18 local governments, which enabled them to develop and adopt Municipal Asset Management Action Plans,¹³¹ leading to better record-keeping and financial management practices and the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina's first Manual for Establishing a System for Efficient Asset Management.¹³² Continued support in analysing municipal asset management databases led to the identification of key challenges, the implementation of standardized record-keeping procedures, and the adoption of General Acts on Asset Management.¹³³ These comprehensive assessments, development of asset registries, and mentoring support for the management of municipal assets, financial systems, and public procurement have brought notable savings and increased revenue for local governments.¹³⁴ UNDP's support to better expenditure management through improved internal controls and public procurement capacities contributed to these efforts. Deliverables included the development of a public procurement manual¹³⁵ for local governments and the creation of internal control policies and procedures.¹³⁶ According to stakeholder feedback, this support has been particularly important in enhancing transparency and reducing the risk of mismanagement of public funds.

UNDP also supported the development of tailored action plans, incorporating, inter alia, gender and social inclusion elements into the Mid-term Action Plans of partner municipalities and enhancing their performance management systems. UNDP promoted the integration of yearly Citizen Satisfaction Surveys by local governments as a regular practice, and introduced and tested a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in four municipalities in 2023,¹³⁷ bringing a more unified tool to be used for quality management at the local level. This is considered relevant within the wider Public Administration Reform efforts. However, so far only the higher levels of government have used CAF, and the local level has been left outside of such interventions. The evaluation could not find further evidence on the utility of the tool given its early testing phase.

Stakeholders also raised concerns about the sustainability of investments as broader legislative framework remains outdated, limiting the potential for expansion of these reforms, most of which are still funded by donors. The fragmentation of governance structures has further complicated the scaling of these initiatives, as local governments operate within a complex and often inconsistent legal and institutional environment. According to the stakeholder feedback, many local governments also lack the internal capacity to sustain these reforms without ongoing external support. The need for an enabling environment at the country level was considered crucial by stakeholders for ensuring the sustainability and scalability of the progress made so far.

Finding 12. UNDP has made notable contributions to local governance of the water sector, though its support has still not fully overcome the systemic challenges that continue to affect the water sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The ongoing issues of fragmented governance and uneven service delivery hinder the transformative potential of more comprehensive and coordinated efforts.

UNDP's contributions to local governance in the water sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly through the Municipality Environmental Governance (MEG/EU4MEG project), launched in 2016,¹³⁸ have addressed the structural and operational challenges for effective water management related to complex and

¹³¹ UNDP (2024), "Project for improving performance of local services (PIPLS): Annual Report 2023."

¹³² See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/press-releases/efficient-asset-management-improves-work-local-governments>.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ UNDP (2024), "Project for improving performance of local services" p. 3; UNDP (2024), ROAR 2023. As per UNDP data, 15 municipalities generated savings or increased revenues exceeding BAM 19.3 million (\$11 million) in 2023. With the Municipality Centar, Sarajevo alone collected an additional \$260,000 in property revenues in the first half of 2023.

¹³⁵ See <https://www.undp.org/bs/bosnia-herzegovina/publications/prirucnik-za-javne-nabavke-za-jedinice-lokalne-samouprave>.

¹³⁶ See <https://open.undp.org/projects/00126502>.

¹³⁷ UNDP MEG project data.

¹³⁸ The first phase of the project was implemented in the period 2016–2021, while the second phase is planned to be implemented in the period 2021–2025.

fragmented governance structure, with authority spread across multiple levels of government. The project tackled these issues by facilitating the harmonization of water-related legislation across Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The development of unified laws on water services¹³⁹ in both entities were important achievements in aligning with EU environmental acquis and addressing regulatory disparities, although their adoption is still pending.¹⁴⁰ While these legislative efforts are significant, they do not fully resolve the deeper issue of fragmented governance. For instance, 24 ministries in FBiH (3 at the entity level and 21 at the cantonal government level) are responsible for enforcement of 11 water laws, 11 laws on communal affairs, and the local governance legislation.¹⁴¹ This complexity continues to hinder coordinated and comprehensive sector-wide reforms.

To address persisting financial sustainability of water utility companies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNDP continued to promote the implementation of cost-reflective tariff systems through the promotion and training on the Methodology for Minimum Water Tariff (developed and tested in the previous CPD cycle), which was considered a crucial step towards ensuring that water utility companies could cover operational and maintenance costs. For instance, the RS Association of Water Utilities in early 2023 adopted the methodology and recommended its use by all its members. Stakeholder interviews and a review of documentation revealed that while these efforts were important to tackle the persisting issues of insufficient water tariffs, which prioritized social considerations over economic sustainability,¹⁴² the project's sole focus on cost-reflective tariffs was not sufficient to address the entrenched issue of tariff setting, which undermines the financial health of water utility companies.

UNDP also promoted more concrete governance mechanisms at the local level by fostering further development and alignment of mutually binding relationships and arrangements between water utility corporations (WUCs) and their local governments by facilitating the finalization of Public Service Agreements that define mutual rights and obligations between water utility companies and municipalities/cities. This was adopted by 23 local governments by May 2023,¹⁴³ enhancing the institutional, operational, and financial capacity of its partner WUCs to provide needed services. UNDP also strengthened capacities of local governments and water utility companies¹⁴⁴ with the aim to professionalize the sector, optimize organizational structures, and modernize technological systems, all of which are critical for improving service delivery. Evaluation findings suggest that the adoption of Public Service Agreements is a critical step towards a more structured and accountable service provision. However, sustainability of these arrangements depends on continued institutional support and further capacity-building efforts. Stakeholders also noted that the full potential is contingent on addressing systemic challenges within the water governance sector, such as financial sustainability and coordination across government levels.

In addition, UNDP facilitated the strategic engagement by the Water Alliance that brings together the EU Delegation, World Bank, Embassies of Switzerland and Sweden, UNDP, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the European Investment Bank to support modernization of the sector. Evaluation

¹³⁹ See <https://fmpvs.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/07-water-law-of-the-federation-bih-70-06.pdf>; <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/bih133161.pdf>.

¹⁴⁰ Strategic direction for reforms, formerly adopted in form of Programmes for Improvement of Water Services by both FBiH and the RS, have been actively implemented from 2023, aiming at fostering a better regulatory environment for enhanced provision of water services at the local level. A Regulatory Impact Assessment, which was undertaken in the FBiH, led to the decision on preparation of the FBiH Law on Water Services, drafted at the end of 2023. In parallel, the Working group in RS finished drafting the RS Law on Water Services.

¹⁴¹ European Commission (2023), Bosnia and Herzegovina Report; https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_691%20Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina%20report.pdf.

¹⁴² UNDP MEG project reports.

¹⁴³ UNDP (2023), European Union Support to Sustainable Management of Water Services in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EU4MEG), Annual Report, May 2022–2023.

¹⁴⁴ Trainings and mentoring support was provided to over 1,000 local government leaders and staff and 200 water utility managers and staff.

findings reveal that the success of these interventions will depend not only on local governance reforms but also on the ability of the Water Alliance to harmonize its contributions towards long-term sector-wide improvements.

Finding 13. UNDP’s initiatives to strengthen local democracy have empowered local community structures (Mjesna zajednica), showcasing how such efforts can help local democracy building and more inclusive local democracy processes.

In efforts to promote local democracy and enhance citizen participation in local decision-making, UNDP focused on strengthening capacities of local community units [Mjesna zajednica (MZ)]. MZs are traditional, area-based grassroots structures that usually serve to test the pulse of citizens’ needs and connect citizens to the governments. As such, MZs have a potential to vitalize citizen participation, encourage inclusive decision-making, and promote improved, gender-responsive service delivery.¹⁴⁵ UNDP’s support extended to assisting 199 MZs across 41 local governments to draft their strategic visions on the renewed role of MZs, with focus on increased citizen participation in public life. Hands-on support to the strengthening of the MZ role and practical application of new MZ models contributed to the empowerment of 36 percent of MZs across the country,¹⁴⁶ leading to the drafting and discussion of three key amendments aimed at strengthening them. Although the political climate posed challenges, the project-maintained momentum by organizing regional consultations and supporting amendments to principal laws.

