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INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION TAJIKISTAN



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ACRONYMS

AfT	Aid for Trade initiative
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ALRI	Agency for Land Reclamation and Irrigation
BMP	Border Management Programme
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CoEP	Committee for Environmental Protection
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil society organization
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization
GBAO	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast
GBV	Gender-based violence
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic Information System
GRES	Gender Results Effectiveness Scale
HCFC	Hydrochlorofluorocarbon
HFC	Hydrofluorocarbon
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IFI	International financial institution
IWP	Integrated Work Plan
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
LITACA	Livelihood Improvement in Tajik Afghan Cross-Border Areas project
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
METD	Ministry of Economic Development and Trade
MoEWR	Ministry of Energy and Water Resources

MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MSME	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
MTDP	Mid-Term Development Programme
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDS	National Development Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIM	National Implementation Modality
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PVE	Prevention of violent extremism
RBEC	Regional Bureau for Europe and Central Asia
REACT	Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team
ROAR	Results-Oriented Annual Report
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TB	Tuberculosis
ToC	Theory of change
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNRCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VLR	Voluntary Local Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review

Evaluation Brief: Tajikistan

This Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) assessed the contribution of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to national development priorities in Tajikistan from 2021 to mid-2025. It covered the final two years of the previous Country Programme Document (CPD) cycle (2016-2022) and the first two and a half years of the current CPD cycle (2023-2026). The evaluation aimed to support the development of the next UNDP country programme, strengthen accountability and contribute to organizational learning.

Country context

Tajikistan, a small lower-middle income landlocked country in Central Asia, is characterized by its mountainous terrain, which covers about 93 percent of its territory. The country has a rapidly growing population of 10.5 million, with a high proportion who are young and living in rural areas. This demographic trend could bring a potential demographic dividend, with substantial investments in human capital and job creation.

Since its independence in 1991, Tajikistan has made remarkable strides in transforming from a conflict-ridden nation to one of increasing strategic importance in Central Asia. The 1997 peace agreement marked the end of a devastating civil war, since when the country has navigated various external shocks, including the 2008 financial crisis and the 2014 Ruble crash. Despite these challenges, Tajikistan demonstrated resilience and a commitment to reform.

Tajikistan's economy has grown steadily, with a gross domestic product of US\$ 14.2 billion in 2024 and strong performance across the industrial, agricultural and service sectors. The country made significant progress in poverty reduction and improving access to clean water, and the Government has also made efforts to address gender disparity and promote women's empowerment. Overall, Tajikistan's journey of recovery and successive reforms highlights its potential for sustainable development and regional cooperation.

The UNDP programme in Tajikistan

The UNDP programme in Tajikistan focused on three priority areas: inclusive and sustainable economic growth; effective and accountable governance; and climate resilience and environmental sustainability. The programme aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and the National Development Strategy 2030.

Findings and conclusions

Relevance and coherence: The UNDP programme was highly relevant to national priorities and effectively targeted vulnerable populations. However, the principle of “leaving no one behind” (LNOB) was not consistently embedded across all outcomes. Internal and external coherence varied, with deeper integration in governance but less synergy in the economic portfolio.

Strategic positioning: UNDP had distinctive positioning in Tajikistan, leveraging its long-standing trusted position, neutrality and convening power to maintain access to sensitive sectors. The programme effectively capitalized on UNDP strengths as a convener and technical integrator.

Effectiveness and sustainability: UNDP delivered tangible results across governance, environment and institutionalization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, systemic transformation was moderated by structural barriers. The most durable results were embedded in legal mandates and public systems, but systemic sustainability remained uneven.

Outcome 1: Sustainable, inclusive and green economic growth. UNDP helped to lay the institutional foundations for integrating inclusive, green and risk-informed principles into Tajikistan’s economic policy and reform agenda. It played a central role in advancing inclusive and green value chains and trade-enabled livelihoods. However, challenges such as limited integration into regional and global value chains and structural barriers facing micro, small and medium-sized enterprises persisted.

Outcome 2: Integrated management of climate and environmental risk. The work of UNDP laid the foundation for progress in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management. It was key in integrating water resource management, creating essential policies and institutional foundations. UNDP played a central role in initiating and shaping Tajikistan’s climate change mitigation agenda and was critical in climate change adaptation.

Outcome 3: People-centred governance and rule of law. UNDP drove reforms in civil registration and border management, supporting the Government to transform access to legal identity and modernize services. It also played a key role in justice sector reform and governance support for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

A four-type contribution typology was used to assess the role of UNDP within nationally led change processes, categorizing the contributing role of UNDP as: foundational enabler, lead implementing contributor, supportive enabler or complementary actor. The results showed that UNDP contributions ranged from decisive system-shaping leadership in some areas to enabling and supportive roles in others, depending on institutional readiness, financing and partnership dynamics.

Efficiency and adaptability: UNDP demonstrated adaptability through shifts in delivery and financing, though systemic bottlenecks and staffing gaps constrained programme performance. UNDP maintained regular project and programme monitoring, but these were often output-focused and compliance-oriented.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Consolidate recent governance and institutional reforms by focusing on select mechanisms that enhance fiscal integration, accountability and the sustainability of ongoing initiatives.

Recommendation 2. Scale up private sector and innovation systems to expand financing, job creation and inclusive green growth.

Recommendation 3. Institutionalize gender equality and LNOB as binding programme drivers.

Recommendation 4. Strengthen operational resilience and national implementation capacity for adaptive and sustainable delivery, risk planning and knowledge management.

Recommendation 5. Strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning as adaptive management tools.

Recommendation 6. Advance the UNDP integrator role by embedding adaptive programming practices in future CPD design.

This chapter presents the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation as well as the methodology applied. It also lays out the development context and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) programme in Tajikistan.

1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of UNDP conducts independent country programme evaluations (ICPEs) to critically assess UNDP contributions to national development priorities and results, in line with the UNDP evaluation policy.

Under the ICPE framework, the evaluation assessed UNDP contributions and the effectiveness of the UNDP Tajikistan country office strategy in achieving the development results articulated in the Country Programme Document (CPD). The CPD is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, which provides the programmatic framework for United Nations agencies operating in Tajikistan. The objectives of this ICPE were to:

- Support the development of the next UNDP country programme for Tajikistan by identifying best practices, results and key lessons from the current cycle;
- Strengthen UNDP accountability to national and international stakeholders and the UNDP Executive Board; and
- Contribute to knowledge generation, organizational learning and decision-making within UNDP.¹

This ICPE was carried out in 2025 and covered the period from 2021 to May 2025. It therefore included: (i) the final two years (2021-2022) of the previous programme cycle (2016-2022), which were not covered by the previous ICPE due to the extension of the earlier CPD; and (ii) the first two and a half years of the current CPD cycle (2023-2026), to mid-2025. This is the third country programme evaluation conducted by IEO in Tajikistan, following the ICPE completed in 2019, and the Assessment of Development Results conducted in 2009.

