

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION KAZAKHSTAN



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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability responsiveness MANAGING FOR RESULTS relevance COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT HUMAN COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP efficiency relevance COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP sustainability HUMAN DEVELOPMENT relevance HUMAN DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability responsiveness MANAGING FOR RESULTS relevance COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP effectiveness relevance COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP sustainability HUMAN DEVELOPMENT relevance HUMAN DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability responsiveness MANAGING FOR RESULTS relevance COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT relevance HUMAN DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability responsiveness MANAGING FOR RESULTS relevance COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT relevance HUMAN DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability responsiveness MANAGING FOR RESULTS relevance COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT cOORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP effectiveness COORDINATION Efficiency PARTNERSHIP s

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INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION: Kazakhstan

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ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank	
СО	Country Office	
CPD	Country Programme Document	
CSO	Civil Society Organization	
DFC	Digital Family Card	
EE	Energy Efficiency	
EU	European Union	
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment	
GoK	Government of Kazakhstan	
GEN	Gender Equality Marker	
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment	
GHG	Greenhouse Gas	
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation	
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office	
IFI	International Financial Institution	
KZT	Kazakhstani tenge	
LNOB	Leave No One Behind	
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution	
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization	
RBM	Results-Based Management	
RE	Renewable Energy	
RES	Renewable Energy Sources	
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal	
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise	
TSA	Targeted Social Assistance	
UN	United Nations	
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme	
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	
WB	The World Bank	

Evaluation Brief: Kazakhstan

Country Context

Kazakhstan, the largest landlocked country in the world, made significant economic and social progress since its independence in 1991. Its transition from a centrally planned to a market-based economy was fuelled by major oil discoveries, foreign direct investment (FDI), and structural reforms. Despite achieving upper-middle-income status, the country remained highly dependent on hydrocarbons, and efforts to diversify the economy have been slow. While Kazakhstan reduced poverty and made advancements in governance and human development, challenges persisted in economic diversification, governance reform, regional inequalities and environmental sustainability.

The Government of Kazakhstan committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into its national policies. Ambitious policy reforms such as the Social Code, the Green Economy Concept, and the Carbon Neutrality Strategy 2060 signal a commitment to inclusive and sustainable development. However, institutional constraints, slow policy implementation and limited civic engagement continued to affect progress.

UNDP in Kazakhstan and Country Programme Under Review

The UNDP Country Programme (2021-2025) aligns with Kazakhstan's national development priorities and is structured around four key priority areas:

- 1. **Inclusive Social Services** Strengthening social service delivery, expanding digital transformation, and improving access for vulnerable populations.
- 2. **Transparent and Accountable Governance** Enhancing participatory governance, human rights protection, and gender equality, while promoting institutional reform.
- 3. Diversified and Knowledge-Based Economic Growth Supporting SMEs, fostering labour market resilience, and promoting women's economic empowerment.
- 4. Climate Resilience and Sustainable Development Advancing renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, and climate adaptation strategies.

UNDP played a key role in supporting Kazakhstan's transition towards a low-carbon, diversified and inclusive economy while strengthening governance frameworks and digitalization efforts. However, ensuring programmatic integration, scaling successful pilot initiatives, and enhancing sustainability remained critical challenges. The next programme cycle presents an opportunity to further deepen UNDP's impact, particularly in climate resilience, digital transformation and governance reform.

Findings and Conclusions

Inclusive Social Services

UNDP significantly contributed to enhancing social protection systems and service delivery, particularly for vulnerable populations. The Digital Family Card (DFC) was a major innovation, integrating data across ministries to improve targeting of social benefits and service efficiency. The DFC benefited nearly 600,000 citizens, improving access to social assistance and reducing bureaucratic hurdles for low-income families, persons with disabilities, and women.

Beyond digitalization, UNDP played a key role in supporting the 2023 Social Code, which expanded Kazakhstan's welfare system to improve labour protections, occupational safety and social insurance coverage. However, regional disparities in social service delivery persisted, with lower institutional capacity and fewer digital infrastructure resources in rural areas, limiting the reach of social protection measures. The rapid expansion of digital services also raised concerns about data security and privacy, requiring further policy development to ensure regulatory safeguards.

Transparent and Accountable Governance

UNDP contributed to Kazakhstan's human rights protection, governance reforms and public sector accountability. The Action Plan on Human Rights and the Rule of Law (2023) was a key achievement, embedding human rights principles into national legal frameworks. UNDP also supported Kazakhstan's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, strengthening legal protections for marginalized groups.

Institutionally, UNDP enhanced the capacities of the National Human Rights Institution and the National Preventive Mechanism, providing technical support that improved monitoring of human rights violations and legal aid services. However, despite these gains, structural barriers to governance reform persisted. Restrictions on civic engagement, limited judicial independence, and high corruption risks continued to pose challenges to transparent governance. UNDP's engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs) on sensitive issues remained limited, constraining broader progress in democratic governance and anti-corruption efforts.

Diversified and Knowledge-Based Economic Growth

UNDP played an important role in promoting inclusive and sustainable economic development, particularly through initiatives supporting SMEs, vocational training and entrepreneurship. The COVID-19 Solidarity Fund provided employment training to women, youth and persons with disabilities, equipping them with skills for the post-pandemic labour market. The One Village – One Product initiative strengthened rural entrepreneurship and local value chain integration, benefiting more than 300 women-led businesses. UNDP also supported the establishment of Women Entrepreneurship Centres (WECs) in 17 regions, benefiting more than 8,700 women with business development services.

Despite these successes, scaling up these initiatives and ensuring long-term sustainability remained a challenge. The discontinuation of government funding for the WECs highlights the fragility of donor-dependent programmes, while limited data on post-training employment rates makes it difficult to assess the long-term impact of vocational training. Further strengthening of monitoring and evaluation systems is needed to improve evidence-based economic policymaking.

Climate Resilience and Sustainable Development

UNDP was a key partner in Kazakhstan's transition towards a low-carbon economy, supporting major policy and regulatory reforms. The Carbon Neutrality Strategy 2060, the Green Economy Concept and the Enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) reflect Kazakhstan's commitment to climate action, with UNDP playing a crucial role in technical assistance and capacity building.

In renewable energy, UNDP-supported renewable energy auctions and blended finance instruments have helped increase renewables to 6 percent of the national energy mix while mobilizing more than US\$290 million in private investment. UNDP also supported the expansion of protected areas covering 1.65 million hectares and promoted green finance models for biodiversity conservation.

However, while progress was strong in climate mitigation, Kazakhstan's climate adaptation efforts remained underdeveloped. The drafting of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) was a step forward, but further efforts are required to improve disaster preparedness, multi-hazard early warning systems, and water resource management.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Adopt a more focused and integrated programming approach, while leveraging UNDP's key strengths.

Recommendation 2. Strengthen the approach to strategic resource mobilization and engagement with the private sector and financing institutions.

Recommendation 3. Adopt flexible programming ensuring sustainability of results by establishing regular review mechanisms to adapt to changing national contexts, and ensuring that scalability and sustainability are embedded into project designs, particularly for pilot initiatives.

Recommendation 4. Increase focus on LNOB and the provision of differentiated responses at the local level.

Recommendation 5. Strengthen GEWE mainstreaming and address structural barriers to gender equality.

Recommendation 6. UNDP should enhance the integration of thematic areas such as climate, governance, health, ecosystems, biodiversity, and green growth across programmes.

Recommendation 7. Establish support to Kazakhstan's water sector by providing innovative policy support, improving flood and drought management, and support to the development of a modern MHEWS.

CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

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

1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) to critically assess UNDP contributions to national development priorities and results.

ICPEs are independent evaluations and are carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP evaluation policy.¹ In the ICPE framework, the evaluation team assessed UNDP's contributions and the effectiveness of the UNDP Country Office's (CO) strategy towards achieving the development results articulated in its Country Programme Document (CPD). The CPD and its goals were derived from the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the programmatic framework for UN agencies operating in the country.

The objectives of the ICPE were to:

- Support the development of the next Kazakhstan UNDP Country Programme by identifying best practices, results and key lessons learned from the current cycle;
- Strengthen the accountability of UNDP to national and international stakeholders and the UNDP Executive Board; and
- Contribute to knowledge generation, organizational learning and decision-making within the UNDP.

This ICPE was carried out between March and November 2024 and covered the period from January 2021 to November 2024, i.e., the first three and a half years of the current country programme cycle (2021-2025). This was the second country programme evaluation conducted by the IEO in Kazakhstan.¹ It covered UNDP activities in the country and interventions funded by all funding sources, including UNDP's own resources, as well as donor and government funds. The ICPE also covered non-project activities, such as coordination and advocacy, which are important in supporting the political and social agenda of the country.

1.2 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation used outcomes and outputs presented by the country programme for the period 2021-2025 as a framework against which achievements were analysed. It looked at each of the planned outcomes, their relative outputs, and their respective links to the strategic objectives of the programme.

To better understand UNDP's performance and the sustainability of results in the country, the ICPE recognized the need to integrate external factors, such as international economic developments and the global political situation, that potentially influenced the country programme, either positively or negatively, to embed the results achieved into an appropriate context. The ICPE also assessed the CO's capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and respond to national development needs and priorities. More specifically, the evaluation sought to answer the four evaluation questions presented in Box 1.

In 2019 IEO conducted an Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE), the report is available online at: <u>https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/</u> evaluations/detail/12566.

The evaluation methodology adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards.² In line with the UNDP gender mainstreaming strategy, the evaluation examined the level of gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the formulation of the country programme and its operations, as well as the results achieved. Gender marker data were used to analyse the level of expected contribution to gender equality in programme design. Gender-related results were assessed using the IEO's Gender Results Effectiveness Scale.³

The following methods were used to respond to the evaluation questions:

- **Portfolio analysis:** Analysis of the full portfolio in the CPD framework, including budgetary analysis, implementation modalities, gender markers.
- Document Review: Analysis of a sample portfolio of project, programme and other relevant documents, including Result-Oriented Annual Reports (ROARs) as well as decentralized evaluations and audits, where available. See Annex 3 for a complete list of documents.

BOX 1. Evaluation questions

- 1. To what extent has the UNDP country programme strategically addressed key national 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?

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- 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 national development goals?
- 4. To what extent did internal and external factors influence UNDP's ability to deliver its programme efficiently and maximize contributions?

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Source: Evaluation TOR

- **Pre-mission questionnaire with CO:** Captured the performance and results of the programme, as well as major crosscutting themes, such as gender, partnership, and the design and implementation-related issues of the country programme.
- Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions: Included 70 key informants (in-person and remote), including those from vulnerable communities.⁴ Annex 4 provides a complete overview of key informants.
- Site visits: Ten site visits were implemented across Kazakhstan. A complete list of project sites visited is provided in Annex 4.

The ICPE used the IEO's rating system to assess the performance of the country programme against the criteria of Relevance, Coherence, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Sustainability. Evidence was triangulated against a set of parameters for each of the criteria, and a four-point rating scale was used for the assessment (see Annex 6).

² See the United Nations Evaluation Group website: <u>http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914</u>.

³ The IEO's Gender Results Effectiveness Scale classifies gender results into five categories: gender negative (results have a negative outcome that aggravated or reinforced gender inequalities and limiting norms), gender blind (results gave no attention to gender, and failed to acknowledge the different needs of men, women, girls and boys and other marginalized populations), gender targeted (results focused on the number of women, men, or marginalized populations that were targeted), gender resources, status, rights, etc. but did not address root causes of inequalities), and gender transformative (results contributed to changes in norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of gender inequalities and discriminations).

⁴ In the context of this report, the expression 'vulnerable communities' is an umbrella term to refer to, inter alia, women, youth, marginalized communities living in remote areas, Afghan nationals, and People with Disabilities (PwD).

1.3 Country context

Kazakhstan, the largest landlocked nation in the world, with a population of 20 million, made significant strides in economic and social development since its independence in 1991.

Economy. Since gaining independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has made significant progress in its economic and social development. The country's transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-based system was fuelled by major oil discoveries. Throughout the first decade of the 21st century, Kazakhstan enjoyed robust economic growth, driven by market reforms, resource extraction, and foreign direct investment (FDI), which propelled it to upper-middle-income status.

However, in the decade following 2010, the growth trajectory slowed, exposing the vulnerabilities of Kazakhstan's economy, particularly its dependence on hydrocarbons and stagnant productivity levels.⁵ After the global downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the economy began to recover, although inflation surged due to geopolitical instability and global supply chain disruptions.⁶ By 2023, Kazakhstan's economy had regained momentum, with trade and industry driving growth, and inflation decreasing to 9.8 percent by December of that year.⁷ Figure 1 provides a visual comparison of Kazakhstan's economic performance alongside regional peers such as Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, highlighting its relatively strong position. Despite ongoing economic growth, efforts to diversify the economy have been slow, and reliance on natural resource extraction continued to hinder the transition to a greener economy. The geopolitical situation, including the war in Ukraine and tensions in the Black Sea region, presented risks to Kazakhstan's economic stability, particularly in relation to its oil exports and FDI inflows.

Despite these challenges, Kazakhstan remained committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, making notable progress in reducing poverty and integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into national policies.

Governance, Rule of Law, Human Rights. In 2023, Kazakhstan ranked 65th out of 142 countries in the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, with a score of 0.53, reflecting moderate adherence to the rule of law globally. However, Kazakhstan performed relatively well regionally (4th out of 15) and among peers in its income group (18th out of 41).⁸ Over the past 30 years, numerous amendments were made to the country's fundamental laws to broaden citizens' rights, promote political modernization, and enhance the protection of human rights. The most recent referendum reflected the people's will, marking a significant milestone in the nation's history by substantially increasing the authority of parliament and local self-government bodies.⁹ A mixed proportional-majoritarian model for the elections of the Mazhilis (the lower chamber of the parliament), was introduced in 2023.

The country strengthened its human rights framework to enhance justice and equality through a reform agenda that included abolishing the death penalty, decriminalizing defamation, lifting employment restrictions on women, and enacting laws to support the Human Rights Commissioner and restore the Constitutional Court, among others. Kazakhstan was elected to the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council for 2022-2024, emphasizing gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). The country

⁵ OECD. 'Insights on the Business Climate in Kazakhstan'. 2023.

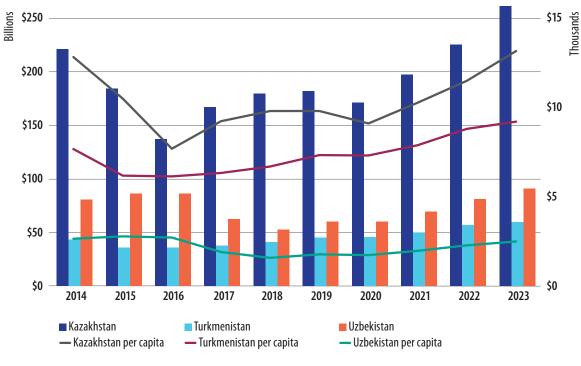
⁶ IMF. 'Republic of Kazakhstan. IMF Country Report'. February 2023. Available at: <u>https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/KAZ</u>.

⁷ World Bank. 'Kazakhstan Economic Update'. 13 February 2024. Last accessed 6 December 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kazakhstan/publication/economic-update-winter-2023-24</u>.

