



Independent
Evaluation
Office

United Nations Development Programme

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION UGANDA



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

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ACRONYMS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement
AHA	Anti-homosexuality Act
ASME	Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining Enterprises
CO	Country Office
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSA	Climate Smart Agriculture
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
DISC	Digitalization, Innovation and Smart Cities
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GoU	Government of Uganda
GPS	Governance and Peace Strengthening
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
HDN	Humanitarian-Development Nexus
HRB	Human Rights-Based Approach
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
ISG	Inclusive Sustainable Growth
JLIRP	Jobs and Livelihood Implementation Response Plans
JLOS	Justice, Law and Order Sector
LED	Local Economic Development
LGs	Local Governments
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NARIS	Uganda Natural Resource Information System
NCER	Nature, Climate, Energy, Resilience

NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDP	National Development Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIM	National Implementation Modality
PDM	Parish Development Model
RP	Responsible Party
SACCO	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIA	SDG Implementation and Acceleration
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VAC	Violence Against Children
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Associations

Evaluation Brief: Uganda

Uganda has maintained steady growth in the last decade while advancing to medium Human Development Index (HDI) status in 2023. However, significant challenges persist, with a stagnating poverty rate, stark regional disparities, refugee influx, climate vulnerability, and governance issues. Against this backdrop and Uganda's ambitions to obtain upper-middle income status by 2040, UNDP Uganda demonstrated strong alignment with national development priorities while maintaining adaptability to emerging challenges. The organization of programmes into three pillars and two enabling programmes enhanced resource allocation clarity and alignment with government plans. However, cross-pillar synergies were not consistently realized where needed.

The evaluation revealed that funding constraints were not the primary determinant of results achievement. Programme design quality, shifting priorities due to health crises and political context, and implementation efficiency were more significant factors. Resources were sometimes spread thinly across multiple government programmes, which limited the impact of UNDP interventions.

Under the Governance and Peace Strengthening (GPS) pillar, UNDP made significant progress in modernizing justice systems, which enabled continued service delivery during COVID-19 and improved case disposal rates. However, access to justice remained limited in Uganda due to factors such as illiteracy, digital divide, and infrastructure challenges. In refugee programming, UNDP's work in the West Nile region showed success in livelihood stabilization while integration of refugees into value chains and access to long-term finance remained a work in progress.

Under the Inclusive and Sustainable Growth (ISG) pillar, UNDP played a crucial role in shaping Uganda's growth agenda, notably its support to the operationalization of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, and strengthened regulatory frameworks in the mining sector. UNDP's influence was more pronounced at the central level than at the local level. The evaluation highlighted UNDP's experimental approach to youth employment and livelihood initiatives, which yielded valuable insights but sometimes lacked quality metrics beyond numerical targets.

Via the Nature, Climate, Energy and Resilience (NCER) pillar, UNDP successfully positioned itself as a trusted leader in climate change response and low carbon development strategies. Notable achievements included technical support for climate financing, institutional development, and innovative monitoring systems. However, challenges emerged with delayed implementation and limited compensation for alternative livelihoods in wetland restoration initiatives, slow operationalization of downstream interventions at the district level and lack of clear exit strategies.

UNDP's leadership in shaping Uganda's digitalization agenda was notable, but limited resources and competing demands from public agencies constrained deeper impact. UNDP played a crucial role in formulating the National Development Plan III (NDP III) and elevating the SDGs' profile in Uganda's development planning. Despite these efforts, both coordinating and implementing institutions of NDP III faced significant implementation challenges. Gender was mainly integrated as a cross-cutting issue, with notable work in gender-responsive policymaking and GBV response, although structural barriers to gender equality remained challenging to address.

This independent country programme evaluation of UNDP's work in Uganda reflects on the achievements and challenges of the past four years. It is intended to guide UNDP Uganda's formulation of the new Country Programme Document (CPD) and assistance to the Government of Uganda in its quest to become an upper middle-income country by 2040.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1. UNDP should articulate a more robust Theory of Change for its pillars, especially when they have a broader mandate, and better justify how the strategies proposed are the most effective to attain the outputs of programmes. UNDP should be more selective regarding which government priorities it would like to align its programmes to so as not to spread its resources too thinly and undermine its own strategic focus. This should be coupled with a separate implementation strategy and action plan that eliminates the operational bottlenecks due to misalignment of UNDP and government processes.

Recommendation 2. M&E: UNDP should design more robust results frameworks for its pillars and the new CPD that realistically assess UNDP's sphere of influence. UNDP should work on a Knowledge Management and Learning Strategy to capture lessons learned and course corrections offered by the Monitoring System at pillar level.

Recommendation 3. GPS pillar: In the next CPD, the GPS team should strive for more cross-pillar work to capitalize on existing programmatic overlaps with other pillars. The GPS team should continue and expand its work with civil society on 'voice and accountability' with an eye towards amplifying their voice in a shrinking civic space.

Recommendation 4. ISG pillar: UNDP should clarify its expectations from youth economic empowerment initiatives. While the utilization of core resources gives UNDP the liberty to experiment with different approaches, appropriate learning from pilots should be integrated into programming and working models should be promoted on a larger scale with clear sustainability measures in place.

Recommendation 5. NCER pillar: UNDP should envision better integration into existing local governance structures and sufficient involvement of communities and implementing partners into the design and execution of downstream interventions on alternative livelihood/climate smart agriculture to increase effectiveness and sustainability as well as to minimize unintended adverse effects of these interventions. UNDP should factor in the time needed for establishing proper market linkages and district structures to avoid a pre-mature exit and allocate resources more realistically to ensure alternative livelihood options are meaningful for communities.

Recommendation 6. Gender: UNDP should design programmes to address structural barriers that leave women behind in the labour market, in governance and ownership of natural resources, and in value chains; as well as changing negative perceptions around women's role and position in society. This will require attacking sources of deprivation in a multi-faceted rather than piecemeal manner.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION



1.1 Purpose, objectives, and scope of the evaluation

The UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) conducts Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) to gather and present evidence of the organization's contributions to national development priorities, as well as the effectiveness of its strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts to achieve sustainable development results. ICPEs are independent evaluations conducted within the framework of the general provisions of the UNDP Evaluation Policy.

This was the second independent country evaluation conducted by the IEO in Uganda.¹ The overall objective of this ICPE was to inform the preparation of UNDP Uganda's country programme document (CPD) for 2026-2030. It also aimed to support UNDP's accountability to its stakeholders, including the Executive Board, the Government of Uganda, and the civil society at large, and to contribute to institutional learning and knowledge sharing, particularly at the country and regional levels. The evaluation covered the current programme cycle (2021-2025) and all UNDP projects from January 2021 to June 2024 (Annex 2).

1.2 Evaluation methodology

This ICPE was conducted according to the approved IEO process and adhered to United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards.² The evaluation was summative in nature, with a formative and prospective component that emphasizes adaptative learning and forward-looking recommendations.

The ICPE was conducted at the outcome-level and using a Theory of Change (ToC) approach. This included mapping the assumptions behind the programme's desired change(s) and the causal linkages between the intervention(s) and the intended country programme outcomes. The detailed methodology of the ICPE is described in Annex 1 (Terms of Reference).

The evaluation team collected and analyzed qualitative data from primary and secondary sources to inform, triangulate and cross-examine findings, conclusions and recommendations. The evaluation team conducted a document review, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, online and in-person, with 259 internal and external stakeholders from different sectors and types of engagement with UNDP (163 males, 94 females and 2 undisclosed; see details in Annex 5). Field visits covered intervention sites in Jinja and Namutumba districts.

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?
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 and emerging opportunities during the period under review?
4. To what extent did internal and external factors influence UNDP's ability to deliver its programme efficiently and maximize contributions?

¹ An Assessment of Development Report (ADR) undertaken in 2009 covered the period between 2001 and 2009, while the following cycles were not independently evaluated. See <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/2739>

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

The implementation of the country programme and results achieved were reviewed based on an analysis of contributions, while examining adaptive capacity and the level of response to evolving needs and priorities during the review period, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Ebola crisis. The performance of the UNDP Country Office (CO) was scored for each indicator included in the evaluation matrix using a four-point scale (presented in Annex 7).

The IEO Gender-Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) was used to assess the quality and level of achievements by programme outcomes.³ The Leave No One Behind (LNOB) approach guided the analysis of design and execution of interventions using the five-factor framework developed by UNDP.⁴

The draft ICPE report went through an internal and external quality assurance process, before being submitted to the CO and the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) for review and identification of factual errors. It was then shared with government officials and other national partners for feedback.

1.3 Evaluation limitations

In most instances, the UNDP CO did not have annual progress reports⁵ for its larger anchor programmes, which posed limitations to the evaluation. Therefore, the team had to rely on UNDP Uganda Annual Reports, ROAR reports, project briefs, technical meeting notes, stakeholder interviews and follow up discussions with pillar teams to capture what had been done and not done. This prolonged the analysis and synthesis period required to capture UNDP programming fully.

Outside of Kampala, the field presence of UNDP programming was concentrated in West Nile for refugee programming, pilots of Spotlight initiative in border regions, wetland restoration initiatives in South-Western, East Central, Teso and Elgon Regions, as well as food security interventions in Karamoja region.⁶ The ICPE team made field visits to the wetland restoration and climate smart agricultural initiatives in East Central region. For refugee and gender programming, the ICPE team prioritized the field work in Kampala, as it was best placed to give the overall perspective about those programmes. To compensate for the lack of field work in other regions, the ICPE team conducted interviews with the vast majority of implementing partners for refugee programming and Spotlight initiative and relied on baseline/end line surveys, case studies, mid-term and terminal evaluation reports.

1.4 Context

Uganda experienced an average growth rate of 4.57 percent between 2013 and 2022, which fueled the Government's ambition to obtain upper-middle-income status by 2040. This ambition is supported by five-year development plans, including the current National Development Plan (NDP III), which outlines 20 key programmes to guide Uganda's development priorities. The country has made significant progress in human development, advancing from a low to a medium HDI, ranking 159th out of 193 countries in 2022.⁷ Despite these advancements, nearly 40 percent of households remain at a subsistence level, and the poverty rate has stagnated around 20 percent over the past decade. Regional disparities are stark,

³ For more information: https://erc.undp.org/pdf/GRES_English.pdf

⁴ https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Brochure_LNOB_web.pdf

⁵ While ICPE team was able to have access to progress reports for those projects funded by donors (which are also tied to pillars), they are not enough in and of themselves to give the strategic overview of what happened under each pillar.

⁶ Inclusive Sustainable Growth pillar had presence mainly in Kampala since its programming was based on working with central level MDAs. This also applies to SIA and DISC programming.

⁷ UNDP (2024). Human Development Report 2023-2024. Available at: <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/country-insights#/ranks>.

with the Northern region facing a multidimensional poverty rate of 63 percent and the Eastern region at 45.7 percent. In response, the Ugandan government launched the Parish Development Model (PDM) in 2021 to shift subsistence households towards a money economy and tackle persistent poverty.⁸

Uganda's economy has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and Ebola outbreak, which have altered development priorities and strained resources. The war in Ukraine has further exacerbated the situation by driving up fuel and food prices, hitting the poorest households hardest.⁹ Despite adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and integrating 95 percent of SDG targets into its NDP-III, Uganda faces challenges in achieving these goals.¹⁰

A parliamentary democracy led by President Yoweri Museveni since 1986, Uganda has experienced significant recentralization in decision-making and budget allocation, impacting local government autonomy and finances.¹¹ This recentralization contradicts evolving and increasing local government (LG) responsibilities, PDM being the most important one. Corruption remains a major issue, with Uganda ranking 141st among the 180 countries on the Corruption Perceptions Index.¹²

With an influx of almost 1.7 million refugees, Uganda has become the largest refugee host in Africa and the third largest worldwide. This surge, primarily from the DRC, Eritrea and South Sudan, has placed additional strain on already underdeveloped communities.¹³

Extreme droughts driven by climate change and porous borders with Kenya have reignited cattle-related violence in Uganda's Karamoja sub-region, despite previous disarmament efforts. To respond to these challenges, Kenya and Uganda signed a 2019 Memorandum of Understanding focusing on poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, and climate change adaptation. Uganda's human rights situation has worsened over the past five years, with notable incidents including violence and arrests, increased internet and social media restrictions during the 2021 elections, and the February 2023 closure of the UN Human Rights Office.¹⁴ This decline was further marked by the enactment of an Anti-Homosexuality Act in May 2023, which introduced some of the world's harshest penalties for same-sex relations.¹⁵

Uganda is highly vulnerable to climate change and its impacts. According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (2023) country index, Uganda ranks high (14th) in vulnerability and low (163rd) in readiness to act against climate change in the world. Uganda's severe climate vulnerability is exacerbated by widespread poverty as well as its reliance on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and forestry, with ongoing issues such as environmental degradation compounding the problem.

⁸ World Bank (2024). Uganda's Parish Development Model. Available at: <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099062124022028331/p1797941000fc9011937b15fa669752d99>.

⁹ CCA page ix

¹⁰ The Sustainable Development Report (n.d.). Uganda Country Profile. Available at: <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/uganda>. Accessed on 16 September 2024.

¹¹ Decision making structures in Uganda has increasingly recentralized in the last decade. The appointment and accountability of local government (LG) officials started to be determined by the center since 2005. The share of the national budget on local government has decreased from 17% to 10% over the past decade. LGs also rely on conditional grants for a significant share of their revenue which directs their funding to sectors, programmes or activities determined by the central government. For more details: <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099062124022028331/p1797941000fc9011937b15fa669752d99>

¹² Transparency International (n.d.). Corruption Perceptions Index 2023. Available at: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023>. Accessed on 16 September 2024.

¹³ UNHCR (n.d.). Refugee Response Portal. Available at : <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/uga>. Accessed on 16 September 2024.

¹⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/uganda>

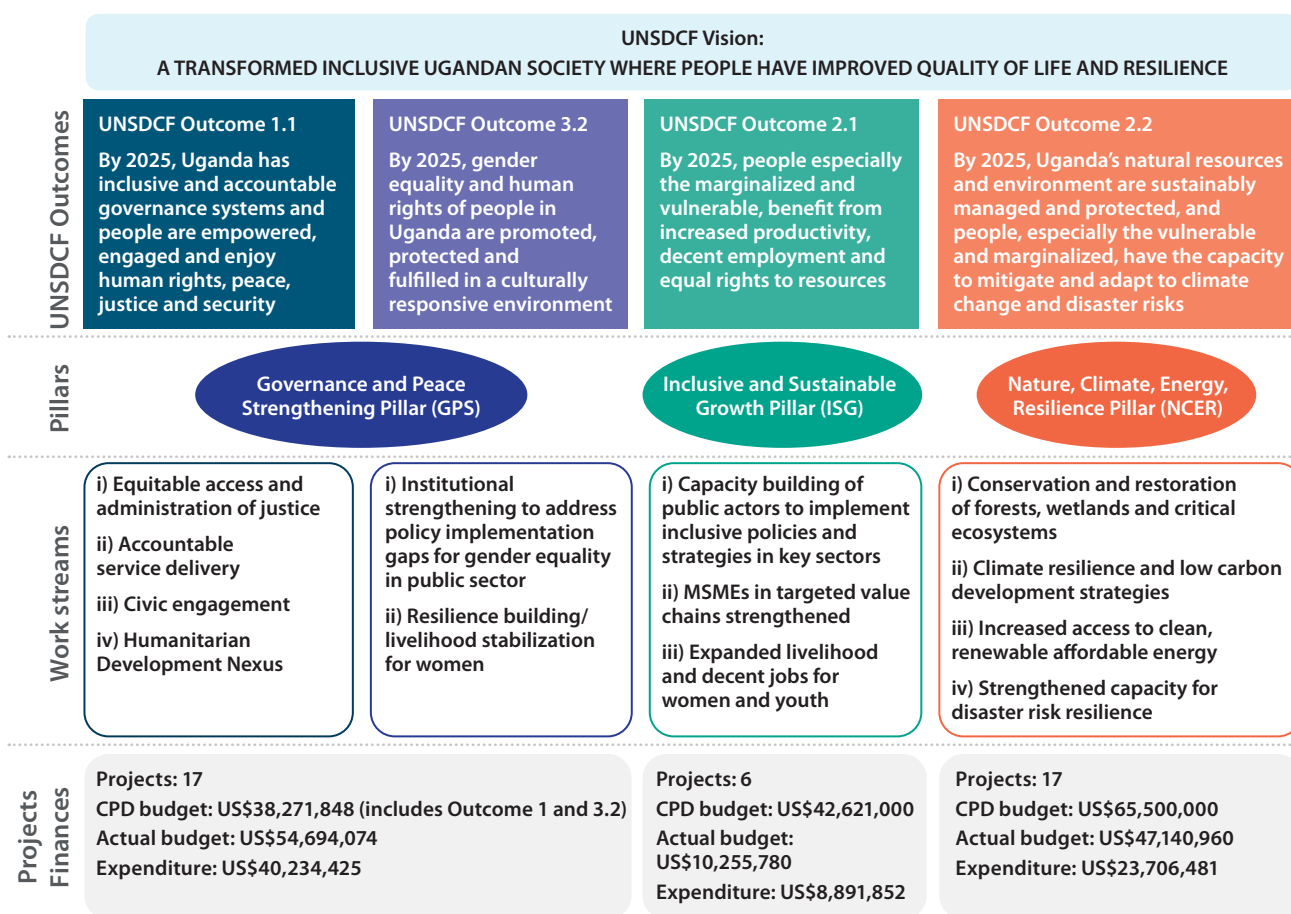
¹⁵ See: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/05/30/ugandas-president-signs-repressive-anti-lgbt-law>.

Gender inequality persisted¹⁶ despite progressive legislation, as women faced significant barriers such as limited access to credit and land, lower educational and employment opportunities,¹⁷ and alarmingly high rates of violence, with more than 95 percent of women and girls having experienced physical or sexual violence by partners or non-partners since the age of 15.¹⁸

1.5 UNDP country programme under review

The UNDP country programme is outlined in the 2021-2025 Country Programme Document (CPD) and is in alignment with the 2021-2025 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and the Ugandan National Development Plan III (NDP-III). The CPD is guided by the UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021 as well as Strategic Plan 2022-2025. The CPD aimed to contribute to four outcomes of the UNSDCF. The Country Office structured the programming into three pillars: Governance and Peace Strengthening (GPS), Inclusive and Sustainable Growth (ISG) and Nature, Climate, Energy and Resilience (NCER). Figure 1 shows how the pillars contribute to the UNSDCF outcomes and the financing of each pillar.

FIGURE 1. Illustration of CPD Pillars and Outcomes



¹⁶ See: <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/thematic-composite-indices/gender-inequality-index#/indicies/GII>

¹⁷ See: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/economy-profiles-5932ef6d39/>

¹⁸ Source: Uganda's violence against women survey heralds legislative and policy changes | UN Women Data Hub

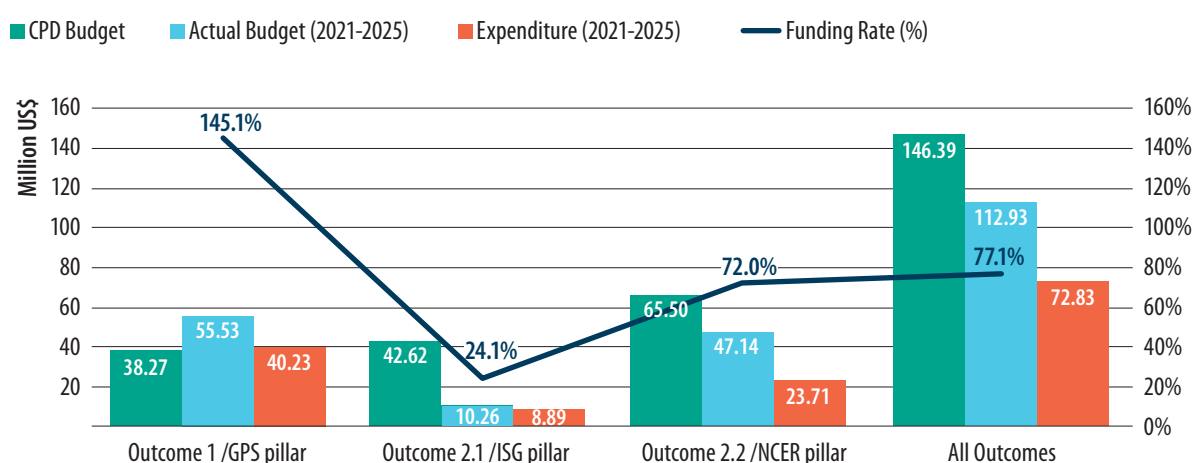
The Governance and Peace Strengthening Pillar (GPS) serving Outcome 1 and Outcome 3.2¹⁹ focused on building inclusive and accountable governance systems to empower people to enjoy their rights, peace, justice and security. This outcome accounted for 48 percent of the funding allocation, with a budget of US\$54.6 million. The proportion of funds for the GPS pillar was inflated due to the inclusion of Direct Programme Costs (DPC), which accounted for \$19.2 million (35 percent) of GPS pillar funding. In line with UNDP Strategic Plan's approach of six signature solutions and three enablers, UNDP Uganda created two enabling programmes that serve the three pillars. One of these enabling programmes was Digitalization, Innovation and Smart Cities (DISC) corresponding to 'strategic innovation' and 'digitalization' enablers and the other was SDG Integration and Acceleration (SIA) corresponding to the 'development financing' enabler as well as the SDG integration agenda. While they were both listed under Outcome 1 of the GPS pillar, in practice they served all outcomes, and their results were analyzed as cross-cutting programmes in the ICPE report. They represented 13 percent of the total GPS budget (\$7.39 million).

Inclusive and Sustainable Growth Pillar (ISG) serving Outcome 2.1 focused on increasing productive, decent employment opportunities and access to resources for marginalized and vulnerable groups. This outcome accounted for 10 percent of the total budget (\$10.2 million).