The evaluation examined all planned CPD outcomes and outputs. Transitional projects implemented during 2021–2022 were included as they contributed to programme priorities that continued into the current CPD cycle.²

Evaluation coverage was based on a comprehensive list of all UNDP projects implemented between 2021 and 2025, including their status, implementation modality, expenditure and classification under the three CPD outcomes (Annex 2). The ICPE covered UNDP activities funded by all sources, including UNDP core resources, donor funding and government cost-sharing. In addition, the evaluation considered non-project contributions, such as policy dialogue, coordination and advocacy, recognizing their importance in supporting national development processes.

The analysis was anchored in the CPD outcomes for the 2023-2026 programme cycle. The field mission was conducted in May 2025, and the cutoff date for data updates from all sources was July 2025.

¹ Further details can be consulted in the evaluation Terms of Reference available in Annex 1.

² The CPD 2023–2026 builds on the strategic foundations established during the previous programme cycle, maintaining continuity in thematic priorities and institutional partnerships.

1.2 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation applied contribution analysis to assess UNDP contributions to development outcomes, recognizing that results emerge from interactions of multiple actors and contextual factors.³ The contributions of UNDP in Tajikistan were assessed across a spectrum of contribution types reflecting its influence within broader change processes led by national institutions.

In line with its mandate, UNDP supported national systems and capacity, with the Government of Tajikistan acting as the primary driver of development outcomes. The evaluation interpreted UNDP contributions in relational terms, examining how the agency shaped, enabled or accelerated nationally owned development processes. It used four colour-coded contribution roles to assess the nature and significance of UNDP involvement: ■ **lead implementing contributor**; ■ **supportive enabler**; ■ **foundational enabler**; and ■ **complementary actor** (Figure 17).

These roles reflected the degree of leadership, influence and indispensability demonstrated by UNDP relative to other actors and the institutional and policy context. The typology and colour coding are applied consistently across findings in this report (Annex 10).

The analysis was guided by the theory of change (ToC) underpinning the UNDP Tajikistan CPD (Annex 11), which positioned governance and rule of law as foundational for achieving environmental and economic outcomes. The ToC also identified institutional weaknesses and conditions of success that influenced performance of the overall programme. The evaluation addressed four evaluation questions (Box 1) and reviewed CPD outcome and output indicators to assess programme progress and results (Annex 8).

The evaluation methodology adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards.⁴ Programme performance was assessed using internationally recognized Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability (Annex 5).⁵ In line with the UNDP gender strategy, gender mainstreaming was assessed across programme design, implementation and results. Gender marker data were analysed and gender-related results assessed using the IEO Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES).⁶

To answer the evaluation questions, the evaluation team collected data and triangulated evidence as follows (Annex 3 and Annex 12):

- **Document review:** Analysis of UNDP project documents, evaluations, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data, policies and government and partner publications to assess performance, results and alignment with national priorities (Annex 4).
- **Pre-mission questionnaire:** A self-assessment completed by country office management and staff covering programme performance, design, cross-cutting issues and implementation challenges.
- **Interviews:** A total of 112 interviews were conducted with UNDP staff, government counterparts, development partners, United Nations agencies, civil society, academia, private sector representatives and beneficiaries.

³ Mayne, J. (2012). Contribution analysis: Coming of age? *Evaluation*, 18(3), 270-280.

⁴ See the United Nations Evaluation Group website: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>.

⁵ See <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/ratingsystem.shtml>. Performance is assessed as 4 = Satisfactory/Achieved, 3 = Moderately satisfactory/Mostly achieved, 2 = Moderately unsatisfactory/Partially achieved, 1 = Unsatisfactory/Not achieved.

⁶ The IEO GRES classifies gender results into five categories: gender negative, gender blind, gender targeted, gender responsive, and gender transformative.

- **Site visits:** The evaluation team visited 32 sites of ongoing and completed UNDP projects to collect beneficiary perspectives on programme contributions and the sustainability of results.⁷

The draft report underwent internal and external quality assurance reviews before being shared with the UNDP country office, the Regional Bureau for Europe and Central Asia (RBEC), Istanbul Regional Hub and national stakeholders for comments. A stakeholder debriefing workshop provided an additional opportunity to discuss evaluation findings and potential follow-up actions.

1.3 Challenges and limitations

The evaluation faced several operational and evidence-related limitations. Overall, the evaluation team applied systematic triangulation of data sources to ensure the credibility and robustness of the evidence base.

Field visits to Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) and certain border regions were not possible due to logistical and travel constraints. To mitigate this limitation, the evaluation relied on project documentation and remote interviews with stakeholders, including community representatives from these regions.

Staff restructuring within the UNDP country office resulted in changes in personnel during the evaluation period, which affected institutional continuity in some programme areas. To address this, the evaluation team conducted additional interviews with remaining staff, project partners and RBEC to reconstruct programme history and validate findings.

The evaluation also encountered gaps in project documentation, particularly for projects implemented during 2021–2022, and variations in the quality of monitoring reports. While monitoring data provided reliable information on outputs and asset delivery, they were less consistent in assessing outcomes, impacts and sustainability. These limitations were mitigated through triangulation of evidence using interviews, site visits and additional project documentation.

A limited number of beneficiary interviews were conducted, though all programme outcomes were represented. These perspectives were complemented by inputs from private sector actors, civil society organizations (CSOs) and local governance stakeholders working with beneficiary groups.

1.4 Country context

Tajikistan is a small lower-middle-income landlocked country in Central Asia (see Annex 7 for Country at a Glance). About 93 percent of its territory is mountainous, creating significant logistical constraints and reinforcing regional disparities.⁸ The country's security environment is complex, influenced by its border with Afghanistan and regional dynamics in the Fergana Valley, both of which affect border stability, economic connectivity and development prospects.⁹

⁷ Outcome 1: 15 visits in Sughd (Ayni, Urmetan village, Spitamen, Khujand); Outcome 2: 11 visits in Khatlon region (Norak, Farkhor, Kulob, Danghara, Jilikul, Shahrituz, Qubodyon, Bokhtar) and Districts of Republican Subordination (Gharm, Vahdat, Varzob, Rudaki); Outcome 3: 7 visits to Jilikul (Jamoat Navzamin), Shahrituz (Kizil-Askar Village, Bahoriston Village), Qubodiyon district Bokhtar (4 sites) and Gharm (2 sites).