This effort facilitated a broader dialogue on local governance reforms, ensuring the inclusion of MZ needs at higher government levels. This support contributed to the direct engagement of more than 26,700 citizens (37 percent women) in forums and a substantial improvement in infrastructure and services, benefiting over 400,000 citizens by the end of 2023.¹⁴⁷ Stakeholder interviews corroborate the evaluation findings, noting that the support to MZs was important in demonstrating how they can promote citizen participation, but also contribute to tangible improvements in local governance and service delivery. MZ networking was expanded, with active participation rising from 5 percent to over 26 percent of MZs across the country.¹⁴⁸ According to stakeholders, the project also boosted citizen trust in MZs, increasing from 70 percent to over 83 percent. It also improved citizens’ perception of inclusive decision-making, with an increase from 36 percent to 62 percent in participating areas.¹⁴⁹ Interviewed stakeholders highlight this as a good indication of the role of MZs as key facilitators of inclusive decision-making and community-driven development, fostering a more responsive and accountable local governance framework. The project also supported the integration of MZ priorities into local government budgets, raising the allocation to 3.5 percent.¹⁵⁰ In order to scale up the role and positioning of MZs, UNDP has been working on the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Principles of Local Self-Governance and on the upgrading of local government regulatory frameworks for enhanced MZ functioning, leading to 27 percent of local governments adopting the renewed local gender-sensitive legislative framework.¹⁵¹ At the time of the evaluation, the amendments to the law were still not adopted.

¹⁴⁵ There are 2,583 MZs in the country, and the level of their activism, legal status, size, development level, volumes of financing, and capacities significantly vary. See more in UNDP (2020), Project Document “Strengthening the Role of Local Communities/Mjesne Zajednice in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2020–2024 (Phase II),” p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ UNDP (2024), “MZ Project Annual Report 2023,” p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 8.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 7.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were highlighted by stakeholders. A significant challenge is the low level of trust between citizens and local authorities, which hampers the full potential of participatory governance. Additionally, local governments' lack of proactive engagement and insufficient skills for fostering inclusive public dialogue continue to limit the effectiveness of citizen engagement efforts.

Security

Finding 14. UNDP's multifaceted support to security and stability, mainly through its support to arms control, has significantly advanced the operational capacity of multiple agencies and fostered effective regional cooperation. Despite these achievements, challenges such as financial instability and inter-agency cooperation continue to impede the full realization of potential benefits of UNDP support.

UNDP's contributions to arms control in Bosnia have been comprehensive and multifaceted, covering multiple law enforcement agencies and addressing various operational and strategic needs. This support has significantly strengthened the country's capabilities in managing and controlling arms, thereby enhancing security and stability.

A key element of UNDP's support has been the tailored provision of specialized equipment and targeted trainings. For instance, UNDP conducted 37 one-day training sessions in 24 cities, reaching 738 employees (191 women; 547 men) across the law enforcement agencies.¹⁵² According to stakeholder feedback, UNDP invested heavily in ensuring gender parity in trainings, but the gender parity could not be fully achieved due to a lack of gender parity in the institutional set up. Regional collaboration was facilitated through study tours to Montenegro, Croatia, and Serbia, which helped establish essential contacts for peer exchanges. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Indirect Taxation Office and the Border Police is currently pending signatures as the new Law on Border control has not yet been adopted. However, according to stakeholder feedback, once signed it is expected to strengthen inter-agency cooperation. Stakeholder feedback also highlighted UNDP's contributions to enhancing the operational effectiveness of the Indirect Taxation Authority through capacity-building, equipment provision, and international collaboration initiatives under the *Halting Arms and Lawbreaking Trade in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Law Enforcement Agencies Development in Small Arms and Light Weapons Control* (Law Enforcement Agencies' Development in Small Arms and Light Weapons Control projects). These efforts have contributed to the strengthening of law enforcement capabilities, fostered inter-agency collaboration, and facilitated the interception of illegal shipments.

UNDP also facilitated collaboration among various law enforcement agencies, including prosecutors, to clarify procedural roles and enhance cooperation, with the aim to improve overall effectiveness. These efforts have led to better joint investigations and a clearer understanding of respective mandates. UNDP also purchased a significant amount of equipment for key institutions, including four mobile detectors for explosives and drugs, micro-detectors, and 25 sets for explosives and drugs detection, along with various mobile tools.

According to interviewed stakeholders, these contributions have been instrumental in the successful identification and confiscation of arms parts at the post office, preventing their assembly into complete weapons and leading to significant legal actions. UNDP's continuous support to the Ministry of Defence's implementation of an improved sustainable ammunition and weapons lifecycle management system led to the successful disposal of over 1,426 tonnes of various types and calibres of unsafe ammunition

¹⁵² UNDP (2023), "Halting Arms and Lawbreaking Trade, Narrative Progress Report – Final Report (21 February 2020 – 30 June 2023)."

and explosive ordnances since 2015.¹⁵³ However, the evaluation identified a number of challenges and gaps that hamper sustained operations and improvements in this sector: (1) reliance on external financing due to budgetary restrictions; (2) staff turnover, weaknesses in inter-agency coordination, and slow decision-making processes; and (3) lack of coherent legislation and the necessary regulatory frameworks.

There are also challenges related to the integration and practical application of digital tools and databases. The digitalization of the security sector, another focus of UNDP's efforts, has significantly improved the identification and tracking of illicit arms through the deployment of the updated Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) identification tool across all law enforcement agencies. The tool has streamlined investigative processes and increased the efficiency in arms identification. However, the effectiveness of the tool is marred by interoperability issues and the lack of concrete data on issued licenses for weapons, which have stalled progress since 2009. Interviewed stakeholders also noted that involvement of international organizations sometimes leads to conflicting agendas, complicating the coordination of efforts and the implementation of a unified strategy. These challenges also reflect the need for UNDP to ensure robust exit strategies for sustainable, long-term solutions.

Building trust among individuals and communities (Outcome 3)

UNDP has focused on supporting trust-building and bridging social divides in BiH under Outcome 3. Its initiatives focused on the capacity-building of citizens, particularly women and youth, local communities, and civil society, to create diverse, inclusive, and gender-responsive communities and local development. In addition, UNDP collaborated with local governments and relevant ministries to foster mechanisms for citizen participation at the local level.

Civil society and youth engagement

Finding 15. UNDP efforts to strengthen civil society and youth leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina have significantly enhanced mechanisms for inclusive decision-making and transparency. However, the geographic scope of efforts remains limited without a clear vision of how successful tools and methods can be scaled up.

UNDP's interventions under this outcome area were rather multifaceted and scattered across different interventions in support to the enhancement of citizen participation and youth engagement and the promotion of institutional approach to enhancing the enabling environment for civil society. Within the realm of institutional mechanisms for civil society/citizen participation, UNDP's digital consultation tools such as E-Citizen,¹⁵⁴ Public Consultations 2.0,¹⁵⁵ and Urban Lab digital platform¹⁵⁶ were acknowledged by stakeholders as helpful to increase the number of participants in civic forums.

UNDP's efforts to strengthen the capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs) has increased the number of CSOs engaged in supporting a wide range of social and developmental issues across multiple municipalities.¹⁵⁷ UNDP provided technical support to the FBiH Ministry of Justice in the preparation of the preliminary draft of the new law on financing CSOs in the FBiH.¹⁵⁸ In addition, key support to municipalities was provided through the promotion of the Integrated Local Development Planning model, which facilitated participatory decision-making by embedding youth and other civil society groups

¹⁵³ See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/explodeplus-project>.

¹⁵⁴ See <https://ecitizen.ba/>.

¹⁵⁵ See <https://ipa-konsultacije.dei.gov.ba/en>.

¹⁵⁶ See <https://www.urbanlab.ba/>.

¹⁵⁷ UNDP (2024), CPD Output and Outcome indicators for the period 2021–2023.

¹⁵⁸ See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/stories/embrace-partnership-government-norway-and-undp-advancement-civil-society>.

into formal governance processes. As per stakeholders, the adoption of Local Development Plans by 19 local governments demonstrates a potential for change, wherein local authorities now view youth and civil society as essential stakeholders in shaping policy and local development priorities. Further, the creation of local youth strategies in Centar Sarajevo and Novo Sarajevo has contributed to fostering an environment in which youth priorities are incorporated into formal governance frameworks. In addition, UNDP's leadership trainings for 282 youth (equal gender split) have promoted leadership skills and empowered youth to effectively advocate for youth-related initiatives.