Nature, Climate, Energy and Resilience Pillar (NCER) serving Outcome 2.2 focused on improving capacities for sustainable management of natural resources and mitigating and adapting to climate change and disaster risks. This outcome accounted for 42 percent of the total budget (\$47.14 million).

The CPD envisaged a total of \$146.39 million for the execution of the programme (This amount was \$136.7 million for the previous CPD). UNDP was able to mobilize \$112.93 million, corresponding to a 77 percent funding rate. This is a significant improvement from the previous CPD, where the funding rate stood at 41 percent. Regarding funding of outcomes, the GPS pillar raised more funds than what was envisaged for Outcome 1 and Outcome 3.2, with 145 percent of funding raised. The NCER pillar raised 72 percent of what was envisaged for Outcome 2.2 in the CPD. The ISG pillar only raised 24 percent of the funding required for Outcome 2.1.

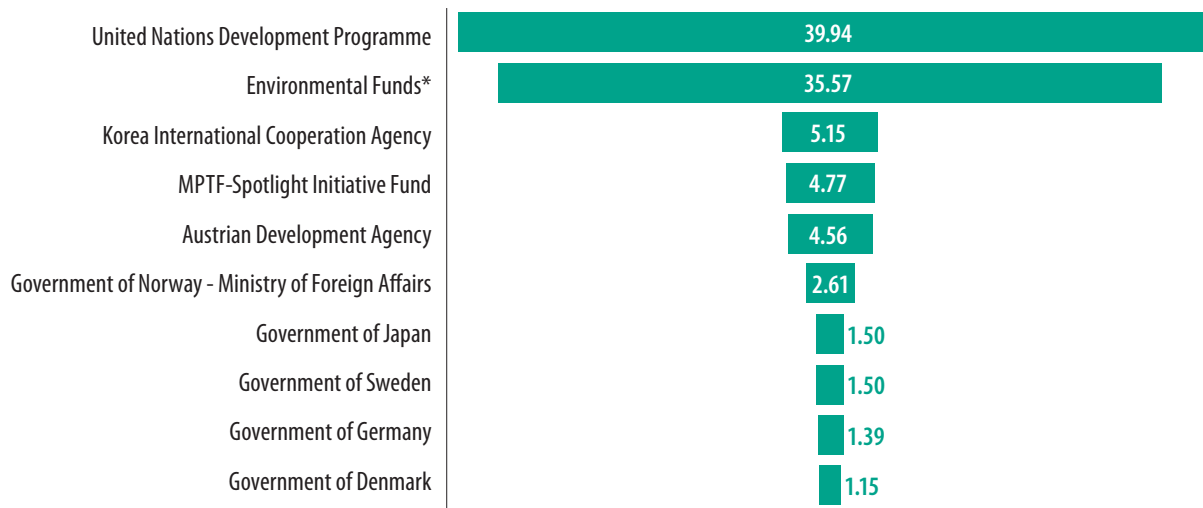
FIGURE 2. Funding rate of CPD outcomes and for total UNDP programme



¹⁹ There was no separate Gender pillar and all GEN3 programmes were implemented as part of GPS pillar.

UNDP was able to leverage funding for new programmes, such as cross-border work in Karamoja region, from previous donors such as KOICA, which funded UNDP’s main refugee programming, or from new partnerships such as with Austrian Development Agency for ongoing work streams such as Wetland restoration. UNDP also launched new phases of predecessor programmes such as Spotlight Initiative with funding from the EU, which forms the backbone of its gender programming. UNDP, for first time ever, established an elections funding basket in Uganda, which received a total contribution of \$7.3 million from donors such as Austria, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Vertical funds continued to be a vital part of environmental programming, with \$35.57 million budget received from Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF).

FIGURE 3. Top 10 Donors 2021-2024 in Million US\$

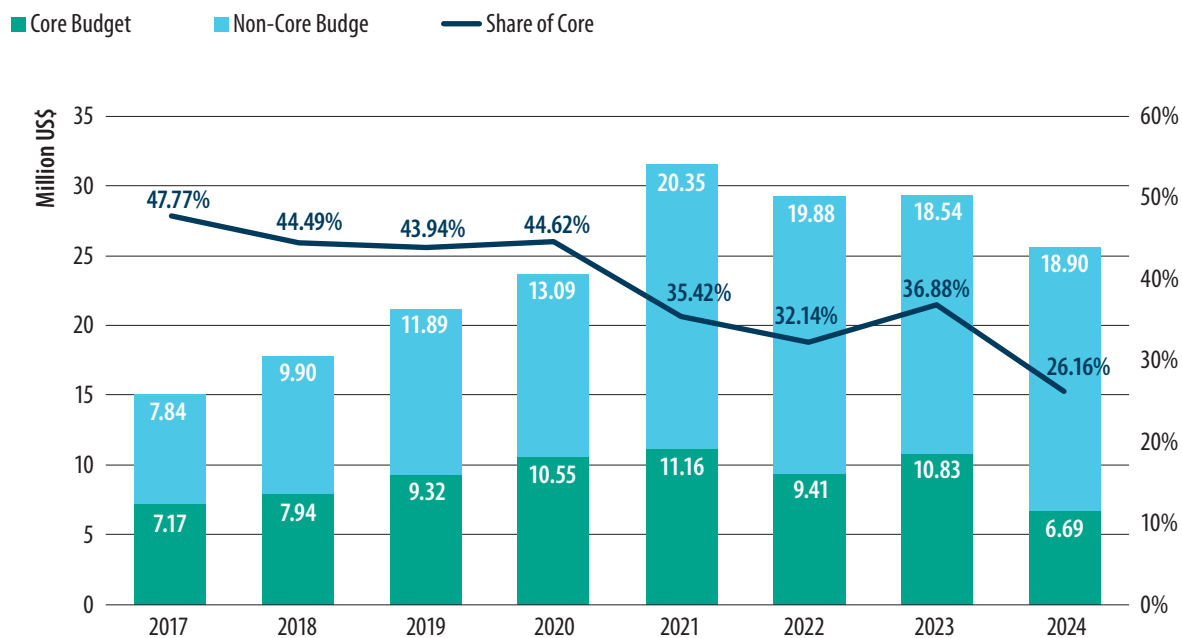


*The Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility have been merged into one category named ‘Environmental Funds’ for the purposes of this visualization.

UNDP had certain advantages compared to the previous CPD regarding fund raising. One was its success at covering a much bigger portion of CPD programming from external funding. The core budget in total budget dropped from 47.7 percent in 2017 to 26.16 percent in 2024. Core budget allocation in the first half of the current CPD was also higher compared to previous cycle, although 2024 witnessed a contraction down to \$6.69 million in allocated resources.²⁰

²⁰ Additional financial information on the CPD evaluated can be found in Annex 3.

FIGURE 4. Core/Non-core Budget in CPD implementation in Uganda (2017-2024)



CHAPTER 2

FINDINGS



This chapter presents the results of the programme and contribution analysis, along with the assessment of operational and cross-cutting issues. The findings are organized into four sections, in line with the key evaluation questions and criteria:²¹ 1. Overall Programme Implementation; 2. UNDP's strategic and programmatic responsiveness and coherence [KEQ 1 and 2]; 3. UNDP's contributions to programme objectives and sustainable development results [KEQ 3]; and 4. Main factors influencing UNDP's performance and broader adoption of results [KEQ 4].

2.1 Overall Programme Implementation

Finding 1: Pillar-based programming approach: The organization of the Country Office programming into three pillars serving specific CPD outcomes and two enabling programmes serving all CPD outcomes made the organization of UNDP programming clearer in terms of allocation of human and financial resources; ensured alignment of UNDP's programming with the Government's plans and priorities; and highlighted UNDP's offer in each domain. However, synergies across pillars were not always present when they were needed.

The organization of UNDP programming into pillars and enabling programmes was motivated by a desire to bring conceptual clarity, more efficient use of resources and better alignment with government priorities. UNDP worked with a wide variety of partners as beneficiaries, implementing partners or responsible parties to deliver these programmes. While pillars had large and inclusive Project Steering Committees, at least one important Ministry acted as the main implementing partner of UNDP programming. Each pillar and enabling programme had an anchor programme document which clarified UNDP's offer within that domain and the work streams through which this would be done.

TABLE 1. NDP III programmes and UNDP pillar alignment

Pillar / Enabling Programme	NDP III Programme
Governance and Peace Strengthening Pillar	Community Mobilization and Mindset Change Governance and Security Programme Administration of Justice Legislature, Oversight and Representation Public Sector Transformation
Inclusive and Sustainable Growth Pillar	Minerals Development Tourism Development Private Sector Development Manufacturing
Nature, Climate, Energy, Resilience Pillar	Agro-Industrialization Natural Resources, Environment, Climate Change, Land and Water Management Sustainable Energy Development
SDG Integration and Acceleration	Development Plan Implementation Regional Development
Digitalization, Innovation and Smart Cities	Digital Transformation Sustainable Urbanization and Housing Innovation, Technology Development and Transfer Human Capital Development (via Digital Skilling)

²¹ The criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability – are addressed within the four KEQ and the sub-questions, in accordance with the Performance Rating System. Details and results of the Performance Rating are presented in Annex 7.

Project Steering Committee sessions provided an opportunity to discuss the results, the strategic direction of each pillar and the actions that needed to be pursued in the next year to reach pillars' objectives. Technical committees gave implementing partners the opportunity to meet regularly with UNDP as well as other actors in the same sector to discuss thematic or sectoral priorities. UNDP also led or took part in important working groups to discuss and shape public policy. Vivid examples include the Tourism Working Group or Development Partners Working Group, where UNDP made expert level contributions to public policy making.

Pillars did not work synergistically even when there were important overlaps in their programming. For instance, a closer look at the refugee programme revealed that while it was trying to contribute to peace, which is the domain of the GPS pillar, the modalities utilized made it a livelihood stabilization initiative above all else.²² Refugee programming was jointly managed by Peace, Security and Systems Resilience and Inclusive Green Growth flagship programmes in the previous CPD, which was a better arrangement considering the approach and observable results of the programme. However, the implementation in this CPD period did not confirm any concrete cross-fertilization between the teams. The refugee programme was executed through a mixed arrangement which included implementing partners (NGOs and INGOs) as well as UNDP direct implementation. The work was coordinated by a project manager in the GPS pillar and implementation was monitored by UNDP field team members.

The NCER pillar and GPS pillar had interventions in the Karamoja region, which involved the NCER pillar working with food and nutrition insecure communities to improve their resilience in agriculture and the GPS team working with African Borderlands (ABC) to promote peaceful co-existence among communities. Given that both pillars had existing initiatives in the Karamoja region, establishing a joint work structure would have been the expected route for addressing a problem as multi-faced as cross-border conflict. While UNDP has a Karamoja field office responsible for all implementation, oversight and coordination of the UNDP portfolio of projects in Karamoja, a joint work structure is still a work in progress. This lack of joint programming was also evident in the way the ISG pillar was organized. Scoping interviews showed that the ISG pillar left area-based work such as refugee programming or climate smart agriculture/food security initiatives to the GPS and NCER pillars, respectively, where there was clear donor interest, and focused its attention on other strategic interventions such as tourism or trade.

Enabling programmes served their cross-cutting function in important ways. The SIA team's pioneer role in articulating the development policies of Uganda helped the three pillars in aligning their programmes with NDP III and developing strategies and policies and strengthening regulatory and legal frameworks in their domain of expertise.²³ The DISC programme enabled different pillars to inject innovation into their programming. The Accelerator Lab was efficiently mobilized to help pillars realize their objectives in more participatory and innovative ways.

Finding 2. Funding constraints and result achievement: In most cases, the ability to deliver results was not determined by the lack of funds but more by anchor programmes' quality of design, shifting priorities (due to health crisis, political context) and the quality of operationalization of programmes.

²² The bulk of the work focuses on integrating refugees into the money economy by providing cash-for-work opportunities, setting up savings groups and creating market value chains. Similarly, the smart agriculture, tree growing, and land management components of refugee programming would link well to the NCER pillar. All refugee related indicators in the ROAR are reported under Outcome 2.1, which is the domain of the ISG pillar. The GPS pillar's result framework does not contain any indicator related to refugee programming. The most immediate and observable results of the programme are related to resilience of refugees and the more indirect results are with respect to peace and social cohesion.

²³ Examples include National industrialization Policy, AfCFTA Implementation strategy, National ICT Roadmap, trade financing (instrumental for ISG Pillar), updating NDC and developing green financing (instrumental for NCER pillar) strengthening data ecosystems as well as reports prepared by SIA on SDG16 (instrumental for GPS pillar).

UNDP adopted a pragmatic approach to its pillars where topics that have enough traction were funded by donors and unfunded UNDP priorities were funded via core resources. The utilization of core resources was more prevalent for pillars that had very limited donor funding, such as for the ISG pillar (where it was 4 percent) and DISC (24 percent). It was less so for the GPS pillar (116 percent), where donor interest was higher. The NCER pillar stands out as receiving both high core resources (96 percent) and mobilizing significant non-core funds (77 percent).

TABLE 2. Core / Non-core fund use per pillar – Programmed versus Actuals (as of 11 September 2024)

Pillars & Enabling Programmes	2021-2025 Programme Document (M US\$)			2021-2025 Actual Budget (M US\$)			% Programme Document Funded	% of Core Received	% of non-core fund mobilization	2021-2024 Expenditure (M US\$)	Delivery %
	Core	Non-core	Total	Core	Non-core	Total					
Governance and Peace Strengthening*	4.00	21.51	25.51	2.91	25.08	27.99	109%	72%	116%	21.55	75%
Inclusive and Sustainable Growth	7.60	17.92	25.52	9.59	0.66	10.25	40%	126%	4%	8.89	87%
Nature, Climate, Energy, Environment²⁴	4.00	56.00	60.00	3.83	43.30	47.14	79%	96%	77%	23.7	50%
Digitalization, Innovation, Smart Cities**	6.88	10.00	16.88	5.22	1.65	6.87	40%	75%	24%	4.32	62%
SDG Integration and Acceleration	4.00	1.08	5.08	1.82	0.48	2.31	45%	45%	44%	1.93	83%

*The programmes under GPS are those under Outcome 1, excluding DPC-CPD implementation, Acclab, SIA, DISC and programmes of the previous CPD.

**Budget and expenditures for DISC include the budget for Acclab and DISC programme document

The GPS pillar was very successful in mobilizing external resources (109 percent of programme document funded). The ISG pillar was clearly prioritized in funding, with 126 percent of core resources received. This was mainly to compensate for the lack of donor interest in inclusive growth issues. In the NCER pillar, 77 percent of the targeted non-core funds were also mobilized successfully from a diverse donor base, including vertical funds. NCER was the only pillar where government co-funded substantially (i.e, renewable energy, wetland restoration, agricultural resilience) corresponding to 20 percent of non-core resources of NCER. Enabling Programmes of DISC and SIA received 75 percent and 45 percent of the agreed core funding, respectively, for their execution.

²⁴ 21% (\$9.25 million) of this non-core was government contributions, which was for F-SURE, Wetland and NAMA-BIOGAS projects.

TABLE 3. Comparison of Result Framework Achievement with Funding and Delivery Rates

Pillar / Enabling Programme	# of Output indicators	Indicators 75% met or above*	RF achievement	% Programme Document Funded	Financial Delivery rate
Governance and Peace Strengthening**	17	6	35%	109%	75%
Inclusive and Sustainable Growth	7	4	57%	40%	87%
Nature, Climate, Energy and Resilience	26	10	38%	79%	50%
Digitalization, Innovation, Smart Cities	15	9	60%	40%	62%
SDG Integration and Acceleration	16	10	63%	45%	83%

*This has been calculated by dividing 2023 milestones by 2023 targets in the Consolidated Comprehensive M&E Tool of Uganda CO.

**Resource mobilization targets and Evaluation Plan targets were excluded from this analysis as they were not about programme result achievement.

As can be seen from the comparison of Result Framework (RF) achievement and percent of Programme Document funded, there was no positive correlation between funding or financial delivery and result achievement. Those pillars that were funded the most (GPS and NCER) had lower levels of RF achievement compared to pillars that were funded the least (ISG, DISC and SIA). This stemmed from four reasons that need careful appraisal in the formulation of the next CPD.

One was non-specific, broad and at times ambitious nature of pillar programmes. ToCs could have articulated in greater detail how the specific strategies of each output contribute to outcomes. These strategies were stated in short sentences which were at times too generic or too narrow and did not specify how they contribute to outputs and whether they were the most effective way to address the development challenge given UNDP's know-how and comparative advantages. The fact that some of these strategies were easily discarded later shows the weaknesses of the formulation of these documents.

TABLE 4. Analysis of Pillar Anchor Programme Strategies based on a sample from GPS and NCER pillars

Pillar Output	Strategy (From Anchor ProDoc)	Assessment
GPS Pillar Output 1: Equitable access and administration of justice	Strengthen the use of digital solutions to facilitate the delivery of justice and business processes and transactions in the justice sector.	This strategy rests on the assumption that by making justice services digital they will become equitable and accessible, which begs verification given the low levels of access of citizens to digital services, especially in rural areas. In Uganda the issues of the case backlog and lack of enough qualified legal aid service providers are equally important problems in ensuring equitable access to justice. UNDP cannot influence equitable access to justice in a meaningful way if it can only do a few pilots given its resources.

Table 4 (cont'd)

Pillar Output	Strategy (From Anchor ProDoc)	Assessment
GPS Pillar Output 3: Civic engagement and culture that values gender, human rights, integrity and democracy	Foster mindset change to enhance values, democratic culture, promotion of inclusion, gender responsiveness and protection of human rights to influence transformative governance.	The strategy itself is not self-explanatory about how mindset change is to be achieved. Concepts such as 'a culture that values integrity' or 'influence transformative governance' are not clear.
NCER Pillar Output 3: Increased and equitable access to, and use of clean, renewable, and affordable energy	Digitalization in the energy sector: UNDP Uganda will pursue efforts to scale up application of digital technologies in the energy sector, particularly in tracking distributed renewable energy and facilitation of remote payments for energy use, thereby reducing transaction costs of energy access.	Given that access to energy is very low in rural areas and digitalization requires electricity, it is not clear whether UNDP ensured all the conditions to carry out this strategy. Limited internet connectivity, resource constraints, human capital challenges and the geographic constraints would have required a more elaborate strategy, which was not in place at the time of the ICPE field work.
NCER Pillar Output 4: Strengthened capacity for disaster risk resilience	Using the Parish Model of development, programmes will be tailored in enhancing community resilience, and establishing functional social groups in facilitating learning, dissemination, and utilization of early warning information in a coordinated way.	Given that the Parish Development Model (PDM) is still not clearly defined beyond its financial inclusion pillar and there are many operational challenges in its implementation, it is not clear how the NCER pillar could and did make use of the PDM in strengthening capacity of communities.

The broader the objectives of a pillar, the harder it was to demonstrate how different outputs reinforced each other. In the DISC programme, the anchor programme document formulated three different ToCs for 'Digitalization,' 'Innovation' and 'Smart Cities' juxtaposed to each other. Given the low delivery rate for DISC (62 percent), it was not clear whether the Smart Cities component was not carried out due to non-availability of funds or due to the difficulties of trying to implement a programme that tries to stand on three ToCs requiring different strategies. The Result Framework of DISC did not contain any result related to Smart Cities.

Shifting priorities due to various shocks and crises but not adjusting the outputs or results frameworks was also an issue. Some of the priorities as expressed in the GPS anchor programme were not initiated, such as Local Economic Development initiatives,²⁵ and most of the legislative work with Parliament,²⁶ which formed the backbone of the Accountable Service Delivery stream. The GPS pillar instead executed electoral interventions and gender responsive policy making in this work stream, but there has been no formal adjustment of the result framework or the pillar objectives. The ease with which one group of interventions can be replaced with another group also shows the non-specific nature of outputs. Another example is the health interventions on COVID and Ebola, where the GPS pillar dedicated core resources to help the public sector cope with the additional burden on the health system, but GPS pillar objectives and results were not adjusted accordingly.

²⁵ ICPE team has taken LED as the sum of activities mentioned under GPS programme document (page 26) including Activity 2.4, 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7

²⁶ ICPE team has taken Parliamentary work as the sum of activities mentioned under GPS programme document (page 26) including Activity 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3

The other difficulty pertained to the implementation efficiency of programmes. Representatives of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and other responsible parties interviewed expressed significant grievances when it came to the adherence to agreed work plans and timeliness of the payments by UNDP, such as last-minute cancellations of activities by UNDP despite having an agreement in Annual Work Plans (AWPs). The different financial calendar years of UNDP (January to December) and the public sector (July to June) also meant UNDP asked for finalization of activities by MDAs according to a more crammed timeline than their regular operations. UNDP could have released these payments in a timelier manner to help MDAs complete their activities in congruence with public sector timelines.

Another difficulty, more pertinent to the NCER pillar, was the challenges related to operationalization of interventions at downstream level, which required the collaboration of District Level Task Forces. Systematic delays were reported in the release of project funds from UNDP to MDAs due to the long review and approval process of AWP. While government entities did not always follow the UNDP rules and expectations in preparing the AWP, there was reportedly no clear communication between UNDP and responsible parties (RPs) on the requirements for planning and reporting. This was coupled with delays of funds release from central-level MDAs to LGs and slow government procurement processes. The involvement of different MDAs in different outputs of the programmes also created uncoordinated delivery, as separate government entities had different procedures for implementation of activities and tended to work separately and without coordination.

Finding 3. Results-based management and monitoring and evaluation: The Country Office had a comprehensive monitoring plan with good coverage of each pillar. The CO did not have comprehensive narrative reporting on pillars, which limited understanding of how interventions were prioritized and implemented. CPD and pillar result frameworks could have benefitted from more quality indicators.