⁸ G.E. Curtis, ed. (1996) Tajikistan: A Country Study; Asian Development Bank (2016) Country Partnership Strategy: Tajikistan (2016–2020); UNDSS (2024) Security Risk Management Area: Tajikistan; United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) (2023) Socioeconomic Update.

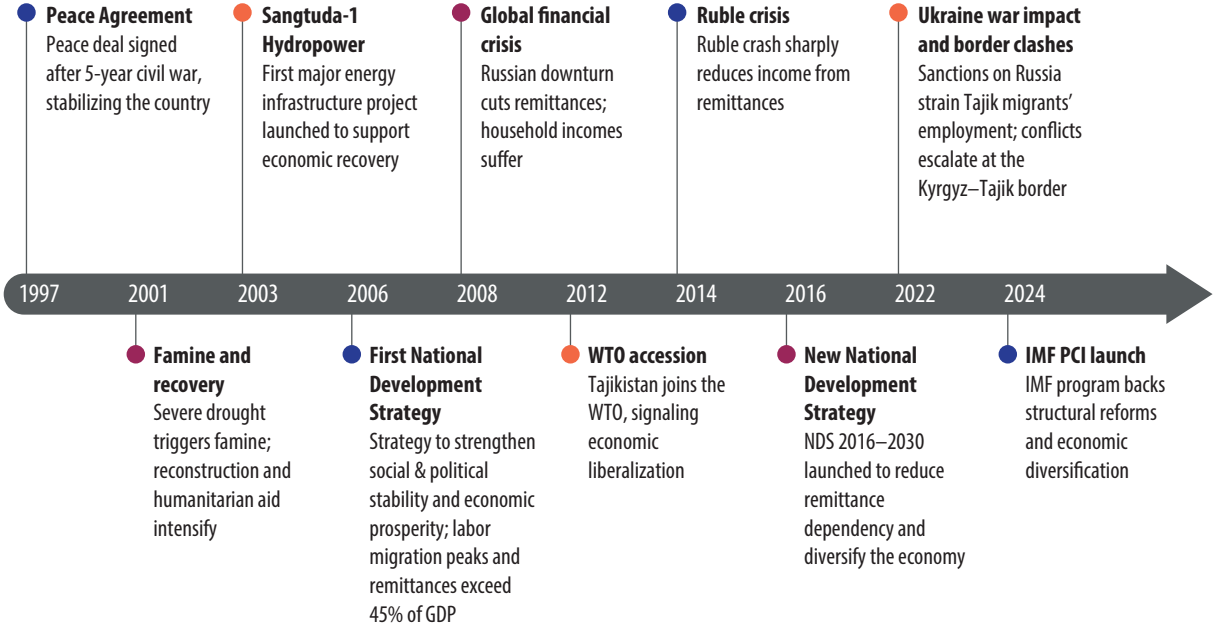
⁹ UNDSS (2024) and UN News (2025) <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/03/1161101>.

Tajikistan is divided into five administrative regions, each with distinct characteristics. The capital city, Dushanbe, and the surrounding Districts of Republican Subordination form the central political and administrative core of the country. GBAO is distinctive, covering 45 percent of national territory but accounting for only 2.3 percent of the population. Extremely remote and with special autonomous status, the region faces economic isolation and the nation’s highest poverty rate at 40 percent. It is also highly exposed to climate-related risks such as floods, landslides and earthquakes, and an area of critical focus for border security.

Tajikistan’s population of 10.5 million is predominantly rural and the fastest growing in the region, with 42 percent under the age of 18.¹⁰ This creates both opportunities and challenges for development.¹¹ 7 percent of the country’s young men and 49 percent of young women are not in education, employment or training.¹² Without sustained investment in human capital and employment generation, demographic growth could lead to continued economic stagnation.¹³

Following independence in 1991 and the end of civil conflict in 1997, Tajikistan remained vulnerable to external economic shocks and labour migration dynamics, including a food crisis in 2001, the 2008 financial crisis, the 2014 Ruble crash and the war in Ukraine. Remittances became a central pillar of household income and economic stability, highlighting structural dependence on external labour markets. However, Tajikistan has undertaken reconstruction and reform efforts, including investment in hydropower, accession to the World Trade Organization in 2013, and significant policy efforts to build resilience. National development strategies have focused on economic diversification, infrastructure development and institutional strengthening (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: Tajikistan’s development trajectory, 1997-2024



Source: Developed by author.

¹⁰ Republic of Tajikistan (2023) VNR - Green Development for shared and prosperous development.
¹¹ UN Tajikistan (2021) Common Country Analysis.
¹² World Bank (2023) Social Protection Modernization and Economic Inclusion Project.
¹³ UN Tajikistan (2021) Common Country Analysis.

1.4.1. Sustainable, inclusive and green economic growth (Outcome 1)

Tajikistan ranked 128th in the 2023 Human Development Index, representing gradual improvement since 1990, though progress on gender equality, decent work and strong institutions was limited.¹⁴ While poverty rates declined significantly over the past two decades, progress has slowed, with the rate standing at 22.5 percent in 2021. A large proportion of the population is economically vulnerable and susceptible to economic shocks. Informal employment is widespread, limiting access to social protection and stable income, and the national social protection system remains fragmented and underfunded.¹⁵ An annual financing gap of US\$ 7.8 billion was estimated for achievement of the NDS and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.¹⁶

Significant gender disparities remain. Tajikistan ranked lowest among Central Asian countries in the 2024 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index, placing 112th out of 146 countries. Women's labour force participation remained substantially lower than men's, with persistent wage disparities, and women earned on average 64 percent of men's income. Women carry the bulk of unpaid care and domestic responsibilities and face persistent barriers to political and economic participation. Patriarchal social norms continue to shape gender roles and contribute to the persistence of gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV). A 2024 study found that 24 percent of women had experienced physical or sexual violence, with 97 percent of cases perpetrated by a current or former husband or partner.¹⁷ While legislative frameworks exist, including the 2013 Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, implementation challenges remained, particularly in strengthening legal protection mechanisms and enforcement in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).¹⁸

Tajikistan's economy has demonstrated steady growth in recent years, driven by expansion across the industrial, agricultural and service sectors, with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth exceeding 8 percent in 2023-2024.¹⁹ However, the country still has the lowest per capita income (\$1,341) in the region and remained structurally constrained by reliance on low-productivity agriculture and a relatively underdeveloped private sector.²⁰ State-owned enterprises received preferential treatment, causing estimated cumulative losses of about 3.2 percent of GDP in 2023.²¹ The financial sector remained fragile, limiting credit for productive investment.²² Remittances accounted for 40 to 50 percent of GDP, providing a lifeline to households, but reinforcing structural economic vulnerability and exposure to external conditions, particularly in the Russian Federation.²³

1.4.2. Integrated management of climate and environmental risk (Outcome 2)

Tajikistan is among the most climate-vulnerable countries in the region, with risks spanning water and energy security, agriculture and transport infrastructure.²⁴ Climate change is expected to generate significant economic losses, with projected GDP reductions of 5-6 percent by mid-century without adaptation and mitigation measures. The country is highly susceptible to natural hazards, costing an estimated 0.4 to 1.3 percent of GDP annually.²⁵

¹⁴ UNDP (2024). Human Development Report 2023/2024.