⁸ The ranking evaluates the criminal investigation system based on its effectiveness, timeliness, impartiality, freedom from corruption and improper government influence, adherence to due process, and success in reducing criminal behaviour. World Justice Project. 'Kazakhstan'. 2023. Last accessed: 04 September 2024. Available at: <u>https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2023/Kazakhstan/</u>.

⁹ The Times of Central Asia. 'Kazakhstan: The Role of the Constitutional Court in Upholding the Rule of Law.' 3 September 2024. Last accessed: 4 September 2024. Available at: <u>https://timesca.com/kazakhstan-the-role-of-the-constitutional-court-in-upholding-the-rule-of-law/</u>.

actively engaged with the UN Commission on the Status of Women and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2023,¹⁰ demonstrating its attention to vulnerable groups. In 2023, Kazakhstan strengthened human rights protections by adopting a comprehensive Action Plan on Human Rights and the Rule of Law, which focuses on critical areas such as gender equality, children's rights, freedom of association, and human rights in the business sector.





The adoption of the Action Plan on Human Rights and the Rule of Law was a positive step forward; however, civil society in Kazakhstan faced significant challenges due to restrictions on freedoms of expression, assembly, and association. Activists often faced imprisonment and protests were tightly controlled.¹¹ Despite constitutional guarantees, civil society organizations (CSOs) must still navigate restrictive laws and regulations, while being targeted by legal and extra-legal measures, such as surveillance and arbitrary detentions.¹²

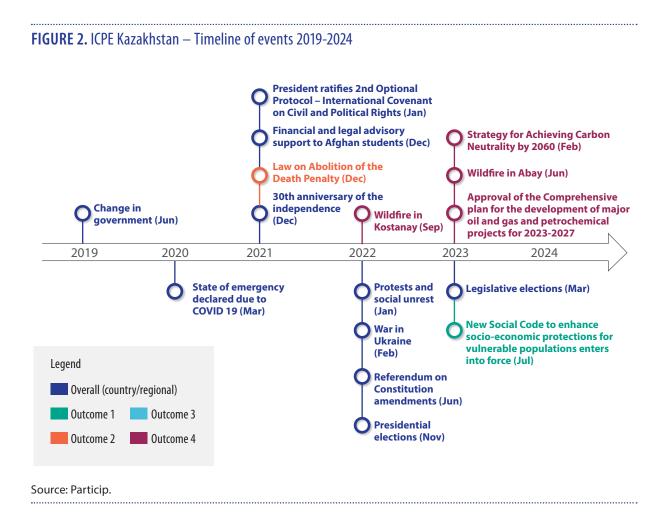
Source: Particip, based on World Bank data.

¹⁰ UNDP. 'Ratification of the Optional Protocol in Kazakhstan: an important step towards protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.' 14 June 2023. Last accessed: 28 August 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.undp.org/kazakhstan/news/ratification-optional-protocol-kazakhstan-important-step-towards-protecting-rights-persons-disabilities</u>.

¹¹ Amnesty International. 'Kazakhstan 2023.' 2023. Last accessed: 5 September 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/eastern-europe-and-central-asia/kazakhstan/report-kazakhstan/</u>.

¹² Wood C. 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place: How Kazakhstan's Civil Society Navigates Precarity.' 25 August 2023. Cambridge University. Last accessed: 5 September 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-labor-and-working-class-history/article/between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place-how-kazakhstans-civil-society-navigates-precarity/B442748B158006EC8696E5B92A7B047E.</u>

Kazakhstan is implementing the National Plan to Ensure the Rights and Improve the Quality of Life of Persons with Disabilities, which is set to run until 2025. The National Plan contains 95 measures in 10 key areas, including, for example: disability prevention, access to education, the creation of a barrier-free environment, employment, effective rehabilitation, social services, and the modernization of public consciousness. A significant focus of the plan is on increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The plan also promotes accessible education and a barrier-free environment, ensuring that all people with disabilities can fully participate in society.¹³



¹³ Official Information Source of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan. 'Kazakhstan implements National Plan for Ensuring Rights and Improving Quality of Life of Persons with Disabilities until 2025.' 2 December 2020. Last accessed: 05 September 2024. Available at: <u>https://primeminister.kz/en/news/kazakstanda-mugedek-zhandardyn-kukygyn-kamtamasyz-etu-zhane-omir-suru-sapasyn-zhaksartu-zhonindegi-2025-zhylga-deyingi-ulttyk-zhospar-iske-asyryluda-b-nurymbetov-2114836.</u>

Gender Equality and Women's Rights. Kazakhstan has made significant progress in gender equality, closing gender gaps in education and advancing economic and political opportunities for women. The country implemented state policies that promote gender equality through legislative measures and the National Commission on Women, Family, and Demographic Policy. The Constitution prohibits gender discrimination, while the Gender Equality Strategy and the updated Family and Gender Policy aim to enhance women's participation in decision-making roles, reduce domestic violence, and close the gender wage gap. A new law signed on 15 April 2024, known as Kazakhstan's 'domestic violence' law, aims to enhance protections for women and children against violence. However, it faced criticism for not explicitly defining domestic violence as a separate offence in the Criminal Code or Kazakhstan's 2009 Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence.¹⁴ Despite advancements in legislation, violence against women and girls was still widespread.¹⁵ Kazakhstan ratified several international conventions to promote women's rights and adopted a National Action Plan for the UN Security Council resolution on 'Peace, Women, and Security.' Despite these achievements, the increase in the number of women in government roles remained modest, and persistent challenges relating to the gender wage gap limited access to employment and career advancement for women.¹⁶

Social Protection and Welfare Systems. Kazakhstan has a comprehensive social protection system, including social insurance, unemployment benefits and social assistance programmes. Kazakhstan's new Social Code, effective from July 2023, addresses social support across all stages of life, provisions for employment, labour safety, social insurance, and assistance during difficult life situations, as well as support for the elderly.¹⁷ The Government expanded welfare programmes and implemented digital solutions, notably the Digital Family Card (DFC), to enhance social protection amid rising costs and economic uncertainties. Additionally, social centres provided legal and psychological aid, as well as vocational training for low-income families and families with multiple children. Nearly 1 million people were helped, but major challenges, such as strict eligibility criteria, low payments, bureaucratic hurdles, and social stigma prevented many from getting aid.¹⁸

Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action. Kazakhstan experiences an extreme continental climate, with long, hot summers and cold winters. Temperatures throughout the year vary with latitude in Kazakhstan, with northern areas experiencing much colder winter temperatures than southern areas, and southern areas experiencing relatively hot summers. Kazakhstan is recognized as vulnerable to climate change impacts, ranking 35th out of 187 countries in the 2022 ND-GAIN Index,¹⁹ with warming trends more pronounced in the western, southwestern, and southern regions of the country, and more so in the spring.²⁰ Kazakhstan faces a diverse set of natural hazards, many of which are expected to increase in severity with climate change. Key threats include floods, drought, avalanches and landslides. Droughts affect two-thirds of Kazakhstan's land area, affecting grain output in rain-fed farming areas of the north.²¹ An estimated

¹⁵ Reliefweb. 'Kazakhstan's new domestic violence law is welcome but further reforms need to close remaining protection gaps.' 16 May 2024. Last accessed: 09 December 2024.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch. 'Kazakhstan: New Law to Protect Women Improved, but Incomplete.' 23 April 2024. Last accessed: 9 December 2024.

¹⁶ UNDP. 'Closing the Gender Pay Gap: A Closer Look at Equal Pay.' 18 September 2023. Last accessed: 09 December 2024.

¹⁷ The Astana Times. 'Kazakhstan Updates Social Code to Improve Citizens Welfare.' 29 June 2023. Last accessed: 04 September 2024. Available at: https://astanatimes.com/2023/06/kazakhstan-updates-social-code-to-improve-citizens-welfare/.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch. 'Kazakhstan: Families Struggle to Enjoy Basic Rights'. 2 October 2022. Last accessed: 6 December 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/05/kazakhstan-families-struggle-enjoy-basic-rights</u>

¹⁹ University of Notre Dame. 'Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative'. Country Index Rankings. Last accessed: 04 February 2025. Available at: https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/.

²⁰ Annual Bulletin on Monitoring the State and Climate Change of Kazakhstan: 2023, Astana, 2024, 90 p. Last accessed: 04 February 2025. Available at: <u>https://www.kazhydromet.kz/ru/klimat/ezhegodnyy-byulleten-monitoringa-sostoyaniya-i-izmeneniya-klimata-kazahstana</u>.

²¹ Chen, F., Mambetov, *et al.*, 'Drought variations in Almaty (Kazakhstan) since AD 1785 based on spruce tree rings'. *Stochastic Environmental Research and Risk Assessment*. 2017, 31(8), pp. 2097–2105. Last accessed 14 May 2024. Available at: <u>https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00477-016-1290-y</u>.

26 percent of Kazakhstan's population lives in areas prone to mudflows, which can occur in tandem with flooding.²² Climate change is projected to impact the quality of land and soil in Kazakhstan in several distinct ways, including pasture degradation and erosion of arable land and soil salinity, causing major economic losses.²³ Increased temperatures are likely to exacerbate issues of high soil salinity, via increased evapotranspiration, leading to reduced crop farming productivity, and higher water demand for irrigation. There is evidence that climate change is causing a reduction in the level of terrestrial freshwater storage,²⁴ affecting agricultural productivity; and drying out of major lakes, such as Lake Balkhash in the southeast, exacerbating trends in desertification, soil salinization and dust storms, with a high impact on the population, due to the Ili-Balkash Basin being home to one-fifth of the total population.²⁵ The expected long-term reduction in river flow will pose a risk to agriculture, given that 90 percent of current water use in Kazakhstan is for irrigation. Further complications include the transboundary nature of almost half of Kazakhstan's water supply, as well as the increasing regional water demand for agriculture, industry and power generation.²⁶

In 2021 Kazakhstan was placed seventh in the world ranking of countries in terms of carbon intensity of GDP, and fourteenth with regard to CO2 emissions per capita.²⁷ Burning of fossil fuels, particularly for electricity and heating, was responsible for 84 percent of emissions.²⁸ Residential energy use has grown by more than a factor of five since 2000 and represented 27 percent of energy consumption and 12 percent of Kazakhstan's energy emissions.²⁹ Land sector emissions have fluctuated and, in some years, served as carbon sinks, demonstrating potential offsetting opportunities, but the effects of climate change put potential future land sector emission offsets at risk.³⁰ Kazakhstan's energy supply is highly carbon intensive, with high reliance on coal and oil for domestic energy needs, and the role of natural gas has been growing. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan has enormous potential for renewable energy (RE), which helps to diversify the energy mix away from the fossil fuels, and has ambition is to become a 'renewable powerhouse' in Central Asia and to lead the green transition.³¹ The presence of the subsidies in energy tariffs acted as a disincentive for shifting to renewable energy and energy efficiency, but Kazakhstan's energy subsidy reform journey is well underway. The package of reforms, including a new methodology for regulating the electricity and heating sectors, was approved by the Government in 2023. Pilot implementation was scheduled for 2024, and it is anticipated that these initial steps will pave the way for broader industry integration. This integration will harmonize investment incentives with regulations, promoting innovation and sustainability while also driving investments into the sector and improving operational efficiency.³²

³⁰ Ibid.

 ²² Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR). 'Kazakhstan' Last accessed 14 May 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.gfdrr.org/kazakhstan</u>.
²³ Ministry of Environment Protection. 'Kazakhstan's Seventh National Communication to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).' 2017. Last accessed: 14 May 2024. Available at: <u>https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/20963851</u>

Kazakhstan-NC7-BR3-1-ENG Saulet Report 12-2017 ENG.pdf.

²⁴ Deng, H. & Chen, Y. 'Influences of recent climate change and human activities on water storage variations in Central Asia.' 2017. *Journal of Hydrology*. 544. 46–57. Last accessed: 14 May 2024. Available at: <u>http://www.egi.ac.cn/xwzx/kydt/201612/W020161229657217542234.pdf</u>.

²⁵ Novikov, V. & Kelly, C. *Climate Change and Security in Central Asia*. 2017. Geneva: ENVSEC.

²⁶ Hagg, W., Hoelzle, M., Wagner, S., Mayr, E., and Klose, Z. 'Glacier and runoff changes in the Rukhk catchment, upper Amu-Darya basin until 2050.' 2013. Global and Planetary Change. Last accessed: 14 May 2024. Available at: <u>https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloplacha.2013.05.005</u>

²⁷ Asian Development Bank and World Bank Group. 'Climate Risk Country Profile: Kazakhstan.' 2021. Available at: <u>https://www.adb.org/publications/</u> <u>climate-risk-country-profile-kazakhstan</u>.

²⁸ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. 'Kazakhstan 2021 Common Reporting Format (CRF) Table.' 2021. Available at: https://unfccc.int/documents/273502.

²⁹ World Bank Group. 'Kazakhstan: Country Climate and Development Report.' 2022. Last accessed: 14 May 2024. Available at: <u>https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/dabff214-772e-50b4-89d9-a172e99accc3</u>.

³¹ This is supported by the EU, aiming to boost the green and digital transformation. Furthermore, at COP27 Kazakhstan signed a Framework Agreement with Fortescue Future Industries on the implementation of green hydrogen production projects in several regions of the country, including Atyrau and Mangystau regions. Source: UN Kazakhstan, 'Kazakhstan Common Country Assessment' 2023.

³² UNDP. 'Empowering the Future of Kazakhstan's Energy Sector.' January 2024. Last accessed: 22 November 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2024/01/05/empowering-the-future-of-kazakhstans-energy-sector</u>.

Air pollution in Kazakhstan is caused by many factors and poses serious threats to public health.³³ Almaty, which is among the cities with high levels of air pollution in Kazakhstan, is currently among the 25 most polluted cities in the world.³⁴

In response to the pressing challenges posed by climate change, Kazakhstan has set ambitious targets, including its Enhanced NDC and particularly the net-zero by 2060 pledge. The GoK recognized the critical need for adaptation measures, including in addressing the increasing frequency of floods, droughts and mudflows, and acknowledged that achieving these goals requires strong action and substantial funding. To enable effective and timely planning and implementation of policies, institutional and planning reforms are needed, particularly to support cross-government coordination. The low priority given to green investment by the private sector reflects the absence of a conducive policy environment.³⁵ According to a World Bank report, "Kazakhstan has made good progress with climate services³⁶ that assess climate and disaster risks, and it could further expand public provision of this information to households, communities, and the private sector at both national and regional levels."³⁷

Foreign Policy, International Cooperation and Development Partnerships. Kazakhstan's foreign policy is characterized by a multi-vector approach, aiming to balance relations with major global powers while prioritizing regional stability and development. Kazakhstan has transitioned from being solely a recipient of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to also becoming a donor nation. In the early years following its independence, Kazakhstan received substantial ODA to support its socio-economic development. As the country's economy strengthened, it reduced its reliance on external aid. In 2020, the Kazakhstan Agency of International Development (KazAID) was established to systematize and enhance Kazakhstan's role as a donor nation. With a focus on education and digitalization projects, KazAID provides ODA to neighbouring countries, promoting regional stability. This shift reflects Kazakhstan's commitment to fostering development and cooperation within the region.³⁸

At the same time, development partnerships still play an important role. Kazakhstan established long-standing cooperation with development partners beyond the UN system, engaging with donors, such as U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Government of Japan, and the European Union (EU). The World Bank (WB) was active in various sectors, ranging from human capital to climate change and environmental management.³⁹ The EU funded various projects related to governance and human rights, but also interventions focusing on economic development and providing support to Kazakhstan's integration into the global economy and adherence to international standards.