The UNDP CO had a comprehensive monitoring plan that detailed the monitoring visits for each programme and intervention. The evaluation team's assessment of the plan and review of the archive of monitoring reports showed the coverage was comprehensive and the task was distributed among staff and M&E officers in a balanced manner. Most monitoring reports contained rich information on bottlenecks and areas of improvement as they relate to beneficiaries, RPs and specific sites of operation.²⁷

TABLE 5. Coverage of 2023 Monitoring Plan Per Pillar

Pillar	# of active projects	# of projects visited	Monitoring Budget (\$)	2023 Budget for the Pillar (\$)	% of budget on monitoring
GPS	6	6	73,300	7,108,477	1.03%
ISG	4	4	30,275	2,261,544	1.34%
NCER	13	13	399,116	12,269,593	3.25%

²⁷ The Terminal Evaluation Report for F-SURE highlights inadequate documentation of monitoring visits and lack of clarity of follow up actions for course correction in adaptive management. The Terminal Evaluation report for the Enhancing Resilience of Agricultural Landscapes and Value Chains in Eastern Uganda – Upscaling Climate Smart Agriculture Practices (CSA) in Uganda's Farming Systems project also highlights weak documentation of lessons learned in the monitoring plan. The Mid-Term Review of the Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in Karamoja Sub-Region project also highlights the need to improve the monitoring framework. However, CO was able to demonstrate other examples where monitoring reports were used to assist decision making and course corrections at project level (i.e., Spotlight, Refugee Programming and Justice initiatives). How these led to higher level decision making at pillar level is not known.

The CO evaluation function was mostly focused on project-level evaluations, with 11 of them planned for the 2021-2025 period.²⁸ Distribution of evaluations per outcome was balanced in terms of representing the weight of each pillar in the CPD accurately, with the dominance of the NCER pillar due to mandatory evaluations of vertical environmental funds. The Evaluation Plan was not strategic, as there were no outcome or thematic evaluations planned for any of the pillars, even though all Anchor and Enabling Programmes planned both a mid-term and a final evaluation in their Programme Documents. These evaluations were not included in the Evaluation Plan submitted along with the CPD, nor were they added later during annual revisions to the Evaluation Plan.

TABLE 6. Distribution of Evaluations by Outcome and by Type

Evaluation type	Outcome 1 & Outcome 3.2 GPS pillar	Outcome 2.1 ISG Pillar	Outcome 2.2 NCER pillar
Outcome/Thematic	0	0	0
Project based	3	1	7

Anchor programmes funded through core resources did not have annual progress reports. The only instrument that seemed to be followed up was UNDP's Comprehensive M&E Tool, where there was a section for each anchor programme's result framework. However, without a narrative account of interventions, it was hard to make sense of the result frameworks of anchor programmes, which were mostly numeric in nature.²⁹ This also made it difficult to understand how the teams prioritized certain interventions over others or made modifications in their pillar programming, managed risks and the lessons learned during implementation.

Both CPD and Pillars' Results Frameworks had issues with articulating SMART indicators at output level, which made it difficult to understand and assess UNDP's real contributions. In most instances, UNDP's Consolidated M&E Monitoring Tool was not helpful in understanding programmes' real sphere of influence or the substantive contributions of UNDP. In certain cases, UNDP chose indicators only achievable by the Government or set the targets too high given UNDP's size and resources. The SIA Enabling Programme result framework is an exception where proper linkages between activities-results-outputs were established, and it was possible to follow up on what the programme was trying to achieve, with meaningful indicators in place.

²⁸ Of the 7 evaluations quality assessed, 3 are satisfactory, 3 are moderately satisfactory and 1 is moderately unsatisfactory.

²⁹ UNDP CO provided short briefs for anchor programmes; however, they are mostly focused on activity completion, not including major sections such as risk management or lessons learned and not explaining why a significant portion of interventions were cancelled or not initiated.

TABLE 7. Examples of non-SMART indicators from CPD and Anchor Programme Result Frameworks at Output level

Unspecified indicators*	Unmeasurable indicators**	Unachievable indicators***
<p>Number of policy and legal frameworks developed at national and subnational levels creating equal opportunities, pro-poor growth and sustainable development</p> <p>Number of innovative, locally appropriate sustainable development initiatives developed and scaled up, targeting underserved communities/groups and women</p> <p>Number of targeted non-state institutions with strengthened capacities for advocacy and engagement in the review and reform of legislation and policies for national and subnational governance and development</p>	<p>Extent to which an infrastructure for peace and security is functional</p> <p>Extent to which an integrated climate information and disaster early warning system is functional</p> <p>Existence of operational end-to-end multi-sectoral early warning systems (EWS) to limit the gender-differentiated impact of: Natural hazards, economic/health shocks (e.g., pandemics) and other risk factors</p>	<p>Indicators achievable only by the government:</p> <p>Number of agreements/MoUs signed for improved border cooperation</p> <p>Proportion of gender-based violence cases reported to authorities and handled in the formal justice system disaggregated by type</p> <p>Proportion of magisterial areas accessing state-funded legal aid services</p> <p>Indicators with targets beyond UNDP's size and resources:</p> <p>Number of new decent jobs (formal and informal) generated, disaggregated by sex, age, disability Target: 200,000</p> <p>Number of men and women who use climate information services, and products Target: 42 million</p>

*The indicator could mean to be many things. **The indicator could not be rigorously measured. ***The indicator was achievable only by the Government or the targets were beyond UNDP's capability given its size and resources

2.2 Programme relevance and responsiveness

Finding 4. Addressing key national development priorities and needs of key stakeholders: UNDP programming was closely aligned with key national development priorities as expressed in the National Development Plan (NDP III). While this ensured swift progress in areas where government endorsement was full (i.e., trade integration), it also meant less attention to certain areas where UNDP had a clear mandate (i.e., corruption, legislative oversight) but that enjoyed limited programming with government. Another drawback of strict alignment with the needs of government was the use of UNDP resources to fill the funding gaps in various government programmes. This drawback was most visible in the use of core resources where UNDP had more flexibility in spending.

UNDP programming was strongly linked to and shaped by the Government of Uganda's (GoU) development programming and adapted according to changes in the Government's political priorities. Representatives of MDAs interviewed during field visits were generally satisfied with the coordinating role of UNDP in helping the Government articulate its development priorities and assess its own performance.³⁰ All anchor programmes and individual donor-funded projects were aligned with the programmatic priorities of the Government as articulated in NDP III.

³⁰ UNDP coordinated the drafting of NDP III and undertook its mid-term evaluation. UNDP has also helped the Government prepare Implementation Action Plans of the 20 programmes of the NDP III.

This alignment gave UNDP a distinct advantage when government endorsement was full, i.e., wetland restoration or trade integration. The drawback identified in this strict alignment was that UNDP ended up foregoing those areas that did not receive adequate attention from the Government but where UNDP has a clear mandate. Given the backsliding in the human rights field, there was a need for opening of spaces for more accountable government.³¹ One drawback aligning governance programming too closely with government priorities was that accountability was largely seen as a byproduct of transparency brought about by technology uptake (i.e., digitalization, e-governance, smart cities) and other dimensions of accountability such as 'anti-corruption' or 'legislature oversight' received lesser emphasis. This limited the scope of what UNDP could do in its work on SDG16.

Another drawback of strict alignment with government programmes was that at times UNDP programming turned into an extension of government programming where certain interventions which did not receive adequate funding from government budgets were expected to be funded by UNDP. This was not always a negative development. UNDP's funding proved catalytic at times in terms of providing a missing element in a government initiative. However, there were also situations where UNDP was seen as an institution of last resort – almost like a donor - that agreed to fill the gap for needs as diverse as computers, salaries, refurbishments, or conferences. This also led to some stakeholders defining UNDP interventions as 'thinly spread' for meaningful impact to holistically address national development priorities. This observation was more pertinent for the use of core resources.

Finding 5. Addressing the needs of those left behind: UNDP programming was largely successful in identifying the needs of those left behind and making them an integral part of programme design. One limiting factor in achieving results was inadequate infrastructure in remote and rural areas, which limited the positive impact of programmes on vulnerable groups.

Assessing the design of UNDP interventions against UNDP's five-factor framework for LNOB, the evaluation can highlight at least three important instances where this approach delivered results:

Socio-economic status: UNDP helped Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBO) to undertake a Poverty Status Report and Multi-dimensional Poverty Index. Field work confirmed these works have been a major reference to define and measure neglected dimensions of poverty such as the urban poor. Support to informal sector workers such as urban food vendors (via upskilling or use of digital tools such as Jumia) as well as artisanal miners (via formalization and value addition) were also informed by a recognition of the precarious nature of their work and interventions were designed to lift them out of subsistence level. Youth unemployment was a major focus of programming informed by the socio-economic inequalities in the labour market.

Discrimination: Sources of discrimination based on refugee status and gender were a major consideration for UNDP programming. Informed by an intersectional analysis of discriminations faced by refugee women, UNDP increased their resilience by providing cash-for-work opportunities and organizing them in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and contributed to their psychological well-being by ensuring their access to legal aid and counseling. UNDP also devised effective livelihood interventions by organizing women into small production groups and providing them with start-up kits, which proved vital in providing vulnerable women with their first meaningful source of income.

³¹ This is only aggravated by the shrinkage of the funding landscape where important donors of UNDP in the human rights field pulled out due to the passing of regressive legislation in recent years. However, this might be more of a temporary situation and with the right programming UNDP can still convince traditional donors in SDG16 to fund programmes on voice, accountability and human rights.

‘Vulnerability to Shocks’ and ‘Geography’: UNDP interventions targeted vulnerable communities (such as food and nutrition insecure communities in Karamoja)³² and some geographic locations with extreme climatic conditions susceptible to impacts of climate change. While short intervention time frames and operational difficulties related to mobilizing district task forces made it difficult to claim long term resilience gains, Climate Smart Agriculture initiatives brought about economic benefits from alternative sustainable livelihood options for various value chains, as evidenced by increased productivity of various commodities and acquisition of assets by women (including land and livestock). Some of the interventions still had limitations that made it more difficult for harder to reach communities to benefit from UNDP programming fully, for example places with limited internet connectivity and absence of financial institutions for receiving grants.³³

Voice and participation: Governance programming created civic spaces to foster participation and voice by the most marginalized populations. One criticism of UNDP’s approach was that NGOs have been mostly utilized to reach vulnerable groups, but in an effort to bring benefits of a programme or intervention rather than to amplify their voice. One exception in UNDP programming was promotion of youth voice and participation in economic empowerment initiatives, where spaces were created for their participation in economic fora domestically and abroad through YouthConnekt initiative.³⁴

Finding 6. Responsiveness to shifts in context and other changes in the operating environment: UNDP was largely able to adapt and reposition its programme to address shifts in context and other changes in the operating environment by reprogramming its budget to address COVID-19 and Ebola outbreaks. While the funds were limited, UNDP was able to address some of the immediate needs and support the Government to address needs. The pandemic accelerated the digitalization agenda, where UNDP played a pioneering role.

The major shift in context in Uganda was the COVID-19 pandemic. The preventive measures that the Government took in 2020 and 2021, including the lockdowns and the closure of educational institutions and business units, slowed progress towards achieving national, regional and global sustainable development targets. The period of the pandemic also saw an increase in GBV. UNDP, in collaboration with the Government and funders, re-adjusted its programming to address the effects of COVID-19. Re-purposing of funds affected the GPS pillar more than other pillars. While this contributed to further alignment with government needs, it also took away resources from the GPS pillar which could have been used for Local Economic Development (LED) initiatives.

Some of the funds were used to address GBV in the form of advocacy campaigns and counselling for victims. UNDP also influenced integration of GBV prevention in the national COVID-19 response. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development led the formation of a COVID-19 sub-committee on GBV and VAC and developed the National Gender Based Violence Multi-Sectoral COVID-19 Response Plan (2021-2024). This provided policy guidance and strengthened multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder response to GBV in the National COVID Response Plan, which also included CSOs.

³² Karamoja sub-region lies in the cattle corridor (agricultural rangeland) which is prone to floods, drought/dry spells, pests, and diseases climate related risks.

³³ During COVID, some of the economic empowerment initiatives such as mentoring of start-ups had to switch to online. Field work confirmed that those entrepreneurs with limited internet connectivity could not benefit from the online delivery model to the same extent that Kampala-based entrepreneurs did. The same goes for access to financial services. Micro-enterprise groups formed under livelihood initiatives in remote areas had a harder time accessing the financial benefits through traditional banking. To counteract such issues UNDP supported other initiatives such as investment in mobile money services through local intermediaries that do not require recipients to open bank accounts.

³⁴ A new Joint Programme on Youth is also aiming to contribute to youth participation in development, peace, security, and climate action. However, the programming only started in 2024, with no results to report.

The Ebola outbreak led to a similar re-purposing of funds in the GPS pillar. The purpose of UNDP's Ebola response was to support government efforts in implementation of the National Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Response Plan to interrupt the spread of the virus in the country and to other neighbouring countries. UNDP supported the Government's National EVD Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) pillar through the procurement of equipment to reduce the risk of infection in treatment and isolation units of high-volume hospitals. UNDP also supported the Ministry of Health to develop health care waste management guidelines and a financial plan to guide the health care system in management of facility waste. This intervention was crucial in preventing infections and in environmental management.

The most important positive change for UNDP programming brought about by COVID-19 was the acceleration of the digitalization agenda and increase in government demand to invest in critical e-services. Field work confirmed that many MDAs approached UNDP not just for setting up various online tools and platforms but also to request hardware and software for the continuity of operations, especially during COVID-19.³⁵ UNDP also pioneered in this field by supporting the Government with the preparation of Digital Transformation Roadmap. Digital Skills Acceleration and e-commerce platforms for informal sector workers also entered UNDP's agenda, driven by the exigencies of the pandemic.

The passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) in 2023³⁶ was a major shock. This impacted governance work as some traditional donors have pulled out of funding.³⁷ Others decided not to work directly with government and to channel funds through trusted intermediaries. Passage of the Act also affected UNDP programming, particularly when it came to its work with more traditional civic actors such as religious organizations whose stance on AHA was not human rights-based (HRB). UNDP distanced itself from such organizations due to values misalignment. Another key factor that has impacted the programme is the fact that the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights in Uganda was closed shortly after the AHA legislation passed. These developments continue to hamper the work of UNDP in its broader mandate around SDG16. Despite these negative developments, some donors underlined that because they did not want to work with the Government directly, they shifted towards implementation agencies, and this has the potential to empower the UN as an intermediary to work with the Government. At the time of field work, there was no indication that this has been used as a leverage point by UNDP vis-à-vis donors to broaden its scope of work in SDG16.

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

Governance and Peace Strengthening Pillar – linked to CPD Outcome 1

The GPS Pillar had four streams of work as explained in its ToC. One centered on access to justice with a prioritization of digital solutions to facilitate delivery of justice and more efficient GBV case management by JLOS. Accountable service delivery was facilitated through electoral interventions as well as strengthening of gender responsive policy making at local level. Civic engagement was the third stream, where interventions

³⁵ The introduction of virtual court hearings in GPS pillar was also a response to reduce the movement of prisoners for court hearings during the pandemic. It also ensured that the magistrates could hold sessions from other jurisdictions.

³⁶ Some of the big donors which imposed sanctions were: The World Bank, which announced it would pause all new public financing to Uganda; and the United States, which imposed visa restrictions on Ugandan officials and suspended some assistance programmes. The EU Parliament called for a review of aid programmes to Uganda. At the time of the field work, Norway ended its presence in Uganda and Sida pulled out of core funding of some of the UNDP programmes which might be partially influenced by the AHA legislation.

³⁷ UNDP ROAR (2023).

were designed to promote civic values and a culture of democracy. Under **Peace, Cohesion and Resilience**, key drivers of conflict such as refugee influx and cross-border conflict were addressed using livelihood stabilization as the primary mechanism.

Finding 7. Equitable access and administration of justice: UNDP contributed to modernization of the justice system through e-service delivery and improving GBV case management by working with Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS) actors and legal aid providers. These initiatives were very effective in the pilots where they were implemented and set a good precedent for nation-wide uptake. UNDP interventions often targeted the most affected districts, but achieving a nationwide transformation necessitated wider implementation by the Government.

Critical infrastructure for e-governance at national and subnational levels: UNDP contributed to infrastructure of e-governance in a select number of courts and prisons in districts of Mbale, Mubende, Jinja, Gulu and Masaka, digitizing the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs (MOJCA) and six regional offices.³⁸ E-governance enabled continuation of service delivery within the justice system during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. According to the staff of the Judiciary, there was a high rate of case disposal as a result. Data management was improved and interaction increased between higher and lower courts, especially in sharing work experience. Access to justice also was enhanced for those left behind, especially by reducing the time and cost of hearings. Other benefits included increased security for the accused and witnesses.³⁹

Despite these achievements, access to justice in Uganda remains limited for various reasons. Interviews revealed that issues such as illiteracy, digital divide, language barriers, lack of electricity, and geographic location prevent JLOS from reaching those left behind. Equitable justice must be paralleled with infrastructure development, particularly in the ICT and energy spheres. While UNDP may not be able to affect these larger processes, there are improvements within its sphere of influence. The JLOS Annual Monitoring Report reveals that there is great variability in the quality of services provided by Legal Aid service providers. In 2023, the Ministry of Justice inspected 105 legal aid service providers, of which 40 were approved and 53 were not approved, and 12 legal service providers closed their offices. This means UNDP can step up its efforts to ensure quality among legal service providers. It will be harder for UNDP to leverage funds from donors for access to justice initiatives if the main emphasis is on modernizing or digitizing justice infrastructure. For instance, the issues of the case backlog and performance standards were stated as areas of interest in access to justice by certain donors.

Capacity strengthening of JLOS for GBV case management: UNDP also strengthened capacities of 18 Local Council Courts (LCC) in Kitgum, Tororo and Kyegegwa to deal with GBV case management. The Legal Aid Services Providers Network (LASPNET) provided legal aid for survivors of GBV. This included a legal aid mobile call center, mobile legal aid clinics/outreaches, and legal aid open days for provision of legal aid services to survivors during and after lockdown.⁴⁰ The linkages between Local Councils and

³⁸ Support provided to the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs included installation of teleconferencing equipment at key points of service that included the Administrator General's Office, Regional offices, and Directorate of Legal Advisory Services and six regional offices as well as digitization of the registries at the Ministry. This was done by converting information storage from hard copy to soft copies stored in electronic registries that were widely accessible. Real-Time Transcription systems were installed in four selected superior courts to enhance justice services. Installation of the video conferencing facility at the Ministry Justice supported intra linkages between the Ministry and the Judiciary thus further enhancing expeditious management of cases and reducing on case backlog.

³⁹ This analysis comes directly from interviews with JLOS officials. For an illustration of benefits, please read: <https://www.undp.org/uganda/stories/judiciary-video-conferencing-system-supported-undp-eases-access-justice-uganda>

⁴⁰ The GBV Mobile Toll-free lines LASPNET in partnership and with support from UNDP Spotlight Initiative, continued to maintain and functionalize the six multiple Toll-free lines from UTL that facilitate the on-spot legal aid services in various spotlight districts including Kampala, Arua, Amudat and Kyegegwa. The GBV Mobile Toll-free lines are manned by five call agents stationed in various spotlight districts who were trained on customer care, client satisfaction and reporting. During the reporting period, a total of 246 cases (64 male, 182 female) were handled through on spot legal advice, counselling and appropriate referrals to ULS, LDC-LAC, Uganda Police, LC and CDOs. These cases were related to domestic violence, child neglect, assault, drug abuse, land disputes, defilement among others. Source: <https://www.laspnet.org/joomla-pages/reports/annual-reports/600-annual-report-2022-2023/file>

Legal Aid Service Providers (LASPs) in Tororo and Kyegegwa districts improved GBV case response and tracking. Interviewees underlined that a functioning network has been established within the communities that includes the police, women leaders, civic actors and the Local Councils Courts (LCCs) to address GBV cases.⁴¹ By empowering the local courts in GBV cases, the workloads for the magistrates and high courts were also eased.

Finding 8. Gender responsive programming at LG level: UNDP integrated gender responsive programming in select Local Government structures with multiple sustainability measures in place. UNDP did this by influencing planning, compliance and human resource development practices.

UNDP invested in LG capacities in planning and budgeting and mainstreaming gender in service delivery in various ways. The local government inspection manual, a tool to measure compliance of local governments on services they provide, was revised to include performance indicators where LGs must report on what services they were providing in relation to GBV. This tool was used quarterly by the Ministry of Local Government to check compliance and ensure accountability of LGs on how they were utilizing funds to tackle GBV.⁴² As a result of these measures, government response to GBV increased, with more than 49 costed specific interventions in six Districts' plans. To embed this more firmly in LG plans, six District LGs have developed 5-Year GBP Action Plans. An integrated GBV and gender responsive interventions in Public Service Performance Management Circular was passed by the Ministry of Public Service in 2021.⁴³

UNDP developed curricula on mainstreaming GBV response in public planning and budgeting processes which were integrated into the academic programmes of pre- and in-service training institutions of the public sector. A tracer study indicated that 83.9 percent of respondents were applying the acquired knowledge and skills to improve GBV planning and budgeting at their workplaces.⁴⁴ Adoption of some of the courses in the government training institutions such as the Uganda Public Service Centre (UPSC) ensured the retention of the capacities and expanded the reach of trained staff beyond the selected districts.

UNDP also adopted an area-based approach to gender responsive programming informed by the higher prevalence of GBV caused by refugee influx. UNDP built capacity of district-level officers, livelihood and GBV actors in West Nile region (Obongi, Adjumani and Lamwo districts) to strengthen gender transformative programming. This strengthened cross-referrals, and increased survivors' trust in the existing structures, including the probation office, CSOs responding to GBV, and local/settlement leadership, consequently increasing reporting of GBV cases. The collaboration among departments/institutions such as health education, social services, and law enforcement, was also strengthened, as was provision of survivor-centered services to GBV survivors/victims. This led to enhanced institutional leadership (both formal and informal) across the three districts and increased sensitivity to gender inclusion in district programmes.