¹⁵ See World Bank (2023); Bertelsmann Stiftung (2024) BTI 2024 Country Report — Tajikistan.

¹⁶ UN Tajikistan (2021) Common Country Analysis.

¹⁷ World Economic Forum (2024) Global Gender Gap 2024 Insight Report.

¹⁸ UN Tajikistan (2021) Common Country Analysis.

¹⁹ World Bank (2024) Tajikistan Economic Update (Summer 2024).

²⁰ World Bank data <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=TJ>, Bertelsmann Stiftung (2024).

²¹ World Bank (2024).

²² UNRCO (2023) Socioeconomic Update.

²³ UNRCO (2023). Bertelsmann Stiftung (2024).

²⁴ World Bank (2024b) Country Climate and Development Report, November. UNDSS (2024).

²⁵ UN Tajikistan (2021) Common Country Analysis.

Tajikistan lost about 20 percent of its glaciers over the past three decades, and changing hydrological patterns threaten hydropower generation and agriculture, both central to the national economy. Major energy infrastructure investments such as the Rogun Hydropower Plant (2027) were expected to strengthen energy security, support regional electricity trade and enhance climate resilience.²⁶

Tajikistan committed to climate adaptation and low-carbon development pathways, but domestic financing was limited. Public investment fell significantly short of the estimated \$34 billion required by 2030 to address green infrastructure and climate adaptation priorities, highlighting the continued need for external support and reforms.²⁷

1.4.3. People-centred governance and rule of law (Outcome 3)

Tajikistan operated under a centralized governance model, with decision-making concentrated in the executive branch. This structure placed high demands on institutions, highlighting opportunities for continued capacity development and streamlined coordination.²⁸ Tajikistan ranked 164th out of 180 countries in the 2024 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, reflecting ongoing governance challenges that influence public confidence, investment climate and public sector efficiency.²⁹

Government institutions faced constraints in strategic planning, public sector remuneration and workforce retention, highlighting opportunities for institutional strengthening and public service reform.³⁰ External financing from development partners and IFIs continued to support public investment and social sector expenditure.³¹

1.5 UNDP in Tajikistan

UNDP has maintained a presence in Tajikistan since 1993, shortly after the country's independence and during the civil war (1992–1997) which significantly weakened institutions and reversed early development gains.³² As one of the first United Nations agencies operating during this fragile period, UNDP supported post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding.³³ Throughout the early 2000s, UNDP shifted from stabilization to long-term development, supporting Tajikistan's first NDS and Poverty Reduction Strategy. UNDP aligned its programmes with national priorities in poverty reduction, governance, energy access and capacity-building, as a key partner in public administration reform, local governance and climate financing.³⁴

The current CPD (2023–2026) aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023–2026, and focused on three priority areas: (i) inclusive and sustainable economic growth; (ii) effective and accountable governance; and (iii) climate resilience and environmental sustainability. The CPD was formulated during a period of relatively strong external financing, but the onset of the war in Ukraine in 2022 significantly altered the regional and fiscal context, resulting in tighter financing conditions during programme implementation.³⁵

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ World Bank (2024b).

²⁸ Bertelsmann Stiftung (2024).

²⁹ Transparency International (2024) Corruption Perceptions Index.

³⁰ Bertelsmann Stiftung (2024).

³¹ Ibid.

³² UNDP Tajikistan (n.d.). UNDP in Tajikistan: Legal Framework. <https://www.undp.org/tajikistan/legal-framework>.

³³ See: <https://www.undp.org/tajikistan/stories/lenni-montiel-fruitful-cooperation-between-undp-and-tajikistan-result-setting-right-goals>.

³⁴ UNDP Tajikistan (2024) Fruitful cooperation between UNDP and Tajikistan is the result of setting the right goals.

³⁵ See: <https://tajikistan.un.org/en/238830-tajikistan-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework-2023%E2%80%902026>.

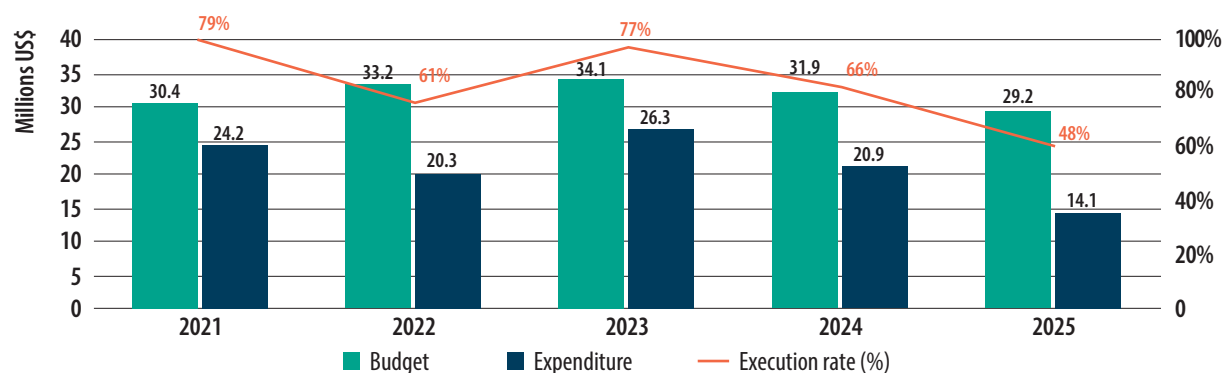
The initial CPD planned budget was \$144.8 million for the period 2023–2026, with an actual cumulative budget of \$128.5 million recorded at the time of this evaluation. Annual allocations ranged between \$29.24 million and \$34.09 million. Programme expenditure reached \$81.6 million over this period, with the highest annual expenditure recorded in 2023 (\$26.32 million) (Figure 2). Across the full evaluation period (2021-2025) the cumulative budget reached approximately \$158.9 million, with total expenditure of \$105.7 million.³⁶

Analysis of funding sources during the evaluation period indicated that the majority of programme resources were mobilized through vertical funds (over 50 percent). Third-party cost-sharing contributed approximately 40 percent, while regular (core) resources stood at around 8 percent. Government and thematic funding together represented approximately 1 percent of total programme resources, with government cost-sharing beginning in 2022.