Stakeholders highlighted the ReLOAD (Local Democracy in the Western Balkans) methodology as a transformative approach in strengthening municipal capacity to provide grants transparently, while also building the capacity of CSOs to effectively use these funds. This methodology was viewed as a critical shift in how local authorities and civil society can collaborate for the betterment of local communities, which, as per UNDP data, resulted in its institutionalization in 40 percent of local governments across the country.¹⁵⁹ Stakeholders confirmed the utility of the methodology, but also raised concerns regarding the limited geographic scope of the ReLOAD, which focused on a few municipalities at a time,¹⁶⁰ with no clear path or resources for scaling it nationwide despite UNDP's long-term involvement in promoting the approach. One reason for a narrower approach, as suggested by stakeholders, was the lack of financial and human resources to coordinate the interventions.

UNDP also supported 28 CSOs and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to improve their social service provision. As per UNDP data, about 3,500 vulnerable individuals, including children with disabilities and the elderly, benefitted from improved services.¹⁶¹ However, the evaluation found that the lack of a comprehensive and integrated approach by UNDP on how social service provision could be further systematized and supported has limited the overall impact of these interventions. This fragmentation reflects a missed opportunity to leverage synergies between civil society and government efforts, posing significant challenges for scaling these initiatives and ensuring their long-term sustainability. Stakeholders emphasized the need for a more strategic alignment of social service interventions to address these gaps and to create more sustainable and systemic improvements.

Stakeholder interviews raised other persistent challenges that hinder civil society empowerment, particularly in Republika Srpska, where the introduction of defamation laws targeting CSOs as "foreign agents" has created a hostile environment for civil society. As a result, many smaller CSOs struggle to raise funds, which limits their ability to meet local community needs effectively. Shrinking donor funds and the bundling of funding into larger projects (for example by the EU) have further constrained smaller organizations, as they often lack the capacity or experience to compete for these opportunities. EU efforts to reach grassroots civil society through sub-granting schemes were seen by stakeholders as a helpful approach to support local initiatives or community actions, but not particularly conducive for the long-term survival of civil society due to the grants' short-term duration and very limited funds.

Women's political participation

Finding 16. UNDP's initiatives have contributed to an increase in women's engagement and participation in political spheres. Inconsistent political commitment to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and over reliance on external support hinders the sustainability and scalability of such efforts.

¹⁵⁹ UNDP (2023), ROAR 2023, p. 27.

¹⁶⁰ ReLOAD 1 (2017–2020) included 21 municipalities, and ReLOAD 2 (2021–2024) included 13 municipalities, of which only six were new, while the other seven were municipalities that were already supported. Thus, a total of 27 municipalities over the period 2017–2024.

¹⁶¹ UNDP (2024), ROAR 2023.

UNDP interventions in support to the enhancement of women's participation in political life in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been rather dispersed, but have brought some interesting results with scale-up potential. UNDP supported evidence generation for advocacy and policy advisory purposes by supporting the Women Forum for Development¹⁶² in producing roadmaps for tackling structural obstacles on the topic of transformational leadership, dignified work, care economy, social innovation, and the Gender Equality Barometer of Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁶³ Stakeholders in particular praised the Barometer, acknowledging it as an important advocacy tool that provides insight into multifaceted dimensions of gender equality.

UNDP also supported awareness-raising among women politicians and building their capacities to assume or promote their roles in governance structures. Such support, as per stakeholders, has contributed to the increase in the number of women who actively engage through collective mechanisms in social, economic, and political life. UNDP's structural interventions and innovative solutions to encourage the participation of women in decision-making have resulted in more substantial engagement and the development of local gender action plans along with sensitization of local governance units on planning and budgeting for gender equality.¹⁶⁴ However, evaluation findings suggest that while the number of engaged women has increased, ensuring that this engagement translates into sustained influence and structural change in political and economic spheres remains a critical challenge for future initiatives. Challenge also remains in ensuring the sustainability and scalability of these efforts. The reliance on external donor support and the varying levels of commitment among political decision makers, and the general understanding and commitment to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, were raised by stakeholders as important factors that hinder long-term progress.

Social cohesion

Finding 17. UNDP initiatives have made important contributions in bridging social divides and improving social cohesion through community empowerment and youth engagement. Yet, the sustainability of these efforts remains uncertain and depends on strong leadership, ownership of local governments, and financial support.

UNDP's thematic and sectoral interventions – for example, in tourism promotion, water and asset management, agriculture, and CSO and youth empowerment (through projects such as ReLOAD, Via Dinarica, MAKERS, etc.) – have integrated social cohesion and confidence building, which hold substantial transformative potential in addressing social divides. Stakeholders recognized that UNDP's efforts to strengthen capacities and foster collaboration among local governments, citizens, and civil society have promoted both intra- and inter-municipal cooperation. This has been viewed as crucial in enhancing social cohesion among participating actors, particularly in a country shaped by historical and political challenges.

An illustrative example is the integrated local development project model, which brought together 20 local governments from various regions and entities within BiH to exchange knowledge, practices, and resources, promoting dialogue and collaboration across traditionally divided communities. By involving local governments from both the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, as well as Brčko District, UNDP effectively bridged administrative and ethnic divides, fostering a more cohesive and cooperative environment. UNDP also utilized social media platforms, such as a dedicated Facebook group and Viber channels, to facilitate ongoing dialogue and cooperation among Local Development

¹⁶² See <https://www.wf4d.ba/>.

¹⁶³ This report was conducted more than 20 years after the first Barometer in 2002. See https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-04/barometer_bhs_web.pdf.

¹⁶⁴ UNDP (2021), "Final Evaluation of Project Women in Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2017–2021."

Plan members, local authorities, and civil society, thus ensuring sustained interaction even after the end of targeted UNDP support. In addition, UNDP and IOM¹⁶⁵ worked together to enhance inter-municipal and inter-entity cooperation on local services in nine local governments.¹⁶⁶

The Via Dinarica and Green Network initiatives were particularly viewed by all stakeholders as a crucial contribution to these efforts, bringing the care for common natural resources and their promotion to the forefront of social cohesion efforts. Further, UNDP's facilitation of intercultural dialogue and interaction efforts among youth from diverse backgrounds and regions, focusing on topics such as nature and science,¹⁶⁷ have also brought together and promoted the empowerment of youth, breaking down social and ethnic divides, as corroborated by stakeholders. Documentary evidence reflects a clear upwards trend, with an increase from 25,217 youth participants in 2021 to 33,050 in 2023.¹⁶⁸ However, the evaluation could not find strong evidence of trickle-down effects of these initiatives beyond UNDP's sources.

UNDP has also invested efforts in transitional justice, social cohesion, and the protection of human rights of vulnerable groups through grant programmes aimed to raise public awareness of past crimes, and to promote dialogue and exchanges among a wide range of stakeholders, especially youth and future opinion leaders in local communities. These grant schemes included measures for the provision of support services to vulnerable groups. In addition, through regional engagement UNDP also facilitated regional dialogue and advocacy on addressing unresolved cross-border war crimes cases. However, the evaluation did not find consistent evidence of transformative potential of such initiatives, mainly due to their small scale and outreach.

2.3 Factors influencing programme performance and cross-cutting issues

Portfolio approach

Finding 18. The UNDP country office has enhanced coherence and advanced synergies across sectors by restructuring teams to leverage in-house expertise, to gain efficiency, and to promote more systemic perspectives. UNDP invested in efforts to define and promote the portfolio approach under Green Transitions and Local Governance, offering valuable lessons on its potential. The approach provides a promising framework for addressing complex challenges, but its successful implementation depends on realistic planning, comprehensive stakeholder engagement, and a willingness to adapt and learn continuously.

UNDP invested in enhancing coherence and fostering synergies across sectors by adopting new methods to design interventions, such as the portfolio approach, and facilitated external knowledge networking and sense-making. This shift has led to the creation of seven new cross-sectoral, issue-based teams within the country office aimed to boost efficiency and promote more systemic perspectives.¹⁶⁹ UNDP also conducted internal restructuring towards the establishment of the new Sustainable Growth Sector, which manages several EU projects (EU4Business, EU4Agri) and five other projects within the same domain. This restructuring aimed to better align with the CPD 2021–2025, ensuring project management is more cohesive and strategically integrated.

¹⁶⁵ See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/spsc-project>.

¹⁶⁶ Bosansko Grahovo, Bosanski Petrovac, Drvar, Glamoč, Ključ, Livno, Mrkonjić Grad, Ribnik, and Sanski Most.

¹⁶⁷ See <https://open.undp.org/projects/00119215/results>.

¹⁶⁸ UNDP 2024 outcome monitoring data.

¹⁶⁹ The cross-sectoral teams include: "Decode for Prijedor," "Circular Economy," "Waste as a Resource," "Social Services and Food Insecurity," "Digital Transformation," "Collective Intelligence for Climate Action," and "Anticipate and Prevent."