⁴¹ The referrals from community activists and leaders enabled the police to provide response services to VAWG survivors, including the arrest of GBV perpetrators. As a result of the collective voice of women networks and other anti-GBV actors in Amudat, the district leadership passed the ordinance on the Prohibition of Gender Based Violence 2022. In Tororo, there is increased awareness of the need to stop the night fundraising at vigil functions, where incidents of sexual assault against adolescent girls have been reported, and the administrative interventions to stop them are ongoing. Such measures have a downstream effect of building a critical mass of district women networks advocating for a conducive policy environment to end gender-based violence.

⁴² In the words of one interviewee: "...right now under the Equal Opportunities Commission it is a requirement that every budget of the government entities must demonstrate that they have planned for gender equity issues. So when the budgets are done they are also put subjected to a verification of whether they have components of the gender equity issues. And we said that that is where GBV also needs to be integrated. So at a national level no ministry, department, agency or local government's budget is approved when it does not have evidence of addressing issues of gender and equity, including GBV".

⁴³ South-south learning and benchmarking visits were conducted to Ghana that enabled Judiciary of Uganda to nurture improvements in the access to and administration of justice. One key result of the benchmarking visit was the development and roll out of the performance assessment of judicial officers.

⁴⁴ Spotlight Initiative, Tracer Study of Capacities to Mainstream GBV Response In Plans and Budgets, page 41

Finding 9: Electoral Support: Election work was marred by various obstacles from the very beginning, which limited the scope of UNDP's work. While UNDP invested in the key institutions for accountable elections (Electoral Commission and Uganda Human Rights Commission) for the long haul, the timing of the interventions impeded their having a meaningful impact on the 2021 elections.

The 2021 elections were highly contentious, with important restrictions on rights and freedoms.⁴⁵ The objectives of UNDP electoral work were to strengthen transparency and inclusion in electoral processes, build institutional capacity of the Electoral Commission (EC) and other electoral stakeholders, and improve peace mechanisms in the lead up to 2021 elections. This work was put on hold by the Government for one year, which meant UNDP could not engage with some of the major stakeholders, including the Electoral Commission, until after the election date. Not being able to work directly with the EC for approximately one year meant lost opportunities. The electoral atmosphere was largely beyond the influence of UNDP. Despite these limitations, UNDP was able to work with election stakeholders to advocate and strengthen their capacities in the administration and accountability of election management for the long haul. For instance, UNDP was later able to provide technical contributions to the review and enhancement of the Electoral Commission Strategic Plan (2021/2022 - 2024/2025) that will provide a roadmap for the next presidential elections in 2025/2026.

Because of the sensitive political environment during the pre-election period, communication of project activities was drastically reduced as part of the risk mitigation strategy. UNDP refocused its efforts and worked more with stakeholders such as the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), strengthening UHRC's capacity in human rights monitoring, creating awareness and advocacy on citizen's rights on multimedia channels (245 radio stations) across the country. As a result, UHRC's engagement with citizens was enhanced: 447 complaints were received and actioned and 698 callers were advised through UHRC call centers. Capacity building trainings were provided to Uganda's security forces regarding prevention and prohibition of torture, freedom of speech, public order management act and rights of vulnerable persons. The work with UHRC and security forces was delivered only after the elections.

Finding 10. Civic engagement and a culture that values gender, human rights, integrity and democracy: UNDP strategically utilized the power of civic actors to further public campaigns around important issues such as elections, the COVID-19 pandemic, Ebola crisis, and GBV. UNDP's approach was pragmatic in that it sought the support of both traditional civic actors (i.e., religious leaders) as well as human rights-based (HRB) groups such as women's rights organizations, according to the exigencies of the campaigns. More perception studies are needed to unearth whether such engagement remains symbolic or is consequential for inculcating a HRB approach in society and among duty-bearers.

UNDP utilized the power of civic actors and opinion makers to shape important campaigns and dialogues around human rights, gender equality, non-discrimination and political accountability. To ensure fair and peaceful elections, UNDP had partnerships with non-state actors and organized regional stakeholder dialogue meetings to identify early warning signs and any emerging issues likely to threaten peace and impede voter participation in the 2021 general elections.⁴⁶ Shuttle diplomacy was conducted through IRCU/ The Elders Forum of Uganda (TEFU) and quiet diplomacy was conducted by the UN to prevent escalation of electoral related conflict in the country. Similarly, The Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) was supervised by a steering committee composed of 21 eminent NGOs. A total of 300,176 people were reached

⁴⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/01/21/uganda-elections-marred-violence>

⁴⁶ Some of the important non-state actors involved in these dialogues were: Media Council of Uganda, Inter Religious Council of Uganda (IRC), The Elders Forum of Uganda (TEFU), Women's Situation Room under the auspices of the International Women Peace Centre, Nnabagereka Development Foundation and Uganda Christian Lawyers Fraternity

with peace messages to ensure peace building and conflict prevention.⁴⁷ According to key informants, the halt in UNDP's electoral work also had an impact on resolution of issues through traditional channels and increased polarization. The traditional actors changed strategy by directly engaging with the EC through convening meetings or by writing pastoral letters.

Under the Ebola initiative, UNDP and the GoU worked with the Inter-religious Council and the Nnabagereka Foundation to create awareness on Ebola. This was seen as a strategic move as the outbreak was largely influenced by religious doctrines and cultural beliefs. Both organizations were supported to deliver messages on prevention, early detection and referral of Ebola virus disease, focusing on the nine districts with confirmed cases, neighbouring communities, and other hotspot areas with a heightened risk of contracting Ebola.

UNDP also used religious leaders' platforms strategically for community mobilization and awareness raising on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), such as printing of pastoral letters. Cultural institutions benefitted from enhanced knowledge and capacity, which they used to assess gaps in their rules/guidelines, norms and practices to ensure comprehensive response to VAWG. For instance, in Kitgum, the customary marriage certificate with the paramount chief's seal began to be issued only to marriages in line with the principle of zero tolerance to child marriage.

While this strategic approach delivered fast results under conditions of emergency (i.e., health crisis, election related conflict), more perception studies were needed to unearth whether such strategic utilization of civic actors remained symbolic or was consequential for inculcating a HRB approach in society and among duty-bearers.⁴⁸

Finding 11. Peace building, cohesion, and conflict management: UNDP contributed to the transition from humanitarian assistance to sustainable development in the three districts of West Nile with highest concentration of refugees. While livelihood stabilization efforts were largely successful, inclusion of refugees and host communities in value chains and their access to long term finance remained a work in progress. The short-term nature of cross-border conflict programming impeded reporting of concrete results in this CPD period.

Refugee programming: The KOICA-funded refugee programme implemented in West Nile region (Obongi, Adjumani and Lamwo districts), which was described by the donor as the first pilot of Humanitarian Development Nexus (HDN) approach in Uganda, was largely successful in reaching the numeric targets of the livelihood stabilization component.⁴⁹ UNDP relied on a 3X6 model⁵⁰ that started with cash-for-work

⁴⁷ Civic actors were also used as a check on duty bearers. Collaboration was achieved with women's groups, Youth SDG Coalition and more than 70 senior religious leaders who obtained feedback from duty bearers such as the Police and Resident District Commissioners on citizen participation in elections, strengthened district peace and stability committees, and enhanced post-election counselling in six Post-Election Consensus Building dialogues. This resulted in strengthening the IRCU's District Inter Faith committees to engage government on creating safe space for believers and conflict mediation. Senior religious leaders pledged to continue offering counselling to both winners and losers to reduce tension and violence.

⁴⁸ For instance, in refugee programming, one of the objectives of the programme was to change perceptions on gender, the instances of GBV and child marriages. However, the activities carried out to change perceptions on these contentious topics was very short term and superficial. TE mentions a tendency of emphasizing mainstreaming gender equity/GBV prevention among institutions rather than the targeted communities (refugees and host communities). Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP), which focuses on gender-based violence prevention and response, was not involved at the inception of the project implementation and at the later stage, CEDOVIP focused more on training institutions rather than the communities. Therefore, its effect on changing the perception of the community vis-à-vis gender equality, GBV and child marriages was limited (TE, page 39)

⁴⁹ The programme was implemented via various NGO and INGOs which were experts in livelihood stabilization and/or GBV response; they took up various components of the programme based on their expertise and their reach in the districts of intervention (Adjumani, Lamwo and Obongi). LGs of these sub-counties were also largely integrated to programming since the expectation was that these programmes would be taken over by these LGs at the end of support. 91% of people in the three refugee-hosting areas benefitted from livelihood opportunities (13,637 people benefitted from cash-for-work, 11,672 were supported to set up or continue micro-businesses); 59% of the people in refugee-hosting areas joined village savings and loans associations; 74% of people owned businesses in the refugee hosting areas, as opposed to 26% at programme inception.

⁵⁰ For more info, please see https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/BROCHURE_3x6_Toolkit_Building_resilience_through_jobs_and_livelihoods.pdf

opportunities for building community infrastructure such as roads or woodlots and continued with setting up of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) by refugees and host communities and provided start up kits and business grants to maintain their economic activities. The last leg of the 3X6 model was based on integrating refugees and host communities to value chains. Refugee programming was designed in a gender responsive manner where a gender quota of 60 percent female beneficiaries was implemented in all livelihood stabilization initiatives. The components of refugee programming that required further strengthening were the accession of refugee-host community savings groups (VSLAs) to a more formal status to benefit from government programmes and value chain/market integration, which remained partially implemented.⁵¹

This programme was aligned with the Government's Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan (JLIRP) prepared for 13 refugee-hosting districts as well as the 'Livelihood and Resilience' sectoral plan of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). UNDP also undertook activities to cascade JLIRP to the District Local Governments of Adjumani and Obongi through launching the plan at district level and building the capacity of key staff on its implementation. The sustainability of refugee programmes hinged partly on their continued existence and maintenance by the local governments. The gains of livelihood interventions also required the inclusion of beneficiaries into existing government assistance programmes. Given the level of unfunded commitments in the district development plans, maintaining such work was precarious.⁵² There are positive indications that UNDP will have a follow up phase to deepen the investments in West Nile to address these sustainability issues.⁵³

Cross-border conflict: Kenya and Uganda signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2019, demonstrating a political momentum to address cross-border conflict. UNDP partnered with the Regional Bureau for Africa under the African Borderlands Centre (ABC) for its cross-border programming (four border districts of Moroto, Kotito, Kabong and Amudat) to implement HDN for peace building. The programme was short and limited in scope. Under the social cohesion pillar, a group of local CSOs was formed into clusters and given small grants. The clusters facilitated the establishment of local peace initiatives and platforms and supported existing initiatives with training and equipment. The initiatives also played a key role in identifying and addressing causes of recurrent conflict with a bottom-up approach.⁵⁴ This joint intervention with ABC, together with the results achieved in the refugee programme, was used as a baseline by UNDP for an upcoming four-year intervention funded by KOICA which will focus on the same districts and will promote increased incomes for vulnerable households through environmentally friendly livelihood options and strengthen essential service institutions to promote peaceful co-existence among communities.

⁵¹ Final evaluation of the programme recommended upgrading the existing savings groups to Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs) – a more formally recognized cooperative status by government for various financial assistance schemes- rather than formulating new savings groups. In Uganda, SACCOs are regulated by the Uganda Microfinance Regulatory Authority (UMRA) to ensure their proper management and to protect members' interests. In terms of value chain/market integration, UNDP conducted a detailed scoping study to determine farm and non-farm sectors where there was a larger potential for value addition and later completed a value chain assessment that focused mainly on cassava and sesame value chains. Final evaluation showed the investment in value chain was mostly at the production stage while a good portion of the recommendations were on better price negotiation, post-harvest handling and collective marketing and collateral management. By only focusing on the production stage, refugee programming did contribute to host and refugee farmer earnings but did not improve their position in the value chain. The final evaluation of the Refugee Programming also makes a recommendation in this area by saying: "Provide more time for the implementation of inclusive value chain development that address all components of the selected value chains as one year may not be sufficient for effective implementation." (Terminal Evaluation of Host and Refugee Community Empowerment Project, page 49).

⁵² <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/13104> , Mid-Term Evaluation of Host and Refugee Community Empowerment Project, Page 42

⁵³ After ICPE field mission, the ICPE team was provided with evidence that UNDP received a conditional approval for a follow up phase to deepen the investments of the refugee programme in West Nile.

⁵⁴ ABC Annual Report 2023, page 45, Africa Borderlands Centre 2023 Annual Report | United Nations Development Programme (undp.org)

Inclusive and Sustainable Growth Pillar – linked to CPD outcome 2.1

The Inclusive and Sustainable Growth Pillar (ISG) was focused on increasing productive, decent employment opportunities and access to resources for marginalized and vulnerable groups. To do this, UNDP adopted a three-tiered approach as explained in its ToC. One stream of work centered around building capacities of Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs), guiding priority sectors of NDP III. Another stream aimed to strengthen capacities of the private sector and MSMEs to help them effectively compete in local and regional markets. Thirdly, UNDP facilitated access of youth to finance, skills and technology for decent employment.

Finding 12: Capacities of targeted Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to develop and implement policies and strategies for productivity and competitiveness: UNDP shaped the growth agenda by developing numerous policies and strategies related to Uganda's industrial and manufacturing policy and created awareness and understanding of newer avenues for growth such as trade integration and low value mining. UNDP's influence was more present at central level as opposed to downstream level.

Some of the most important pieces of guiding frameworks that gave a direction to industry in Uganda, such as the National Industrial Policy, Green Manufacturing Strategy and Green Growth Development Strategy, were prepared with UNDP support. UNDP was also the go-to-actor to develop policies and regulations in promoting trade, and artisanal mining in line with the priorities of NDP III. One important area of work that UNDP initiated in this CPD period was the successful operationalization of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA). In partnership with the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Cooperatives, UNDP supported the development of the AfCFTA National Implementation Strategy, which informed high-level Presidential and Cabinet discussions about the establishment of long-term manufacturing and export development financing for export commodities and markets and a National Branding and Packaging Strategy to promote the development and use of appropriate and sustainable product packaging by SMEs.

UNDP was not only the pen holder of these guiding documents but also created information sharing platforms to increase awareness of existing markets, cross-border procedures, requirements, and potential markets. UNDP directly brokered relations between Uganda and neighbouring countries by facilitating Joint Permanent Commission meetings between the GoU and other African countries such as DRC, Nigeria and South Africa, and organizing joint events such as East African Business Summit. The Joint Permanent Commissions and trade and investment summits organized to date contributed to removing of trade barriers with Uganda's neighbours. Field work confirmed the pivotal role played by UNDP in facilitating regional trade and the need for its continued involvement to deepen the impact of AfCFTA.

UNDP also supported the GoU to strengthen the regulatory frameworks in the mining sector, including support to update the Mining and Minerals Act 2022; preparation of the Mining and Minerals Regulations 2023; and the Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining Enterprises (ASME) Formalization Strategy that provided a framework for the structured transformation of ASME's operations and business activities that employ 600,000 people in Uganda.⁵⁵ The Mining and Minerals Act of 2022 created new classes of mineral rights, including an 'artisanal mining license' specifically designed to formalize small-scale and artisanal mining operations. Field work confirmed that UNDP was able to create a constituency around the development minerals by convincing the public and the Government that this group of minerals was important and

⁵⁵ According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), the mining and quarrying industry directly employs close to 600,000 people. <https://www.undp.org/uganda/stories/development-minerals-innovation-and-enterprise-empowering-women-artisanal-miners-uganda>

gave it a name which everybody adopted.⁵⁶ While the Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining Enterprises Formalization Strategy was a good attempt at regulating this sector dominated by small scale artisanal miners, formalization was not a straightforward process, as artisanal miners and local governments did not always have cohesive relationships. UNDP hired a Responsible Party to support 125 artisanal miner groups to register. While the pilot set a good precedent, it was not a guarantee that informal artisanal miners would naturally initiate formalization given the administrative hurdles and certain misconceptions around paying taxes.⁵⁷ It was also not certain whether the district commercial officers who are mandated by law to provide extension services had the willingness and means to carry out this work in the absence of adequate budget and incentives.⁵⁸

Finding 13: Tourism: UNDP's support to tourism was highly adaptive to COVID-19 realities and responsive to new consumer trends that demanded cultural products. UNDP programming was largely determined by the priorities of the Government, whereas the private sector could also have played a part to increase the reach and impact of programmes.

UNDP carved a special place for tourism in its ISG anchor programme, which was also a major programme of NDP III. Field work confirmed the strong linkages and convening power of UNDP in coordinating both with the Government and donor community around tourism objectives, as well as possessing the archival knowledge around policies, strategies and legislation more than any other actor. The initial ambition in this CPD was to create a Domestic Tourism Policy and Strategy and to prepare tourism development plans for selected tourism development areas. These initiatives were not undertaken.⁵⁹

As a response to COVID-19, UNDP made changes around its tourism offering by pivoting tourism work more towards digitalization, promotion of cultural products and helping SMEs and other informal players recover from the effects of the pandemic. Field work confirmed that some of the interventions funded through these programmes were very timely and needed. UNDP supported the Ministry of Tourism and others with Zoom licenses, which was critical for continuity of operations. The UN COVID-19 Socio-Economic Assessment on the tourism sector helped the GoU design the recovery and coping strategy. Not only was this assessment important in terms of leveraging resources from the EU for a bridging financing programme that helped people to retain jobs, but it also helped the GoU rethink its destination policy by diversifying Uganda's product offer according to the realities of a post-COVID world. To address the lack of quality standards in tourism accommodation, UNDP provided hardware and software support to the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), the authority in charge of registering, inspecting and then licensing of all the tourism enterprises. Field work confirmed that this investment increased work efficiency of UTB by 75 percent by minimizing human error and speeding up the registration process in the hospitality sector. UNDP also provided Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to Uganda Wildlife Authority to enhance its capacity to monitor protected areas, undertake research and prevent poaching and encroachment.

To cater to consumer trends, UNDP, in partnership with Uganda Wildlife Authority and the private sector, co-created two innovative, inclusive and climate-smart tourism products that have diversified Uganda's tourism product offering, namely the Rwenzori marathon in 2022 and the Elgon Half Marathon in 2023.

⁵⁶ The Final Evaluation Report confirms that only four of the ten focus countries, namely Cameroon, Jamaica, Uganda, and Zambia, have significantly improved their policy, legal, and regulatory capacities in the public sector to support gender inclusion and formalization of ASMEs along the Development Minerals value chain. (page 37)

⁵⁷ The Final Evaluation also confirmed that emphasis also needs to be put on consistent financing and technical support for formalization. Most countries now have the laws but are not actively supporting the formalization because of attached costs.(page 37)

⁵⁸ A final report prepared by an RP on facilitating LG extension services to ASMEs admits that reliability of the LGOs to execute the work was shaky.

⁵⁹ While COVID-19 has played a role in shifting priorities away from these studies, this delay is also attributed to the re-distribution of roles between WB and UNDP, where WB volunteered to prepare the Tourism Policy and UNDP focused on preparing the Tourism Development Master Plan 2024 – 2034, which is a continuation of the Uganda Tourism Development Master Plan 2014 – 2024, which was also prepared by UNDP.

The Rwenzori Marathon generated an estimated total direct expenditure of nearly US\$1 million, with close to \$400,000 spent by domestic tourists, who made up 96 percent of the visitors during the marathon, according to an Impact Assessment Report. In 2024, the Rwenzori Marathon was organized for a third time and the Elgon Marathon for a second, by public-private sector partnership (PPP) model.⁶⁰ Proliferation of such new cultural products will contribute to the Government's objective of increasing the share of tourism revenue within GDP, which is also in line with UNSDCF objectives.⁶¹

One factor that limited the impact of UNDP's tourism programming was that it was very much government focused, whereas the private sector also had vested interests and a role to play in this domain. UNDP programming was largely determined by the work plan of the Ministry of Tourism and its funding gaps. Despite having good relationships with the private sector, UNDP did not always properly capitalize on this relationship when thinking of larger skilling programmes or conceptualizing standards/regulations for the sector.⁶² The PPP model in the Rwenzori and Elgon Marathons showed that co-creation with the private sector had more potential for sustainable tourism initiatives than strictly working with the Government, which had limited resources in this domain.

Finding 14: Private Sector & MSME Capacity Strengthening: UNDP fostered dialogue, increased awareness of cross border trade procedures, requirements, and markets by mobilizing business associations representing the private sector. There was limited attention to initiatives around financing of the private sector that went beyond giving short-term grants, adoption of renewable energy by the private sector as well as strengthening of MSMEs in value chains.

Export readiness capacity of private sector: UNDP partnered with the country's most important business associations, including the Private Sector Foundation of Uganda (PSFU), Uganda National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (UNCCI), Uganda Manufacturers Association (UMA) and Federation of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (FSMSE), to assess export readiness of members, define potential destination markets as well as products with high export potential, assess the administrative and technical hurdles SMEs face when they are trading, and improve their awareness, knowledge and capacity to make fullest use of the AfCFTA. In total, these trainings reached 1,108 SMEs.^{63,64} UNDP, in partnership with the Presidential Advisory Committee on Exports and Industrial Development, ITC and UN Women, strengthened the competitiveness and export readiness of SMEs, particularly those owned by youth and women.⁶⁵ UNDP also supported the development and implementation of a comprehensive export training programme to equip SMEs with knowledge and tools to position themselves, produce, and trade in intra-African and select marketplaces, including the U.S. market.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ In 2024, Rwenzori Marathon became the first Ugandan marathon to be certified by World Athletics Federation which means it no longer needs to stay as a local marathon and with good promotion can start the kind of foreign exchange needed for Uganda's development.

⁶¹ One of the UNSDCF indicators of Outcome 2.1 is "contribution to GDP by selected sectors (agriculture, tourism, mining, industry, manufacturing)" where tourism is supposed to increase from the baseline value of 7% to 9%.

⁶² For instance, Tourism Development Plan Annual Performance Report for 2022-2023 refers to many skilling initiatives by GoU that were programmed but not executed due to limited/inconsistent funding. Private sector has vested interests in having a more skilled and regular labor force. UNDP can assist such efforts by working together with private sector and using private sector resources.