Execution rates varied across the period, from 79.4 percent in 2021 to 65.5 percent in 2024. Execution reached 48 percent in June 2025, compared to 31.5 percent in June 2024, and increased to approximately 72 percent by the third quarter of 2025. The delivery rate for 2025 was 48.13 percent at the time of data extraction, still subject to revision.

External shocks, regional instability and internal structural changes influenced programme delivery patterns, contributing to fluctuations over the years. UNDP exceeded its Integrated Work Plan (IWP) delivery targets in 2021, 2023 and 2024, reaching 108 percent in 2023, reflecting multi-year programme implementation and planning dynamics.³⁷

FIGURE 2: Programme budget, expenditure and execution rate, 2021-2025



Source: UNDP Atlas and Quantum data, as of July 2025

Between 2021 and 2025, UNDP implemented a geographically diverse portfolio, with a focus on Khatlon and Sughd regions, as the country’s main agricultural and industrial hubs. Sughd, located in the ethnically diverse Fergana Valley, functioned as the country’s industrial centre, generating over 56 percent of the national industrial output. Khatlon served as the agricultural heartland and a priority area for food security and border stability due to its extensive border with Afghanistan.³⁸ This reflected a strategy to address rural poverty, while concentrating interventions in areas with high economic activity and population density (Figure 3).

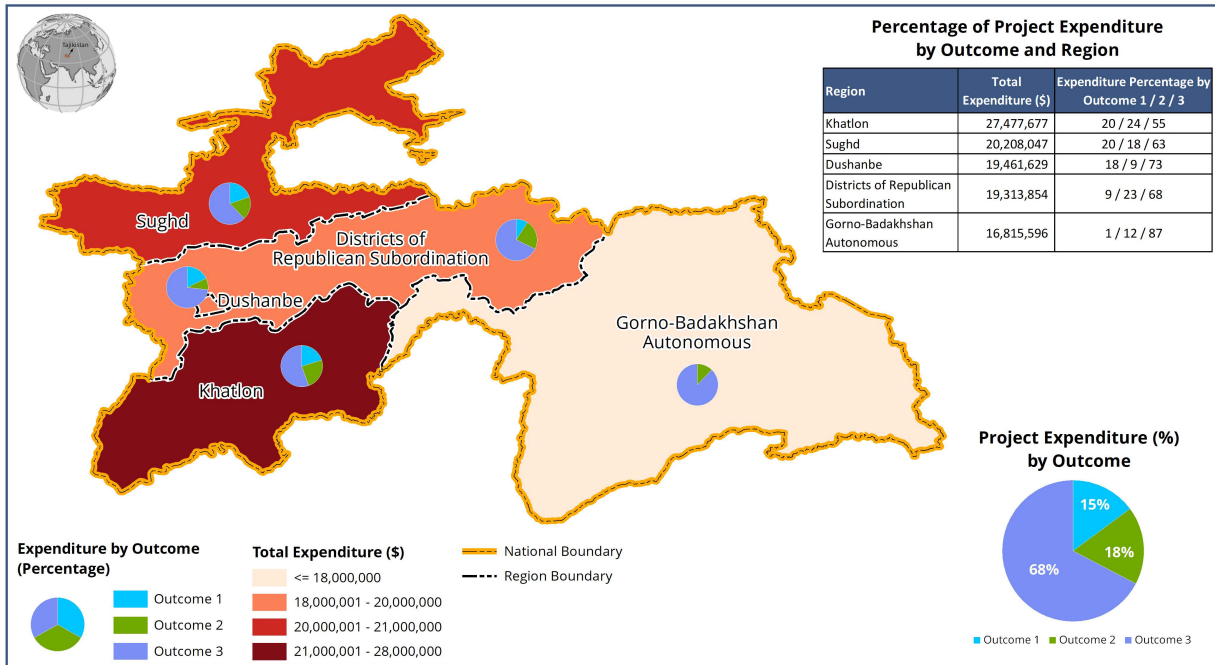
³⁶ All financial data presented in this report is sourced from Atlas and Quantum systems and is based solely on the official list of projects evaluated within the expanded cycle.

³⁷ UNDP Tajikistan (2025) Scan report: Tajikistan 2025. Q1-Q2.

³⁸ UNRCO (2023), UNDSS (2024).

Governance programming (Outcome 3) was implemented across all regions, including fragile areas such as GBAO, where 87 percent of UNDP resources supported institutional development, service delivery and citizen engagement. Environmental resilience (Outcome 2) and inclusive growth (Outcome 1) interventions were concentrated in Khatlon and Sughd, focusing on agricultural modernization, value chains and natural resource management. This portfolio distribution highlights the dual focus of UNDP on national governance strengthening and targeted regional economic and environmental programming.

FIGURE 3: Geographic distribution of UNDP projects and expenditure in Tajikistan (as of July 2025)

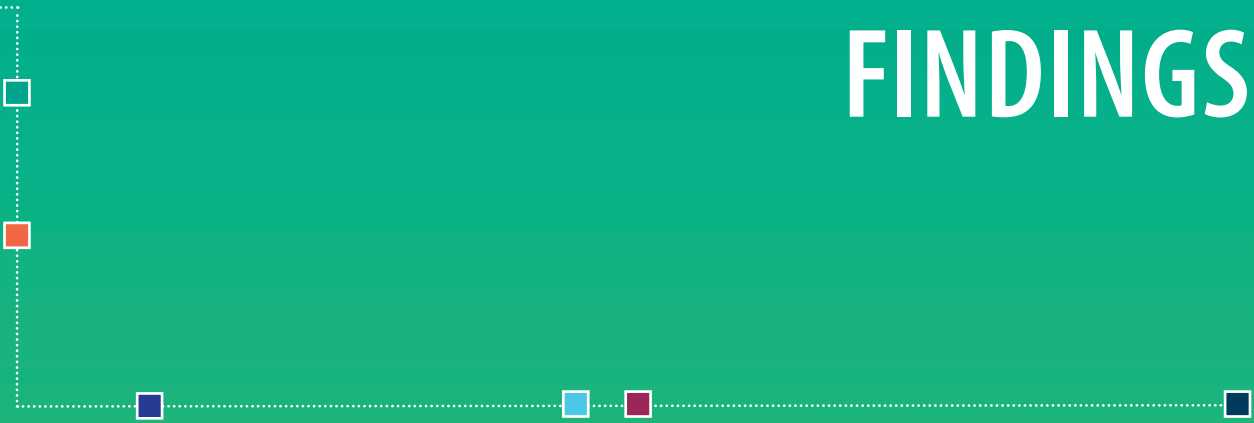


The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations or UNDP concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Source: *Tajikistan Country Office, December 2024*

At the time of the evaluation, the UNDP country office employed 115 personnel, 40 percent of whom were women, who were represented at all organizational levels. The programme structure comprised three clusters: climate change and energy; environment and governance; and sustainable economic development (which included inclusive economic growth).