The cross-sectoral collaboration between the Justice and Security Sector and the Environment and Energy Section on the Eco-Justice Project is a good example of how different sectors can work together to address complex issues by combining their expertise to enhance project outcomes. UNDP's shift towards a portfolio approach was organized as a step towards addressing complex development challenges more coherently and systematically. This transition involved creating key portfolios, such as Green Transition and Local Governance, each employing distinct methodologies to streamline operations and foster systemic change.

Implementation of the portfolio approach had its challenges as well. For instance, the Green Transition portfolio, initially called Circular Transition, followed a structured approach to activate the portfolio with a multi-year work plan and governance structure, which eventually did not materialize. As per the interviews with UNDP teams, despite the thorough and systematic design process, it proved time-consuming and resource-intensive, making it difficult for the broader team to maintain an overarching perspective. The resulting Green Transition portfolio was overly ambitious, covering a wide range of areas and attempting to engage numerous institutions without proper consultation. This led to execution difficulties and stakeholder disengagement. The role of different ministries¹⁷⁰ as 'owners' of the portfolio was not clear, as cited by interviewed stakeholders, despite information shared by UNDP, resulting in differing opinions regarding the portfolio's relevance and alignment with the country's needs.

Evaluation findings reveal that despite the sharing of information by UNDP, the rush to implement the portfolio approach did not allow sufficient space for essential consultations with key institutions, such as international financial institutions, the World Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). This led to a lack of buy-in and collaboration, as confirmed by interviewed stakeholders. For instance, the first draft portfolio submitted to Sweden in October 2023 was rejected due to its vagueness and lack of detail on actions and responsibilities. Despite revisions, the subsequent version in December 2023 still did not address the donor requirements. It was only after the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) engaged the Systems Innovation Learning Partnership unit¹⁷¹ to support this portfolio development, and after receiving guidelines from UNDP Headquarters, that a more coherent document was produced, though it still required significant improvements, particularly in explaining the involvement of UN agencies. The Local Governance portfolio, currently in the design phase, has since adopted a more streamlined approach, allowing for quicker consensus-building and faster identification of priority interventions.

The evaluation found that one of the major obstacles in the portfolio design was the need for a mind-set shift from traditional project-based determinism to a more exploratory and adaptive approach, which encountered resistance. Despite numerous briefings, some team members struggled to grasp the portfolio's purpose and principles, which offers important lessons for UNDP's guidance on portfolio approach development.

¹⁷⁰ The Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Ministry of Energy, Mining, and Industry of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Ministry of Energy and Mining of Republika Srpska; the Ministry of Environment and Tourism of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Buildings, and Ecology of Republika Srpska; the Ministry of Development, Entrepreneurship, and Crafts of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship of Republika Srpska; the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in Republika Srpska.

¹⁷¹ See <https://www.climate-kic.org/silp/>.

Resource mobilization

Finding 19. UNDP's ability to mobilize resources effectively has enabled significant investment in critical areas such as ammunition disposal, climate action, public services, and emergency COVID-19 interventions, demonstrating its role as a key development partner in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A changing donor landscape and recent amendments in the Bosnia and Herzegovina level law pose significant challenge to UNDP resource mobilization efforts.

UNDP's strategic position as a key development partner and supporter of government efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina is highlighted by its ability to rapidly mobilize resources and leverage funding from various sources. This is exemplified by the successful utilization of Trust Fund resources for the EXPLODE+ multi-donor platform,¹⁷² which enhances ammunition disposal and stockpile management. Additionally, UNDP's access to Vertical Funds such as the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund has attracted investments in circular economy initiatives, local carbon urban development, public buildings, climate change, and biodiversity protection.¹⁷³

UNDP's high relevance and alignment with country and donor priorities have facilitated stable resource mobilization across its entire portfolio, with the government authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina as the largest UNDP donor, contributing \$43.4 million – primarily through government cost-sharing arrangements. This funding is largely directed towards improving public services and ensuring the rule of law. By playing a key role in the procurement and delivery of critical equipment and medical supplies,¹⁷⁴ UNDP enhanced capacities of the health authorities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷⁵ This partnership and the broad donor base, including the European Union, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Italy, Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom, underscore UNDP's affirmed role as a partner of choice in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additionally, collaborations with international financial institutions such as the World Bank, EBRD, and the Council of Europe Development Bank have further boosted UNDP's resource mobilization efforts, enabling a wide array of development initiatives across the country.

However, the recent amendments to the Public Procurement Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina,¹⁷⁶ adopted in 2023, have introduced significant challenges for resource mobilization from the governments. The new law requires that if institutions are to transfer funds for activities implementation, 51 percent of funds should be co-financed, and this applies to all international organizations, including UNDP where its procurement interventions are envisaged. Both UNDP and government counterparts report that this presents a big challenge as UNDP's seed funding cannot reach 51 percent of total funding in most cases. Stakeholder interviews suggested that, going forward, this will have huge implications on UNDP's ability to assist government authorities to reform or to tap into government sources.

¹⁷² See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/explodeplus-project>.

¹⁷³ As per UNDP ROAR data for the CPD period.

¹⁷⁴ For example, 2,070,404 units of personal protective equipment, 652 units of medical equipment, 369 units of laboratory equipment, and 457,068 units of tests and RNA extractions were procured by UNDP.

¹⁷⁵ UNDP (2023), "Response to COVID-19 pandemic in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Project, Final report."

¹⁷⁶ See <https://rai-see.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/BiH-Law-on-public-procurement-en.pdf>.

This is further exacerbated by the changing donor landscape and EU priorities in the region and country. The most notable shift is the EU's orientation towards the Team Europe approach,¹⁷⁷ which has now become the backbone of Global Europe (2021–2027)¹⁷⁸ and related programming.¹⁷⁹ The implications of this approach for future collaborations with Member States and EU funding channelled through the UN system, including UNDP, remains unclear to date.

Partnerships and collaboration

Finding 20. UNDP has promoted partnerships with governments, UN agencies, the private sector, and other country level and international actors in the implementation of its activities and in sharing its knowledge and experience across the region, although the level and type of engagement has varied across initiatives.

UNDP has cultivated close ties and partnerships with government agencies and institutions and invested in long-term collaborations offering stable and consistent support to address the needs of the various governance levels, often acting as a bridge between government institutions at all levels or between governments and CSOs and citizens. The convening role is clearly visible in its strong partnerships with central and municipal institutions, including CSOs and grassroots community level organizations, especially in local capacity strengthening processes and social cohesion, an area which is still sensitive.

With the private sector, UNDP has collaborated in boosting competitiveness and transition towards a green economy, and investments in agri-food operators. To promote women's economic empowerment, UNDP supported the Women's Mentoring Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina by training young businesswomen to gain knowledge that can facilitate their business development;¹⁸⁰ and it initiated actions that will support private sector companies in implementing Gender Equality Seal workplace standards. Interviewed stakeholders noted that formalizing UNDP partnerships with the private sector can be extremely time consuming due to its diligence processes, which often limits its meaningful and effective engagement. This limitation not only hampers UNDP's ability to secure essential funding in a timely manner but also limits the potential for private sector involvement in critical areas such as the green agenda and sustainable development initiatives. For example, UNDP has started negotiations with Sparkasse Bank and Intesa Sanpaolo Bank to develop new financial products, with the support of SIDA, which would advance the green and circular capacity of businesses and access to green financing. This is particularly important as there have been limited financing mechanisms that would boost the private sector transition to sustainable and green economic business models. However, UNDP cannot sign an agreement with these banks as its standard operating procedure has expired. In the absence of senior management, the office has not been able to resolve the issue so far, which is a high reputational risk.

Playing a leadership role in advancing SDGs, UNDP has performed its convening role in multiple thematic areas with other UN agencies. UNDP implements at least eight joint projects (in partnerships with the UN Resident Coordinator, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, IOM, and UNODC) focusing on localizing the SDGs; design of the SDGs Financing Framework; disaster risk reduction; food security; security; social cohesion and trust; and gender equality. This collaboration is also visible in the area of communications and advocacy,

¹⁷⁷ Team Europe has been initiated in 2021 based on the need to ensure a co-ordinated and comprehensive response between the EU and its Member States in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. See more at: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/team-europe-initiatives_en#:~:text=on%20the%20ground-,What%20is%20Team%20Europe%3F,more%20effectiveness%20and%20greater%20impact.