⁶³ The breakdown of trainee numbers per business association is (numbers retrieved from their Final Progress Reports to UNDP): FSM: 308 SMEs, UMA: 158 SMEs, UNCCI: 328 SMEs in person + 50 online, PSFU: 264

⁶⁴ All four organizations also created a pool of ToTs who not only delivered the said trainings to these 1,108 SMEs but also can act as focal points for any future capacity building exercise. UNDP also had a partnership with PSFU to create a nationwide awareness campaign radio, print and social media across six regions in Uganda to create mass awareness on the AfCFTA, its provisions and market opportunities the agreement offers to the private sector of Uganda. Overall, through the radio engagements, PSFU reached out to more than 1.5 million people across the country. PSFU also utilized online social media platforms through Twitter and social media influencers to create awareness on the AfCFTA. More than 500 tweets were sent out during the campaign attracting more than 10,655 followers.

⁶⁵ <https://intracen.org/news-and-events/news/un-agencies-join-forces-in-east-africa-for-small-businesses-women-and-youth>

⁶⁶ https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/business/exporters-set-for-us-market-training-program-NV_167659

Training assessment reports and field work both confirmed that these associations saw the trainings as useful for their members in terms of giving them the primary exposure needed on how they can maximize AfCFTA benefits. These organizations also praised UNDP for being a convener and aggregator in the ecosystem in terms of working harmoniously with all actors in a way to maximize benefits for the private sector. One other observation that came out of field work was that these business associations thought the trainings were short-lived and needed a follow-up or deepening. Continuing and deepening trade missions and business-to-business interactions were also high on the agenda of the associations. Given UNDP's limited resources in the ISG field, UNDP could have leveraged the resources of ITC, which already has a comprehensive online training programme on leveraging the opportunities of AfCFTA.⁶⁷ In doing that, scarce resources could have been dedicated to other aspects of private sector strengthening work that could not receive adequate attention, including strengthening of MSMEs in value chains, access to financing for private sector and adoption of renewable energy.

Finding 15: Livelihood and Employability skills for women, youth and marginalized: The ISG pillar forged fruitful collaborations with major actors in the livelihood and employability eco-system such as universities, skilling centers, INGOs, incubators in youth employment and entrepreneurship. This wide array of initiatives gave the current CPD period a more experimental outlook that was based on a search for what works best in the youth employment field. However, most of the initiatives were based on achieving numeric targets and more quality aspects such as retention rates remained hidden.

UNDP had a special focus on youth employment in this CPD period where strategic partnerships were forged with academia, public skilling and innovation centers and INGOs to help Uganda make better use of its youth dividend. Refurbishing important skilling centres contributed to their training capacity by up to 50 percent.⁶⁸ Innovation pods and hubs at universities helped promising youth start-ups to start their first production with limited cost. Investing in critical capacities of regionally based incubation centres enabled decentralization of some of the skilling activities.

UNDP also ran programmes on entrepreneurship (i.e., Youth for Business-Y4B) with a dual track approach where limited funding was allocated to young people who were at ideation stage through Ideathons as well as a more advanced track where start-ups which were in operation for more than 12 months and able to demonstrate a profitable product were supported through Innovation Challenge Funds (ICFs) which reached a total of 45 start-ups in three phases from 2020 to 2021. UNDP complemented the ICFs with a Business Incubator programme of Stanbic Bank, a well-known incubation programme in the Ugandan business community. The Y4B programme successfully identified promising youth start-ups with growth potential, but their success in the programme varied greatly, partially due to the design of the support. Because Innovation Challenge Funds were designed such that financial support was given first and enterprises were to join incubation support later, the incentivizing nature of incubation was eliminated.⁶⁹ The incubation stage helps the grant makers to have a more informed opinion about the real capacity of these organizations and serves as a due diligence mechanism. In ICF, many youth startups (35 of 45) did not receive this crucial incubation support. An independent audit study showed the percentage of grantees that met their own self determined targets stood at 70 percent at the end of the ICF support.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ <https://www.afreximbankacademy.org/>

⁶⁸ Implementation of UNDP's Support to KCCA's Smart City Initiatives Annual Report 2023

⁶⁹ Many interviewees confirmed it should have been the other way around to pinpoint those start-ups who may be good in writing grant proposals but who in reality do not have the business acumen to run a business.

⁷⁰ UNDP had a special interest in investing in certain subsectors such as creatives where more customized business development services (BDS) were provided to a select group of startups in creatives. Custom BDS modules for the sector were created which will be useful not just for the cohort of 50 startups supported through Y4B but any future startup that wants to excel in this domain. However, the same design mistake for the more general cohort of ICF was repeated in the creatives module as well. Startups received financial support way ahead of the BDS support, which lowered their participation and interest in later activities such as mentorship. There was also a lack of a graduation model to showcase those creatives that successfully completed the programme and those which dropped out. Despite these challenges, this separate mentorship, coaching and BDS module remains one of the few initiatives designed specifically for creatives and that has a potential to be scaled up.

UNDP was cognizant of the financing challenges for startups and envisaged an Enterprise Challenge Fund (ECF) by providing competitive catalytic grants to small businesses as an incentive to Financial Institutions (FIs) to offer longer-term concessional loans based on procedures for blended finance. However, this component was never initiated. In the absence of sustainability and scale-up opportunities such as ECF and with low rates of participation to incubation support, Y4B was reduced to a one-shot financial support scheme, expressed in interviews as very valuable for startups but limited in its potential to change the trajectory of these businesses in the long run.⁷¹ In the original flagship programme, the key success metrics were defined as increased access to finance and greater survival of MSMEs,⁷² which were not measured.⁷³

In terms of livelihood skills in formal and informal markets, UNDP collaborated with BRAC Uganda, which designed comprehensive skilling programmes in Central, Northern and West Nile, Karamoja and Eastern regions through interventions crafted for three different categories of young people: those with businesses, those with limited skill sets and that had never engaged in any kind of productive activity and those who were ready to start a business but needed support or market linkages.⁷⁴ While each group received some sort of business development and/or upskilling training based on their baseline knowledge, these were complemented by mentorship support by volunteer business owners or apprenticeship programmes that gave on-the-job training as well as creation of market linkages, exchange visits, etc. This initiative reached 7,500 young people.⁷⁵ While this initiative was the most comprehensive of all UNDP initiatives in youth skilling, with clear private sector linkages and multiple support mechanisms, the fact that the whole programme was seven months long limited an understanding of which streams or which combinations of support worked the best. By the time all the support packages were completed, there was no time left to do deeper monitoring, which limited an analysis of quality aspects of the programme such as access to finance rates, growth rates of startups, or ratio of apprentices retained in jobs.

One successful initiative that showed when solutions are created in collaboration with the private sector the odds of success are higher was the Graduate Volunteer Scheme (GVS), which was designed in the previous CPD and mentioned as a good model in the 2019 ICPE. GVS started as a pilot with Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development which ran for two cohorts of 500 people. It was based on having slots for entry level positions in companies that agreed to be part of the initiative. Companies committed to keeping these new hires for at least for one year and to keeping them for the long haul if they demonstrated capacity and if the firms had the resources. The programme had a 96 percent retention rate. Due to lack of funding, the programme was not continued in the current CPD.⁷⁶

Nature, Climate, Energy, Resilience Pillar – linked to CPD outcome 3

The Nature, Climate, Energy and Resilience Pillar (NCER) was focused on improving capacities for sustainable management of natural resources and on mitigating and adapting to climate change and disaster risks. According to the ToC, one work stream revolved around adoption of low carbon development strategies and engaging Uganda fully in the global process of climate change response. Another stream focused on

⁷¹ Field work, although based only on a sample of the beneficiaries, shows that other than UNDP support, startups do not have meaningful access to finance, therefore inclined to use their core resources for business expansion.

⁷² Youth for Business ProDoc, page 6

⁷³ Only numbers of start-ups reached were counted in the RFF, however the ratios would reveal the success of the programme.

⁷⁴ The novelty and strength of this programme stemmed from the fact that while traditional TVET institutions were bogged down in theory and offered limited on-the-job training, these initiatives started from the recognition that there is a mismatch in the skills required by the industries and the skills offered by the TVET institutions, therefore there is a need for better forging of relations with private sector to bridge this gap.

⁷⁵ Youth for Business and Employment Facility BRAC Uganda April 2021-January 2022 Progress Report

⁷⁶ However, the initiative was very costly and there was a monthly stipend as well as insurance to be financed by GVS. The discussions with EU were underway when COVID-19 hit Uganda, which diverted the funds that could have been used for this initiative.

protecting forests, wetlands, and critical ecosystems. A third stream focused on enhanced capacities of institutions and communities at national and subnational levels to mitigate and adapt to climate change and disaster risks. The last stream focused on increasing equitable access to and use of clean, renewable and affordable energy.

Finding 16. Technical capacity building to mitigate and adapt to climate change: UNDP was viewed as a trusted convener and strategic leader at national and local levels on articulating Uganda’s low carbon development strategies and climate change response. UNDP was able to leverage this comparative advantage through technical support for climate change financing, institutional development, policy reviews, and building systems for M&E, including innovative open-source data platforms.

UNDP’s added value and comparative advantage lay in its convening power and technical capabilities, including the breadth of knowledge and experience and the well-established support system from the global team and Regional Technical Advisors (RTAs).⁷⁷ In 2021 UNDP supported the Government of Uganda to revise the country’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement and develop the NDC implementation plan and led the development of regulations and guidelines on carbon markets.⁷⁸ UNDP partnered with the Ministry of Water and Environment to revise and increase the ambition of the NDC to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 24.7 percent by 2030, beyond the initial 22 percent commitment made in 2015 in key sectors including agriculture, forestry and land use, industrial processes and product use, energy and waste.⁷⁹

UNDP made technical inputs into the GoU’s position papers on climate change such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) and technical support for review of the climate change thematic area in NDP III. These assisted the Government to review its planning and budgeting processes for climate change interventions. As a result, the Ministry of Financing Planning and Economic Development provided support to establish a climate finance unit for planning and resource mobilization for climate action. Technical support was provided to enhance resource mobilization for climate action through the climate finance working group. As a result, UNDP launched a \$13 million climate financing facility together with Uganda Development Bank and gave relevant MDAs primary exposure on how to prepare climate smart projects. Field work confirmed the need to invest further in climate financing as MDAs still struggle with the concept and its operationalization.

UNDP facilitated strengthening of information and monitoring systems and capacity building of technical staff for natural resources management. Examples included the integrated Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) tool and database, which built on Uganda’s national MRV framework to enhance data collection, reporting and tracking of greenhouse gas emissions, NDC adaptation and mitigation targets, climate finance flows and contribution toward achievement of the SDGs. UNDP launched the Uganda Natural Resource Information System (NARIS), a collaborative, open-source data visualization platform and mobile app to monitor and mediate deforestation, which eased the work of field staff of the National Forest Authority (NFA) in forest ground truthing. UNDP was involved in developing the Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) Information Management System, a one-stop center for identification of common RIO indicators.

⁷⁷ For example, the Terminal Evaluation for the CCCD project (2021) highlighted UNDP’s comparative advantage, which formed the basis for UNDP’s selection as the GEF agency. This included vast experience in supporting capacity development efforts in Uganda; presence and experience at regional and global levels; ability to provide technical expertise in designing and implementing the project; in-country presence; capacity for advocacy; and experience in integrating policy in national processes, policies, and frameworks.

⁷⁸ Scoping Interview Notes with the UNDP CO

⁷⁹ UNDP Uganda. 2021 Annual Report: Strengthening our Collective Pursuit of Uganda’s Development Beyond COVID-19; UNDP Uganda 2022 Annual Report

In Karamoja region, UNDP supported implementation of National Agriculture Policy strategies, which included building capacity of technical staff at district level on sustainable land management/integrated natural resources management (SLM/INRM). Experiences from the field mission further verified capacity building of district level technical staff on climate smart agriculture (CSA) practices (e.g., discussions with the CSA taskforce in Namutumba District indicated deep appreciation and knowledge of CSA).

Finding 17: Sustainable management of natural resources and protection of vital ecosystems: UNDP was the lead agency in building government capacities in wetland restoration and creation of awareness on environmental management and the value of ecosystem restoration. Protection of vital ecosystems hinged on provision of alternative livelihoods to communities which previously encroached on wetland areas. The slow rate at which alternative livelihood efforts were implemented as well as the limited funds allocated for this line of work led to limited re-encroachment of some wetlands and at times triggered complaints for lack of compensation.

The Government of Uganda officially gazetted all wetlands in the country, recognizing their critical role in protecting communities from climate change and providing essential benefits for vulnerable communities.⁸⁰ The Government's efforts to reclaim the degraded and encroached wetlands yielded mixed results, with the rate of destruction surpassing restoration efforts.⁸¹ To counteract this trend, UNDP aimed to contribute towards conservation of forest cover and wetlands for biodiversity and ecosystem services and increase protected areas under improved management. By the end of 2023, more than 49,000 hectares of wetlands were restored against a target of 64,370ha and 6,655ha of degraded catchment were rehabilitated and/or restored against a target of 11,630ha.⁸²

UNDP contributed to the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE)'s efforts towards wetland demarcation (by planting concrete pillars along boundaries), mapping and classification (through GIS and remote sensing), providing the foundation for their legal protection and sustainable utilization. UNDP conducted training on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing training for the project implementers in collaboration with MWE.^{83,84} Field visits to Mpologoma wetland in Namutumba District confirmed the utility of GIS and remote sensing data locations, types and sizes of wetland resources in guiding implementation of wetland conservation and restoration plans at the district level. Mapping of distribution of livelihoods and demarcation of wetland boundaries were also conducted to other wetlands, including Limoto and Lwera wetlands.⁸⁵ Field work confirmed that with UNDP efforts, there was increased awareness and agency for environmental management⁸⁶ and appreciation of the value of ecosystem restoration. UNDP contributed to preparation and implementation of community-based Wetland Management Plans (WMPs). By 2022, more than 120 WMP and District Wetland Action Plans were developed by the MWE.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ The Uganda Gazette on wetlands, officially titled 'The National Environment (Declaration of Wetlands) Notice, 2023,' is a legal document issued by the Government of Uganda in September 2023. This notice was officially launched on World Wetlands Day 2024 and serves as a crucial step toward wetland protection in the country. This landmark decision is aligned to the Ramsar Convention and comes after years of collaboration between the Government, UNDP and partners on restoration of wetlands and associated catchments.

⁸¹ This has been attributed to the increasing population with the associated pressure on land, negative political interference and funding shortages, especially at the local government level (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2022).

⁸² UNDP Uganda Annual Reports, 2023

⁸³ <https://www.mwe.go.ug/sites/default/files/Global%20Lessons.pdf>

⁸⁴ The training aimed at equipping more than 25 Project Implementation Technical Staff from various institutions (Ministry of Water and Environment, National Environment Management Authority, National Forest Authority, Uganda National Metrological Authority, Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda Bureau of Statistics) with specialized skills in applying digital technologies such as QGIS and Google Earth Engine to monitor the restoration efforts.

⁸⁵ https://www.learningfornature.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Part-3-Session-1_Wetlands-Restoration-Project-Uganda_Paul-Mafabi.pdf

⁸⁶ For example, the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on responsible tenure of land, fisheries, and forests (VGGT) for resolving land tenure issues was utilized under the F-SURE project. This was done within the framework of the established Land Act, Land and Land Use Policies and regulations. It increased awareness by communities of their rights of access, use and control of land resources.

⁸⁷ Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (2022). Wetland restoration and management in Uganda: Are the approaches sufficient to achieve the NDP III targets? Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit (BMAU) BRIEFING PAPER (12/22). <https://archive.finance.go.ug/sites/default/files/Publications/BMAU%20Briefing%20Paper%2012-22-Wetlands%20Restoration%20and%20Management%20in%20Uganda-Are%20the%20approaches%20sufficient%20to%20achieve%20the%20NDP%20III%20targets.pdf>

UNDP's wetland restoration interventions resulted in more than 13,037 households benefiting from improved agricultural practices, alternative livelihoods, and incomes by the end of 2023.⁸⁸ This accounted for only 17 percent of the targeted number of households. MTE of wetland restoration pointed towards a gross insufficiency of funds utilized for alternative livelihoods, which stands at €12.7 per household.⁸⁹ The initial challenges encountered in operationalizing the alternative livelihood schemes also meant that livelihood gains did not happen simultaneously with demarcation of most wetlands. Late implementation of alternative livelihood schemes in some instances resulted in limited re-encroachment of some wetlands.⁹⁰ In fact, the GFC/UNDP partnership for the Building Resilient Communities, Wetland Ecosystems and Associated Catchments in Uganda experienced issues (complaint registered in April 2024) through the Independent Redress Mechanism of GCF.⁹¹ These related to adverse impacts related to the implementation of wetland restoration, including restrictions on access to wetlands, lack of compensation and/or adequate consultation, increased food insecurity and impoverishment of wetland-dependent communities and increased threats to community health, security and safety, among others.⁹²

Finding 18. Enhanced capacities of institutions and communities at national and subnational levels to mitigate and adapt to climate change and disaster risks: UNDP positively contributed towards policy and institutional strengthening for disaster risk reduction although community uptake was less than desired. While community level climate change adaptation and climate smart agriculture (CSA) interventions yielded some positive livelihood benefits, the longevity of such benefits relies on establishing long term backstopping to cooperatives and facilitating their access to markets.

UNDP supported national efforts to strengthen structures and systems to enhance national resilience to multi-hazard induced disaster risks. This was mainly through building the capacity of Uganda's National Emergency Operation and Coordination Centre to effectively manage multiple disasters, including epidemics and pandemics.⁹³ UNDP facilitated development of disaster risk screening and analysis tools for utilization by the District Local Governments. These assisted in the development of planning processes that identify the severity of potential risks to projects of various scales ranging from national plans to individual project investments. Thanks to these efforts, UNDP exceeded its target for proportion of local governments that adopted and implemented local disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for DRR, attaining 89 percent against the target of 81 percent by the end of 2023.⁹⁴

Regarding community reach for use of climate information services, UNDP targets were overly ambitious. For example, the indicator for number of men and women who use climate information services and products had targets of 24.5 million for females and 23.8 million for males, but only 308,865 farmers had access to weather and early warning information using SMS and social media by 2022 (there was no gender-disaggregated data). According to ROAR, only 7,345 people (3,520 men and 3,825 women) were using climate information services and products. Key challenges included inability to localize climate

⁸⁸ GCF Final Progress Report 2023 page 34.

⁸⁹ <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/15747> , Midterm Evaluation (MTE) of the project 'Restoration of Wetlands and Associated Catchments in Eastern Uganda, page 29.

⁹⁰ This was observed in Namutumba District during the field mission. Some beneficiaries highlighted delays in receiving support for alternative livelihood options resulting in frustration and limited re-encroachment of some wetlands.

⁹¹ <https://irm.greenclimate.fund/case/c0010-uganda>

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ ROAR Data 2022 and 2023.

⁹⁴ In the previous CPD (2016-2020), UNDP supported the Government to establish the National Emergency, Coordination and Operations Center (NECOC) based at the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). UNDP's invested in equipment; installation of the modelling and communication systems; establishing and equipping disaster management committees at national and district levels; and training technical and first-line disaster responders. As a build up to this investment, in 2022, UNDP in partnership with the Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA) and the Office of the Prime Minister Disaster Risk Management department supported the establishment of District Emergency Coordination Centers (DECOCs). Training was conducted for 22 technical officers at the district level in disaster risk assessment, monitoring and early warning, post-disaster, and disaster impact assessments. These interventions are the key contributing factors.

information in the form of specific weather conditions and local language to address the local needs. Although UNDP planned to translate climate information into 10 local languages in 2022, this was not done. This negatively impacted dissemination of climate information. The targets were also based on effective use of various forms of media for wider reach. However, there was limited engagement with the media to promote access to weather information across different stakeholders.

UNDP promoted climate smart agriculture (CSA) technologies and practices among cooperatives and farmer field schools for various value chains (maize, soyabeans, pulses, cereals, fruits, neem tree products)⁹⁵ especially around wetlands and in Karamoja region. UNDP's approach for utilizing producer cooperatives and schools yielded positive results in raising awareness and appreciation of CSA for climate change adaptation and promoting value addition in the wetland area.⁹⁶ Primary schools were targeted to instill climate change awareness among young pupils, which allowed for transfer of knowledge and skills to their parents and communities.⁹⁷ Discussions with selected producer organizations further highlighted successful promotion of CSA technologies among cooperatives and provided loans through revolving funds and equipment for value addition⁹⁸ acquired through matching grants. There were economic benefits from alternative sustainable livelihood options for various value chains⁹⁹ as evidenced by increased productivity of various commodities, including maize, rice, sorghum, poultry, piggery, vegetable and cereals and acquisition of assets by women (including land and livestock).

During the field mission, it was established that some CSA coordinators at the district level still provided technical backstopping to cooperatives (in areas such as post-harvest handling, value addition, financial management, governance, and legal registration), even after completion of UNDP support. However, the business model for maintaining this taskforce backstopping was not clear. Although some cooperatives highlighted the existence of revolving facilities (mainly for inputs), they still indicated the need for additional matching grants beyond UNDP support. A key challenge facing cooperatives was the readiness for linking farmers to reliable input and output markets. Despite efforts made to connect cooperatives to markets and important linkages to the private sector, there was still a recognized lack of readiness in terms of ensuring the quality required for the market, aggregation of produce, as well as access to markets.¹⁰⁰ Land ownership/ insecurity of tenure remained a threat to CSA as it eroded incentives for investments through associated risks. There were cooperatives that were struggling to find secure land for establishing processing facilities.

Finding 19. Access to modern, renewable and affordable energy sources: UNDP investments in the renewable energy sector were limited due to challenges related to high costs of renewable energy technologies and lack of access to finance for the private sector. Despite these limitations, UNDP promoted renewable energy sources such as solar and modern cooking technologies through policy support and on-the-ground initiatives to expand access to clean energy in rural and underserved areas, albeit with limited private sector linkages.

⁹⁵ This was confirmed during the field mission through interviews with leadership of Kasimizi Primary School in Namutumba District

⁹⁶ The Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the project 'Enhancing Resilience of Agricultural Landscapes and Value Chains in Eastern Uganda – Upscaling Climate Smart Agriculture Practices (CSA) in Uganda's Farming System', December 2021.