³³ D. Kenessary, *et al.*, 'Air Pollution in Kazakhstan and Its Health Risk Assessment' in *Annals of Global Health*, 2019; 85(1): 133. Last accessed: 14 May 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6838766/</u>.

³⁴ IQair. 'Air quality in Kazakhstan.' Available at: <u>https://www.iqair.com/kazakhstan</u>.

³⁵ World Bank Group. 'Kazakhstan: Country Climate and Development Report.' 2022. Last accessed: 14 May 2024. Available at: <u>https://openknowledge.</u> worldbank.org/entities/publication/dabff214-772e-50b4-89d9-a172e99accc3.

³⁶ Climate services are the provision and use of climate data, information and knowledge to assist decision-making. Climate services require appropriate engagement between the recipient of the service and its provider, along with an effective access mechanism to enable timely action. For more information, see <u>https://gfcs.wmo.int/site/global-framework-climate-services-gfcs/what-are-climate-services#:~:text=Climate%20services%20are%20</u> <u>the%20provision,mechanism%20to%20enable%20timely%20action</u>. Last access: 9 December 2024.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 22.

³⁸ See: Kazakhstan Agency of International Development (KazAID), <u>https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/kazaid?lang=en</u>; EU Reporter. 'Kazakhstan's Journey from Aid Recipient to Donor: How Kazakhstan's Development Assistance Contributes to Regional Security.' 20 April 2024. Last accessed: 22 November 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.eureporter.co/kazakhstan-2/2024/04/20/kazakhstans-journey-from-aid-recipient-to-donorhowkazakhstans-development-assistance-contributes-to-regional-security/; and Eurasian Research Institute. 'KazAID – Kazakhstan's Emerging Foreign Policy-instrument'. 2020. Last accessed: 22 November 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.eurasian-research.org/publication/kazaid-kazakhstans-emerging-foreign-policy-instrument/</u>.</u>

³⁹ World Bank. 'Shifting to a more Competitive, Greener and Inclusive Economy with World Bank Support.' 14 March 2024. Last accessed: 30 August 2024. Available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/03/14/shifting-to-a-more-competitive-greener-and-inclusive-economy-withworld-bank-support#:~:text=ASTANA%2C%20March%2014%2C%202024%20%E2%80%94,economic%20growth%20in%20the%20country.

1.4 UNDP in Kazakhstan and country programme under review

The UNDP programme in Kazakhstan for the period 2021-2025 was structured around four priority areas.

Addressing social vulnerabilities and inequalities (Outcome 1) strengthened institutions in the delivery of public social services, with a special focus on vulnerable communities. During the current Country Programme Document (CPD) cycle, 17 percent (\$10,258,800) of the funding was allocated to this area. The projects under this outcome were designed to:

- 1. improve access to quality services;
- 2. develop social protection systems;
- 3. support digital solutions; and
- 4. provide policy support.

The priority area **Transparent and Accountable Governance (Outcome 2)** supported the efforts of public institutions to become more participatory, efficient and fair, with a special attention to GEWE. In the current CPD cycle, 31 percent (\$18,813,200) of the funding was allocated to this area. The projects under this outcome were developed to:

- 1. reform public administration and enhance participatory governance;
- 2. strengthen Rule of Law and Human Rights;
- 3. promote Gender Equality and the country's leading role in the area, through regional and South-South cooperation initiatives; and
- 4. foster capacity building in crisis management and resilience.

The third priority area focused on **Inclusive Economic Development (Outcome 3)** to foster labour market conditions that are conducive to a vibrant economy, with a view to include the most vulnerable categories. During the current CPD cycle, 5 percent (\$3,418,083) of the funding was allocated to this area. The projects under this area aimed to:

- 1. improve the labour force's productive capacities, skills and employment prospects;
- 2. enhance the private sector development and market competitiveness; and
- 3. foster value-chain integration and strengthen local economic development.

The priority area **Climate Resilience and Sustainable Development (Outcome 4)** focused on creating inclusive and sustainable practices to foster policy development in the environmental sector and encourage green economy financing. Under this CPD cycle, 47 percent (\$30,096,407) of the funding was allocated to this area. The projects under this area aimed to:

- 1. incorporate climate change measures, including natural disaster response systems, into national policies, strategies and plans;
- 2. expand the green economy sector and scale up the financing mechanisms to reduce the country's carbon footprint;
- 3. promote efficient and sustainable environmental practices, engaging the private sector; and
- 4. address gender-based violence and encourage women's involvement in leadership and decision-making processes.

UNDP available budgets to date amount to \$64 million, which is below the CPD target (\$80,671,500), and amounts to 56 percent of the total available resources to UN Agencies operating in Kazakhstan in 2021-2023.⁴⁰ At the time of writing, UNDP execution rate of the budget under the 2021-2025 CPD cycle was 61 percent.

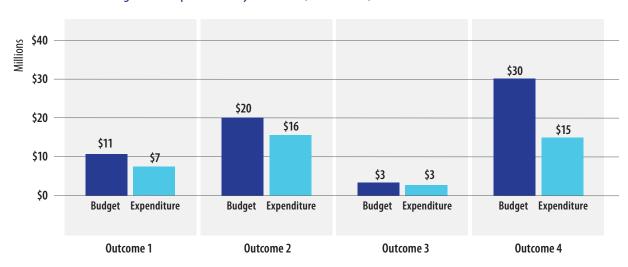


FIGURE 3. Total budget and expenditure by outcome (US\$ million) 2021-2024

Source: Atlas & Quantum project data, as of 9 April 2024.

⁴⁰ The provisional assessment is based on the financial figures provided by UNDP CO in Kazakhstan, including the budget for 2024, against the financial figures published in the Kazakhstan United Nations Country Results Reports for 2021, 2022 and 2023; the 2024 Report was not available at the time of writing. The total resources available to UN agencies operating in Kazakhstan amounted to \$29.1 million in 2021, \$45.7 million in 2022 and \$39.5 million in 2023. The United Nations Country Results Reports on Kazakhstan are available at: <u>https://kazakhstan.un.org/en/resources/publications</u>.

CHAPTER 2 FINDINGS

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This chapter presents the results of the outcome analysis and an assessment of the implementation of the UNDP country programme in Kazakhstan. The main factors that influenced UNDP's performance and contribution to results are also described. The assessment was based on an analysis of the correlation between the results of the projects, their contribution to the expected outputs under each outcome and, consequently, to the overall objectives of the programme.

2.1 UNDP strategic and programmatic offer

Finding 1. UNDP's programme was closely aligned with Kazakhstan's national development needs and priorities, as well as to the SDG agenda and UNDP global policies. The CPD was designed around Kazakhstan's needs for the modernization of institutions, diversifying the economy, digitalization of public services, and pursuing low-carbon growth while strengthening resilience in the face of climate change.

UNDP's Country Programme Document (CPD) 2021-2025 directly addressed recommendations from the 2019 ICPE by refining its programmatic focus and leveraging its comparative strengths. In response to the 2019 ICPE, the CPD consolidated efforts in public administration and civil service reforms, particularly in empowering women, vulnerable groups and civil society (recommendations 3 and 4). It also built on achievements in the energy and environment sectors by upscaling and institutionalizing results through stronger partnerships (recommendation 5). The CPD also prioritized the sustainability and institutionalization of UNDP's models and services across its portfolio, engaging the Government to ensure long-term impact (recommendation 6). The CPD was structured to support Kazakhstan's goals in several key areas. It emphasized the modernization of public institutional sectors,⁴¹ and the promotion of low-carbon growth strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Through these programmatic interventions, UNDP aimed to support Kazakhstan's sustainable development while addressing both immediate needs and long-term resilience. UNDP's programmatic offerings to Kazakhstan in the period under review were closely aligned with the country's national development priorities, the SDG agenda, and UNDP's global policies.

In the area of social inclusion and reducing inequalities, for instance, UNDP supported the Digital Family Card (DFC), a digitalization initiative that, according to interviews, enhanced the delivery of social services. This initiative enabled the identification and assistance of vulnerable populations, including families living in poverty and individuals with disabilities. The digitalization of the national social protection system was integral to Kazakhstan's broader digital transformation strategy, helping the Government to foster greater trust in government institutions through modernization and strengthened accountability. However, at the time of the ICPE, the roll-out of the DFC was not fully completed and the initiative was too recent to show tangible results backed up by data. Recognizing the critical role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in job creation and economic diversification, UNDP facilitated the development of innovative financial mechanisms for SMEs and established a digital business registration platform. Support for entrepreneurship, particularly targeting women and youth in rural areas, was provided through training programmes.

⁴¹ Kazakhstan's dependence on traditional sectors, particularly oil, gas, and minerals, is well-documented in reports and analyses from international organizations and economic research institutes. For example, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have published reports highlighting Kazakhstan's economic structure and the challenges associated with its reliance on extractive industries. Additionally, the UNDP also addressed this issue in its programmatic work with the country, particularly in the context of fostering economic diversification and sustainable development. The World Bank's 'Kazakhstan Economic Update' series and the IMF's 'Country Reports' for Kazakhstan provide detailed discussions on this topic.

UNDP's contributions were instrumental in advancing Kazakhstan's sustainable development agenda. UNDP positioned itself as a key partner in addressing the country's pressing environmental and energy challenges.⁴² In the area of climate change mitigation, UNDP supported Kazakhstan with measures promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy to meet key national targets, such as the unconditional target of reducing emissions by 15 percent by 2030 and a conditional emissions reduction target of 25 percent relative to the 1990 baseline (the enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions).⁴³ UNDP also supported strengthened water management to improve water supply to villages; biodiversity protection; promotion of renewable energy sources (RES) and energy efficiency (EE) measures; and Disaster Risk Preparedness, Reduction and Management for both climate-related and seismic risks; and promoted climate-smart agricultural technologies and practices. Measures to promote environmental justice were missing from the programme. While access to justice on environmental matters is promoted by the Supreme Court, very few judges specialize in environmental cases and courts do not have access to a pool of environmental law specialists commensurate with the importance of the extractive sector in the country.⁴⁴

The six 'Signature Solutions' introduced in UNDP's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan – poverty and inequality, governance, resilience, environment, energy and gender equality – provided a framework for strategic programming and implementation.⁴⁵ Within the Signature Solution framework, UNDP made effective use of its three 'Enablers'—digitalization, innovation, and development finance—to enhance its strategic positioning and operational impact in Kazakhstan.⁴⁶

Finding 2. UNDP demonstrated adaptability by maintaining programmatic relevance and coherence in the face of budgetary uncertainty, high ministry staff turnover, and the COVID-19 crisis. While progress was made in strengthening integrated programming, considerable potential remains to further leverage the synergies between outcomes.

UNDP maintained steady progress by engaging in regular communication with government bodies such as the Ministry of Finance, proactively adjusting timelines, and reallocating resources as necessary, despite facing limited budgets and co-financing challenges. This flexibility ensured that projects continued despite financial and bureaucratic hurdles and was crucial for the long-term success and sustainability of UNDP programmes in the context of issues related to high turnover and retaining institutional memory. UNDP's continuous engagement with stakeholders helped to re-establish connections when there was turnover and align its programmes with the evolving priorities of the Government. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP quickly adapted its strategies to address emerging needs, including supporting healthcare systems, procuring essential medical supplies, and focusing on vulnerable groups disproportionately affected by the crisis. At the same time, as project documents and interviews show, UNDP did not fully exploit synergies between different outcome areas. Despite some successful intra-outcome complementarities, particularly

⁴² Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery. 'Kazakhstan.' 2018. Available at: <u>https://www.gfdrr.org/kazakhstan</u>; USAID. 'Climate Risk Profile – Kazakhstan.' 2017. Available at: <u>https://www.climatelinks.org/resources/climate-risk-profile-kazakhstan</u>; International Energy Agency. 'Kazakhstan Energy profile. 2021'. Available at: <u>https://www.ea.org/reports/kazakhstan-energy-profile;</u> UNFCCC. 'Kazakhstan's Seventh National Communication and Third Biennial Report of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change'. Available at: <u>https://unfccc.int/sites/ default/files/resource/20963851_Kazakhstan-NC7-BR3-1-ENG_Saulet_Report_12-2017_ENG.pdf;</u> UN Kazakhstan.'Kazakhstan Common Country Assessment'. 2023; Asian Development Bank/World Bank Group. 'Climate Risk Country Profile: Kazakhstan'. 2021; U.S. International Trade Administration. 'Kazakhstan Environmental Technology Waste Management Opportunities'. A pril 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.trade.gov/market-intelligence/ kazakhstan-environmental-technology-waste-management-opportunities</u>. Websites were last accessed on 6 September 2024.

⁴³ Unconditional meaning not conditional on international support received.

⁴⁴ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). 'Synopsys' in Environmental Policy Review: Kazakhstan, Third review. 2019.

⁴⁵ The Signature Solutions are the backbone of the UNDP's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 'Advancing the Future of Development.' The plan stipulated that "UNDP will continue to work through its six signature solutions on poverty and inequality, governance, resilience, environment, energy and gender equality" and that "the signature solutions will be adapted to better match countries' evolving priorities. Collaborating across the strengthened United Nations system and beyond, UNDP will develop integrated approaches that apply combinations of solutions for greater impact. Powerful enablers – strategic innovation, digitalization and development finance – will further accelerate and scale results." Source: UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

⁴⁶ The enablers support and enhance the effectiveness of the signature solutions by providing innovative approaches, financing mechanisms, and digital tools that enable UNDP to achieve more significant results. Essentially, enablers serve as the foundational capacities that empower the signature solutions to address complex development challenges more effectively. Source: UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

in the environmental portfolio (Outcome 4), inter-outcome synergies were underutilized. For instance, stronger connections could have been made between social protection (Outcome 1) and labour market development (Outcome 3). This missed opportunity limited the programme's ability to fully integrate cross-cutting thematic areas.

2.2 UNDP contributions to programme objectives

Inclusive social services

OUTCOME 1: By 2025, effective, inclusive and accountable institutions ensure equal access for all people living in Kazakhstan, especially the most vulnerable, to quality and gender sensitive social services according to the principle of leaving no one behind.

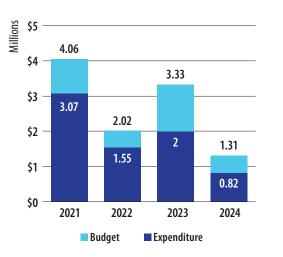
Corresponding outputs:

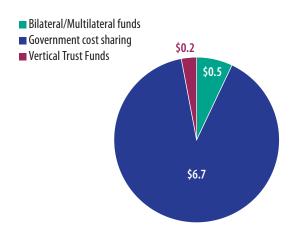
Output 1.1: Marginalized groups, particularly the poor, women, people with disabilities and displaced have better access to quality basic services.

Output 1.2: Capacities developed for progressive expansion of inclusive and sustainable social protection systems.

The eight projects under Outcome 1 had a total budget of \$10.7 million, with \$7.4 million spent between January 2021 and April 2024. Figure 4 provides an overview of annual budgets and expenditures as well as the mobilized resources for the Outcome.







Source: Atlas & Quantum project data, as of 9 April 2024.

Finding 3. UNDP contributed to improved access to quality basic social services for marginalized groups, including the poor, women, people with disabilities, and displaced persons in Kazakhstan. This was enabled through targeted initiatives and projects designed with strong attention to the specific needs of these vulnerable populations and support to the country's digital transformation agenda. However, concerns remained about data protection and persistent regional disparities.