¹⁷⁸ This is the main financial tool for EU international cooperation from 2021 to 2027. See more on the Global Gateway Website, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/funding-instruments/global-europe-neighbourhood-development-and-international-cooperation-instrument_en.

¹⁷⁹ Global Europe Programming, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/funding-instruments/global-europe-programming_en.

¹⁸⁰ See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/news/womens-mentoring-network-leap-womens-empowerment-business-sector>.

including through joint events, joint press releases, etc. However, stakeholders highlight several challenges, such as the lengthy process of developing joint programmes, often taking more than a year to finalize, or difference in proposed approaches or issues with programme coordination and coherence.¹⁸¹

UNDP also played a significant role in the transfer and sharing of knowledge through South-South cooperation in almost all outcome areas, bringing to bear its international network and experience. Examples include the scaling up of the BiH ReLOAD project to a regional programme to strengthen civil society-government cooperation across the Western Balkans, and the sharing of UNDP's work and expertise on SALW and security with other UN country offices across the region. UNDP's work in Protected Areas was presented at the International Scientific Conference 'Green Agenda for the Western Balkans' in 2023, organized by the University of Belgrade. Close collaboration with UNDP Serbia helped in adjusting the e-Parliament software solution for development for the e-Cabinet of the FBiH Government. This was possible since the source code and rights for this solution are owned by UNDP. UNDP offices in Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia had an online training-of-trainers on methods to address sexual and gender-based violence in the digital sphere based on shared best practices from the Korean National Police Agency.¹⁸² This resulted in planned training sessions to be implemented with various police stations and other actors to increase their knowledge on combating gender-based violence in the digital sphere, as confirmed by interviewed stakeholders. In addition, UNDP BiH and UNDP Kosovo are currently conducting a study to identify opportunities for women's engagement in strengthening environmental justice.¹⁸³

Monitoring and evaluation

Finding 21. UNDP employs a comprehensive integrated monitoring and evaluation system to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of its programmes. This system is supported by advanced tools such as the CO Monitoring Tool and Historic Evidence of Programmatic Engagement and Cooperation, enabling detailed tracking, data-driven decision-making, and adaptive learning to address evolving programmatic needs and ensure impactful interventions across various governance levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

UNDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina employs a comprehensive and multi-layered approach to M&E to support effective programme implementation. Guided by UNDP's Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures, the CPD Results and Results Framework is aligned with the UNDP Integrated Results and Resources Framework 2022–2025. The M&E strategy is further strengthened by the country office's specific Monitoring Action Plan 2021–2025, integrated into the broader Country Office Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan 2021–2025.¹⁸⁴

The country office has established two critical M&E tools that enhance monitoring and strategic decision-making. The CO Monitoring Tool, an automated platform, consolidates project data on a semi-annual basis, tracking indicators, baselines, and targets, and feeding this data into reporting and learning processes. This enhances the CO's capacity to adapt and align with evolving strategic outcomes. The Historic Evidence of Programmatic Engagement and Cooperation (HEPEC) tool, which is still in nascent stages, aims to map UNDP's interventions across Bosnia and Herzegovina at multiple administrative levels,

¹⁸¹ For example, a lack of inter-UN agency coordination and coherence is evident in the implementation of the Join Project addressing DRR, where the type and nature of cost-sharing by each UN agency were not clearly defined, causing revision of the programme document during the implementation stage.

¹⁸² See <https://www.undp.org/policy-centre/seoul/news/discussion-undp-bangladesh-north-macedonia-and-bosnia-and-herzegovina-country-specific-methods-address-sexual-and-gender>.

¹⁸³ UNDP (2023), "Strengthening Environmental Rule of Law (Eco-Justice), Final report."

¹⁸⁴ See https://undp.sharepoint.com/:x:/r/teams/BIH/KnowledgeHub/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B102F493B-F6A3-494B-8A37-77739DD613B2%7D&file=BiH_MEL_Plan_2021-2015.xlsx&action=default&mobileredirect=true.

offering insights into investments and programme delivery. However, given the early development stage of this tool the evaluation could not confirm HEPEC's capacity to provide detailed understanding of UNDP's impact across regions and sectors.

Annual Work Plans include clear indicators, and form the foundation for monitoring, while feedback loops with stakeholders, including the analysis of gender-disaggregated data and social media trends, foster an adaptive and responsive approach, particularly on gender equality, as confirmed by analysis of available frameworks. A review of project-level progress reports presents some examples of good practices in terms of outcome-level reporting that goes beyond simply reporting on activities, presenting a more analytical overview of achievements with supporting data and examples. Regular reports such as the Results Oriented Annual Report and Integrated Work Plans offer structured updates on progress, risks, and lessons learned.

The CO has been recognized for consistently delivering high-quality evaluations since 2020 and won the IEO Evaluation Excellence Award in 2024. Among the 15 evaluations conducted during the review period, the majority were rated satisfactory.¹⁸⁵ Some evaluations highlighted gaps in results frameworks and the need for gender-sensitive monitoring. The evaluation noted that these issues are being addressed, notably in the EU4Energy and Green Transition portfolios, through enhanced M&E practices.

Gender mainstreaming

Finding 22. UNDP has been effective in mainstreaming gender into both programming and country office functions, achieving Gold Gender Equality Seal certification in 2023. The Gender Accelerator presents a new avenue for a more coherent and holistic approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in cooperation with other UN agencies.

In line with the ICPE 2015–2019 recommendation on gender aspects in UNDP interventions,¹⁸⁶ UNDP's efforts to integrate gender in its programmes and projects were comprehensive. Data shows that 88 percent of projects are classified under the GEN-2¹⁸⁷ with 89 percent of total expenditure; and 1 percent on GEN3 projects focused on skills building, labour market opportunities, and economic empowerment in decision-making and politics across all outcomes.

The CPD integrates gender-responsive outputs and indicators across various sectors, such as climate change mitigation, economic growth, and public services. The 2023 Gender Portfolio Review led to revisions of several projects to better capture gender-related progress. Review of project level documentation shows gender integration across Climate Change, Environment, and Biodiversity portfolios where a gender assessment was done to map gender component in data and legislation¹⁸⁸ and a gender action plan was developed. Another example is the support to gender-responsive and SDG-informed public finance management and local governance. UNDP, in collaboration with UN Women, helped establish the Feminist

¹⁸⁵ Ten evaluations were carried out for projects under Outcome 1; 2 under Outcome 2; and 3 under Outcome 3. The evaluation reports are made public at the Evaluation Resource Centre, <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/>.

¹⁸⁶ ICPE 2016–2020 Recommendation 4. Additional actions should be taken to ensure that gender aspects are mainstreamed across all outcome areas and, in particular, the environment and energy portfolio. This suggests a more concerted effort during project formulation and review.

¹⁸⁷ Rating scale: GEN0 – The output at the project level does not contribute to gender equality; GEN1 – The output at the project level contributes in a limited way to gender equality; GEN2 – Gender equality is not the main objective of the expected output, but the output promotes gender equality in a significant and consistent way; and GEN3 – The achievement of gender equality and/or the empowerment of women are an explicit objective of the output and the main reason that this output was planned. Source: <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/tr/Annex-9.pdf>.

¹⁸⁸ See https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-02/report_on_mapping_the_gender_component.pdf.

Coalition for Climate Justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2022,¹⁸⁹ further embedding gender equity into environmental actions. At the community level, gender-responsive strategies have shaped public spaces and supported civil society activities.

The CO's commitment to gender equality is reflected in its achievement of the Golden Level Gender Equality Seal in 2023, with a 93 percent score, a significant increase from 65 percent in 2021, positioning the office among the seven global gender leaders.¹⁹⁰ This high score demonstrates the CO's progress in mainstreaming gender, with strong performance in partnerships, communications, and results. From October 2022 to March 2024, UNDP – in partnership with the government's Gender Equality Agency, the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina – piloted the introduction of the Gender Equality Seal for public institutions, leading to the Silver Gender Equality Seal award for the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁹¹ Stakeholders confirm that this has improved the system of data collection, as well as monitoring and reporting in the judiciary of Bosnia and Herzegovina on cases of gender-based violence and violence in the family.