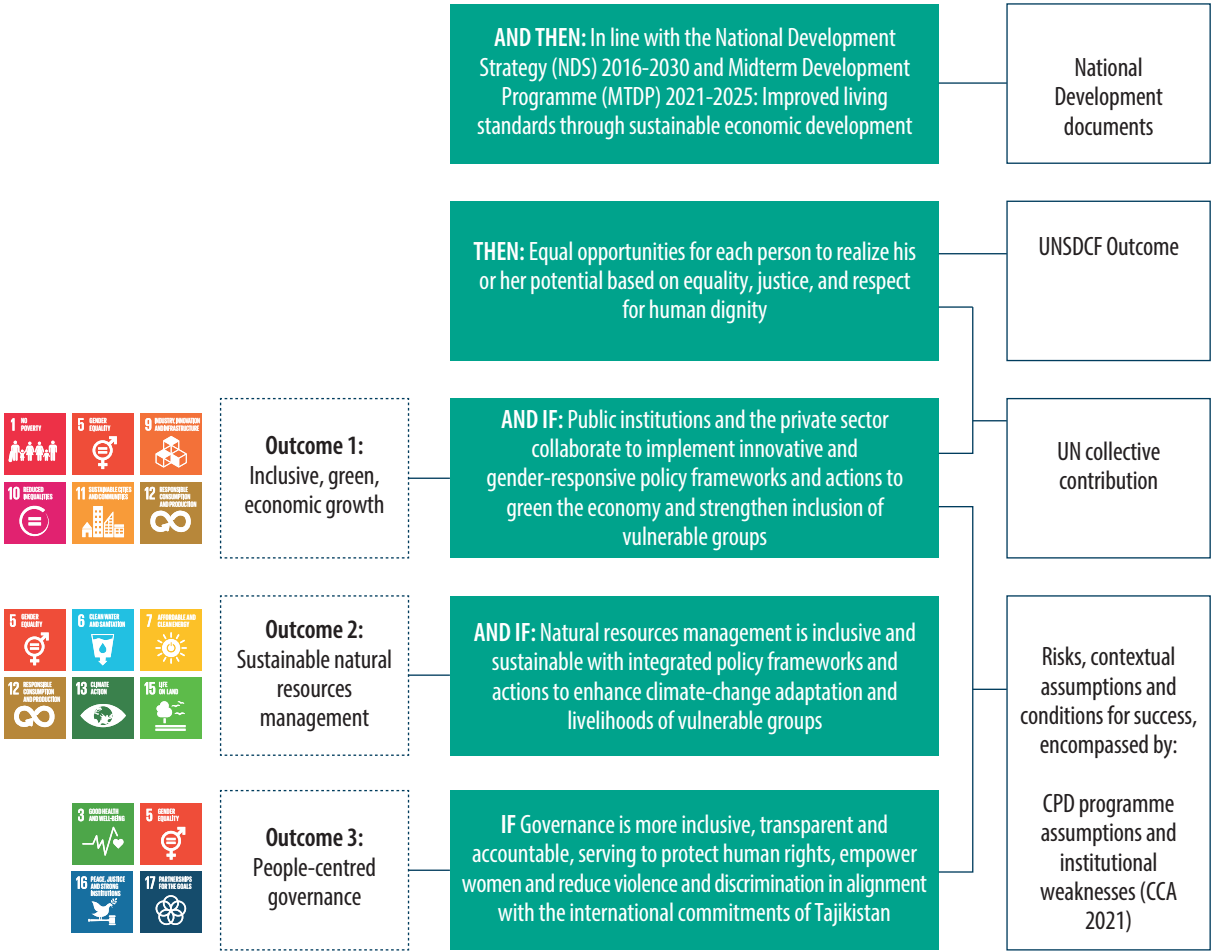
CHAPTER 2 FINDINGS



This chapter presents the results of the outcome analysis and an assessment of cross-cutting issues of the UNDP country programme in Tajikistan. The main factors that influenced UNDP performance and contribution to results are also described.

The ICPE adapted the UNDP Tajikistan CPD ToC (Figure 4), which aligns with the Tajikistan NDS 2030 through the three outcomes. The ToC assumes that good governance and rule of law (Outcome 3) form the foundation for inclusive growth (Outcome 1) and environmental resilience (Outcome 2). It also outlines risks, assumptions and conditions for success, factors assessed by the ICPE team for each outcome and the programme as a whole, noting that if institutional weaknesses at central and local levels (as identified in the United Nations 2021 Common Country Analysis) remained unaddressed, progress across all outcomes would be constrained.

FIGURE 4: UNDP Tajikistan CPD theory of change



2.1 UNDP positioning and programmatic response

Finding 1. UNDP strategic positioning.

UNDP created a clear strategic niche and distinct position in the development landscape of Tajikistan, building on its comparative advantage. It supported both policy-level innovation and community-level empowerment through a broad, integrated mandate. Its ability to connect local delivery with national policy

processes and maintain operational presence in remote and sensitive locations reinforced its continuing relevance and comparative advantage in the country. This positioning aligned closely with national priorities, particularly in relation to inclusive development, green transition and institutional transformation.³⁹

UNDP Tajikistan delivered a multifaceted development offer grounded in national priorities, and was recognized by partners for its accessibility, responsiveness and long-term engagement. The programme architecture combined area-based community programming with national policy engagement, allowing UNDP to influence processes upstream and downstream. This modality proved particularly effective in rural settings where community self-organization and traditional solidarity mechanisms supported local service delivery and crisis response.⁴⁰ UNDP area-based programming in regions such as Sughd, Rasht Valley, Khatlon and GBAO, delivered integrated support in health, livelihoods, local governance and access to justice for vulnerable groups such as women, youth, migrants and border communities.⁴¹

At national level, UNDP maintained a portfolio of programmes supporting systemic reform and inclusive service delivery, including initiatives for legal aid, civil registration, green energy, climate change adaptation (CCA) and biodiversity conservation, contributing to SDG alignment. UNDP was also able to operate in some of the poorest and most sensitive areas of the country, complementing regional initiatives supporting cross-border trade, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and social cohesion.⁴²

UNDP acted as a sustained investor and lead implementing contributor in institutional strengthening. Over more than a decade, UNDP built trust and relationships across government institutions, enabling it to support reforms in the context of developing national systems. UNDP interventions combined infrastructure investment, digital systems, capacity development and technical policy support to various ministries and state bodies.⁴³ For example, collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported diplomatic training and institutional modernization aligned with national priorities, including climate diplomacy. These investments contributed to strengthened delivery systems, improved coordination and institutional ownership of reform and innovation agendas.