At the level of legislative and regulatory reform, the UNDP project 'Enhancing Effectiveness of Social Protection Programmes and Improving Access and Participation of Socially Vulnerable Groups - Social Protection III' contributed to the development and implementation of important changes to the Social Code of 2023.⁴⁷ This comprehensive policy framework, which aims to provide extensive social support throughout the life cycle and covering aspects such as employment, occupational safety, social insurance, and social assistance, was endorsed with substantial involvement from UNDP and represented a significant step towards creating a more inclusive and sustainable social protection system. Additionally, a new amendment to the Code 'On Marriage (Matrimony) and Family,' introduced in April 2024, integrated a new section on Family Support Centres. These centres, coordinated by local social protection and employment bodies, serve as a one-stop shop for families in need of support in areas such as education, health, unemployment, and matters involving the Ministry of Internal Affairs, such as children in conflict with the law.

UNDP technical support increased access to social services, built confidence in public institutions and contributed to the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) agenda. One of the most successful initiatives was the acceleration of the DFC initiative to integrate various social services into a single digital platform. This involved collecting, integrating and processing data from eight ministries, mapping information on approximately 20 million people or 6.2 million families, enabling local and state agencies to improve targeting of social assistance and social protection services for vulnerable groups. UNDP supported the development of a methodology using 80 indicators to assess family well-being in categories such as income, employment, social services, health and education, categorizing families into five levels from 'well-off' to 'crisis.' The DFC already provides services for 11 types of benefits and social payments and 3 types of notifications.⁴⁸ Overall, the provision of social benefits, pensions and newborn care payments was optimized while improving the overall efficiency and responsiveness of social services. As a result of this initiative, more than 594,000 citizens were proactively supported. As a direct result of the Social Protection Phase III project, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection adopted a per capita normative financing mechanism for special social services, improving both their efficiency and sustainability. The Government plans to replicate the DFC model in other sectors such as education, although its success and long-term impact depend on political commitment, data maturity and technical expertise. The rollout of the system raised questions about data security, privacy, and the need to ensure that the technology used meets the latest security standards to prevent potential cyber threats. In response, UNDP advocated for robust data protection protocols. The main legislation governing data protection is the Personal Data and Protection Act of 2013. While this law establishes a general framework for the collection, processing and storage of personal data by individuals and organizations, it lacks sufficient regulatory detail and enforcement mechanisms. Regional differences in internet access and digital literacy have also affected the implementation of the DFC.

⁴⁷ Adilet (Legal information system of Regulatory Legal Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan). 'Social Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan: dated April 20, 2023 № 224-VII.' Available at: <u>https://adilet.zan.kz/eng/docs/K2300000224</u>.

⁴⁸ Encompassing childbirth benefits, child care benefits, child care for disabled children, unemployment benefits, survivors' benefits, disability benefits, benefits for families with many children, TSA, notifications on pension payments, employment and notifications to Kandas (ethnic Kazakhs and/or members of their families of Kazakh nationality, who have not previously held citizenship of the Republic of Kazakhstan).

According to interviews with UNDP staff, project staff and beneficiaries, UNDP contributed to improving access to services for marginalized groups, including better procurement and distribution of essential medicines, such as those for HIV treatment. UNDP supported the SK Pharmacy LLP, which was the sole distributor for the Ministry of Health, by strengthening its procurement processes for medicines, health products, and medical equipment, ensuring timely and equitable access. Capacity-building efforts also strengthened national and local institutions' abilities to deliver inclusive and gender-sensitive services. This included training healthcare professionals, social workers and other service providers to better serve the needs of women, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. However, challenges remained in ensuring consistent access across regions and sectors, with gaps in reaching the most marginalized individuals, particularly in remote areas, due to varying capacities and readiness of local institutions. According to interviews, these gave rise to gaps in service delivery. Some regions still struggled with limited resources and logistical challenges, making it difficult to reach the most marginalized individuals, including those in geographically isolated or underserved areas. The disparities in regional capacity and institutional readiness highlighted the need for further support to ensure equitable access to essential services for all vulnerable populations.

Governance, Human Rights and Rule of law

OUTCOME 2: By 2025, state institutions at all levels effectively design and implement gender-sensitive, human rights- and evidence-based public policies and provide quality services in an inclusive, transparent and accountable manner.

Corresponding outputs:

Output 2.1: Systems and capacities to implement the 2030 Agenda through participatory and inclusive budgeting and planning are enhanced.

Output 2.2: Institutions and systems enabled to develop and implement institutional reforms towards more effective, transparent and inclusive governance and service provision at the national and local levels.

Output 2.3: Capacities, functions and financing of rule of law and national human rights institutions and systems strengthened to expand access to justice and combat discrimination, with a focus on women and marginalized groups.

Output 2.4: Triangular development initiatives are in place to support the positioning of Kazakhstan, with a focus on empowerment of women.

The 20 projects under Outcome 2 had a total budget of \$20.1 million, with \$15.6 million spent between January 2021 and April 2024. Figure 5 provides an overview of annual budgets and expenditures as well as the mobilized resources for the Outcome.

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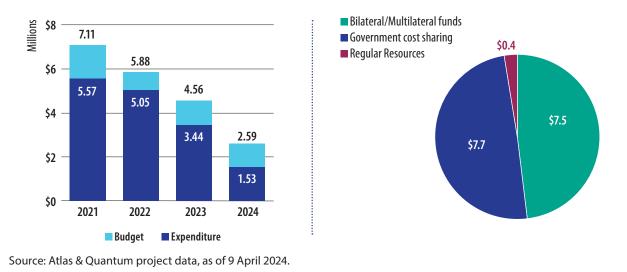


FIGURE 5. Budgeted amounts and expenditure in Outcome 2 and funding sources (US\$)

Finding 4. UNDP support enhanced state institutions in Kazakhstan to develop gender-sensitive, human rights-based, and evidence-driven public policies, and deliver inclusive, transparent and accountable services.

In the area of Governance, Human Rights, and Rule of Law, UNDP navigated a challenging context. There were challenges related to fostering systemic changes in law enforcement and the impartiality of the judicial system; the persistence of corruption risks that prevent government agencies from effectively working in the human rights area; and issues with public associations, peaceful meetings, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and the lack of anti-discriminatory legislation.⁴⁹ UNDP contributed to progress towards Outcome 2 by strengthening the National Human Rights Institution, the National Protective Mechanism, and promoting linkages between business and human rights. The democratic governance portfolio focused on capacity building for national human rights institutions, public administration reform, the empowerment of women, and human rights.

UNDP contributed to the capacity and policy development in the National Human Rights Centre and Ministry of Justice, embedding a human rights-based approach within those entities.⁵⁰ The Country Office's support for the Capacity Assessment mission provided crucial recommendations to enhance the functions and organizational framework of the Human Rights Commissioner, ensuring alignment with the Paris Principles.⁵¹ These recommendations were endorsed by the Human Rights Commissioner. Stakeholder interviews emphasized that this intervention not only strengthened the Commissioner's capacity to adhere to international human rights standards but also emphasized the importance of participation and inclusivity, ensuring that the institution is responsive to the needs of all citizens, particularly marginalized groups. The assessment laid the groundwork for the development of Kazakhstan's National Action Plan on Business and

⁴⁹ Amnesty International. 'Kazakhstan 2023.' 2023. Last accessed: 5 September 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/eastern-europe-and-central-asia/kazakhstan/report-kazakhstan/</u>.

⁵⁰ Interview with stakeholders.

⁵¹ Interview with stakeholders.

Human Rights, which aims to integrate human rights considerations into business practices. In this context, UNDP advocated for the Government to incorporate business into the human rights agenda by supporting companies in developing and implementing human rights due diligence policies.⁵²

In 2023, Kazakhstan advanced human rights protections by endorsing a comprehensive Action Plan on Human Rights and the Rule of Law⁵³ covering key areas such as gender equality, child rights and freedom of association. To this end, UNDP conducted the first-ever National Baseline Assessment of human rights in the business sector, which included a participatory approach involving diverse stakeholders (private sector, CSOs) and informed the forthcoming National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights. This important strategic document was drafted with the help of the Country Office, which further assisted the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in streamlining processes and introduced the first Business and Human Rights project, funded by the Government of Japan.

UNDP provided technical and financial support to enhance the knowledge and work of the regional representatives of the Human Rights Commissioner and participants of the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) to ensure effective responses to citizens' complaints and the prevention of torture and cruel treatment in closed institutions. The project faced challenges with delivery during Covid-19, and the pandemic also raised the issue of digital transformation. This included the need for extended use of digital technologies by NPM participants, including in their monitoring visits to the detention centres and prisons. The pandemic also accelerated work on the development and testing of the National Prevention Mechanism Information System for case management, which was successfully launched and handed over to the national partner. The national partners recognized the CO's technical expertise that facilitated and aided in opening up prisons for oversight.

One of the key outcomes of the support to the NPM was the transfer of health services, previously managed by the Ministry of Interior (Mol), to the Ministry of Health (MoH). This shift of responsibility significantly enhanced transparency, accountability and inclusivity within the system. According to stakeholder interviews, the transition resolved long-standing issues and fostered better cooperation and alignment. As a result, the integration of health services into the MoH improved the quality and efficiency of medical care in detention facilities, further ensuring that health services adhered to civilian standards and human rights principles.⁵⁴

Finding 5. UNDP contributed to substantive legislative advances promoting gender equality and supporting other vulnerable groups. However, engagement with CSOs on sensitive human rights issues was constrained and systemic challenges remained unaddressed.

Many stakeholders interviewed noted that UNDP's advocacy and support for the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was a significant contribution. This marked an important achievement in enhancing the alignment with international human rights standards. UNDP's role in advocating for the ratification of the Optional Protocol and supporting the NHRI through training and workshops was acknowledged in interviews with CSOs. However, UNDP's engagement with CSOs working on sensitive human rights issues was limited. Interviewed stakeholders indicated that CSOs perceived UNDP as an ally of the Government, undermining the CO's ability to address systemic issues.

⁵² Interview with stakeholders.

⁵³ Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan. 'On the approval of Follow-up Plan for Human Rights and the Rule of Law.' 28 April 2022. Last accessed: 22 November 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/adilet/documents/details/338328?lang=en</u>.

⁵⁴ Information submitted by the representative of the NPM.

Collaborating with the Government, UNDP enhanced the skills of 2,500 local leaders (Akims) on state obligations regarding adequate housing for people with disabilities, relevant legislation and international human rights conventions, effective community engagement, and advocacy for persons with disabilities. The focus of this support was on expanding local government functions and introducing mechanisms for direct financing of local budgets to foster more effective governance reforms. By strengthening local governance capacities, UNDP contributed to creating a critical mass of professionals in the regions working directly with the vulnerable groups.

Finding 6. UNDP supported the introduction of innovative methods in public administration.

UNDP's strategic coordination with state bodies in Kazakhstan and regional partners introduced innovative methods in public administration, exemplified by the launch of accelerators aimed at improving governance efficiency. The CO contributed to these efforts in innovation through digitalization by facilitating the implementation of the regional project in collaboration with the Astana Civil Service Hub (ACSH) and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) of the Republic of Korea. Specifically, the Country Office supported conducting analytical studies, organizing workshops with the involvement of leading Korean experts, and arranging study visits to South Korean government agencies. At the outcome level these efforts aimed to build the capacity of civil servants in Central Asia and the Caucasus, enabling them to adopt innovative governance approaches and enhance the digitalization of public service delivery across the region.⁵⁵ However, the specific indicators to assess the achievement of these stated goals were not introduced in the result framework and the outcome-level results of these initiatives are yet to be fully achieved.

Diversified and knowledge-based economic growth

OUTCOME 3: By 2025, all people in Kazakhstan, especially the most vulnerable, benefit from inclusive, resilient, and sustainable economic development with improved productive capacities, skills and equal opportunities for sustainable and decent jobs, livelihoods and businesses.

Corresponding outputs:

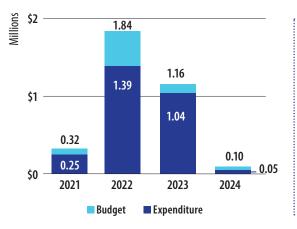
Output 3.1: Skills development opportunities, policies and platforms facilitated to strengthen labour force resilience.

Output 3.2: Policies and partnerships in place to support economic diversification and transition to knowledge-based economy.

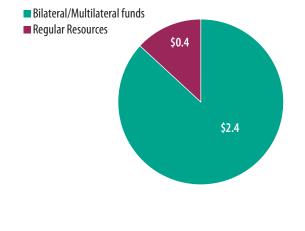
Output 3.3: Local economic development enhanced through value chain integration and facilitation of regional development programmes.

⁵⁵ Topics of capacity-building activities included the following: 'Ecosystems and Conducive Environments for Innovation and Digitalization to Flourish,' Policy Making for Development of Innovation and Digitalization,'Innovation and Digitalization Policy for Efficient Implementation,'Digital Government Policies and Best Practices of the Republic of Korea,'Appraisal of the Needs-Assessment Survey Results on Digitalization,'Cooperation and Capacity Development in Digital Government Policy Frameworks,'Provision of Public Services Using the Latest Digital Technologies,'Open Data Policies, Practices, and Cases,' and 'Change Management for Digital Transformation.'

The five projects under Outcome 3 had a total budget of \$3.4 million, with \$2.7 million spent between January 2021 and April 2024. Figure 6 provides an overview of annual budgets and expenditures as well as the mobilized resources for the Outcome.







Source: Atlas & Quantum project data, as of 9 April 2024.

Finding 7. UNDP contributed to strengthening labour force resilience in Kazakhstan through a series of targeted skills development opportunities and platforms, particularly in response to the economic challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. By addressing the skills gap, UNDP supported the transition to a more knowledge-intensive and diversified economic model, with an emphasis on sustainability and green transition. Assessing the impact of these initiatives remained a challenge, notably linked to the generation of data and studies on the post-intervention labour market trajectory of direct beneficiaries.

One of the central initiatives supported by UNDP was the 'COVID-19 Solidarity Fund for Kazakhstan,' a collaborative effort involving the Ministry of National Economy, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the World Bank. As stated in project progress reports and minutes of board meetings, one key achievement was the employment support provided through training and retraining programmes delivered to women in rural areas, unemployed individuals, 'unproductively self-employed' individuals, and people with disabilities.⁵⁶ A key output was the report produced by the Applied Economic Research Centre (AERC) published by the ADB, which identified the most in-demand skills in the post-COVID labour market.⁵⁷ This report later provided an important input for the development of short-term gender-inclusive online training courses, which, according to interviewees, became available in early 2024. Given the recent start of the courses, sufficient data was not available to assess the results. According to the government stakeholders interviewed, the Fund contributed to minimizing the pandemic's impact on vulnerable populations and prepared the labour market for post-crisis recovery, particularly in emerging industries, and an important component in this context was the support provided to SMEs with green technologies, contributing to economic diversification.

⁵⁶ UNDP. 'COVID-19 Solidarity Fund for Kazakhstan.' 2023 Annual Progress Report; and UNDP. 'Annual Work Plan 2024. Project Title: COVID-19 Solidarity Fund for Kazakhstan.'

⁵⁷ ADB. 'Study of the COVID-19 Impact on the Economy of Kazakhstan.' 2021. Available at: <u>https://www.adb.org/documents/study-covid-19-impact-economy-kazakhstan</u>.