⁹⁷ The CSA project attained the targeted number of active school CSA clubs; and number of schools integrating CSA practices into their curricular and co-curricular activities, mainly school gardening.

⁹⁸ The CSA TE report highlights disbursement of matching grants and post-harvest handling equipment to 15 Cooperatives each who procured agro-processing machines for maize and soya milling machines.

⁹⁹ UNDP Uganda data highlights an increase of 64% in agricultural income and livelihood among households accessing alternative livelihoods. <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/green-climate-fund-building-resilient-communities-wetland-ecosystems-and-associated>

¹⁰⁰ The Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the project 'Enhancing Resilience of Agricultural Landscapes and Value Chains in Eastern Uganda – Upscaling Climate Smart Agriculture Practices (CSA) in Uganda's Farming System', December 2021.

To promote clean energy solutions, UNDP focused on addressing institutional and technical capacity gaps for waste-to-energy ventures.¹⁰¹ Although several feasibility studies on establishment of biogas plants were conducted¹⁰² with a private sector driven model, these initiatives were hampered by limited buy-in by the private sector.^{103,104} According to the Mid-term Evaluation of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action on Integrated Waste Management and Biogas in Uganda, the process of securing private sector investors to work with cities required special equipment which was not available to municipalities.¹⁰⁵ UNDP was involved in development of the Biogas strategy and implementation plan for Uganda and supported operationalization of National Renewable Energy Platform (NREP) for a far-reaching discussion on renewable energy and electric mobility policy, and market development strategies on electric mobility and financing.

UNDP also partnered with the Government to promote renewable energy sources such as solar and modern cooking technologies through both policy support and on-the-ground initiatives to expand access to clean energy in rural and underserved areas. A Waste to Energy Unit was established under the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development to promote the development, adoption and safe utilization of biogas and co-products.¹⁰⁶ Efforts were made to support a transition to renewable and sustainable energy access in the health sector through the installation of Solar Photo Voltaic (PV) systems in 15 health centers across the country. UNDP also contributed to enhancing business through access of clean energy from the installation of solar PV systems in three markets, which enhanced trade for more than 20,000 vendors who were able to work for longer hours in safety due to improved lighting.¹⁰⁷

Despite these achievements, some stakeholders felt that the solar energy interventions were small scale, thinly spread and had limited commercial orientation to demonstrate viability that could attract or provide incentives for private sector investment. UNDP also conducted successful experiments in partnership with the Electricity Regulatory Authority, which reduced the electricity tariff for institutional and domestic consumers to limit biomass consumption, although the model only worked in urban areas with access to electricity. UNDP promoted energy efficient cooking stoves for rural areas, although private sector linkages were not properly established to expand this market.

Digitalization, Innovation, Smart Cities (DISC) – linked to all CPD outcomes

The DISC programme was run by the Accelerator Lab and worked across pillars as an enabling programme.¹⁰⁸ The AccLab team seized opportunities to inject innovation into programming of all pillars. Youth employment and entrepreneurship work of the ISG pillar benefitted immensely from DISC programme's support to innovation hubs, skilling centers as well as start-up ecosystem.¹⁰⁹ Many of the AccLab experiments

¹⁰¹ UNDP installed five institutional biogas to heat/electricity demonstration plants located in Jinja College School (Jinja), Nakaloke secondary school (Mbale), Masaka secondary school (Masaka); Mbarara Junior School (Mbarara), and Kyanja demonstration farm at KCCA. Through these investments, the beneficiary institutions now realize the economic and environmental values of waste management. For example, the cities have developed business models for women now manufacturing briquettes from organic waste.

¹⁰² These include a feasibility study for establishment of biogas plant to electricity at Kiteeza dumpsite (conducted in 2021/22); and a holistic feasibility study to enhance biogas production at national Water and Sewerage Corporation, Nakivumbo Wastewater Treatment Plant through co-digestion (conducted in 2021/22)

¹⁰³ NAMA Biogas Terminal Evaluation Report page 11 reads: "No work towards attracting the private sector investment was either planned or carried out during the implementation of the project."

¹⁰⁴ Following the failure to attract private sector investors, the NAMA Biogas project implemented recommendations from the Mid-term evaluation to re-allocate funds for pilot plants to procurement of demonstration mobile waste separation and sorting trommel machine(s) and equipment. The project procured three mobile trommel compost sorting machines at Masese dumpsite in Jinja, Katikolo dumpsite in Mukono and Wankoko Black soldierly composting site in Kampala. While the business models for these compost facilities could not be verified, stakeholders interviewed during this evaluation highlighted views around improving productivity of compost facilities and quality of composts.

¹⁰⁵ <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/13112> Mid-Term Evaluation of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action for Improved Waste Management and Biogas Production in Uganda Project

¹⁰⁶ Based on the National Biogas Strategy, the unit is promoting the biogas market development, innovation, and R&D in biogas technology and applications for increased adoption.

¹⁰⁷ Implementation of UNDP's Support to KCCA's Smart City Initiatives Annual Report 2023

¹⁰⁸ The programme intervention logic revolves around three separate ToCs for three outputs, namely 'digitalization,' 'innovation' and 'smart cities,' which are related but involve their own unique priorities and challenges.

¹⁰⁹ Private sector strengthening stream of ISG is also benefiting from interventions on e-learning platforms for MSMEs albeit in beta stages.

such as clean energy solutions and National Resources Information System were crucial for NCER objectives. The connections with the GPS pillar seemed weaker than the other two pillars and most of the GPS efforts in digitalization, such as support to JSOLs, were not designed or reported by DISC team. 'Smart cities' is an area where these connections could have been forged due to the emphasis on urban governance, but this line of work received limited attention and funding in the DISC programme.¹¹⁰

Finding 20. Shaping the digitalization agenda of Uganda: UNDP took on a leadership role in shaping the digitalization agenda of the Government and invested in critical capacities and upgrading of existing facilities of numerous government agencies. The programme distributed its resources too thinly due to competing demands from public agencies. Given the limited resources of DISC programme, the continuation and deepening of these pilots require resources from implementing partners for meaningful impact.

Digitalization strategy and e-government services: UNDP successfully shaped government policies on digitalization by giving technical and financial support to the preparation of Digitalization Roadmap and Big Data Utilization Strategy and invested in critical capacities in terms of technical expertise (hiring and funding of Digital Transformation Lead at MoITC) and upgrading of existing facilities (National ICT Innovation Hub). Given this roadmap and strategy, UNDP engaged with a wide array of MDAs who had their own digitalization needs. The digitalization component tried to address infrastructural and capacity shortages of numerous government services spanning from postal services to JLOS, e-commerce, market intelligence and training platforms for SMEs, tax and land registries, monitoring of wetlands and start-up ecosystem and Zoom licensing for business continuity during the pandemic. Given funding limitations, most of the initiatives were only piloted, which made it difficult to pinpoint impact.

Digital skilling of citizens: Uganda performed significantly worse than its neighbours in terms of digital connectivity of its citizens.¹¹¹ To address this issue, the DISC Enabling Programme aimed to roll out a Digital Skills Acceleration Programme in pilot primary and secondary schools. While UNDP designed a Pilot Digital Skills Acceleration Programme, there was not much progress in its execution. The private sector has vested interest in having digitally savvy citizens and actively running programmes on digital skills. The pilot programme also recommended building public private partnerships on citizens' digital skills.¹¹² UNDP could have engaged with the private sector both in programming and resource mobilization in this area.

Investment in innovation and start-up ecosystem: UNDP also made important contributions to innovation eco-system by building strategic alliances with leading universities and MDAs. UNDP established an ultra-modern innovation hub, 'Unipod' at Makerere University complete with Maker Spaces, Design Labs, collaboration spaces and Tech Transfer systems.¹¹³ The work for the establishment of a business incubation center in Kabale University commenced, with an inauguration expected in late 2024. Field work confirmed these hubs drastically changed the way universities do research and promote innovation and are a further

¹¹⁰ Due to competing demands in DISC area, the majority of the funds have been dedicated to digitalization and innovation components. One notable exception is the installment of solar lighting in urban markets and six other critical public facilities such as hospitals, skilling centers and schools in Kampala. Such investments had clear benefits to urban users, such as more than 20,000 street vendors who are now able to work for longer hours in safety due to improved lighting. However, the ad hoc nature of investment in smart cities component gives the impression that the interventions are done when and where there is some funding available and not necessarily serving a larger vision on smart cities. Lab is already piloting participatory methods to address problems related to rapid urbanization especially when it comes to flooding and waste management. A more holistic programme that targets major challenges of slum areas can be designed as a stand-alone initiative under GPS pillar.

¹¹¹ Recent surveys by the Government and research organizations point to a general lack of access to ICT tools and basic digital literacy in the population. NITA-U's 2022 National Information Technology Survey revealed that 97% of individuals had not used any computing device in the previous three months, while only 1.3% owned personal computers/laptops. In addition, only 10% had used the internet for any purpose in the previous three months. Among individuals that had not used the internet, lack of knowledge or skills was the biggest barrier at 37%, followed by lack of knowledge about what the internet was at 28% and the high cost of internet access at 26%. (Page 11, Digital Skilling Report)

¹¹² Pilot Digital Skilling Acceleration Program, Page 18

¹¹³ With the facilitation of the Unipod, students or recent graduates successfully registered 20 Intellectual Property (IP) certificates and 13 more IPs were in the pipeline by the end of 2023.3 UNDP not only provided hardware support but also designated Acclab staff to give part-time advisory support to the functioning of Unipod which was very much appreciated by the Unipod management.

catalyst for university-industry linkages.¹¹⁴ Successful examples of this linkage include the manufacture of electric buses, which are used in the Entebbe-Kampala express highway and Uganda's E-Mobility Skilling Programme offering specialized skilling in electric vehicle technologies preparing youth for careers in the renewable energy sector.¹¹⁵ The refurbishment and equipping of the National ICT Hub was also crucial to increase physical capacities to cater to a bigger number of start-ups.¹¹⁶

Finding 21. Piloting of innovative solutions to development challenges: UNDP's efforts to infuse innovation into its own interventions were commendable and produced a wide array of solutions to Uganda's development challenges. UNDP was successful in upscaling some of these innovative pilots while a few others were discontinued or remained dormant. The innovations that were continued were those where a powerful actor (mostly public sector) was able to change the incentive structures to make it economically viable for economic actors in that eco-system.

E-commerce platforms for informal businesses: COVID-19 showed the importance of small informal businesses having digital skills and digital infrastructure to survive. To address the disruption caused by COVID-19, in 2020 UNDP partnered with Jumia, a leading online shopping platform, to adapt the existing Jumia E-Commerce Platform to cater to a new market segment of vulnerable informal market vendors and to sustain supply chains for food and groceries. For three years the initiative connected customers with more than 4,000 vendors from seven markets in Kampala, 60 percent of them being women and youth.¹¹⁷ While in the initial stages of the pandemic, the vendors maintained and even increased their daily sales, subsequent proliferation of similar online platforms drove down the profitability of the business, which caused Jumia to pull out of the online food business altogether in 2023.

Some of the limitations of the Jumia example were repeated across UNDP interventions promoting digital platforms and digital tools. For instance, the highest ratio of Y4B start-ups that did not meet their expected targets were in ICT sector (40 percent).¹¹⁸ This was because the business ideas were partially based on having digitally savvy users on both market demand and supply as well as lower transaction costs, which were not in place.¹¹⁹ Successful digital platforms supported by UNDP under Y4B had the following similar characteristics: low transaction costs, more digitally savvy users and/or significant upskilling provided to users, and a model that was still economically profitable for the creators.

Clean energy solutions: Deforestation was an important problem area that AcCLab tackled in the current CPD period. UNDP commissioned energy audits to show under which conditions converting cooking from biomass to electricity could be feasible in rural and urban settings.¹²⁰ As a result of this experiment, the Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERA) reduced the electricity tariff rate from \$0.15 per Kwh to \$0.12 per Kwh and for a rate of 81kWh and 150kWh per month for household domestic consumers, which was expected

¹¹⁴ <https://news.mak.ac.ug/2023/03/makerere-university-innovations-hub-set-to-commercialize-innovations/>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hX1ZWZ4IjpQ>

¹¹⁶ Field work confirmed that 33 start-ups housed in the ICT Hub enjoy a more productive experience thanks to the physical capacity enhancements brought by UNDP support.

¹¹⁷ Lessons in Scaling: UNDP's Role in Digitalizing Informal Market Vendors in Uganda

¹¹⁸ Consolidated Performance Assessment Report for 42 youth owned and focussed enterprises, page 10

¹¹⁹ For instance, an online platform trying to match job applicants with available jobs failed because of high cost of doing business and lack of digital skills on the part of job seekers. It became easier for employers to hire outside of their systems which is a similar fate to that of Jumia. Another online marketplace for low value development minerals suffered a similar result. The creators came up with an online catalogue of different products under the category of low value development minerals. They tried to popularize the app among the ASMEs by giving trainings and dissemination activities. The app was to be used by ASME cooperative leaders who were supposed to negotiate on behalf of their cooperatives. However, ASMEs are largely informal, highly mobile and not digitally savvy. Sales through a digital app also require significant training on creating standard products that meet market demand. Not all ASMEs have the knowledge and expertise and reaching a significant portion of artisanal miners has large costs that the creators cannot shoulder. The buyers also have all the interest to keep the purchases outside of a digital system to be able to strike better deals with individual groups and to avoid paying fees. This app was dormant at the time of field work and user statistics were not available.

¹²⁰ The audits revealed the possibility of a two-tiered model. In rural households, where use of electricity for cooking is not possible, improved cook stoves that are highly efficient and use little charcoal was preferred to traditional cookstoves. In urban environments, reducing the electricity tariff to affordable levels for final consumers to trigger the necessary switch from biomass to electricity was preferred.

to benefit 50,000 households, 500 institutions (including hospitals, prisons, institutions of learning), and commercial enterprises.¹²¹ To increase the impact of such initiatives UNDP could have involved critical players such as the private sector in validation meetings as they are critical actors in the supply chain (i.e., producers of energy efficient cook stoves) especially for harder to reach rural areas.

National Resources Information System (NARIS): UNDP collaborated with the National Forestry Authority and the National Environmental Management Authority to develop the Natural Resource Information System (NARIS) to monitor deforestation throughout the country. NARIS is a collaborative, real-time data mapping system designed to monitor changes in forest and wetland cover, track the impact of initiatives relating to deforestation and wetlands restoration, and provide a data source for future initiatives. NARIS has a mobile app (with ability to work both online and offline) which was utilized by National Forestry Authority (NFA), easing the work of field staff in forests ground truthing. The NARIS platform was scaled up to include capability to monitor Uganda's wetlands in real-time using satellite imagery, while also strengthening Uganda's natural resources governance.

SDG Integration and Acceleration (SIA)– linked to all CPD outcomes

Given the complexity of SDGs implementation, the 2019 ICPE Uganda recommended that UNDP develop a separate SDG programme and offer the Government a clearly outlined portfolio of support to strengthen the integrated and accelerated implementation of the SDG agenda in Uganda. This recommendation was taken on board and a holistic programme, SDG Integration and Acceleration (SIA), was designed, which cut across all CPD outcomes.¹²² In addition to its SDG implementation agenda, this enabling programme helped build capacities of the public sector to access development financing and produced analytical work to support evidence-based decision making.

Finding 22. SDG integration into development planning and implementation: UNDP successfully elevated the profile of the SDGs, domesticated the 2030 agenda and ensured its visibility in Uganda. Thanks to UNDP efforts, Uganda made significant progress towards integrating the SDGs into national planning and budgeting processes. UNDP also had a clear leadership role in the formulation of the NDP and articulation of programmatic priorities. Despite these efforts, both the coordinating and implementing institutions of the NDP faced tremendous implementation challenges.

Field work confirmed that UNDP successfully elevated the profile of SDGs in development planning. This was done by building technical capacities of the SDG Secretariat to coordinate the SDG related activities such as the review of the First SDGs Roadmap and the formulation of the Second SDG Roadmap¹²³ and rolling out the SDG localization process through SDG annual conferences and regional workshops across the country and piloting Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).¹²⁴ UNDP contributed to South-South Cooperation through facilitating bilateral and multilateral AfCFTA negotiations and had an important coordinating role in strategic forums such as Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), G77+China Summit and SDG high level forums.

¹²¹ <https://www.era.go.ug/index.php/media-centre/what-s-new/422-energy-minister-commissions-biomass-to-electricity-pilot-project-at-mulago-hospital>

¹²² The programme targeted four core areas of work including i) integrated development planning and implementation, ii) integrated national financing framework, iii) SDG data monitoring and evaluation systems and iv) knowledge management ecosystem.

¹²³ UNDP also finances the salary of Chief SDG Advisor since 2020 who gives the strategic direction to OPM SDG Secretariat.

¹²⁴ UNDP also facilitated South-South exchanges to learn from good SDG integration experiences or share its own experience with others from the region such as the study visit to Rwanda to learn about their alignment of NDP with SDGs and also exchanges with Benin authorities (at the request of UNDP Benin) about the NDP process-SDG alignment in Uganda together with NPA.

To contribute to SDG financing, UNDP developed an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) to finance the SDGs implementation and an SDGs Investment Map for Uganda designed to help the private investors with insights into the local SDG investment opportunities; and supported creation of NDP-III bankable projects for resource mobilization. There was no tracking system to verify private financing for SDGs that resulted from the SDGs Investor Maps.¹²⁵ There has been an increase in FDI in 2023/2024 in sectors intimately linked to SDG achievement such as Food and Beverage, Infrastructure, Health Care, Education and Renewable Resources, but it is not known whether this is due to SDG Investor Maps or a more favourable investment climate created by government policies. UNDP also helped government officials build capacity in accessing financing by facilitating their participation in various trainings and conferences on topics such as loan negotiations and alternative and innovative financing.

Via the SIA programme, UNDP was a key player in influencing national development planning in Uganda. UNDP did this by working with the National Planning Authority (NPA) and ensuring stakeholder engagement for the formulation of NDP III. UNDP financially and technically supported the Mid-Term Review of the NDP-III, including its dissemination. It played a key role in the articulation of the Implementation Action Plans of the 20 programmes of the NDP. To ensure alignment between national planning and local government development plans, UNDP reviewed 176 Local Government Development Plans (LGDPs) to strengthen the alignment between LGDPs and the NDP III. With UNDP support, NPA developed a new certificate of budget-compliance (CoC) to ensure the alignment of the budgets of MDAs to the new programme-based approach of NDP III. Thanks to this effort, the overall score for Annual Budget alignment to the NDP III increased from 54.8 percent in 2020/21 to 71 percent in 2023/2024.¹²⁶

UNDP supported the APEX Platform, an oversight body housed within the Office of the President, in evaluating the Government's strategic interventions and investments on the commercialization of agriculture. Agro industrialization being an important tenet of NDP III, this report had the leverage to influence policy discussions.¹²⁷ While such studies were important and needed, in this case, the cooperation seemed to be based on a one-off study, whereas the Government clearly had capacity shortages in monitoring the 20 programmes of the NDP.

SIA provided support to various MDAs for evidence generation such as the 2021 Poverty Status Report, 2022 MPI Report, Socio-economic impact assessment of the COVID-19 and Socio-economic impact assessment of the war in Ukraine. Field work confirmed such works were a major reference in parliamentary debates or in re-assessing government policy (i.e., tourism policy during COVID-19). A series of knowledge products was also curated for SDG integration.¹²⁸ UNDP sponsored and technically contributed to the establishment of a Parish Development Model Lab (PDM) at Makerere University to develop a roadmap (an action plan) for the implementation of the PDM. While the lab produced important analytical work¹²⁹ that could feed into the implementation of the model, the PDM roadmap was still not finalized by the Government at the time of the field work.

¹²⁵ UNDP-Uganda also supported the Government in launching number of strategies to enhance enabling environment to attract private investment towards the SDGs. Such strategies include the National Industrial Policy 2020, Nationally Determined Contribution, National AfCFTA implementation Strategy and Digital Transformation Roadmap. Private investment in Uganda has increased from \$6.54 billion in 2020/2021 to \$7.99 billion in 2023/2024 – an increase of \$1.45 billion in the recent years although exact attribution to UNDP is difficult to make.

¹²⁶ With this new CoC, the overall score for Annual Budget alignment to the NDP III increased from 54.8% in 2020/2021 to 71% in 2023/2024. Alignment of the budget with SDGs increased from 65% in 2020/2021 to 68.6% in 2023/2024. Local Government alignment to NDP III also increased from 60.5% in 2021/2022 to 70.8% in FY2023/2024 (SIA team formal response to ICPE Team questionnaire dated 14.08.2024).

¹²⁷ For instance, field work confirmed that thanks to this report decisions have been taken at cabinet level around better coordination of irrigation schemes between the Ministry of Water to Ministry of Agriculture with large scale irrigation schemes undertaken by the former and the micro-scale schemes by the latter.

¹²⁸ These are Integrated SDG Model Report, SDG Policy and Institutional Gap Analysis Report and Data Gap Analysis for SDG 16 Report. Some of this research was concluded in the previous CPD period such as Data Gap Analysis for SDG 16 Report but it continued to guide SDG implementation in the current CPD period.

¹²⁹ At the time of field work, the Lab concluded 9 studies on enterprises - both livelihood enterprises as well as the commercial enterprises, both agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises- and community profiling in order not to channel the PDM uniformly across the country. The Lab also profiled the previous interventions of the government to learn working and non-working models when it comes to serving citizens living in subsistence levels.

Field work showed great appreciation by stakeholders for the way the analytical work was carried out by UNDP, for always consulting with commissioning MDAs that helped UNDP be critical without burning bridges, and for bringing in-house technical expertise of UNDP instead of hiring outside consultants. Both interviewees and desk reviews point towards implementation challenges and lack of capacity at both national and local levels related to NDP III programmes and the PDM model.¹³⁰ The SIA programme included capacity building as an important element of integrated development planning and implementation and built certain capacities around alignment of local government plans with NDPIII and in loan negotiations for financing from non-traditional development partners, which yielded additional resources for the Government. That said, most of the result indicator milestones related to capacity building were not attained.¹³¹ Better articulated success metrics around training, skills development and technical assistance would have helped the SIA team clarify its offer in capacity building.