The broad mandate of UNDP enabled it to act as a neutral convener in sensitive areas such as border management, rule of law and prevention of violent extremism (PVE). Programme initiatives including legal clinics, trial monitoring and rehabilitation models demonstrated innovation and political agility.

While the CPD and ToC framed youth primarily as a vulnerable and priority group, programme implementation increasingly positioned them as agents of change, though with uneven emphasis across outcomes. Under Outcome 3, integrated investments supported youth and women as leaders in addressing deep-rooted gender and generational norms, and PVE initiatives explicitly built resilience and leadership capacity. These included vocational training, digital literacy and entrepreneurship support linked with emerging sectors such as green economy and e-governance. UNDP also promoted civic participation through innovation labs and youth-led development initiatives, particularly in fragile regions. Under Outcome 1, however, youth programming focused on employment and livelihood support, with limited integration into national youth policy frameworks or dedicated monitoring of youth results. Overall, UNDP began to move beyond vulnerability-based approaches, but transformative youth engagement remained uneven across programme areas.

³⁹ Republic of Tajikistan (2023) VNR.

⁴⁰ Bertelsmann Stiftung (2024).

⁴¹ UNRCO (2023).

⁴² Such as Aid for Trade, the LITACA project, PVE, and Spotlight initiatives.

⁴³ Such as METD, MoJ, SDG working groups, State Agency Legal Aid Centre, Office of the Ombudsperson and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Progress in institutional strengthening largely depended on the long-term, sustained investment of UNDP. For over a decade, UNDP built unique trust and relationships across government institutions, enabling it to operate where national systems were underdeveloped, coordinate work across diverse sectors, and sustain reforms beyond short-term projects. UNDP played a broader role than many other development partners in Tajikistan - from IT systems and policy advice to infrastructure - and was able to align these investments to progressively build institutional capability.

■ Finding 2. UNDP relevance.

UNDP remained highly relevant to the national priorities of Tajikistan, demonstrating strong awareness of systemic enablers and risks. It was widely regarded as a trusted, catalytic partner, especially during periods of crisis such as COVID-19 and regional instability. UNDP maintained close alignment with national strategies while adapting to emerging needs, enabling it to sustain strategic relevance and added value in a complex operating environment.

Relevance to national priorities: The previous and current CPDs were closely aligned with Tajikistan's NDS 2030 and Mid-Term Development Programme (MTDP) 2021–2025. UNDP programming supported national priorities related to inclusive economic growth, governance reform and climate resilience, while aligning with the UNSDCF and supporting SDG acceleration. Through consultation with government and non-state stakeholders, UNDP maintained strong contextual relevance and country ownership.

Stakeholders and United Nations partners consistently identified UNDP as a major contributor to progress on human rights in the country. UNDP contributed to key national reforms, including support to the adoption of Tajikistan's first national human rights strategy and related legislative reforms, strengthening the Office of the Ombudsperson, advancing the penitentiary reform strategy and expanding legal aid and access to justice.

Value addition to national development processes: UNDP added value by strengthening the coordination, coherence and implementation of policies already underway. Its support to national planning and SDG integration strengthened alignment across sectoral strategies and monitoring frameworks. In public administration reform, UNDP supported initiatives such as civil service e-registry systems. UNDP also supported border management through infrastructure and service delivery improvements, contributing to operational effectiveness in sensitive border regions.⁴⁴ Regional initiatives, such as the Livelihood Improvement in Tajik Afghan Cross-Border Areas (LITACA) project, further supported livelihoods, social cohesion and regional stability in border regions by promoting inclusive trade, skills development and participatory governance.

Relevance to changing priorities and shocks: UNDP demonstrated responsiveness during the COVID-19 pandemic, aligning with the national response plan, repurposing resources and supporting health system coordination, launching a platform for real-time data sharing and emergency coordination.⁴⁵ UNDP supported recovery of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) through subsidized credit, skills development and entrepreneurship support, targeting vulnerable populations including unemployed, returned migrants, women and youth. Community-level interventions supported climate-resilient livelihoods, micro-watershed management and disaster preparedness. UNDP also responded to localized disasters such as the Khuroson mudflows through emergency assistance to households.⁴⁶ These interventions enhanced community resilience and demonstrated UNDP relevance in supporting inclusive recovery.

⁴⁴ See UNDP Tajikistan (2021) ROAR.

⁴⁵ UNDP Tajikistan (2020) ROAR.

⁴⁶ UNDP Tajikistan (2021) ROAR.

Addressing systemic gaps in government capacity: UNDP programming responded to institutional and policy gaps where government capacity and international support were limited. Acting as lead implementing contributor, UNDP supported spatial data systems for climate planning, expanded mobile legal aid services in remote areas and introduced digital systems for legal identity and rural civil registration. UNDP also addressed gaps in human capital development, cultivating reform champions and multistakeholder coalitions for institutional capacity strengthening.⁴⁷

Through partnership with vertical funds, including the Global Fund and Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), UNDP supported health system strengthening in underserved areas.⁴⁸ Interventions included building and upgrading primary health care infrastructure, strengthening telemedicine capacity and improving vaccine supply systems. UNDP also supported outreach services targeting key populations affected by HIV and tuberculosis (TB) (people who inject drugs, sex workers, men who have sex with men, prisoners, migrants and people living with HIV), contributing to expanded prevention, testing and treatment services and strengthening community-based service delivery mechanisms.⁴⁹

The contribution of UNDP was critical to delivering results in this area, in a central implementation role in close partnership with the Government, which provided overall leadership. Evidence shows that, without the sustained engagement of UNDP, the observed progress would not have materialized in the same timeframe or depth.

■ Finding 3. UNDP adaptability.

UNDP demonstrated strong institutional adaptability by proactively adjusting its strategic focus, delivery modalities and operational structure in response to financial constraints, evolving civic space conditions and border security challenges. Through this adaptive approach, UNDP positioned itself as a key partner in Tajikistan's pursuit of inclusive, risk-informed development.