In rural areas, the 'One Village - One Product' initiative provided more than 20 training programmes focused on leadership and product development, benefiting more than 300 women. This initiative also included four exhibitions to showcase the products of local producers, enhancing their visibility in both domestic and international markets.⁵⁸ According to interviewed beneficiaries, the project helped local producers improve their products and connect with broader markets, a key aspect of value chain development. The completion of the subsidized apprenticeship programme, implemented by the Civil Fund 'Kameda,' was another achievement. According to interviews, it provided training to 260 individuals who lost their jobs due to the pandemic. The objective was to help them find new employment, start their own businesses or pursue further education. However, the evaluation found weaknesses with regard to the direct follow-up on the trajectory of beneficiaries to determine the level of insertion into the labour market.

UNDP also helped to establish Women Entrepreneurship Centres (WECs) in 17 cities and regions across Kazakhstan. These centres, benefiting more than 8,700 women by the end of 2022, provided training, mentoring, and business development support.⁵⁹ Interviewees noted that this initiative advanced women's economic empowerment by equipping them with the skills and resources necessary to start and grow their businesses. The Eco-Damu microcredit scheme⁶⁰ (implemented with support from the Global Environment Facility and the Government), supported rural women entrepreneurs near protected natural areas. This programme financed 39 business projects and created 56 new jobs, with a strong focus on gender equality and sustainable economic development.⁶¹ Beyond those outputs there were no data or assessments available to indicate whether any transformational effects were achieved, or to what extent.

Energy and Environment

OUTCOME 4: By 2025, all people in Kazakhstan, in particular the most vulnerable, benefit from increased climate resilience, sustainable management of environment and clean energy, and sustainable rural and urban development.

Corresponding outputs:

Output 4.1: Solutions developed, and resources mobilized for more sustainable use of ecosystems for the improvement of the well-being of local communities and nature.

Output 4.2: Solutions developed, financed and applied at scale for structural transformation of energy sector and improved public health.

Output 4.3: Environmentally sound chemicals and waste management system aligned with international standards and obligations.

Output 4.4: Climate change measures integrated into national policies, strategies and planning.

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⁵⁸ UNDP. 'COVID-19 Solidarity Fund for Kazakhstan.' 2022 Annual Progress Report.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Kerteshev T.S. & Akhmetzhanov G.A., 'Microcredit Scheme – A Financial Solution to Save Biological Diversity' Eco-Damu. 2017.

⁶¹ Interviews with stakeholders.

The 21 projects under Outcome 4 had a total budget of \$30.1 million, with \$15 million spent between January 2021 and April 2024. Figure 7 provides an overview of annual budgets and expenditures as well as the mobilized resources for the Outcome.

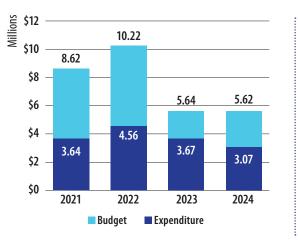
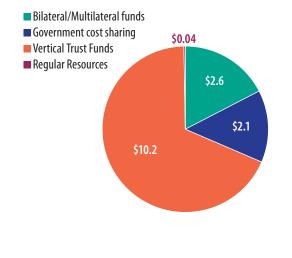


FIGURE 7. Budgeted amounts and expenditure in Outcome 4 and funding sources (US\$)



Source: Atlas & Quantum project data, as of 9 April 2024.

Finding 8. UNDP contributed strongly to policy and regulatory reform covering many aspects of energy and environment, stepping up the efforts of the previous cycle, supporting the Government in formulating its ambitious agenda.

UNDP contributed to the Government's policy reforms, including: (a) the ambitious Carbon Neutrality Strategy 2060 (2023); (b) the Enhanced NDC, which now, importantly, include climate change adaptation and community resilience; (c) the 'Concept for the development of energy saving and increasing energy efficiency of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023 – 2029' (2023) and the Roadmap for energy saving and improving energy efficiency in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2022-2026 (2021);⁶² and (d) the updated draft Green Economy Concept (2023), which aligned with the national policies, regulations, SDGs targets and indicators, other international agreements, such as the Paris Climate Agreement, as well as the plans of the Government, to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.⁶³

UNDP supported the development and application of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)⁶⁴ tool, which was first applied for conducting an Environmental Assessment for the Astana City Masterplan (2024-2028). UNDP contributed to the development of the National Agro-Industrial Sector Development Programme (2021-2026) and the Kazakhstan Land Degradation Neutrality concept. This work was particularly significant given that 78 percent of the total land of Kazakhstan is vulnerable to land

⁶² The Roadmap stipulated, inter alia, (a) a decrease in energy intensity of the industrial sector by 10% thanks to economic incentives for enterprises under energy saving projects and increasing energy efficiency, taking into account new solutions and technological modernization of industry, appointment of energy managers for 800 industrial enterprises and conducting the third stage of energy audit; (b) improved tariff setting system to give impetus to updating the technical condition of energy facilities assets by 10%, and (c) improved financing mechanisms related to energy saving projects in order to develop the market for energy service contracts and conclude energy service agreements.

⁶³ Awaiting Presidential approval at the time of writing this report.

⁶⁴ SEA approaches help mainstream adaptation to climate change into strategic planning.

degradation and 21.3 percent is degraded.⁶⁵ Moreover, 31.7 percent of the population is exposed to land degradation and more than 58 percent of the population is exposed to drought, leading to the Government of Kazakhstan committing to restoring more than 4 million hectares of degraded land⁶⁶ and achieving a neutral balance of land degradation by 2030.⁶⁷ UNDP also contributed to the drafting of the new Water Code (at the time of writing, it was discussed in the Mazhlis), and of Kazakhstan's Sustainable Public Procurement policy to align with international standards.

UNDP also assisted the Government in reporting on progress related to climate change, supporting preparation and submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of the fourth and fifth gender-mainstreamed Biennial Reports and the Eighth National Communication,⁶⁸ with updates on GHG inventories.

Pilot measures promoted by UNDP addressing climate change were mostly integrated into national policies, strategies and planning. This applied, for example, to: (a) the application of energy performance and energy audit requirements in buildings;⁶⁹ (b) the model for financing energy-efficient modernization in pilot multi-apartment residential buildings;⁷⁰ (c) the schemes to incentivize the use of the Renewable Energy sources with subsidized credit lines;⁷¹ (d) the model for strengthening Protected Area (PA) management and financial planning for improved state financing;⁷² and (e) incentivizing water saving measures with a nationwide state programme on grants and subsidies for irrigation systems, as well as for the purchase of drip and sprinkler irrigation equipment to stimulate farmers to apply water-saving technologies at 50 percent.⁷³ To ensure the practical implementation of the country's strategic low-carbon and green goals, UNDP contributed to the development and implementation of secondary legislation related to climate change aspects of the Environmental Code, GHG emissions calculation methodologies, and biodiversity financing frameworks.⁷⁴ An area in which UNDP legislative initiatives, despite achieving important milestones, did not fully meet expectations, was the sustainable management of chemicals.

⁶⁵ Aibarshyn Akhmetkali, 'UN Expert Warns of Land Degradation Risks in Central Asia.' The Astana Times. Last accessed: 22 November 2024. Available at: <u>https://astanatimes.com/2024/03/un-expert-warns-of-land-degradation-risks-in-central-asia/</u>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Economics of Land Degradation Initiatives (ELD). 'Kazakhstan.' Last accessed: 22 November 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.eld-initiative.org/en/country-work/asia/kazakhstan</u>.

⁶⁸ The 8th National Communication and 5th Biennial Report of Kazakhstan to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change were prepared by national experts under a joint project by the Ministry of Ecology, Geology, and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan and UNDP, with financial support from the Global Environment Facility. The report provides comprehensive information on climate change, based on data from various sources and organizations. It includes nine sections covering national conditions, GHG emissions, policies regulating emissions, projections of policy impacts, climate change adaptation, financial resources, technology transfer, and climate change education. For more information, please consult this website: https://www.undp.org/kazakhstan/publications/8th-national-communication-and-5th-biennial-report-republic-kazakhstan-un-frameworkconvention-climate-change.

⁶⁹ See for example Zhaxylyk Tokayev, International Consultant for SECCA 'Kazakhstan's experience in implementing energy efficient measures in residential and public buildings. Achieved results and prospects.' 2024. Last accessed: 24 November 2024. Available at: <u>https://secca.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Day-4.4-Zhaxylyk-Tokayev_ENG.pdf</u>.

⁷⁰ See UNDP, 'An effective financing model for the modernization of multi-apartment residential buildings was implemented in the capital'. Last accessed: O3 December 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.undp.org/kazakhstan/press-releases/effective-financing-model-modernization-multi-apartment-residential-buildings-was-implemented-capital</u>. Moreover, since 2021, the financing of such projects in residential buildings was carried out the Republic of Kazakhstan "Program for the Development of Regions." For more information see: L. Schreckenbach and A.V. Bely 'On the Systemic organisation of Modernization of the Multi-Dwelling Housing stock in Kazakhstan for the Purpose of Decarbonisation.' 2022. Last accessed: 24 November 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/20220411_KAZ_PROMHOUSE_article_EER_short_en.pdf</u>.

⁷¹ Implemented by the DAMU Fund, for more information please see <u>https://damu.kz/en/</u>.

⁷² The updated structure of the Management Plans for Specially Protected Natural Areas, as well as the methodological recommendations for their development, developed by the project and approved by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources. Source: UNDP CO.

⁷³ See GoK's Information note on 'Kazakhstan to fully ensure its water security: new measures approved by Government' 2024. Available at: https://primeminister.kz/en/news/kazakhstan-to-fully-ensure-its-water-security-new-measures-approved-by-government-27143.

An updated order titled 'On approval of tariffs for services provided by Pas' was developed and approved by the Government. A recommended list of the main types of paid services provided by Pas was also developed, and the corresponding tariffs have been calculated. As of August 2024, 16 Protected Areas had new management plans tied to budgets. Public expenditure on protected natural areas for 2023 was \$70,354,049, representing 95% increase compared to 2022. Source: UNDP CO.

While the Environmental Code of Kazakhstan included a regulatory framework for Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) and mercury management, the country did not yet join the Minamata Convention and the planned Centre for Chemical Conventions was not yet established.⁷⁵

Finding 9. UNDP contributed to the development of innovative approaches to finance energy and environment policy implementation, leading to their scaled-up implementation by the Government and development partners, with a notable impact. This was supported by substantial capacity development efforts. UNDP also launched a significant initiative to assist the Government in its journey toward Just Transition in energy, marking an important step in support of the Government's ambitious Coal Transition goals.

UNDP developed and piloted innovative green finance measures for sustainable practices, which were then scaled up by the Government and multilateral banks to accelerate the structural transformation of the energy sector. This included initiatives such as site-specific renewable energy auctions and subsidy schemes for renewable energy sources (RES) and energy efficiency (EE) measures in residential buildings. As a result, more than 36,000 people gained access to clean renewable energy, according to the UNDP CO.⁷⁶ The auction and subsidy schemes for RES encouraged small producers to adopt renewable energy, contributing to a greater share of renewables in the overall energy mix. At the time of writing this report, this share reached 6 percent, with plans to double it in the near future.⁷⁷ In the case of site-specific auctions, there was a decline in electricity costs (\$0,03 per kWh in the most recent auction).⁷⁸ Interviews indicated that in areas experiencing electricity shortages and frequent power outages, the implementation of renewable energy projects enhanced resilience for local businesses. These innovative green finance mechanisms were reflected in the legislation and policies mentioned earlier and were institutionalized by the Government and managed by the state agency DAMU.⁷⁹ The DAMU Fund reported support for 128 green projects totalling \$422 million over the entire period of collaboration.⁸⁰

UNDP's support for the Government at both the policy level and through innovative pilot projects was a significant positive factor. The implementation by DAMU, with its nationwide presence, played a crucial role in ensuring that the schemes were operational across the entire country. The subsidy mechanism for RES helped to ensure that the financing schemes became affordable by the companies and individuals across all financial backgrounds.⁸¹ UNDP piloted such green finance instruments as 'Sustainability' bonds⁸² and green subsidized bonds in 2023. According to project reports, the green finance instruments mobilized \$3.5 million, leveraging an additional \$290 million, achieving a \$127 leverage for every donor dollar.⁸³ With UNDP support, a framework was also developed for sustainable biomass fuel production which contributed to improved public health, given that new biofuel briquette subindustry benefited 149 people, predominantly women, according to UNDP.⁸⁴

⁷⁵ UNDP.'Terminal Evaluation of the "Strengthening national capacity of the Republic of Kazakhstan in regulating chemicals through fulfilling commitments under multilateral environmental agreements" project.'

⁷⁶ UNDP. 'Kazakhstan's Results Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2023.' 2023.

⁷⁷ Interview with stakeholders.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ DAMU Entrepreneurship Development Fund JSC (DAMU Fund) was established in 1997. Since 2010, the DAMU Fund is a financial agent of subsidizing rates of remuneration on loans of entrepreneurs and guaranteeing loans of entrepreneurs to banks, and also performs the functions of operator of training and consulting programmes within the framework of the state programme 'Business Roadmap 2020' (hereinafter - DKB 2020 programme). Available at: <u>https://damu.kz/en/o-fonde/</u>.

⁸⁰ UNDP. 'Kazakhstan ROAR 2023.' 2023.

⁸¹ Interviews with stakeholders and site visits. See also examples in UNDP. 'Transition to renewable energy sources: economic benefits for entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan.' 12 February 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.undp.org/kazakhstan/stories/transition-renewable-energy-sources-economic-benefitsentrepreneurs-kazakhstan</u>.

⁸² Sustainability bonds are financial (debt) instruments where the proceeds are exclusively applied to finance or re-finance a combination of both green and social projects.

⁸³ UNDP. 'Kazakhstan ROAR 2023.' 2023.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

UNDP efforts to support green energy and energy efficiency were coordinated well with other development partners, including the World Bank (which supported the Housing modernization with RES-based heating project, started by UNDP); ADB (especially in relation to the financial support schemes for RES, and focused more recently on assisting the Government in achieving its net-zero emissions goals); and USAID (the Power Central Asia Activity, which, inter alia, provides assistance to the Government to integrate clean energy and energy efficiency into energy planning).

UNDP assisted the Government in developing the Just Transition Roadmap for Coal Transition under PAGE, marking a crucial step toward safeguarding those impacted by the coal transition. This initiative exemplified the intersection of governance and sustainable energy.⁸⁵ Although it was only the first step in supporting the Government's Just Transition efforts, it was a significant milestone, as it outlined key areas for future action and identified pressing needs. While the private sector was crucial for Kazakhstan's green transition, especially in the shift toward clean energy sources and energy-efficient technologies, many entities capable of making substantial investments in green financing were primarily located in sectors that heavily depend on fossil fuels and other environmentally harmful practices. The low priority given to green investment by the private sector reflected the lack of an adequately strong conducive policy environment,⁸⁶ something that is expected to improve with the removal of tariff subsidies.