2.4 Factors influencing programme performance and results

Finding 23. Sustainability: Initiatives that were more sustainable were those that employed a combination of approaches and leveraged favourable factors, including ownership by government (i.e., co-financing, NIM modality), institutionalization of interventions in government structures and programmes, transfer of ownership of know-how and community mobilization. Limits to sustainability usually emerged from an overstretched public bureaucracy, having a more experimental approach that valued piloting over scaling up and very short implementation time frames.

In terms of sustainability, UNDP interventions exhibited mixed results. The NCER pillar differed from the others in terms of government ownership, which was viewed as enhancing sustainability through institutionalization of projects into mainstream development efforts. Most government institutions viewed the NIM modality positively in enhancing ownership. The use of project focal persons at national and district level, development of joint work plans and joint monitoring activities also reported to enhance ownership. This also tied to the institutionalization of interventions in government structures and programmes. Embedding projects within district-level development frameworks (District Development Plans) was generally viewed as a mechanism for sustainability.¹³² Ownerships was also highlighted through the willingness for co-funding by government departments.

While many UNDP interventions engaged in capacity building for both duty bearers and rights holders, it was those interventions that had a mechanism for transfer of ownership of know-how to trusted counterparts that held the biggest chance of sustainability. In the same vein, training activities and peer learning for rights holders were most successful if the interventions left behind certain structures for the transfer of know-how in the long run. ‘Host farmer’ and farmer-field schools model was a case in point.¹³³ Climate Champions trained in interpretation and application of weather and climate information at sub-county level in seven districts to serve as valuable resources for dissemination of climate related information to farmers in the future was another example.

¹³⁰ Mid-Term Review of the Third National Development Plan (NDPIII), WB report on Uganda’s Parish Development Model, interviews with Makerere University and NPA

¹³¹ These are: Indicator 1.2: # of MDAs supported to develop Development Plans integrating SDG Agenda/ localization, Indicator 1.2: # of PWGs with technical assistance provided and Indicator 3.2: # of LG officials (targeting 5 per district and 10 districts per year) trained and provided skills and tools to support monitoring and evaluation of NDP-III targets and SDGs (disaggregated by sex)

¹³² For example, the CSA project established the District Task Force (DTF) made up of permanent district staff (which includes the district local government: the forestry officer, agricultural officer, commercial (marketing) officer and the education officer), led by the District Production Coordinator who is a permanent staff of the district.

¹³³ The Terminal Evaluation Report for Enhancing Resilience of Agricultural Landscapes and Value Chains in Eastern Uganda – Upscaling Climate Smart Agriculture Practices (CSA) in Uganda’s Farming System (2021) highlights capacity building of district level technical staff on CSA practices, attaching interns to cooperatives to support development of data management systems, and training cooperative leaders as mechanisms for sustainability.

UNDP also invested in community involvement and representation as an approach for sustainability. One successful strategy employed across pillars in livelihood initiatives was setting up of Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) for beneficiaries. This model emerged long before UNDP started using them. It was first introduced to Uganda in 1998 by Care International as a successful micro-finance model under which savings groups were formed at community level to reduce poverty by financially and socially empowering poor households.¹³⁴ Under refugee programming, food security and livelihood initiatives, such groups were formed. Some of the VSLAs were voluntarily formed into cooperatives leveraging collective bulk purchasing and marketing strategies to advance commercialized farming practices.¹³⁵ In others, these groups provided loans to the members at a lower and affordable interest rate.¹³⁶

One hurdle that came up repeatedly when it comes to ensuring sustainability was an overstretched public bureaucracy (both in terms of human and financial resources) that limited the positive effects of UNDP programmes in the medium to long term. For instance, most livelihood initiatives tried to connect UNDP beneficiaries with existing government funded programmes as an exit strategy. Examples included women's groups funded by the Spotlight Initiative on livelihood activities, savings groups by refugees and host communities, ASMEs in need of equipment or formalization, who were all encouraged to link up with LGs or existing government programmes. Beneficiaries had heightened expectations from government assistance due to high publicity of PDM and its financial inclusion pillar. However, despite these attempts, the ICPE team could not verify a successful linkage with existing programmes at the field level.¹³⁷

UNDP initiatives meant for piloting did not exhibit a strong sustainability element as they were usually one off, limited in scope, or not meant to be continued, but only experimented. With few exceptions, work in the digitalization domain fit within the first two elements. Given funding limitations, most of the initiatives were not deepened, only piloted.¹³⁸ In other instances, piloting was not a matter of not having the resources but a matter of experimenting and seeing what worked best, such as with youth employment programmes. Interventions spanned from providing start-up kits, mentoring, establishing savings groups, to linking with foreign markets, apprenticeship, and on-the-job trainings. However, in most of these cases, there was not a clear exit strategy or a crystallization of a decision on which type of a graduation model to adopt.

One theme that came up repeatedly in field work was that for making long-lasting changes at behavioural or institutional level, intervention time frames should have been more realistic. UNDP aimed to contribute to peace, social cohesion and resilience, which were harder to affect and shape in short intervals. In refugee programming, livelihood interventions under Spotlight and skilling initiatives under Youth for Business working through IPS in short grant cycles meant that beneficiaries had limited support periods to improve

¹³⁴ According to a study by Poverty Action Lab, VSLAs led to improvement in financial inclusion, household business outcomes, and women's empowerment. There was also evidence of improved resilience: in villages affected by drought, households experienced improved food security and income. For further details see: <https://poverty-action.org/study/impact-savings-groups-lives-rural-poor-ghana-malawi-and-uganda>

¹³⁵ Terminal Evaluation of Host and Refugee Community Empowerment Project, Page 43-44

¹³⁶ F-SURE Terminal Evaluation, 2023

¹³⁷ There are various reasons for this disconnect. Shrinking resources of the local governments, more stringent criteria that limit who is eligible or corruption and/or unclear communication around prioritized groups were among the cited reasons during field work. The most important factor however is the limited human resources at LGs for provision of extension services to a wide spectrum of beneficiaries. For instance, despite being integrated to ASMEs training programmes and implementation of return-to-work plans, a training report prepared by a third party attested to the limited quality of work by LG officers whose willingness and means to carry out this work was seriously questioned in the absence of adequate budget and incentives. This also applies to Implementation of Jobs and Livelihood Integrated Response Plans (JLIRPs) by LGs. While their integration to refugee programming was quite successful during programme implementation, it is not certain how Adjumani, Lamwo and Obongi districts continue to mainstream refugees in the implementation of general government programmes as well as the cascading of JLIRP to the District Local Governments Plans. Monitoring and maintenance of many of the investments of UNDP (i.e., roads, markets) in the region also require continued functioning of Maintenance committees which depends on the availability of support from the local government towards these committees. It is argued that the level of unfunded commitments in the district development plans is so high that makes it difficult for LGs to continue this work. In a similar vein, FSURE Terminal Evaluation says the current extension worker to farming household ratio in Uganda is about 1:1800 yet internationally accepted ratio is 1:500. The district local government authorities need to establish/revamp farmer support programmes such as training, extension services, and credit facilities to help farmers adopt sustainable agriculture practices and increase their productivity.

¹³⁸ There are a few exceptions especially in Acclab's experiments where pilots were successfully scaled up. See Finding 16 for an explanation.

their resilience.¹³⁹ Short time frames were also an issue in value chain work, where most interventions focused on the production stage but did not have time to improve pricing and the post-harvest handling part of the value chain.¹⁴⁰ In the same vein, the short term nature of interventions that required changes at perception level or behavioural level meant the changes would not be sustainable. This was most evident in not being able to change gender perceptions in refugee programming.

Finding 24. Gender: Gender was mostly integrated as a cross-cutting issue across pillars at UNDP Uganda. Noteworthy interventions included building capacities on gender-responsive policy making and GBV response, especially at local level, and building economic resilience of refugee women. UNDP invested more in institutional strengthening and livelihood support than mindset change and access/ownership over natural resources. This limited the ability of UNDP to address root causes of gender inequalities in Ugandan society.

Despite having a separate Outcome on Gender in the CPD (Outcome 3.2), UNDP Uganda had a limited number of programmes where gender equality was the explicit and primary objective (14 percent of CPD budget and 16 percent of CPD expenditure).¹⁴¹ All GEN3 interventions were housed under the GPS pillar and the Gender Advisor operated under this pillar.¹⁴² This was due to the Spotlight Programme and refugee programmes being executed from GPS. This pillar adopted both institutional strengthening to address the policy implementation gaps in gender mainstreaming (Spotlight initiative) and resilience building/livelihood stabilization (refugee programming) to address unequal adaptation capacities in disasters as two important strategies. Both approaches brought important results, as explained in GPS pillar findings.

In terms of institutional strengthening in the private sector, the Gender Seal initiative, which assessed and supported companies' commitment to gender equality through workplace policies on pay, benefits and sexual harassment protections, continued and expanded from 41 companies in the previous CPD to 90 companies in the current one. The Gender Quality Seal for Public Institutions was piloted at Makerere University, which led to the establishment of a day care centre for staff and students. In line with the observations of the previous ICPE, the Gender Seal continued to be largely limited to Kampala, in that 75 percent of the companies participating were from Central region (62 out of 67 from Kampala). This ICPE echoes the findings of the previous ICPE in terms of the relevance of this intervention for improving women's position in the labour market. In the Ugandan context, where 92 percent of women work informally,¹⁴³ job creation for women may have been a more relevant intervention to address structural barriers in women's employment.

UNDP successfully utilized women's NGOs in bringing in the economic empowerment angle to GBV programmes. UNDP worked with women-led NGOs to equip 3,146 vulnerable women at risk or survivors of GBV or trafficking with income generating opportunities such as skilling, VSLA methodologies and start-up kits. The funding into their small-scale income generating projects gave many women their first income and the unprecedented ability to either add to or often be the only source of family income. During fieldwork,

¹³⁹ There are similar observations in NCER pillar as well. The timeframe for the Karamoja Greenbelt project is viewed as too short to finalize planned activities to draw lessons for scaling up. The terminal evaluation for the CCCD project highlighted results achieved at pilot scale which left room for replication and up-scaling to the national level. Some stakeholders also viewed UNDP projects as 'thinly spread' and short term for meaningful impact to scale up.

¹⁴⁰ The final evaluation of the Refugee Programming also makes a recommendation in this area by saying: "Provide more time for the implementation of inclusive value chain development that address all components of the selected value chains as one year may not be sufficient for effective implementation" (page 49).

¹⁴¹ These are Spotlight initiative and Host and Refugee Community Empowerment. It has to be stated that according to the CO Gender Strategy 2022-2025, the organizational goal was "to lobby for at least 15% of Track 2/3 funding for stand-alone gender equality interventions (organizational goal 1a- Key action 6). The office has attained this target in this CPD period.

¹⁴² While the advisor operates in GPS pillar due to her funding from Spotlight programme, in the organigram she is tied to Strategy and Policy Unit. However field work did not show any ties of the Advisor to this unit, which is in charge of SIA enabling programme.

¹⁴³ Gender Gap Report 2023

two groups were visited, and it was found that despite the Spotlight initiative ending one year ago, they were still undertaking their activities, albeit on a small scale, and sensitizing their own communities about women's economic empowerment.

However, UNDP did not have an elaborate strategy to address entrenched social norms and practices that require changes at perception level. For instance, in refugee programming, one of the objectives of the programme was to change perceptions on gender, GBV and child marriages. The activities carried out to change perceptions on these contentious topics were very short term and superficial. The Terminal Evaluation mentioned a tendency to emphasize mainstreaming gender equity/GBV prevention among institutions rather than the targeted communities (refugees and host communities).¹⁴⁴ This is reflected in the programme results, where most of the indicators related to gender-related perceptions either remained constant or worsened.

Inclusive Growth initiatives were not gender targeted or gender transformative in the way they tackled the structural issues that left women behind in the labour market. There was no policy work around improving women's employment despite this being a priority for the ISG pillar in the Gender Strategy. In terms of entrepreneurship support, UNDP did not have a particular gender strategy or any targeted treatment of women-led startups.¹⁴⁵ The result indicators for employment and entrepreneurship programming were not gender disaggregated.¹⁴⁶

One innovative area in which UNDP also mainstreamed gender was its trade promotion work. 'Women in trade' was on the UNDP agenda since the formulation of AfCFTA programme.¹⁴⁷ UNDP prioritized women's SMEs in bilateral trade meetings in Nigeria and South Africa, which provided them with new business opportunities in external markets and opened new markets for a select group of women entrepreneurs. However, field work did not confirm a similar level of commitment and endorsement by the Government.

UNDP aimed to facilitate gender-responsive action within a specific value chain, that of Artisanal Mining.¹⁴⁸ While the emphasis on the precarity of women in artisanal mining was noteworthy in UNDP programming, field work confirmed that addressing the structural barriers to the empowerment of women in this value chain would have required more than trainings or grants.¹⁴⁹

There was limited progress in affecting structural issues that limited women's voice, participation and access to natural resource management. The impacts of project activities on women's roles in natural resources governance was blurred and needed further strengthening.¹⁵⁰ Female participation in wetland

¹⁴⁴ The NGO that focuses on GBV prevention and response was not involved at the inception of the project implementation and at the later stage, it focused on institutions rather than the communities. Therefore, its presence in the community was limited..

¹⁴⁵ For instance, the criteria used to evaluate start-ups to Y4B facility are General Organisational Capability, Innovativeness of the proposed solution, Commercial viability and sustainability of the proposed solution, Development Impact and Sustainability and Availability of co-financing.

¹⁴⁶ Except for one indicator, which is derived from Uganda Bureau of Statistics and not tied to UNDP's own performance: # of new decent jobs (formal and informal) generated, disaggregated by sex, age, disability

¹⁴⁷ UNDP partnered with UN Women, ITC, East African Business Council and UNDP Regional Bureau of Africa which showed keen interest in what AfCFTA can offer for women in trade.

¹⁴⁸ Desk review and external evaluation attest that various women-led groups and associations have been supported to receive PPE and tools to facilitate safer and efficient mining. 61 women-led mining groups were trained on value addition. The Programme has also engaged the Ministry of Trade to institutionalize the support to women ASMs and leverage further funding from the government. For instance, it advocated for formalized mining groups to be included in other government initiatives for COVID-19 recovery – such as the Parish Development Model that will provide grants at community level to selected groups. There was also successful cross-fertilization with the Spotlight Initiative of GPS pillar which utilized livelihood strengthening as a strategy to mitigate against GBV. Grants were provided to women led ASMEs in four districts of Kitgum, Amudat, Tororo and Kasese to recapitalize operations towards business growth and linked women in mining to GBV service points within their communities.

¹⁴⁹ The Final Activity Report for Onsite Training of ASMEs shows the value addition training was appreciated by the women led/headed ASMEs. But at the same time, they were skeptical that they can take off without support for machinery. The informal nature of most ASMEs makes direct sales to clients the most preferred way for earning a living. Interviewees stressed that many clients or intermediaries approach female members of ASMEs separately to reduce prices and break the union strength as they know the precarity of female headed households and their need for immediate compensation.

¹⁵⁰ As a vivid example, The Karamoja Green Belts' Women-Led Large-Scale Farming of Cereals, Legumes and Oil Seed Project made an unrealistic assumption of working with women only groups, in an environment where women do not generally own land in Karamoja. The project has slowly realized the need to recruit some men, particularly those that are willing to offer land that women can utilize in this project. This option is being considered with a view that such men should be ready to be members of the group but not leaders, and not to dictate what women should do.

restoration and agricultural resilience interventions was relatively low due to several factors, including the historical land tenure arrangements which alienated women to landownership, as women usually used the land as tenants.

On a positive note, there were efforts towards addressing the unequal capacities in adaptation to disasters among women and men and the need to reduce inequality in economic empowerment. These efforts yielded some positive results, including evidence of acquisition of some assets by women (including land and cattle), diversification by women into agricultural value addition/processing resulting in improved disposable income,¹⁵¹ and evidence of registration of women cooperatives which gave legal protection for assets owned by women's groups. However, for some projects, although there were set targets for promotion of gender responsive on and off-farm business enterprises, some targets were not met.¹⁵² There were some successes in gender responsive technological innovations that promoted commercial orientation by women.¹⁵³

Finding 25. Partnership approach: UNDP heavily relied on its partnerships with the UN and NGOs to deliver programmes. While UNDP's leadership in joint programming was largely praised by other UN agencies, partnership with civil society and INGOs had more mixed reviews. Partners complained at times of not being made part of the design process or not being informed adequately about exit strategies and their further involvement.

UN agencies and UNCT: UNDP's role in the coordination of development partners through its financial and technical contributions to the National Partnership Forum, which is the apex forum for engagement between the Government and Development Partners under the National Partnership Dialogue Framework, was well recognized. Through working with the National Planning Authority, UNDP was able to integrate issues of different development partners agencies into the planning processes. UNDP was seen by the Resident Coordinator's Office and other UN agencies as the agency that steered the discussions around SDGs. Its leadership role in the Joint Programme on Data and Statistics was well recognized both by UN agencies and the Uganda Bureau of Statistics. Its expertise in the intersection of youth and climate policies was instrumental in shaping the Joint Programme on Adolescents and Youth Outcome on peace, security, and climate action. Through the Spotlight initiative, UNDP ensured the application of principles of gender responsive budgeting (GRB) and an effective GBV response at the downstream level and partnered with other UN agencies such as IOM for tracking cross-border movement to curb human trafficking. UNDP's co-leadership role in the Karamoja working group where UN agencies tried to coordinate their cross-border work using the HDN approach was also praised by interviewees for bringing the development angle into the working group, as other agencies operated mainly from a humanitarian perspective. UNDP led the operations management team of the UN Country Team, which significantly contributed to cost efficiencies in the UN system in procurement and human resource management.

Civil society and INGOs: Civil society played a very crucial role in a diverse array of interventions, such as Ebola response, peaceful elections, economic empowerment of women, GBV, youth skilling, refugee programming and food security. UNDP was able to tap into the relevant expertise of these institutions and

¹⁵¹ The F-SURE Terminal Evaluation report highlights a significant percentage of women who benefitted from livelihood interventions. For example, participation in value chains was as follows: Nakapiripirit, cassava MSP has 40% F, 40% M, 20% youth, in Nabilatuk sorghum MSP has 40% F, 45% M, 15% youth; in Moroto, honey MSP has 20% F, 50% M, 30% youth; in Kotido, livestock MSP has 25% F, 55% M, 20% youth; in Kaabong sorghum MSP has 50% F, 40% M, 10% youth and in Karenga sorghum MSP has 50% F, 40% M, 10% youth. FGDs mentioned that males are always on the move for pastoral/grazing activities and in search of jobs and females must shoulder the responsibility of running the households.

¹⁵² Under the Restoration of Wetlands and Associated Catchments Project in Easter Uganda project, the project targeted 50% of beneficiaries who benefit/have control of livelihood interventions such as water and household incomes in the project sites to be women. As of 2023, the percentage of females who are benefiting from the project was 35.5%.

¹⁵³ For example, introduction of rippers through the CSA project reduced labour required to prepare and plant by women, who traditionally did the land preparation and planting; they became more commercially oriented as they could hire tractor services when they needed them.

leveraged their trustworthiness and wider reach to beneficiaries. Some of these partnerships were crucial in emergencies, such as reduction of communicable diseases and prevention of escalation of electoral related conflict.¹⁵⁴ However, partnerships faced monitoring problems, reporting problems, and bureaucratic challenges in timely releasing of funds. Some of the interviewed partners in refugee programming indicated that late disbursement of funds affected the effectiveness of certain activities such as tree planting, whose timing was dependent on seasons. While some of the larger INGOs were able to pre-fund their projects as they waited for disbursements, others were put under significant financial strain as activities had to be implemented before the arrival of funds.¹⁵⁵ This also meant that organizations in the West Nile were not working at the same pace, which strained a holistic implementation process.¹⁵⁶ In the NCER pillar, there were mixed results with subcontracted NGOs. For example, while the Terminal Evaluation for the F-SURE project indicated success for activities conducted through small grants subcontracted to NGOs, local NGOs under the Karamoja Greenbelt project (IIRR subgrantees) recorded frustrations. Wetland Restoration programming's livelihood component also experienced significant delays due to cancellation of contracts of NGOs due to poor performance and lack of results.

Some partners in skilling/advisory support to youth start-ups emphasized that they could have been part of the design of some of the initiatives since they had deep domain knowledge. In most cases, by the time they were recruited, UNDP already determined the design of all programming. One common theme that came up repeatedly in interviews was that there were challenges in keeping stakeholders informed on final steps toward the closure of interventions.¹⁵⁷ During the fieldwork some of the partners were not aware that a second phase was about to begin. There was a need to inform partners, especially if they were to be retained in the next phase, but more importantly, to ensure sustainability of results after UNDP funding ended.

¹⁵⁴ Having said that, UNDP also had to abandon certain partnerships with religious NGOs due to non-alignment of values, especially after the passing of AHA legislation.

¹⁵⁵ This is in stark contrast to the finding of Terminal Evaluation of Host and Refugee Community Empowerment Project which claimed all RPs had smooth operations. ICPE team field work indicated the contrary.

¹⁵⁶ In NCER pillar, there were mixed results with subcontracted NGOs. For example, while the Terminal Evaluation for the F-SURE project indicated success for activities conducted through small grants subcontracted to NGOs, local NGOs under the Karamoja Greenbelt project (IIRR subgrantees) recorded frustrations.

¹⁵⁷ For example, a thematic assessment of the Spotlight programme found that there seemed to be uncertainty among implementing partners about the programme's next steps. The overall reflection was that while inception meetings were held on the first Spotlight programme, similarly, it would have been beneficial to hold close-out meetings (from this first phase) to ensure that all partners were aligned and well-informed about the programme's end phase and about Spotlight 2.0.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



This chapter presents the evaluation conclusions on UNDP performance and contributions to development results in Uganda during the programme cycle 2021 - 2025, as well as the recommendations and management response.