Another notable initiative is the Gender Accelerator, a collaborative effort with UN Women, UNICEF, and UNFPA, aimed at addressing gender gaps through areas such as gender-responsive budgeting and women's economic empowerment.¹⁹² With a projected investment of \$24 million over four years, it has attracted donor commitments (e.g., EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance funds and SIDA), and is considered by stakeholders to be a good example of the shift towards integrated interventions. However, stakeholders noted that the success of this initiative depends on strong government ownership and inter-agency coordination. Some stakeholders raised concerns about potential inconsistencies in how each agency addresses gender issues, as past experiences have shown instances of parallel efforts and lack of communication between agencies, which presents a risk to its systematic implementation. Currently, the Gender Accelerator aims to overcome these challenges by fostering greater coordination and ownership, but the stakeholders suggest that its ultimate success will depend on the ability of the participating agencies and institutions at all levels to work together effectively and maintain a unified approach to gender equality across the country.

The country office demonstrates a rather balanced gender representation, with 48 percent female (out of 269 persons).¹⁹³ Further, 66.7 percent of National Professional Officers and 69.2 percent of UN Volunteers are women, while men are more engaged in General Service functions and international professionals.

¹⁸⁹ See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/press-releases/launch-feminist-coalition-climate-justice-bosnia-and-herzegovina>.

¹⁹⁰ Bosnia & Herzegovina, <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/news/undp-bosnia-and-herzegovina-office-receives-gold-gender-seal-award>.

¹⁹¹ See <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/news/hjcp-bih-receives-silver-medal-gender-equality-seal-first-institution-europe-and-balkans-receive-kind-recognition>.

¹⁹² UN Women data.

¹⁹³ UNDP Executive Snapshot, data extracted on 31 July 2024.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



3.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. UNDP's strategic alignment with the country development priorities and EU accession goals combined with strong partnerships have been instrumental in driving governance reforms and sustainable development, reinforcing its role as a vital partner in the country's ongoing development and Agenda 2030. UNDP's strategic position and its role with both authorities and donors, along with its neutral stance, are crucial for facilitating cooperation, promoting dialogue, and aligning policies at different levels of government. This represents significant added value, aiding in the implementation of reforms and in finding additional financial mechanisms to achieve set objectives. However, significant challenges with resource mobilization and internal efficiency issues demand UNDP to rethink its approaches to ensure the positioning is maintained.

UNDP's strong strategic position in Bosnia and Herzegovina has helped the office to boost its delivery of results underpinned with healthy resource mobilization from governments and donors. UNDP's portfolio is closely aligned with and responsive to the country's development priorities and its EU accession goals, effectively supporting governance reforms, policy coherence, and sustainable development. Its comprehensive support, particularly in legislative development and institutional capacity-building, has facilitated the country's reform agenda and EU integration aspirations. The alignment of strategic documents with the SDGs and UNDP's continued support to SDG coordination and financing further highlight the organization's critical role in ensuring that Bosnia and Herzegovina is well-positioned to advance towards achieving its 2030 targets. UNDP's added value in the country is that of an efficient and neutral partner that is willing and able to support government and donor partners in navigating its complex governance structure and addressing key country challenges.

UNDP has effectively leveraged partnerships with key country and international actors as well as its expertise to navigate complex challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina, demonstrating flexibility and adaptability in meeting its targets. Its collaboration with institutions at all levels has been highly effective, fostering governance improvements and strengthening local capacities. In partnership with other UN agencies, UNDP has been instrumental in advancing the SDG agenda, though coordination and coherence challenges among agencies have occasionally limited the potential for greater impact. However, UNDP's strategic directions and position have been affected by a prolonged gap and turnover of senior management, and its resource mobilization is affected by recent changes to the procurement law. These challenges demand that UNDP must find new ways to navigate these challenges to ensure its continued effectiveness and strong position in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Conclusion 2. UNDP has made a positive shift to improve coherence and cross-sectoral synergies by adopting portfolio-based approaches, which require more clarity and significantly more efforts to achieve its full potential.

UNDP's strategic shift towards a portfolio approach has offered some space for the country office teams to rethink and consider cross-sectoral, issue-based solutions to complex, interlinked development challenges more systematically. However, it has not fulfilled its envisaged potential in enhancing programme strategies or attracting donor support, which require the country office to think outside the box and consider ways in which the office can add value through more holistic, cross-portfolio planning and engagement. The success of the portfolio approach will ultimately depend on UNDP's ability to address critical obstacles related to staff buy-in, collaborative approaches, and joined resources to foster a more adaptive and collaborative organizational culture.

Conclusion 3. The effectiveness of UNDP's contributions to environmental protection and energy efficiency has been mixed and challenged by Bosnian and Herzegovina's complex political structure and lack of harmonized legislation across the country, which impedes the pace of energy and climate change reforms.

UNDP's long-term support to governments at different levels has been critical in increasing energy efficiency and prioritization of energy efficient investments in public buildings and in the improvement of energy management information systems. However, these investments in the residential and private sectors have been small in scale and have benefited only a limited number of households. Results are also visible in the management of POPs, protected area management, and the development of an integrated disaster risk management model at the country level, albeit these results are still in the early institutionalization phase. The uptake and sustainability of these results is challenged by a lack of harmonized legislation across the country, poor coordination and undefined responsibilities among relevant institutions, lack of a more integrated approach to policy development, and low administrative capacities across all levels to lead various ongoing energy and climate change reforms in the country.

Conclusion 4. UNDP's contribution to sustainable economic development and to the strengthening of SME competitiveness has been important. Its ongoing support to innovation and learning is promising, but the impact of such results is not yet visible.

UNDP has provided valuable support in the promotion of sustainable tourism, resulting in the development of the Via Dinarica tourism destination, with high sustainability potential and cross-sectoral linkages. While UNDP has contributed to strengthening the competitiveness of SMEs, and the promotion of sustainable growth and resilience principles in their business operation, this falls short in addressing the challenges of small-sized agricultural holdings. UNDP has been a strong partner of the governments in rural development and has contributed to the adoption of a country strategic plan for rural development and for bringing the utilization of EU funds closer to agri-businesses and farmers. Some positive results are evident in the support for the development of infrastructure to support innovative business and for entrepreneurship and STEM learning in educational institutions, albeit the sustainability of these efforts is still not fully ensured. Progress is also evident in creating dialogue around a circular economy; but to ensure reforms in these areas, UNDP needs to re-align its focus on transition towards a circular economy in line with the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.

Conclusion 5. UNDP's digital solutions and cyber security support have been notable and contributed to advancements in digital governance. Broader impact has been constrained by structural challenges, inconsistent legislation, and a lack of cohesive UNDP strategy on digital transformation.

UNDP is one of the many organizations in the country working on digital transformation. Its innovative approaches and digital solutions have made some valuable contributions to digital transformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly in advancing digital governance and public consultation tools, highlighting the potential for improved service delivery and greater citizen engagement. While UNDP's initiatives such as the development of digital platforms and e-services and its support to cyber security have shown promise, their broader impact has been limited by interoperability issues, inconsistent legislation, and limited institutional digital readiness and capacity. Added to this, a lack of a cohesive, strategic approach to digitalization was evidenced not only at UNDP but also at the government level. The digital transformation arena is crowded by a number of big players, including the World Bank, and UNDP's specific role and added value in this space remain to be defined in light of this competitive environment.

Conclusion 6. UNDP has made significant contributions – with the potential for transformative effects – in improving local governance and service delivery by enabling the municipal level governments to better plan and provide public services and to establish mechanisms to promote inclusive democracy and policy-making. The challenge, however, remains to ensure full uptake and sustainability given the governments' weak absorption capacity, limited financial resources, and persistent structural barriers.

UNDP has been strongly positioned within the sector as a trusted partner of institutions at all levels, but also of civil society. Long-term partnerships have supported local governance reforms and contributed to the strengthening of the capacities of civil society, citizens, and local governments. Investment in enhancing

good governance have resulted in improved asset and public finance management, governance of public utilities (water, energy, and to a lesser extent social services) as well as stronger engagement of civil society and citizens as significant players in governance and policy-making processes, particularly at the local level. Various interventions across governance, environment, tourism, and service delivery have successfully engaged young people, empowered civil society organizations, and enhanced inclusive decision-making, thus contributing to stronger social cohesion and the integration of community priorities, in turn leading to strengthened local governance, increased citizen participation, and sustainable community development.

Cumulative effects of these achievements are positive and demonstrate significant potential for increasing municipal revenues, enhancing transparency, and improving public service delivery. However, the broader impact has been constrained by entrenched legislative, institutional, and financial frameworks that remain largely unreformed, limiting the scope for comprehensive and systemic change in local governance. Moving forward, UNDP's development of a unified local governance portfolio will be crucial in providing a more coherent and strategic approach to addressing these challenges and in ensuring that civil society engagement remains a priority and vital force in promoting inclusive governance and social cohesion in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Conclusion 7. UNDP's long-term strategic support to arms control has directly contributed to advancing Bosnia and Herzegovina's security infrastructure, with transformative potential towards wider safety and security in the country. Ongoing stable support to address political, financial, and governance challenges is essential to ensure the lasting impact of such results.