The innovative financial mechanisms for biodiversity under the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) project, coupled with the development of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) under the Global Biodiversity Framework – Early Action Support global project, along with several downstream projects (e.g., Conservation, Turan Tiger), collectively addressed enhanced biodiversity preservation from multiple angles. The financial mechanisms aimed at the sustainable use of ecosystems to improve the well-being of local communities and preserve natural resources. These mechanisms were either approved by the Government (as in the case of the sustainable management of protected areas) or were in the process of approval (as in the case of biodiversity offsets, subsidized game breeding, certification in the field of ecotourism, mechanisms to attract positive carbon offsets from the international markets, and the local carbon trading system). In the case of the improved PA management, the Government scaled up the implementation beyond the pilot PAs supported by UNDP.⁸⁷ According to UNDP, ecosystem conservation through expanding protected areas reserved more than 1.65 million hectares, with funding secured through the nationwide adoption of new Management Plans, increasing from approximately \$17.2 million in 2018 to \$64.5 million in 2023.⁸⁸

UNDP interventions strengthened capacities across various institutions, directly involving ministries, state agencies, local government administrations, and scientific research institutes. Organizations such as QazaqGreen, the Kazakhstan Association of Biodiversity Conservation, the Union of Field Growers of Kazakhstan, and ATAMEKEN benefited indirectly from their involvement in UNDP projects as contractors or partners, which positively influenced their work. A good example of building the capacities of the local governments was provided by the Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA) project: UNDP established an institutional framework to support urban mitigation projects through capacity building for

⁸⁵ Interview with stakeholders. See also, UN PAGE. 'Energy Transition in Monocities. Coal Phase-out Roadmap and Just Transition Action Plan for Ekibastuz (Kazakhstan).' 2023. Available at <u>https://www.un-page.org/static/dc10131616a8f9f1411d844e623463c9/esmia-undp-kazakstan-ekibastuz-2023-06-29final.pdf; and UN PAGE. 'Kazakhstan's journey towards a renewable future.' Available at: <u>https://www.un-page.org/news/kazakhstans-journey-towardsa-renewable-future/</u>.</u>

⁸⁶ World Bank Group, 'Kazakhstan: Country Climate and Development Report.' 2022.

⁸⁷ Interviews with stakeholders. See also UNDP's BIOFIN page on Kazakhstan. Available at: <u>https://www.biofin.org/kazakhstan</u>; and UNDP. 'Kazakhstan Triples Protected Area Budget Advancing Biodiversity Goals.' 2024. Last accessed: 25 November 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.biofin.org/news-and-media/kazakhstan-triples-protected-area-budget-advancing-biodiversity-goals</u>.

⁸⁸ UNDP. 'Kazakhstan ROAR 2023.' 2023.

local governments (Akimats), enabling them to manage public and private service contracts effectively.⁸⁹ Private companies, particularly Energy Service Companies (ESCOs), received support in the form of enhanced regulations and targeted training to better align their operations with their intended goals and objectives.⁹⁰ Housing associations were supported with increased capacity to encourage EE heating in multi-apartment housing,⁹¹ as well as individual farmers, many of whom gained new knowledge of innovative adaptation practices, RE systems, and received innovative equipment as grants or subsidized loans for green initiatives. The progress observed across the various sectors demonstrated that the new skills were effectively put into practice.⁹²

UNDP took calculated risks under this Outcome that proved successful, particularly regarding climate change mitigation and biodiversity, positioning UNDP as a strong 'innovator' in these areas, with support from the Government and other development partners for institutionalization. In contrast, UNDP's portfolio in climate change adaptation was not yet as extensive. While there were notable achievements, particularly in afforestation and promoting water-saving technologies, there were not any prominent cases of innovation in this thematic area. This is expected to change with the ongoing drafting of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP). UNDP also supported measures to enhance meteorological forecasting, but this was only a fraction of the large needs in establishing a modern Multi Hazard Early Warning system (MHEW).

2.3 Overall performance and cross-cutting issues

Partnerships

Finding 10. UNDP's partnership strategy in Kazakhstan was comprehensive, engaging key national institutions, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to ensure sustainability. Under the 2021-2025 CPD, UNDP placed a stronger emphasis on partnerships established by diligent implementation of UNDP's platform approach.⁹³ This included bringing in non-traditional stakeholders such as businesses and foundations marking a greater shift from the earlier strategy, where partnerships were mostly limited to government agencies and international donors.

UNDP's collaboration with international organizations and donors, which was mainly driven by available funding, was instrumental in advancing sustainable development goals in Kazakhstan, providing critical funding, technical expertise, and strategic alignment. UNDP successfully leveraged partnerships with, for example, the ADB,⁹⁴ WB, the EU,⁹⁵ and the Government of Japan,⁹⁶ bringing substantial technical expertise,

⁹² Ibid.

⁸⁹ UNDP. 'Terminal Evaluation of "UNDP-GEF Project: Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions for Low-carbon. Urban Development (NAMA Project)." 2024.

⁹⁰ For a good summary see Oleg Khmelev, 'UNDP-GEF projects role in green funding in Kazakhstan: policies, institutions and practices'. Available at: <u>https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/kz/dcdd2723b83f321db23391b669fe70258a2c704df5a9bb54c8812914127e26a2.pdf</u>.

⁹¹ For a good summary see UNDP. 'More than 300,000 people in Kazakhstan now live and work in more comfortable conditions' 2024. Available at: https://www.undp.org/kazakhstan/press-releases/more-300000-people-kazakhstan-now-live-and-work-more-comfortable-conditions.

⁹³ UNDP. 'Social innovation platforms.' Last accessed: 22 November 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.undp.org/governance/social-innovation-platforms</u>.

⁹⁴ For example, on medical waste management, see UNDP. 'UNDP supports Kazakhstan's healthcare system.' 6 April 2021. Available at: <u>https://www.undp.org/kazakhstan/news/undp-supports-kazakhstans-healthcare-system.</u>

⁹⁵ In the context of the SDG platform for Central Asia, see for example UNDP. 'SDG Platform for Central Asia funded by the European Union: final meeting of the Steering Committee.' 25 June 2024. Last accessed: 22 November 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.undp.org/kazakhstan/press-releases/sdgplatform-central-asia-funded-european-union-final-meeting-steering-committee.</u>

⁹⁶ See UNDP. 'Japan and UNDP launched two joint projects in Kazakhstan to promote corporate Human Rights Due Diligence and tackle climate change.' Last accessed: 9 September 2022. Available at: <u>https://www.undp.org/kazakhstan/news/japan-and-undp-launched-two-joint-projects-kazakhstan-promote-corporate-human-rights-due-diligence-and-tackle-climate-change</u>.

funding, and strategic direction, particularly in areas such as climate-resilient development and sustainable energy (see Finding 9), and economic resilience. For instance, the partnership with the Government of Japan led to advancements in climate-smart agriculture. Similarly, collaborations with the WB and ADB facilitated the implementation of projects that focused on clean energy and climate change adaptation, helping Kazakhstan to align more closely with global environmental targets. The cooperation in the health sector with the Global Fund, World Health Organization, and United Nations Population Fund further exemplified the impact of these international partnerships, particularly in improving the procurement and distribution of essential medicines for vulnerable populations, including those living with HIV/AIDS. This collaboration ensured that critical health interventions reached those most in need despite logistical and bureaucratic hurdles. According to stakeholder interviews, partnership management faced challenges, especially in finding suitable technical partners for specialized tasks such as developing online courses or implementing new technologies.

UNDP built a strong network of partnerships with government entities, including the Ministry of National Economy, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, local authorities, and law enforcement agencies, and positioned itself as a reliable partner to the GoK. These collaborations were essential in implementing initiatives that aligned with Kazakhstan's national strategies. For example, the partnership with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection played a critical role in developing and implementing the DFC. UNDP also worked closely with Kazvodkhoz and Kazhydromet,⁹⁷ strengthening their capacity to address climate change impacts, such as through improved water management systems and enhanced meteorological forecasting. The collaboration with the National Human Rights Centre, regional Human Rights Commissioners, and members of the National Preventive Mechanism strengthened human rights.⁹⁸

UNDP's engagement with local NGOs, such as the Civil Fund 'Kameda,' and private sector entities, including chambers of commerce, was important for reaching and supporting vulnerable populations, including women, youth and rural communities. These partnerships facilitated the delivery of critical services, such as training, mentoring and business development support, which were vital during initiatives such as the 'One Village - One Product' project and the 'COVID-19 Solidarity Fund for Kazakhstan.' For example, the partnership with national NGOs enabled UNDP to deliver tailored support to rural female entrepreneurs and thereby improved their livelihoods through access to funding and capacity-building resources. The involvement of the private sector, particularly in fostering responsible business practices and human rights due diligence, strengthened UNDP's influence in promoting corporate responsibility.⁹⁹

Management and implementation arrangements

Finding 11. UNDP's management and implementation arrangements in Kazakhstan demonstrated flexibility and adaptability, yet faced challenges related to external and internal factors affecting the efficiency of implementation.

UNDP's strategic alignment with national development priorities in Kazakhstan was a key strength of its management approach, as outlined above. UNDP's responsiveness to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as swiftly reallocating resources to maintain essential services for vulnerable populations, highlighted the CO's flexible management capabilities.

99 Ibid.

⁹⁷ Kazvodkhoz is a state-owned enterprise responsible for managing and regulating the country's water resources. It oversees the operation of water infrastructure, including reservoirs, canals, and irrigation systems, and plays a crucial role in water supply for agriculture, industry, and domestic use. Kazhydromet is the country's national meteorological and hydrological service. It provides weather forecasting, climate monitoring, and hydrological data to support agriculture, water management, disaster risk reduction, and environmental protection in the country. It also plays a key role in monitoring and responding to climate change impacts.

⁹⁸ Interview with stakeholders.

However, Kazakhstan's centralized decision-making process, while ensuring consistency across government policies, frequently led to delays in project approvals, such as in the implementation of the Green Economy Concept. Coordination challenges were evident in the execution of the 'Irrigation and Drainage in Kazakhstan' project, where multiple government bodies involved had differing priorities, resulting in fragmented efforts and inefficiencies. Problems related to coordination were also reported in the case of the 'COVID-19 Solidarity Fund for Kazakhstan.' UNDP's proactive engagement with key stakeholders and its flexibility in adapting to changing circumstances allowed it to overcome these hurdles.

A number of projects experienced delays in government budget allocations, which hindered timely execution. These delays disrupted the flow of funds and created uncertainties in planning, as in the case of the Turan Tiger project. UNDP itself also contributed to delays due to insufficient oversights, according to the 2023 audit.¹⁰⁰

Implementation also faced challenges related to procurement inefficiencies, impairing the timely and effective delivery of projects. For instance, delays in securing developers for online educational courses, as part of the 'COVID-19 Solidarity Fund for Kazakhstan' project, led to a reduction in the scope of some initiatives. In projects such as the 'Engagement Facility - Almaty Water Supply' and 'Irrigation and Drainage in Kazakhstan,' shifting national priorities often complicated the implementation process. As national partners adjusted their focus, UNDP was required to modify its approach mid-project, which delayed implementation.

The diverse regional contexts of Kazakhstan further added to the management challenges. For example, the 'Sustainable Agriculture Project' aimed at improving agro-meteorological forecasting faced difficulties due to the varying levels of regional capacity and infrastructure, necessitating tailored interventions. The need for region-specific solutions was also evident in the 'Sustainable Forest Management' project, where environmental and socioeconomic conditions varied widely across the regions involved, requiring a more nuanced approach to project execution.

Resource Mobilization

Finding 12. The CO continued its efforts to diversify its portfolio and donor-base. However, the largest donor for UNDP in Kazakhstan was the Government. This continued to pose risks for UNDP's programme implementation due to fiscal shortfalls and shifting government priorities. This also resulted in difficulties mobilizing funding for areas such as human rights and civil society development. The CO was continuing its efforts to diversify its portfolio and donor-base.

UNDP partnerships with international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the ADB and WB, and bilateral donors such as the Government of Japan, generated substantial funding for projects focused on climate change, renewable energy, and post-COVID economic recovery. UNDP also effectively secured co-financing from the Kazakh government, particularly for initiatives such as the DFC, significantly enhancing the impact of such projects.

Sustaining long-term financial support was difficult, especially for projects heavily reliant on external donor funding. Government budget cuts in 2024,¹⁰¹ which led to the discontinuation of most WECs, according to stakeholder interviews, highlighted the vulnerability of certain programmes to shifts in national funding

¹⁰⁰ UNDP, 'Office of Audit and Investigation.' Report on the Audit of UNDP Kazakhstan. 2023. p. 11.

¹⁰¹ In the first half of 2024, government budget spending decreased by 4.5% year-on-year in real terms, reflecting efforts to tighten fiscal policy amidst economic pressures. See World Bank. 'Kazakhstan Monthly Update'. August 2024. Available at: <u>https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/</u> <u>cde7269f0566af2399c4ba50bba455df-0080062024/original/Kazakhstan-Monthly-Economic-Update-August-2024.pdf</u>.

priorities. The reliance on a limited number of funding sources posed additional risks, underscoring the need for more diversified and sustainable funding mechanisms to ensure the continuity and success of UNDP's initiatives in Kazakhstan. Funding was limited for interventions related to the protection and promotion of human rights, as well as for the development and support of civil society.

UNDP mobilized fewer financial resources than planned for the Energy and Environment thematic area. While funding was secured from sources including the Government, Kazvodkhoz, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the UN Environmental Programme Trust Fund, the Coca-Cola Foundation, Bitfury, and bilateral donors such as the German and Swiss governments (for Biodiversity Finance Initiative, BIOFIN), the need to mobilize additional resources from IFIs was acknowledged by the CO. Although financial resources were not pooled across funding streams, they were strategically allocated based on risk analysis and were optimized by building on synergies between outcomes, such as those related to biodiversity, as pointed out during interviews.

Results-based management / M&E

Finding 13. While UNDP demonstrated a commitment to Results-Based Management (RBM), the low number of decentralized evaluations and monitoring site visits limited the effective utilization of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) insights, hindering the scaling of successful interventions.

UNDP's interventions had clear targets against which progress could be tracked and significant resources were allocated to enhance M&E. For example, in the implementation of social protection programmes and the DFC, the CO made an effort to utilize RBM principles to ensure that those initiatives were addressing the needs of vulnerable populations and contributing to broader social and economic goals. However, there were gaps in fully utilizing M&E insights to scale up successful interventions, which limited the potential impact of those activities.

The review of the Evaluation Plan for 2021-2025 revealed that between 2021 and 2024 external evaluations were conducted only in projects under Outcome 4. This was mostly the case for the projects financed by the vertical funds, dictated by their policies. Across Outcomes, very few project site visits, even planned ones, were undertaken by the M&E Unit. Only one visit was conducted in 2022 even though the Country Office implemented 35 projects. None of the eight planned visits for 2023 were undertaken by mid-2023.¹⁰² While it is understood that as an UMIC, Kazakhstan may have fewer donor-commissioned evaluations, the CO – or more specifically the CO's RBM and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Systems – were not fully prepared for this.

Gender

Finding 14. Through gender-mainstreamed and gender-targeted interventions, as well as policy dialogue, UNDP contributed to gender-inclusive and gender-sensitive development processes in all Outcome areas. Overall progress in promoting and achieving GEWE was constrained by multiple factors, some institutional, but mainly related to deep-rooted cultural norms that limit women's roles in public life. Transformative change, as in shifting gender power relations, remained a distant goal.

¹⁰² UNDP. 'Office of Audit and Investigation.' Report on the Audit of UNDP Kazakhstan. 2023. p. 5.

As part of its efforts to promote GEWE programming, UNDP's Gender Action Plan incorporated recommendations from the 2022 Gender Audit Report.¹⁰³ Under the current CPD, UNDP Kazakhstan made concerted efforts to improve gender mainstreaming in programming and implementation, with a mandatory gender team review of draft project documents.