3.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. Articulation of pillar-based programmes and quality of implementation: UNDP's pillars and enabling programmes ensured strong alignment with government priorities and highlighted UNDP's offer in each domain. However, they exhibited certain weaknesses in formulation of strategies to achieve their objectives. The non-specific, broad and at times ambitious nature of pillar strategies led to difficulties in result achievement at times. There were certain implementation challenges due to not streamlining processes between UNDP and the Government.

UNDP decreased its dependence on core resources considerably in the current CPD period. However, pillars' result achievement was not always on a par with their funding levels due to the non-specific, broad and ambitious nature of the pillar objectives. This was partially driven by a desire to cater to as many government priorities as possible, which at times created planning challenges and cancellation of activities. This also led to some stakeholders defining UNDP interventions as 'thinly spread' for meaningful impact to holistically address national development priorities. ToCs of pillar programmes had strategies that were not always the most effective or were not well defined to address the development challenges given UNDP's know-how and comparative advantages. This was coupled with certain implementation challenges and operational bottlenecks that slowed implementation at times.

Conclusion 2. Governance and Peace Strengthening: The GPS pillar was highly adaptive to external shocks such as health crises and limitations imposed by political trends in Uganda, which caused major modifications in its programming. There was no formal effort to reflect these changes into the anchor programme or results framework, which created a disconnect between the intended objectives and reported results of the pillar. Despite being the most successful pillar in resource mobilization, results were limited in certain areas due to the pilot nature of interventions. GPS was at the forefront of piloting the humanitarian-development nexus, which would have benefitted from a closer working relationship with other pillars.

The GPS pillar bore the brunt of external shocks more than any other pillar and had to do significant re-programming to respond. While COVID-19 and the Ebola health crisis implied using core resources to fill capacity shortages of the health sector, the shrinking civic space implied the focus of programming was more on service delivery models for LGs and digital infrastructure for JLOS. That also meant some of the more sensitive topics around legislative oversight and corruption were on the back burner in GPS programming. Despite these negative developments, the GPS pillar was able to raise significant funding for its accountable service delivery and peace, cohesion and resilience workstreams. One factor that limited the impact of programmes was that certain initiatives in the justice sector or gender responsive programming were pilots, which made it hard to verify whether equitable access to services was achieved at a meaningful scale. Nevertheless, these programmes were largely successful in the pilots where they were implemented and set a precedent for government to upscale. A closer look at the refugee programming revealed that while the programme was trying to contribute to peace, which is the domain of governance, the modalities utilized made it a livelihood stabilization initiative. However, the implementation in this CPD period did not confirm any concrete cross-fertilization between GPS and other teams.

Conclusion 3: Inclusive and Sustainable Growth: The ISG pillar adopted the right mix of programming to promote growth in high impact sectors while ensuring this growth benefits vulnerable populations in an equitable way. While alignment with government priorities was seen as a prerequisite to garner support for the ISG agenda, more opportunities could have been leveraged for private sector involvement in design, resourcing and implementation of programmes. Experimental approaches to youth unemployment limited impact of programmes as support was short term and thinly spread.

UNDP was the go-to-agency in implementing the Government of Uganda's growth agenda in key sectors identified in NDP III. UNDP provided invaluable advisory support to the GoU in shaping its new trade policy as part of regional trade integration and was the pen holder of numerous other strategies in industry, green growth and artisanal mining. UNDP had a clear leadership role in shaping post-pandemic growth policy based on green sectors such as tourism and was a pivotal actor in defining the roadmaps for digitalization and innovation. UNDP factored in the socio-economic inequalities in the labour market working with more marginalized segments of the workforce, including street vendors and artisanal miners, with varying degrees of success. UNDP underutilized the power of the private sector in design, resourcing and implementation of programmes. In cases where the private sector was engaged, it was mostly as service providers (responsible party) or beneficiaries. While important partnerships were established to test various approaches in youth employment, there was no clear indication as to which were to be deepened and which would be discarded. This was also due to not having a clear mechanism to report on substantive contributions of these initiatives.

Conclusion 4: Nature, Climate, Energy, Resilience: UNDP was the go-to agency for Government of Uganda in shaping policies, strategies and guiding frameworks for environmental and natural resources management, climate change and disaster risk management. It made significant efforts to ensure these standards were applied at national and sub-national levels by working through existing government structures, although the operational challenges slowed progress at sub-national level. There was need for clear exit mechanisms to ensure district-community interphase functioned, especially for livelihood and value chain initiatives, after UNDP support.

UNDP was largely successful in creating awareness around natural resource governance and building structures and systems for Uganda's disaster response, climate mitigation and adaptation architecture. The effects of its programmes at community level were mixed, mainly due to slow operationalization of programmes at district level, systematic delays in release of the project funds from UNDP to MDAs and from MDAs to LGs, slow procurement processes and uncoordinated delivery of separate government entities. This affected the pace of alternative livelihood interventions. While UNDP was successful in demonstrating climate smart interventions and increased productivity using innovative methods such as Farmer Schools, farmers needed reliable and continued access to output markets. UNDP developed institutional arrangements for ensuring sustainability, including embedding projects in district-level development plans and building technical capacity of district staff to monitor projects. However, in the absence of clear exit strategies, the modalities for resourcing the operationalization of the district-community interphase to ensure sustainability were not always well defined.

Conclusion 5. Gender programming: UNDP programming was largely gender responsive with significant results achieved regarding strengthening capacities of local governments in gender informed policy making and justice institutions in GBV case management as well as livelihood strengthening of refugee women in the context of post-conflict. UNDP was limited in addressing structural barriers that leave women behind in the labour market, in natural resource management, in value chains, as well as in negative perceptions around women's role and position in society.

UNDP focused mostly on gender targeted and responsive approaches and not enough on gender transformative approaches to address key structural barriers and root causes of gender inequality. While UNDP provided a response to the structural barriers of policy implementation gaps through institutionalizing GRB at local/central level and unequal capacities in adaptation to shocks/disasters by prioritizing women in its resilience/livelihood stabilization initiatives, other aspects of gender equality, namely entrenched social norms and practices, rising gender inequality in economic empowerment and gender-dimension of the youth dividend, were not tackled adequately. While UNDP successfully utilized women's NGOs in bringing the economic empowerment angle into GBV programming, their transformative power to challenge negative social norms was not utilized to the maximum. Food security and value chain initiatives were informed about the precarious position and limited bargaining power of women in production processes; however, the support mechanisms were mostly short term in nature and did not always adequately address the lack of access/ownership over natural resources.

3.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1. UNDP should articulate a more robust ToC for its pillars, especially when they have a broader mandate, better motivating how the strategies proposed are the most effective to attain the outputs of programmes. UNDP should be more selective as to which government priorities it would like to align its programmes in order not to spread its resources thinly and undermine its own strategic focus. This should be coupled with a separate implementation strategy and action plan that eliminates the operational bottlenecks due to misalignment of UNDP and government processes.

In the next CPD, UNDP should define a ToC that is not thinly spread to address as many Government priorities as possible but that focuses its attention to areas which UNDP thinks it is best positioned to address given its expertise and resources. This will also ensure better planning and higher execution rate that will give a more reliable image about UNDP to its implementing partners. ToCs of pillar programmes should articulate strategies that are realistic and most effective given the complexity and main drivers of the development challenges addressed. Discarding of outputs and strategies should be clearly motivated and documented to have an archival memory on what worked and did not work. To avoid the operational bottlenecks related to downstream interventions as well as the funding of government initiatives at central level, UNDP should work on an implementation strategy and action plan that ensures better alignment between government processes and that of UNDP. This will help UNDP avoid the reputational risk related to cancellations or late payments.

Recommendation 2. M&E: UNDP should design more robust result frameworks for its pillars and the new CPD that make a realistic assessment of UNDP's sphere of influence. UNDP should work on a Knowledge Management and Learning Strategy to capture lessons learned and course corrections offered by the monitoring system at pillar level.

UNDP should devise better result frameworks for its CPD and anchor programmes, paying attention to SMARTness of indicators. Result Frameworks of pillars should be adapted if there are modifications in programming. The M&E function has a comprehensive monitoring system that can be used to strengthen knowledge management and learning. There could be more established mechanisms to integrate the observations of the monitoring reports to decision making, especially at anchor programme level, which has been prone to modifications according to shifts in context. There is a need to establish the practice of preparing annual progress reports for all anchor and enabling programmes where lessons learned sections can formally refer to the findings of monitoring function and offer corrective actions. Monitoring function in return could follow up on whether these corrective actions are implemented.

Recommendation 3. GPS pillar: In the next CPD, the GPS team should strive for more cross-pillar work to capitalize on existing programmatic overlaps with other pillars. GPS should continue and expand its work with civil society on ‘voice and accountability’ with an eye towards amplifying their voice in a shrinking civic space.

The GPS pillar should establish a more formal working relationship with other pillars due to the cross-sectoral nature of its programming in HDN (refugee and cross-border conflict) and due to the added value of GPS expertise in important programmatic areas such as Smart Cities and the Parish Development Model. For instance, instead of having Smart Cities as an output of DISC programme, a more holistic programme that targets major challenges of slums can be designed as a stand-alone initiative under the GPS pillar with the Accelerator Lab contributing to participatory methods of managing problems of rapid urbanization. In the case of PDM, field work confirmed that implementation of the model is hindered by the lack of capacity at local level to implement the most important tenets of the model and pointed at recurrent examples of misuse of funds, which erodes public trust in the viability of the model.¹⁵⁸ GPS could work with the SIA team on ways to restore public trust in the model by ensuring its transparency. UNDP should also look for ways to increase its engagement with civil society, as UNDP has an important role to amplify ‘voice and accountability’ in a shrinking civic space.

Recommendation 4. ISG pillar: UNDP should clarify its expectations from youth economic empowerment initiatives. While the utilization of core resources gives UNDP the liberty to experiment with different approaches, appropriate learning from pilots should be integrated into programming and working models should be promoted on a larger scale with clear sustainability measures in place.

UNDP needs to distil the necessary lessons learned from youth economic empowerment initiatives and focus on what works best in the next CPD period to make better use of core resources. UNDP should move away from focusing on achieving numeric targets and pay attention to more quality aspects such as retention rates. This line of work needs a more robust monitoring framework (i.e., tracer studies, impact assessments) to integrate learning more firmly in programme implementation. UNDP should also leverage the know-how of its implementing partners (INGOs, incubators, etc.) not just as service providers during implementation but also as active contributors to the design of programmes in youth economic empowerment.

Recommendation 5. NCER pillar: UNDP should envision better integration into existing local governance structures and sufficient involvement of communities and implementing partners into the design and execution of downstream interventions on alternative livelihood/climate smart agriculture to increase effectiveness and sustainability as well as to minimize unintended adverse effects of these interventions. UNDP should factor in the time needed for establishing proper market linkages and district structures to avoid a pre-mature exit and allocate resources more realistically to ensure alternative livelihood options are meaningful for communities.

UNDP should continue efforts to strengthen marketing and value addition, to ensure that alternative livelihood options offer a better opportunity cost to utilization of wetlands. There is a need for robust viability assessments for value chains, including mechanisms for meaningful private sector engagement for input and output markets. There is also a need for more clear exit mechanisms to ensure district-community interphase functions after UNDP support ends. In climate smart agricultural initiatives as well as alternative livelihood initiatives, timelines and targets should be realistic and available resources commensurate

¹⁵⁸ Mid-Term Review of the Third National Development Plan (NDPIII), WB report on Uganda's Parish Development Model, interviews with Makerere University and NPA

with ambitions of the programmes. Communities and implementing partners such as NGOs should be made an integral part of programmatic interventions from the start so that grievances due to inadequate compensation do not arise in the first place.

Recommendation 6. Gender: UNDP should design programmes to address structural barriers that leave women behind in the labour market, in governance and ownership of natural resources, and in value chains as well as to change negative perceptions around women’s role and position in society. This will require attacking sources of deprivation in a multi-faceted rather than piecemeal manner.

UNDP should design programmes that tackle sources of deprivation for women at policy, institutional and community levels in a holistic manner. This will require a more meticulous assessment of structural drivers of gender inequalities during the design of programmes. There are three specific areas where UNDP can make better progress given its comparative advantages: women’s integration to agricultural value addition; natural resource governance and ownership of resources of production; and labour market integration. Longer and more meaningful partnerships with CSOs must be forged which do not utilize them just as service providers but also as partners in designing programmes to be able to change societal perceptions around women’s position in society.

3.3 Key recommendations and Management Response

RECOMMENDATION 1:

UNDP should articulate a more robust Theory of Change for its pillars, especially when they have a broader mandate, better motivating how the strategies proposed are the most effective to attain the outputs of programmes. UNDP should be more selective as to which government priorities it would like to align its programmes in order not to spread its resources thinly and undermine its own strategic focus. This should be coupled with a separate implementation strategy and action plan that eliminates the operational bottlenecks due to misalignment of UNDP and government processes.

Management response: Accepted.

UNDP will develop a robust TOC for the new CPD 2026-2030 which will clearly articulate the broader mandate, how the proposed strategies will be most effective to attain the outputs of programme targets and indicators and will be strategic, well aligned to the national development challenges and the UNSDCF. A separate implementation strategy and action plan that eliminates the operational bottlenecks due to misalignment of UNDP and government processes will be developed.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.1 Develop and articulate a robust TOC for the new CPD 2026-2030 which clearly articulates the broader mandate, the proposed pillar strategies, targets and indicators well aligned to the national development challenges and the UNSCDF	August 2025	Programme Team		Initiated

◀ Recommendation 1 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
1.2 Formulate Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) for the new CO CPD 2026-2030 to reflect the results chain, strategic focus/ key priorities in the TOC with SMART indicators and targets for effective accountability, reporting and learning.	August 2025	Programme Team		Initiated
1.3 Design an implementation strategy and action plan that addresses the operational bottlenecks due to misalignment of UNDP and government processes.	August 2026	Programme Team		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 2:



UNDP should design more robust result frameworks for its pillars and the new CPD that makes a realistic assessment of UNDP's sphere of influence. UNDP should work on a Knowledge Management and Learning Strategy to capture lessons learned and course corrections offered by the monitoring system at pillar level.

Management response: Accepted.



UNDP Uganda recognizes the importance of having robust result frameworks for its pillars and a new CPD with mechanisms that ensure the effectiveness and impact of UNDP programmes.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
2.1 Design and implement a robust result resources framework for pillars and the new CPD that makes a realistic assessment of UNDP's sphere of influence.	August 2025	Programme Team		Initiated
2.2 Design and implement a Knowledge Management and Learning Strategy that incorporates programme lessons learned, and course corrections offered by the M&E System at pillar level.	December 2026	Programme Team		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 3:



(GPS pillar) In the next CPD, GPS team should strive for more cross-pillar work to capitalize on existing programmatic overlaps with other pillars. GPS should continue and expand its work with civil society on 'voice and accountability' with an eye towards amplifying their voice in a shrinking civic space.

Management response: **Accepted.**



The Governance and Peace Programme will continue to expand its cross-pillar work to capitalize on existing programmatic overlaps with other pillars, including collaboration with civil society to enhance 'voice and accountability.' Further deliberate diplomatic engagement will be pursued with duty bearers and within the framework of the National Partnership policy to address the emerging observation about shrinking civic space.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Currently, several Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are key partners under the Governance and Peace Programme. Building on these partnerships, integrate interventions on voice and accountability into activities planned for 2025 and beyond and monitor on a continuous basis through the Governance arrangements of the respective projects and programmes.	January-December 2025	Programme Team		Initiated
3.2 Identify civic education as one of the key interventions in the GPS pillar, with the aim of fostering increased civic engagement, strengthening voices, and ensuring accountability.	January-December 2025	Governance & Peace Programme		Initiated

◀ Recommendation 3 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
3.3 Mainstream voice and accountability interventions across the portfolios of the Country Office programme document 2026-2030. The proposed strategic integration is intended to reinforce UNDP's commitment to empowering civil society, nurturing voice and promoting inclusive governance and accountable governance. Further, this strategic note identifies entry points for governance permeating the new CPD areas, including in addressing disputes through alternative justice systems, including on environment and land issues, deepening local governance through strengthening the local government ability to generate resources that enhance the broad-based local development challenges, which aligns with the pillar work on economic governance as well and in prevention measures that create a conducive environment for all other element of the CPD pillar work, among others.	January-December 2025	Programme Team		Initiated
3.4 Prioritize diplomatic engagement with duty bearers, leveraging Uganda's National Partnership policy framework, to address issues related to shrinking civic space.	January-December 2025	Governance & Peace Programme		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 4:



(ISG pillar) UNDP should clarify its expectations from youth economic empowerment initiatives. While the utilization of core resources gives UNDP the liberty to experiment with different approaches, appropriate learning from pilots should be integrated into programming and working models should be promoted on a larger scale with clear sustainability measures in place.

Management response: **Accepted.**



The Country Office recognizes the importance of clearly defined expectations, the integration of lessons learned from pilots, and the promotion of scalable, sustainable models for the success of youth economic empowerment initiatives. Youth employment and empowerment are central to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2063, and Uganda's Vision 2040. The Country Office is committed to enhancing its approach to youth economic empowerment by clarifying expectations, integrating pilot learnings, and scaling effective models. The actions outlined hereunder reflect a comprehensive strategy to drive lasting, positive change for youth, addressing their socio-economic needs in alignment with national development priorities and the SDGs. This approach will ensure that youth economic empowerment initiatives are impactful, sustainable, and fully aligned with UNDP's global mandate for inclusive and sustainable development.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Redesign of the country's youth flagship programme: Youth4Development utilizing the portfolio approach to define appropriate scalable and fit for purpose initiatives building on successful pilots from the previous programming cycle.	Feb - December 2025	Programme Team		Initiated
4.2 Co-create and collaborate with the Government, private sector, development partners, and financial institutions to scale successful pilot initiatives that have demonstrated effectiveness in creating sustainable livelihoods, enhancing economic resilience, and fostering youth entrepreneurship, with a focus on scalability and long-term impact.	Feb - June 2025	Programme Team		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 5:



(NCER pillar) UNDP should envision better integration into existing local governance structures and sufficient involvement of communities and implementing partners into the design and execution of downstream interventions on alternative livelihood/climate smart agriculture to increase effectiveness and sustainability as well as to minimize unintended adverse effects of these interventions. UNDP should factor in the time needed for establishing proper market linkages and district structures to avoid a pre-mature exit and allocate resources more realistically to ensure alternative livelihood options are meaningful for communities.

Management response: **Accepted.**



UNDP continues to strengthen project implementation through district local governments. This is being done in more than 25 districts where ecosystem-based adaptation projects are being implemented. This will continue to be prioritized to strengthen ownership and sustainability of UNDP initiatives. UNDP is implementing an inclusive approach to planning, ensuring inclusion of all community segments (women, men, people with disabilities and youth) in project design and implementation and has also considered skilling an integral part of project implementation.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
5.1 Strengthen the capacity of government and other partners to effectively implement the Social and Environmental Safeguards of target projects and promote the use of data and evidence-based policy decisions to address risks.	Ongoing	NCER Team		Initiated
5.2 Integrate project implementation approaches into the existing local governance structures and ensure sufficient involvement of communities and implementing partners in the planning frameworks, monitoring and evaluation.	Ongoing	NCER Team		Initiated
5.3 Conduct comprehensive risk assessments and regular reviews to identify gaps and implement corrective actions to ensure resilience and sustainability of programme interventions.	Ongoing	NCER Team		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 6:



(Gender) UNDP should design programmes to address structural barriers that leave women behind in the labour market, in governance and ownership of natural resources, and in value chains, and to change negative perceptions around women's role and position in society. This will require attacking sources of deprivation in a multi-faceted rather than in piecemeal manner.

Management response: **Accepted.**



Country Office (CO) will finalize development and launch of its Gender for Development (G4D) portfolio aimed at addressing the systemic exclusion and/or marginalization of women from economic, political and social opportunities and socio-cultural norms and mindsets that reinforce it. The G4D portfolio seeks to catalyse systems transformation by moving away from fragmented/project-based interventions to a system that promotes gender equality, equity, and empowerment at all levels of society. Further, with a G4D portfolio, the CO envisages opportunities for harnessing private and public domestic and international funding sources. To enhance its work in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, UNDP will extend the Gender Seal initiative to a wider range of stakeholders. UNDP will develop an integrated monitoring framework that incorporates gender considerations at every stage of the project lifecycle. The CO will strengthen gender action plans for sustained progress.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
6.1 Finalize development and launch of UNDP's Gender for Development (G4D) portfolio aimed at addressing the systemic exclusion and/or marginalization of women from economic, political and social opportunities and socio-cultural norms and mindsets that reinforce it.	June 2025	Programme Team		Initiated
6.2 Develop and implement an integrated monitoring framework that systematically incorporates gender considerations at every stage of the project lifecycle, including design, implementation, and closure.	December 2026	Programme Team		Initiated

◀ Recommendation 6 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
6.3 Continue with domestication of UNDP's Gender Equality Seal (GES) Global Flagship initiative in public (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Judiciary, National Council for Higher Education and Makerere University) and private sector to champion and address gender inequalities in institutional systems, policies and work environments and externally, through designing and delivering gender-responsive development interventions.	December 2025	Governance & Peace Programme		Initiated
6.4 Implement project-based initiatives to close gender gaps and biased perceptions around women's role and position in leadership and decision-making processes; support to women environmental human rights defenders and elimination of gender-based discrimination (such as gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse), etc.	December 2026	Programme Team		Initiated

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

ANNEXES



Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the Evaluation Resource Center of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/detail/24467>

Annex 1. Terms of reference

Annex 2. Projects under review

Annex 3. Country office at a glance

Annex 4. GIS maps

Annex 5. People consulted and interviewed

Annex 6. Status of country programme outcome & output indicators

Annex 7: Performance rating



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