UNDP's support in arms control has addressed and responded to the country's persistent needs and priorities to raise its security capabilities and regulatory frameworks, but also to diminish the threat from undestroyed ammunition. Its strategic positioning and long-term stable support have been crucial in building cumulative capacity of law enforcement agencies, clarification and strengthening procedures, and detection and destruction of ammunition and weapons. Such results have a huge transformational potential towards building wider safety and security of the country, especially within Bosnia and Herzegovina's complex governance and post-conflict context. Stable and successful efforts have also positioned UNDP as a catalyst for systemic transformation in the country's security landscape. However, to sustain and build on these results, UNDP must continue to navigate persistent challenges, including political volatility, financial constraints, and fragmented governance, by strengthening inter-agency cooperation and refining its own strategies to ensure a long-term, sustainable impact.

Conclusion 8. UNDP's efforts have integrated gender equality and women's empowerment considerations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but further progress in this area depends on transitioning from project-based successes to systemic, institutional change. The Gender Accelerator, in partnership with other UN agencies, is a promising tool to guide this transition and overcome fragmentation.

UNDP's efforts have significantly advanced gender equality and women's empowerment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, evident in increased women's participation in politics and local decision-making. Good practice of partnerships with other UN agencies have contributed to more integrated approaches and stronger results around gender-sensitive policies and empowerment of women. The achievement of the Golden Level Gender Equality Seal underscores these successes. However, these gains face sustainability challenges due to reliance on external funding and inconsistent political commitment at different governance levels. UNDP's efforts to build the Gender Accelerator in partnership with UN Women, UNICEF, and UNFPA presents an opportunity for a more cohesive and substantial approach to address gender gaps by investing in gender-responsive budgeting and women's economic empowerment. However, this must be carefully managed to ensure it does not replicate the fragmented efforts thus far.

3.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1. UNDP should deepen its efforts in energy efficiency by helping local governments to implement co-financing initiatives in the residential sector and to promote the use of the Energy Monitoring Information System (EMIS) and the Energy Service Company (ESCO) model, while encouraging the private sector to integrate best practices in energy management.

Given the governments ownership of the investments in energy efficiency in public building, UNDP should develop an exit strategy to smoothly phase out from this area. UNDP should work on promoting the use of EMIS and related capacity-building for its use when needed, finding legal solutions for the ESCO model and promoting the scaling up of good practices emerging from pilot ESCO projects. UNDP should further strengthen relevant institutions in full-scale operationalization of the Environmental Information/MRV system and its wider use. UNDP should also focus on decarbonization of the residential and business sector. Support should include implementation of a developed financial mechanism for co-financing energy efficiency in the residential sector in collaboration with local governments, including developing energy efficiency pilot projects in collective residential buildings. Special attention should be given in the application of the 'leave no one behind' principle in interventions within the residential sector to provide support to low-income families and energy-poor households, and to protect hard-to-reach groups such as rural communities, ethnic minorities, and people living in poverty. Further capacity-building initiatives should be undertaken with the private sector by integrating new technologies and best practices in energy management.

Recommendation 2. UNDP should further invest in sustainable management of protected areas and in environmental protection.

Building on the results achieved so far, UNDP should continue its support for sustainable management and the protection of natural resources. This includes supporting the development of plans to strengthen the resilience of protected areas, but also encouraging their implementation. In addition, investing in the setting up of self-financing mechanisms for protected areas will further secure the implementation of management plans of protected areas. UNDP should further apply its good practices and build synergies and connections between projects from other areas, such as tourism development, social cohesion, and disaster risk reduction. In the area of environmental protection, UNDP should work on advocating the adoption of developed legislation on POPs by the relevant institutions, promoting the 'Polluter Pays' principle, and work with UNDP support on financial solutions for the disposal of POPs previously identified in inventory.

Recommendation 3. In line with best practices, UNDP should focus on enhancing sustainable economic development, including further development of a circular economy and the agriculture and tourism sectors, and create an enabling environment for innovation.

UNDP should prioritize sustainable economic initiatives by encouraging the governments and private sector to implement circular economy measures, in line with the Green Agenda for the Western Balkan. This includes the finalization of the Circular Economy Roadmap, supporting the private sector transition towards sustainable solutions, and circular business models. This effort should be linked with previously achieved results in the tourism and agriculture sectors. UNDP should learn from good practices in the region on the use of EU funds for agriculture and tourism so as best to address specific needs identified in the rural development strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina and related entities strategies. Considering the limited fiscal capacities of governments at all levels, UNDP should further explore new financing modalities for achieving the set goals. In doing so, UNDP should promote collaboration between academia and the private sector and work with youth, women, and vulnerable groups on skillset development related to the green economy.

Recommendation 4. UNDP should build a strong and cohesive local governance portfolio that integrates efforts to promote local democracy, governance, and service delivery.

UNDP has the potential to maximize the transformative impact of its local governance and service delivery efforts. To achieve this, UNDP should more clearly align and integrate its initiatives with civil society, citizens, and local governments with those in environment, water management, social services, and infrastructure development to ensure they are complementary and mutually reinforcing. UNDP should also further deepen its efforts around social cohesion and local democracy building. By fostering greater synergy, UNDP can drive broader systemic transformation.

UNDP should intensify and streamline its advocacy efforts to push for legislative and institutional reforms that address long-standing barriers in local governance. This includes working closely with institutions at all levels to modernize regulatory and institutional frameworks for local governance, asset management, and public procurement, creating an enabling environment for sustainable development and service delivery. It should build on existing capacity gains and leverage strategic partnerships with more advanced local governments to scale up peer learning and capacity-building programmes, particularly targeting weaker municipalities. This should include expanding training and peer-learning in key areas such as governance, financial management, and public procurement, ensuring that local governments can independently manage and sustain improvements.

UNDP should develop a strategy that ensures the sustainability of local governance portfolio results relative to local democracy, governance, civil society engagement, and social cohesion, focusing on building local leadership capacity, securing continued financial and institutional support, and fostering ownership at the community and local government levels.

Recommendation 5. UNDP should intensify its arms control efforts by engaging with law enforcement institutions to address financial and operational capacities and improve the interoperability of established tools and databases within the wider safety and security framework.

To enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of its arms control efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNDP should intensify its engagement with senior law enforcement officials in high-level forums to build consensus, accelerate the adoption of critical legislation such as the new arms control law, and improve inter-agency cooperation within the wider safety and security framework. UNDP should prioritize strengthening the financial and operational capacities of law enforcement agencies to reduce reliance on external funding by providing targeted training in financial management, resource mobilization, and strategic planning, and advocating for sustainable budget allocations. Additionally, UNDP should collaborate with relevant agencies to improve the interoperability of arms control systems by providing technical assistance to standardize data collection and management practices, ensuring that digital tools such as the SALW identification system are fully operational and effective in tracking and controlling illicit arms. Developing robust exit strategies will be crucial to ensure that the progress made in arms control is maintained and expanded after UNDP's direct support expires.

3.3 Management response

RECOMMENDATION 1.



UNDP should deepen its efforts in energy efficiency by helping local governments to implement co-financing initiatives in the residential sector and promote the use of EMIS and the ESCO model, while encouraging the private sector to integrate best practices in energy management.

Management response: Recommendation is accepted.



Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.1 Develop exit strategy for energy efficiency in public buildings based on energy poverty definition and developed financial mechanisms.	Dec 2027	UNDP BiH, Energy and Environment sector; partner institutions (entity energy ministries, environmental funds, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina)		Not initiated
1.2 Finalize EMIS handover to the responsible institutions (Federal Fund for Environment, Republika Srpska Fund for Environment and Energy Efficiency). Handover will be accompanied by additional capacity-building and promotion.	June 2025	UNDP BiH, Energy and Environment sector, partner institutions (environmental funds, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina)	Handover initiated in November 2024.	Initiated
1.3 UNDP will continue working on establishment of ESCO market to scale up good practices emerging from pilot ESCO projects.	Dec 2027	UNDP BiH, Energy and Environment sector, partner institutions (entity energy ministries, environmental funds, cantonal governments)	UNDP BiH implemented several activities on establishment of ESCO market, such as draft rulebook on ESCO financing, and several pilot projects to showcase the modality.	Initiated

1.4 Support development of by-laws for Environmental Information System operationalization to enable data flow among institutions through new National Adaptation Plan project, which will be implemented by UNDP BiH (2025–2026).	Dec 2026	UNDP BiH, Energy and Environment sector, partner institutions (entity environment ministries, environmental funds, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina)		Not initiated
1.5 Capacity-building of entity hydro-meteorological institutes to strengthen Measuring, Reporting, and Verification for greenhouse gases. Training sessions to start in Q2 2025.	Dec 2026	UNDP BiH, Energy and Environment sector (entity environment ministries, environmental funds, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina)	The preparatory activities started within the 5th National Communication Project.	Initiated
1.6 Support implementation of already developed financial mechanism for co-financing energy efficiency in the residential sector to unlock funds and activate the developed financial mechanisms.	Dec 2027	UNDP BiH, Energy and Environment sector, partner institutions (entity energy ministries, environmental funds, cantonal governments)	UNDP did some preparatory work in this field through previous projects, e.g., establishing a Revolving Fund within the FBiH Environmental Fund.	Initiated
1.7 Support energy efficiency pilot projects in collective residential buildings.	Dec 2027	UNDP BiH, Energy and Environment sector, partner institutions (entity energy ministries, environmental funds, cantonal governments)		Not Initiated
1.8 UNDP will work on capacity-building with the private sector. This will be implemented in parallel with working on unlocking funds and activating the developed financial mechanisms, as well as further development of the ESCO market.	Dec 2027	UNDP BiH, Energy and Environment sector, partner institutions (entity energy ministries, environmental funds, cantonal governments)		Not Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 2.

UNDP should further invest in sustainable management of protected area and environmental protection.

Management response: Recommendation is accepted.



Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
2.1 Support organization of public hearing process and adoption of management plans for nine protected areas.	July 2025	UNDP BiH, Energy and Environment sector; partnering institutions (ministries and protected areas managers)	One management plan adopted.	Initiated
2.2 Support development of draft by-law document on methodology and content of management plans that consider climate change threats/challenges.	May 2025	UNDP BiH, Energy and Environment sector; partnering institutions (Project Board members)	Preparatory work started; ToR for consultancy developed.	Initiated
2.3 UNDP will continue working on establishment of ESCO market to scale up good practices emerging from pilot ESCO projects.	March 2027	UNDP BiH, Energy and Environment sector; partnering institutions (ministries and protected areas managers)	Action plans for protected areas developed; pending adoption.	Initiated
2.4 Support development and utilization of standardized methodology for pricing of goods and services for protected areas.	Dec 2025	UNDP BiH, Energy and Environment sector; partnering institutions (managers of protected areas gathered around the Associations of PAs managers at level of FBiH and RS)	Associations of managers of protected areas at level of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska established.	Initiated
2.5 Support development of Biodiversity Finance Action Plans, including piloting of selected innovative finance mechanisms.	Dec 2027	UNDP BiH, Energy and Environment sector; partnering institutions (Project Board members)	Working groups consisting of representatives of partnering institutions and consultants formed. The first step is to develop the Action Plan.	Initiated

2.6 Advocate for the adoption of already developed, draft legislation on POPs by the relevant institutions, promoting the 'Polluter Pays' principle; and working with UNDP support on financial solutions for disposal of POPs, previously identified in inventory.	Dec 2025	UNDP BiH, Energy and Environment sector; partnering institutions (Project Board members)	Three rulebooks have been adopted; financial estimates and prioritization plan completed and presented to the Project Board.	Initiated
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RECOMMENDATION 3.



UNDP should focus on enhancing sustainable economic development, including further development of a circular economy and the agriculture sector, in line with regional best practices, and create an enabling environment for innovation.

Management response: Recommendation is accepted.



Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Through the Green Transition Portfolio, UNDP BiH will support the just green transition of the country in line with the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. Implement interconnected interventions focused on developing and implementing policy frameworks and financial instruments to support the transition to a circular economy, providing technical assistance and capacity-building for SMEs to adopt circular business models. As a part of this effort, UNDP will support revision and adoption of the Circular Economy Roadmap and the development of a Priority Measures Document to identify key actions and initiatives for advancing circular economy goals.	Dec 2029	UNDP BiH, Sustainable Growth Sector	The Portfolio document has been finalized, and UNDP BiH is currently engaged in the process of resource mobilization.	Not initiated

3.2 Integrate sustainability and circular business models within the private sector, and support interventions, especially in the areas of rural tourism and agriculture. These efforts will include: a) Delivering tailored technical assistance to companies. b) Providing financial support to facilitate the transition to circular business models. c) Assisting key national counterparts in developing policies and strategic documents to promote the adoption of circular business models.	Dec 2029	UNDP BiH, Sustainable Growth Sector	In 2024, UNDP BiH enhanced competitiveness, boosted resilience to external shocks, and facilitated the adoption of green and sustainable business models for 239 companies. In addition, UNDP BiH has completed the 'Assessment of circularity of construction and packaging industries', including roadmaps for implementing circular and green business models in those industries.	Initiated
3.3 Leverage best practices from the region in utilizing EU funds for agriculture to address the specific needs outlined in the Rural Development Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as related entity-level strategies. These practices will be integrated into the design and incorporated into the implementation of current and future projects focusing on agriculture and rural development.	Dec 2028	UNDP BiH, Sustainable Growth Sector	In 2024, UNDP BiH supported the design and adoption of the Strategic Plan for Rural Development of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023–2027.	Initiated
3.4 Recognizing the need for a skilled workforce to drive the country's green transition and the overall socio-economic development, UNDP BiH will implement targeted workforce development programmes and foster strategic collaboration between academia and the private sector.	Dec 2029	UNDP CO BiH, Sustainable Growth Sector		Not initiated

RECOMMENDATION 4.



UNDP should build a strong and cohesive local governance portfolio that integrates efforts to promote local democracy, governance, and service delivery.

Management response: Recommendation is accepted.



Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Leverage results of the local governance consultations process held in 2024 to adjust existing and create new programmatic interventions so as to address critical systemic issues in the area of local governance.	Dec 2029	UNDP CO BiH, Good Governance, Rule of Law and Security Sector	Local governance consultations held in 2024.	Not initiated
4.2 Enhance performance management and service delivery at the local level by building on existing results and exploring introduction of new service delivery mechanisms and partnerships, while focusing on gender equality and inclusion of the most vulnerable.	Dec 2029	UNDP CO BiH, Good Governance, Rule of Law and Security Sector	In 2024 an intervention addressing public finance management was approved.	Initiated
4.3 Going beyond local governance, UNDP will work towards strengthening country-wide institutional architecture for implementation of the SDGs, working in parallel with executive and legislative branches of government and fostering partnerships with civil society and the private sector.	Dec 2029	UNDP CO BiH, Good Governance, Rule of Law and Security Sector		Not Initiated
4.4 Integrate training and peer-learning as horizontal activities in all future governance interventions.	Dec 2029	UNDP CO BiH, Good Governance, Rule of Law and Security Sector		Not initiated

RECOMMENDATION 5.



UNDP should intensify its arms control efforts by engaging with political leaders and law enforcement institutions to address financial and operational capacities, and improve the interoperability of established tools and databases within the wider safety and security framework.

Management response: Recommendation is accepted.



Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
5.1 Establish and intensify cooperation with BiH SALW Coordination Board and 12 law enforcement agencies in order to secure adoption of new harmonized laws on arms and ammunition aligned with relevant EU directives.	June 2028	UNDP CO BiH, Good Governance, Rule of Law and Security Sector	UNDP has established cooperation with the law enforcement agencies within the country.	Initiated
5.2 Ensure sustainability of interventions regarding investigations of SALW-related crimes through provision of specialized detection equipment and training for prevention of illicit SALW trafficking, including through digital platforms.	June 2028	UNDP CO BiH, Good Governance, Rule of Law and Security Sector	The know-how transferred through the SALW has already been applied by some of the police agencies in the country.	Initiated

* Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database.

ANNEXES

Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the Evaluation Resource Centre website of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/detail/24350>.

Annex 1. Terms of Reference

Annex 2. Evaluation Matrix

Annex 3. Country at a Glance

Annex 4. Country Office at a Glance

Annex 5. List of Projects for In-depth Review

Annex 6. Documents Consulted

Annex 7. Status of Country Programme Outcome & Output Indicators

Annex 8. Performance Rating



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