In the areas of social services (Outcome 1), governance (Outcome 2), and economic development (Outcome 3), UNDP made progress in promoting gender equality and empowering women in Kazakhstan through various gender-inclusive and gender-sensitive initiatives. Under Outcome 1, UNDP played a key role in incorporating gender perspectives into national policies, such as the DFC project, ensuring that economic and social planning were gender-sensitive. For example, by generating gender-disaggregated data, the DFC project provided essential evidence to inform and shape more inclusive policy-making. However, the evaluation found no evidence of how this data and statistics have been utilized in policymaking or decision-making processes. Under Outcome 2, the SCALE project and the Inclusive Society and Human Rights project strengthened civil society's capacity to advocate for gender-sensitive policies and provided support to women affected by the COVID-19 pandemic through capacity-building and awareness-raising. However, the gender equality theme remained insufficiently advanced overall. The number of governance projects with gender marker under Outcome 2 did not increase since the last CPD, and there were only two projects with GEN 3: a Regional Programme project (Supporting the Economic Empowerment of Afghan Women, implemented in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) and the Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions project. There was a commitment at the highest political level of the Republic of Kazakhstan to advance gender equality and the momentum was there to design many initiatives, but the Country Office did not use this momentum in pursuing GEN 3 projects unless they were specifically aligned with donor priorities.¹⁰⁴ In the area of energy and environment (Outcome 4), gender was mainstreamed with EU support in policies such as the Enhanced NDC and the Concept on Transition towards a Green Economy until 2050. UNDP contributed to a comprehensive report on gender balance in the energy sector.¹⁰⁵ The report showed that in general, women expressed more concern about climate change and decarbonization than men. However, the green energy sector employs a higher number of men. Women in all the energy sub-sectors were found to be concentrated in low-skilled and non-specialized jobs. The report also noted the absence of disaggregated gender-specific employment, presenting a significant challenge for monitoring progress toward gender equality and effectively evaluating initiatives designed to promote it. As mentioned above, UNDP subsequently supported the formation of the Women for Just Transition Network.

¹⁰³ UNDP. 'Gender Audit Report in UNDP Kazakhstan Projects.' July 2022.

¹⁰⁴ UN Women. 'Kazakhstan's President delivered a video statement at the Generation Equality Forum.' Press Release. 21 July 2021. Last accessed: 22 November 2024. Available at: <u>https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/07/press-release-kazakhstans-president-delivered-a-video-statement-at-the-generation-equality-forum</u>.

¹⁰⁵ UNDP.'Gender Balance in the Renewable Energy Sector in Kazakhstan: current status, challenges and solutions.' 2023. <u>https://www.undp.org/</u> <u>kazakhstan/publications/gender-balance-renewable-energy-sector-kazakhstan-current-status-challenges-and-solutions</u>.



FIGURE 8. Projects by gender marker and thematic area

LNOB

Finding 15. UNDP's commitment to the LNOB principle was demonstrated through its comprehensive support for vulnerable groups in Kazakhstan, particularly persons with disabilities. However, the mainstreaming of LNOB was progressing more slowly and was less extensive compared to gender-related efforts.

UNDP advanced social protection and inclusion for vulnerable groups by collaborating closely with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. Through the joint project 'Increasing the effectiveness and accessibility of social protection and activation programmes for vulnerable groups of the population' (2021-2023), UNDP played a significant role in refining the social services financing policy, establishing social service integration centres in five regions, and launching a pilot Vocational Rehabilitation Centre in Astana. UNDP also supported the development of the Institute of the Advisor for Persons with Disabilities, strengthening the framework for disability inclusion. The Institute has been operating in Kazakhstan since 2016 as part of a national initiative to enhance the inclusion and rights of persons with disabilities. Supported by the CO and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, the Institute introduced dedicated advisors to regional and municipal leaders, as well as to key ministries. By 2023, these advisors were actively engaged in 13 regional administrations, 4 national ministries, and various municipal and district offices, playing a pivotal role in shaping inclusive policies and promoting disability rights.¹⁰⁶ Following Kazakhstan's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2015 and the Optional Protocol in 2023, UNDP contributed to the development and implementation of the 'National Plan to Ensure the Rights and Improve the Quality of Life of Persons with Disabilities until 2025¹⁰⁷ to improve the quality of life for

¹⁰⁶ Interviews with stakeholders. See also, UNDP. 'Ratification of the Optional Protocol in Kazakhstan: an important step towards protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.' 14 June 2023. Last visited: 19 November 2024. Available at : <u>https://www.undp.org/kazakhstan/news/ratification-optionalprotocol-kazakhstan-important-step-towards-protecting-rights-persons-disabilities.</u>

¹⁰⁷ Official Information Source of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan. 'Kazakhstan implements National Plan for Ensuring Rights and Improving Quality of Life of Persons with Disabilities until 2025.' Last accessed: 22 November 2024. Available at: <u>https://primeminister.kz/en/news/</u>

persons with disabilities, including creating the Portal of Social Services. In 2023, UNDP provided analysis and recommendations for legislative amendments to enhance the social and professional rehabilitation system, illustrating its sustained commitment to ensuring a thorough approach to LNOB.¹⁰⁸

UNDP balanced its support for national and local development processes, ensuring that its initiatives served both urban and rural populations, particularly the most disadvantaged regions. For example, the Small Grants Programme (SGP) 6 involved close cooperation with Akimats, many of which provided co-funding, and targeted the most vulnerable populations in remote and disaster-affected areas such as the Aral Sea region.

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific conducted a LNOB assessment for Kazakhstan,¹⁰⁹ but UNDP did not carry out a specific assessment for its programme. While the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework incorporates the LNOB principle, there was an opportunity for greater alignment in the CPD. The Country Office's recent enhancements to its Social and Environmental Screening, supported by SIDA, represented a positive step forward, but potential remained for developing a more comprehensive LNOB strategy.

Sustainability

Finding 16. UNDP effectively integrated its initiatives into national systems to foster long-term impact beyond its direct involvement. However, external funding constraints and institutional capacity limitations hindered the full realization of long-term sustainability.

Projects such as the UNDP-supported DFC were designed with sustainability in mind, enabling the integration of outcomes and approaches into national systems and ensuring continued operation beyond initial support phases. The DFC's evolution to date demonstrates the potential for innovation to achieve long-term sustainability and scalability. Generally, UNDP's sustainability strategy included equipping beneficiary groups and institutions with the necessary knowledge and skills to continue programme efforts post-completion. This was particularly successful in capacity-building efforts targeting non-state actors, including CSOs, academia, and the private sector. Collaborations with organizations such as QazaqGreen and KABC exemplified the scaling up of innovations in renewable energy and biodiversity conservation.

At the same time, UNDP's efforts in building the capacity of national institutions to sustain and scale up initiatives were sometimes constrained by the uneven readiness and resource availability of local institutions. This inconsistency somewhat reduced the ability to expand successful pilot projects nationally or maintain them without new or additional support.

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See: UNDP. 'Kazakhstan Looks to Europe for Blueprint on Integrating People with Disabilities.' September 18, 2023. Last visited: 19 November 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.undp.org/kazakhstan/news/kazakhstan-looks-europe-blueprint-integrating-people-disabilities</u>.

¹⁰⁹ UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. 'Leaving No One Behind (LNOB): Kazakhstan.' 2022. Last accessed: 6 September 2024. Available at: <u>https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/leaving-no-one-behind-lnob-kazakhstan</u>.

CHAPTER 3 CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

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3.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. The UNDP country programme aligned well with national development goals and demonstrated adaptability by allowing the CO to effectively respond to the evolving national context and emerging challenges.

The UNDP country programme in Kazakhstan demonstrated a high degree of alignment with the country's national development agenda, particularly in addressing core areas such as economic diversification, social inequality reduction and climate resilience. The programme effectively adapted to key national strategies, including the Social Code, the Low Emission Development Strategy, and the Green Economy Concept and thus paved the way for progress in, inter alia, climate resilience and governance reform. UNDP's digitalization efforts directly aligned with the national development objective of increasing access to state support and enhancing service transparency. The programme's strong strategic alignment in all sectors reinforced UNDP's role as a trusted and valued partner in supporting Kazakhstan's development priorities.

In the process of Kazakhstan's economic transition, UNDP played a crucial role in supporting national development priorities while adjusting its approach to align with the expectations of a UMIC. This alignment was evident, for example, in UNDP's focus on developing innovative financing mechanisms, such as site-specific renewable energy auctions and green bonds, aiming to support Kazakhstan's long-term development trajectory and strengthen its institutional capacity to pursue sustainable growth. UNDP also adapted to the reduced availability of traditional donor funding due to Kazakhstan's UMIC status by focusing on capacity building and digitalization, ensuring that the country was equipped to sustain its development gains independently.

The adaptability of the UNDP programming was a key strength, allowing UNDP to effectively respond to the evolving national context and emerging challenges. The CO demonstrated flexibility in adjusting its focus and operations. UNDP realigned its activities to better address critical national issues, such as social inequalities and climate change, and to support national frameworks through innovative approaches. This adaptability was further evident in the CO's ability to react to unforeseen challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, by reallocating resources and adjusting timelines to ensure continued progress.

While the programme's alignment with national priorities was strong, there were missed opportunities in creating a more cohesive approach across interrelated thematic areas. In particular, the absence of a formalized mechanism to map cross-cutting issues limited UNDP's ability to fully exploit synergies between sectors such as governance and climate resilience. Proactively integrating these themes, particularly through initiatives such as environmental justice and governance, would have further strengthened the programme's alignment with national development objectives.

Conclusion 2. UNDP-supported initiatives effectively addressed vulnerabilities and promoted inclusivity for marginalized groups. Challenges existed in ensuring consistent service delivery across regions due to inconsistencies in local capacities and buy-in.

UNDP addressed vulnerabilities and the principle of LNOB through a range of initiatives focused on social protection, economic development, health services, and environmental sustainability. Central to UNDP's efforts was improving access to quality basic social services for marginalized groups, including the poor, women, and people with disabilities by streamlining service delivery and making the social protection system more inclusive and responsive to the needs of vulnerable populations. The DFC initiative stood out as it created the basis for a direct positive impact on tens of thousands of citizens by integrating data from multiple government ministries and streamlining access to social services. The initiative was a prime

example of how digital tools could be used to enhance social protection systems, but its impact was limited by the regional inequalities that persisted in Kazakhstan's service delivery landscape. Concerns around data protection and privacy due to the nascent legal framework in Kazakhstan were raised.

UNDP-supported initiatives promoting economic diversification and addressing climate change-induced challenges helped build resilience among vulnerable populations. Key efforts included supporting SMEs in the field of green technologies and fostering rural women's entrepreneurship to diversify the economy. Among the direct beneficiaries, initiatives such as the WECs improved livelihoods, created jobs, and helped vulnerable groups adapt to economic changes by reducing dependence on single industries. Due to variability in regional capacity, which led to uneven implementation and gaps in reaching the most marginalized individuals, particularly in remote areas, widespread results beyond the direct beneficiaries were not observed. Potential progress on LNOB indicators in the CPD could not be assessed due to the absence of data.

Conclusion 3. UNDP's strategy in Kazakhstan promoted human rights and gender equality; however, ongoing barriers to systemic governance reform hindered progress toward creating effective, inclusive and accountable institutions.

Notable outcomes included the endorsement of the comprehensive Action Plan on Human Rights and the Rule of Law, which signified progress in embedding human rights considerations into governance frameworks. Similarly, the establishment of the National Human Rights Centre, supported by UNDP, played a crucial role in institutionalizing human rights mechanisms, particularly in promoting business practices aligned with human rights standards. However, systemic barriers limited broader impact to date. Challenges persisted in fostering structural changes within law enforcement, ensuring judicial impartiality, and addressing entrenched corruption risks. Issues related to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and the absence of anti-discrimination legislation further hindered comprehensive governance reforms. These factors restricted the ability of UNDP's initiatives to create sustainable, systemic shifts in governance and human rights, despite institutional gains.

UNDP's efforts in the area of gender equality were significant in promoting women's economic empowerment and reducing social inequalities through targeted local interventions. The establishment of WECs stood out as an important achievement, enabling several thousand women across the country to access business development services, skills training and mentorship. These initiatives contributed to local economic growth and increased women's participation in economic activities, particularly in rural and marginalized areas. Regrettably, due to lack of continued government funding, the initiative failed to have a looked-for sustainable impact. The integration of gender-sensitive approaches in social protection initiatives, such as the DFC, ensured that women's specific needs were considered in programme design. However, structural changes remained elusive, with significant social and institutional barriers hindering the country programme's effects at national level. Deep-rooted cultural norms and societal expectations continued to limit women's participation in public life, as well as progress on gender-based violence, wage inequality, and workplace discrimination.

Conclusion 4. UNDP contributed to promoting inclusive and sustainable economic development by strengthening SMEs, advancing the green economy, and improving skills training. Challenges remained in scaling these efforts and reaching the most vulnerable populations.

UNDP contributed significantly to enhancing Kazakhstan's productive capacities through targeted support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), promotion of the green and digital economies, and fostering innovation. These interventions were aligned with national priorities for sustainable economic

growth and diversification, particularly in the context of Kazakhstan's transition to a more inclusive and knowledge-based economy (see Conclusion 1). By promoting green technologies and integrating digital tools, UNDP not only supported economic growth but also helped to steer Kazakhstan towards a low-carbon development path.

In addition to promoting economic diversification, UNDP's focus on vocational training and skills development played a vital role in equipping the workforce with the capabilities required for the evolving job market. This approach was particularly important given the need for Kazakhstan to build human capital in line with its aspirations for sustainable, inclusive growth. While these initiatives had positive localized impacts, their scale remained limited. Challenges also persisted in reaching the most vulnerable populations in remote and rural areas, where access to resources, education and economic opportunities remained limited.

Conclusion 5. UNDP played a significant role in advancing sustainable solutions in climate change mitigation through innovations in renewable energy and energy efficiency, green finance and biodiversity. In the area of climate change adaptation, the ongoing drafting of the NAP is expected to strengthen current efforts and establish a more sustainable foundation. UNDP's initial support for enhancing meteorological forecasting laid the groundwork for developing a modern MHEWS.

Building on its ability to support both upstream- and downstream-level initiatives and strong implementation capacity, UNDP strategically positioned itself as a long-term and trusted partner of the Government in the energy and environment area. UNDP supported the drafting of numerous policies, many of which were adopted, including the Carbon Neutrality Strategy 2060 (2023), the Concept on Transition towards a Green Economy by 2050, and the Enhanced NDC (for the first time including climate change adaptation).

UNDP played a key role in supporting major innovations related to renewable energy and energy efficiency finance that were subsequently institutionalized and replicated by the Government and IFIs, particularly in renewable energy and energy efficiency finance. Despite challenges such as the continued presence of energy tariff subsidies, these efforts increased the share of renewable energy in the overall energy mix and reduced unit prices. UNDP built the capacities of both state agencies and local governments to implement and sustain the green agenda, and engaged extensively with the private sector.

UNDP's support to the water sector in Kazakhstan was important due to the country's limited freshwater resources and climate vulnerability. UNDP contributed to improving water management and ensuring sustainable access to water resources, particularly in vulnerable rural communities. Challenges remained in scaling these initiatives to ensure equitable access across regions, especially in remote areas where infrastructure and institutional capacities needed further strengthening. The new Water Code (pending adoption) and the drafting of NAP are expected to put these efforts on a sustainable footing. Kazakhstan needs a modern Multi-Hazard Early Warning System and the initial UNDP support which improved meteorological forecasting was the first step in that direction.

3.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Adopt a more focused and integrated programming approach, while leveraging UNDP's key strengths (based on conclusions 1, 4, and 5).

UNDP should enhance integration across its programming areas by focusing on key national priorities such as economic diversification, climate resilience, and governance reform, specifically targeting the promotion of digitalization and innovation. UNDP should move beyond sectoral silos by fostering strong linkages between these areas. For example, UNDP could support the creation of a Digital Climate Governance Platform that integrates climate resilience planning with digital tools to enhance decision-making and transparency in environmental governance. This would require capacity-building initiatives for local authorities to manage these platforms effectively, particularly in regions where digital infrastructure and governance capacities need to be enhanced.

UNDP should expand its focus on inclusive value chain development by providing SMEs with digital tools for market access and by promoting inclusive green finance such as microcredit schemes targeted at rural women entrepreneurs in sustainable agriculture. UNDP should strengthen the alignment of its digitalization efforts with environmental justice and resource governance, ensuring that vulnerable groups are included in these developments through targeted policies such as integrating gender-sensitive climate justice measures into national frameworks.

Recommendation 2. Strengthen the approach to strategic resource mobilization and engagement with the private sector and financing institutions (based on conclusions 1, 2, and 5).

In light of Kazakhstan's UMIC status, UNDP should adopt a comprehensive resource mobilization strategy that includes deepened engagement with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, alongside Kazakhstan's private sector, to fund initiatives that support the green transition. A primary focus should be the scaling up of green finance mechanisms, such as green bonds and renewable energy auctions, with UNDP acting as a technical partner to facilitate these investments.

More specifically, UNDP should expand green financing mechanisms to support Kazakhstan's NAP and the Carbon Neutrality Strategy 2060. This could include advocating for the development of blended finance models that combine public and private funds to support investments in renewable energy and climate-smart agriculture. UNDP should build partnerships with private sector entities involved in sectors such as sustainable water management and biodiversity conservation, encouraging them to contribute to biodiversity financing.

UNDP also should engage with the private sector to introduce risk mitigation instruments in collaboration with IFIs to de-risk investments in sectors such as energy efficiency and climate-smart agriculture. These efforts should aim to encourage long-term investment in green technologies and infrastructure in rural areas, where institutional capacity needs to be enhanced, ensuring that private sector contributions align with national goals such as the Just Transition and climate resilience initiatives.

It is essential that UNDP avoid spreading resources across small-scale projects by focusing on scalable, high-impact initiatives, such as the Eco-Damu microcredit scheme. Concentrating on scalable projects will allow for a more significant mobilization of private sector resources, creating sustainable financing frameworks to support long-term socio-economic and environmental outcomes.

UNDP should also work to enhance its reputation in policy innovation and technical assistance, building on successes such as the BIOFIN model, to position itself as a key technical partner for large-scale investment initiatives.

Recommendation 3. Adopt flexible programming ensuring sustainability of results by establishing regular review mechanisms to adapt to changing national contexts, and ensuring scalability and sustainability are embedded into project designs, particularly for pilot initiatives (based on conclusions 2, 3, and 4).

UNDP should maintain flexibility in its programming by establishing regular review mechanisms to assess changing national contexts and adjust its approach accordingly, as it did during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This flexibility should be balanced with an emphasis on sustainability. UNDP should embed scalability and sustainability into project designs, especially for pilot initiatives that show potential in areas such as green technology, rural economic development, and SME support. For instance, scaling up the One Village – One Product projects should include measures to address regional disparities, especially in regions where the local governance capacities need to be enhanced. This can be done by building the institutional capacity of regional governments and civil society to manage these initiatives effectively.

Recommendation 4. Increase focus on LNOB and the provision of differentiated responses at the local level (based on conclusions 2 and 3).

UNDP should develop a comprehensive Leave No One Behind (LNOB) strategy that includes specific action plans and indicators to monitor and address inequalities at both the regional and national levels. To address this, UNDP should ensure that initiatives such as the DFC are scaled to benefit all citizens, particularly those in regions with lower institutional capacities.

By better integrating regional diversity into programme planning and procurement processes, UNDP can improve service delivery in areas where governance structures need to be enhanced. This includes providing differentiated responses that reflect the unique socio-economic conditions of each region, ensuring that the most vulnerable groups, including women, people with disabilities, and rural populations, receive adequate support. The integration of gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches across all UNDP programming is essential to achieve sustainable outcomes in social protection, economic empowerment and governance (see also Recommendation 5).

Recommendation 5. Strengthen GEWE mainstreaming and address structural barriers to gender equality (based on conclusions 3 und 4).

UNDP should intensify efforts to mainstream GEWE across all programmes. Emphasis should also be put on expanding the reach of gender-focused initiatives in rural areas.

UNDP should advocate for comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that tackles the persistent gender pay gap, gender segregation in the labour market, and domestic violence, ideally in a coordinated effort across the UNCT. UNDP's support for the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities serves as an example of how it can encourage similar legislative reforms to enhance gender equality in governance, employment and social protection. By integrating gender-sensitive indicators in social protection initiatives such as the Digital Family Card, UNDP can ensure that programmes better meet the needs of women, particularly those in vulnerable situations. UNDP should foster political support by collaborating with local governments and civil society organizations to build capacity at the grassroots level. This would not only help address gender disparities but also ensure that reforms in gender equality are embedded in governance and policymaking structures, contributing to more inclusive and equitable development across Kazakhstan.

Recommendation 6. UNDP should enhance the integration of thematic areas such as climate, governance, health, ecosystems, biodiversity, and green growth across programmes (based on conclusions 1, 3, and 5).

UNDP should strengthen cross-thematic work by promoting linkages in programming related to climate, governance, health, ecosystems, biodiversity, and green growth. This includes: (a) deeper engagement in just transition, with the engagement/leading of the coordination mechanism and elaboration of the social inclusion and GEWE measures in the Just Transition context; (b) engaging in the promotion of environmental justice specifically targeting environmental rights, and conflict resolution mechanisms related to resource access; (c) addressing the climate-health nexus with a particular emphasis on worsening air quality and health impacts of climate change; and (d) addressing the nexus between ecosystems, biodiversity, climate and green growth (building on Nature Pledge).

UNDP should systematically map potential cross-thematic priorities and integrate them into existing and new projects, aligning with 'Integrated offers' promoted by the Nature, Climate, Energy, and Waste global team. Promoting knowledge sharing and joint initiatives with other UN agencies and development partners in the country will further strengthen these synergies and contribute to more sustainable and inclusive development outcomes.

Recommendation 7. Establish support to Kazakhstan's water sector by providing innovative policy support, improving flood and drought management, and support the development of a modern MHEWS (based on conclusion 5).

Given the increasing severity of water stress in the country, UNDP should focus on identifying key areas for developing Kazakhstan's water sector. Pathways for UNDP support could be found in the implementation of the new Water Code, a nationwide water conservation policy, and introduction of innovative water-saving technologies. Enhancing the protection of water bodies and improving water resource management through digitalization could be a crucial component. As many IFIs are already involved, identifying areas where UNDP can add value by building on its comparative advantages should be the first step. This could include providing innovative ideas and policy support, as well as improving flood and drought management as part of a modern Multi Hazard Early Warning System (MHEWS). UNDP also could contribute to enhanced pasture management, supporting Land Degradation Neutrality efforts, which are a priority in Kazakhstan.

3.3 Key recommendations and management response

RECOMMENDATION 1.

Adopt a more focused and integrated programming approach, while leveraging UNDP's key strengths (based on conclusions 1, 4, and 5).

Management response: Fully accepted. (•••

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UNDP will enhance integration across its programming areas by ensuring alignment with key national priorities, including economic diversification, climate resilience, and governance reform. Greater efforts will be made to foster linkages between different sectors and avoid programmatic fragmentation. This will include supporting integrated territorial development approaches that promote sustainable economic growth, modernization of governance structures, and environmental conservation. Additionally, digitalization will play a central role in strengthening decision-making, particularly in environmental governance, through the development of digital tools that support climate resilience and equitable access to resources.

Key Action(s)	Completion date	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
	uute	Unit(s)	Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
1.1 Finalize a concept note on integrated territorial development that promotes economic growth, diversification and governance reform while ensuring sustainable use, ecosystem conservation, and resilience to climate change	April 2025	EE Unit/GLD Unit/AccLab Unit		Initiated

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Recommendation 1 (cont'd)

1.2 Demonstrate the integrated territorial development approach in selected pilot oblast(s)	March 2026	EE Unit/ GLD Unit/ AccLab Unit	Initiated
1.3 Develop or enhance a digital tool/platform to support sustainable land and natural resource use, improve climate resilience, strengthen decision-making in environmental governance with ensuring access to environmental justice	December 2026	EE Unit/ GLD Unit	Will be launched in 2025

RECOMMENDATION 2.

Strengthen the approach to strategic resource mobilization and engagement with the private sector and financing institutions (based on conclusions 1, 2, and 5).

Management response: Fully accepted (•

UNDP will adopt a more structured approach to resource mobilization, with a strong focus on engaging International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and the private sector to support Kazakhstan's transition to a greener and more sustainable economy. Emphasis will be placed on expanding financing mechanisms for climate action, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development. This includes supporting the development of an investment plan for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and piloting financial instruments that leverage both public and private sector resources to advance climate-smart agriculture, biodiversity protection, and low-carbon development.

Key Action(s)	Completion date	Responsible Unit(s)	Tr	acking
			Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
2.1 Develop a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Investment Plan	January 2026	EE Unit		Will be launched in March 2025

Recommendation 2 (cont'd)

2.2 Prepare a financing plan for the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)	January 2026	EE Unit	Will be launched in 2025
2.3 Pilot and implement green finance and non-financial regulatory instruments to mobilize public and private funding for the implementation of NDCs, NAPs (water, agriculture, forestry, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, etc.) considering human rights due diligence policy	December 2026	EE Unit	Will be launched in 2025
2.4 Develop a concept note to mobilize donor funding to support NAP implementation	July 2027	EE Unit	Will be launched after NAP development

RECOMMENDATION 3.

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Adopt flexible programming ensuring sustainability of results by establishing regular review mechanisms to adapt to changing national contexts, and ensuring scalability and sustainability are embedded into project designs, particularly for pilot initiatives (based on conclusions 2, 3, and 4).

Management response: Fully accepted (•••

Ensuring that UNDP projects remain relevant, scalable, and sustainable is a key priority. Regular review mechanisms will be embedded into programming to allow for flexibility in response to changing national contexts. Pilot initiatives demonstrating strong impact and scalability potential will be expanded, particularly in the areas of green technology, rural economic development, and SME support. In this regard, regional differences will be taken into account and a differentiated approach to the development of each region will be applied depending on its potential and direction for further development. Exit strategies will be systematically developed to ensure that project results are sustained beyond the intervention period.

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Recommendation 3 (cont'd)

Key Action(s)	Completion date	tion Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
	uute		Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
3.1 Pilot initiatives in areas such as green technology, rural economic development, and SME support with high scalability potential	December 2027	EE/GLD		Initiated
3.2 Develop exit strategies for closing projects to ensure the sustainability of results	On regular basis	EE/GLD		Initiated



Increase focus on LNOB and the provision of differentiated responses at the local level (based on conclusions 2 and 3).

Management response: Fully accepted (•••

UNDP will ensure that all programmes incorporate a strong LNOB approach, with tailored responses addressing regional disparities and the needs of marginalized populations. Attention will be given to scaling up initiatives such as the Digital Family Card (DFC) to enhance access to social protection and improve service delivery for vulnerable groups. Programme planning and procurement processes will be adjusted to better reflect the diverse socio-economic conditions of different regions.

Key Action(s)	Completion Responsible date Unit(s)	Tra	acking	
		Unit(s)	Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
4.1 Develop a draft LNOB strategy with specific indicators to monitor and address inequalities at regional and national levels	December 2025	EE Unit/ GLD Unit		Initiated

Recommendation 4 (cont'd)

4.2 Develop a plan for integration of regional diversity into	December 2025	EE Unit/ GLD Unit	Initiated
programme planning and procurement processes to enhance national partners' effectiveness in responding to needs of vulnerable groups			

RECOMMENDATION 5.

Strengthen GEWE mainstreaming and address structural barriers to gender equality (based on conclusions 3 und 4).

Management response: Fully accepted



UNDP will intensify efforts to mainstream gender equality across all programmes, with a focus on addressing structural barriers such as gender pay gaps, economic disparities, and gender-based violence (GBV). Partnerships with local governments and civil society will be strengthened to ensure gender considerations are embedded into governance, policymaking, and service delivery at all levels.

•	Completion date	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
5.1 Develop a concept for mainstreaming GEWE in rural areas through local governments development plans	December 2025	EE Unit/GLD Unit/Gender Specialist		Initiated
5.2 Enhance partnerships with local governments and CSOs to extensively address gender disparities and ensure integration of gender equality principle in the work of local governments and policymaking structures	December 2025	EE Unit/GLD Unit/Gender Specialist		Initiated

Recommendation 5 (cont'd)

5.3 Follow up with promotion of experts' recommendations towards improved	December 2025	GLD Unit	Initiated
anti-discrimination			
legislation to eliminate			
economic gender			
inequality, gender			
segregation in the labour			
market, and GBV			

RECOMMENDATION 6.

UNDP should enhance the integration of thematic areas such as climate, governance, health, ecosystems, biodiversity, and green growth across programmes. (based on conclusions 1, 3, and 5).

Management response: Fully accepted



UNDP will promote greater cross-thematic collaboration in its programming, particularly at the intersection of climate resilience, governance, health, and biodiversity conservation. Efforts will be made to integrate environmental justice into national policies and strengthen judicial capacities in environmental law.

Key Action(s)	Completion date	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
		Unit(3)	Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
6.1 Integrate the nexus of ecosystems, biodiversity, climate, and green growth into the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), National Adaptation Plan (NAP), and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)	December 2026	EE Unit		Initiated

Recommendation 6 (cont'd)

6.2 Develop a situation analysis on environmental justice and enhance capacity of judiciary on international environmental justice standards with ensuring remedy mechanisms for the victims	Unit Initiated
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RECOMMENDATION 7.

Establish support to Kazakhstan's water sector by providing innovative policy support, improving flood and drought management and support the development of a modern MHEWS (based on conclusion 5).

Management response: Fully accepted (

UNDP will contribute to strengthening Kazakhstan's water management policies and systems by supporting the implementation of the new Water Code, improving flood and drought management, and developing an Early Warning System.

Key Action(s)		Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
7.1 Develop a prototype for an Early Warning System in the water sector, focusing on flood modeling	December 2025	EE Unit		Initiated
7.2 Establish and facilitate a Water Council to leverage partnerships and address key priorities for the development of Kazakhstan's water sector	2025	EE Unit		Initiated
7.3 Provide support for the implementation of the new Water Code	2025	EE Unit		Initiated

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ANNEXES

Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the Evaluation Resource Center of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <u>https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/detail/24383</u>

Annex 1. Terms of reference

Annex 2. Project List

Annex 3. Documents Consulted

Annex 4. Site visits conducted during in-country data collection

Annex 5. Status of country programme outcome and output indicators

Annex 6. Performance rating





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