Adapting to financial constraints: As the funding landscape tightened, UNDP Tajikistan introduced strategic adjustments to preserve programme impact and institutional sustainability. The closure of Local Implementation and Innovation Centres and restructuring of staff reflected efforts to align programme delivery with reduced resource availability. Resource constraints particularly affected inclusive economic development programming (Outcome 1), where slow progress in economic reform contributed to the declining engagement of traditional donors. UNDP shifted towards more targeted interventions designed to sustain programme effectiveness under reduced funding conditions.⁵⁰

Adapting to evolving civic space and regulatory sensitivities: Changes in the regulatory environment and declining operational space for CSOs required UNDP to adjust its implementation modalities. Following the dissolution of several CSOs engaged in HIV and AIDS prevention and care, UNDP supported the absorption of trained personnel into public HIV and AIDS centres, ensuring continuity of critical services for key populations. Programme approaches were adapted to align with regulatory requirements and sensitivities. For example, reform initiatives were reframed as action plans to support implementation and align with Ministry of Justice (MoJ) requirements, while HIV programming introduced modified language to maintain outreach and context sensitivity, and confidential service delivery mechanisms to sustain engagement with key populations.

⁴⁷ UNRCO (2025), ICPE pre-mission questionnaire.

⁴⁸ UN Tajikistan (2021) Common Country Analysis.

⁴⁹ UNDP Tajikistan (2025a) Scan report Tajikistan Q1-Q2.

⁵⁰ Slay, B (2024) UNDP Tajikistan's sustainable economic development portfolio—Final report.

Adapting to border security issues: UNDP demonstrated flexibility in responding to volatile border conditions and regional instability through adaptive programming approaches. The LITACA initiative illustrated the ability of UNDP to maintain service delivery in high-risk areas by combining infrastructure development, capacity-building and livelihoods support. UNDP proximity to local communities enabled it to sustain delivery, deploy technical expertise and pivot quickly towards entrepreneurship and livelihoods support, especially during mass migrant returns. Following political shifts in Afghanistan and tensions on the Tajik-Kyrgyz border, UNDP temporarily suspended cross-border programming and refocused efforts on domestic border areas. Programming with the Afghan side resumed in 2023, reflecting the ability of UNDP to adjust programming in response to changing security conditions while sustaining long-term regional cooperation.

■ Finding 4. SDG institutionalization.

Across planning, monitoring, financing and regional cooperation, UNDP supported Tajikistan's transition from reactive, donor-driven SDG implementation, to a nationally owned SDG agenda. By strengthening the link between data systems, development planning and financing mechanisms, UNDP contributed to establishing durable institutional pathways for SDG acceleration.

Between 2020 and 2024, UNDP supported efforts to strengthen coordination and integration of SDG implementation within national planning systems. UNDP assistance focused on improving data systems, governance mechanisms and inclusive financing frameworks, building on long-term engagement with government institutions. Evidence reviewed for this ICPE indicates that UNDP played a catalytic role in advancing these reforms, by supporting coordination across planning, monitoring and financing functions simultaneously. While other development partners contributed to sectoral elements of SDG implementation, UNDP engagement linked multiple institutional components of the SDG ecosystem, including planning platforms, statistical monitoring systems and financing frameworks. The convergence of these reforms suggests that UNDP support was a significant enabling factor in consolidating SDG institutionalization, helping to move SDG implementation beyond fragmented consultative processes towards more integrated national planning structures.

A central component of UNDP support was strengthening national SDG governance structures. UNDP supported the operationalization of the National Development Council, which reports annually to the President of Tajikistan on SDG progress, and facilitated the functioning of 14 thematic working groups led by Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (METD). These platforms brought together ministries, civil society, academia and private sector actors, bringing much-needed space for stronger multistakeholder policy coherence. Critically, these platforms were embedded within the planning cycle, contributing to the alignment of the MTDP 2021–2025 with SDG targets, and supporting localization of SDG priorities within district development planning processes.

Efforts to strengthen SDG governance also highlighted limitations in institutional coordination and data availability. UNDP supported the Agency on Statistics to develop the country's first SDG monitoring strategy, including compilation of metadata for all 231 SDG indicators, and establishment of the Open SDG Platform as the central repository for indicator data.⁵¹ UNDP also supported expansion of national gender-related indicators and facilitated formal data-sharing agreements between the Agency of Statistics and key ministries, contributing to improved coordination and reporting across government. Interviewees reported that METD was working with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, to mobilize resources to promote the work of this platform.

⁵¹ UNDP Tajikistan (2022) Monitoring the SDGs in Tajikistan Final report; Republic of Tajikistan (2023) VNR.

UNDP also supported integration of SDG priorities into national financing frameworks. Through the Joint Programme on Financing the SDGs in Tajikistan (2020–2022), implemented with UNICEF and UN Women, UNDP supported the establishment of a national SDG financing coordination mechanism - the High-Level Working Group on Financing under the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) - to analyse fiscal space and financial architecture and develop a comprehensive SDG Financing Roadmap.⁵² Though the roadmap still awaited formal government endorsement, the process engaged parliamentarians, the Ministry of Finance and civil society in sustained dialogue around fiscal policy, investment needs and spending efficiency. UNDP also promoted the integration of gender-responsive budgeting tools into national budget processes and introduced related training within the Academy of Public Administration.

Despite progress in strengthening SDG governance and financing systems, structural challenges remained. SDG financing continued to be limited and fragmented and rely on public resources, and weak links between planning and budgeting also constrained implementation. Private sector engagement and costed sectoral strategies remained limited, and public finance alone was insufficient to enable Tajikistan to meet its national development aspirations and the SDGs.⁵³

Multiple lines of evidence indicated that UNDP supported the Government with all pillars of the SDG ecosystem—planning, monitoring and financing—in a coordinated and sustained way. While other partners contributed to sectoral areas (e.g. JICA on statistics, UNICEF on social budgeting), none demonstrated systemic engagement across institutional platforms, public finance reforms and multi-stakeholder governance as led by UNDP. The operationalization of the NDC, alignment of the MTDP with SDGs, nationalization of indicators and creation of the SDG Financing Roadmap collectively constituted a sufficient set of reforms for institutionalizing SDG planning. Without the role of UNDP, these elements would have remained fragmented or stalled, making its contribution both a necessary part of an otherwise insufficient context and a sufficient condition for the observed shift.

2.2 Outcome 1 - Sustainable, inclusive and green economic growth

Outcome 1: By 2026, public institutions and the private sector collaborate to implement innovative and gender-responsive policy frameworks and actions to green the economy and strengthen inclusion of vulnerable groups.

Output 1.1: Policies, laws and budgets accelerate people-centred and risk-informed economic transformation aligned with Agenda 2030.

Output 1.2: Innovative solutions are scaled up for green and inclusive value chains and enhanced trade and cross-border economic cooperation to promote sustainable livelihoods and jobs.

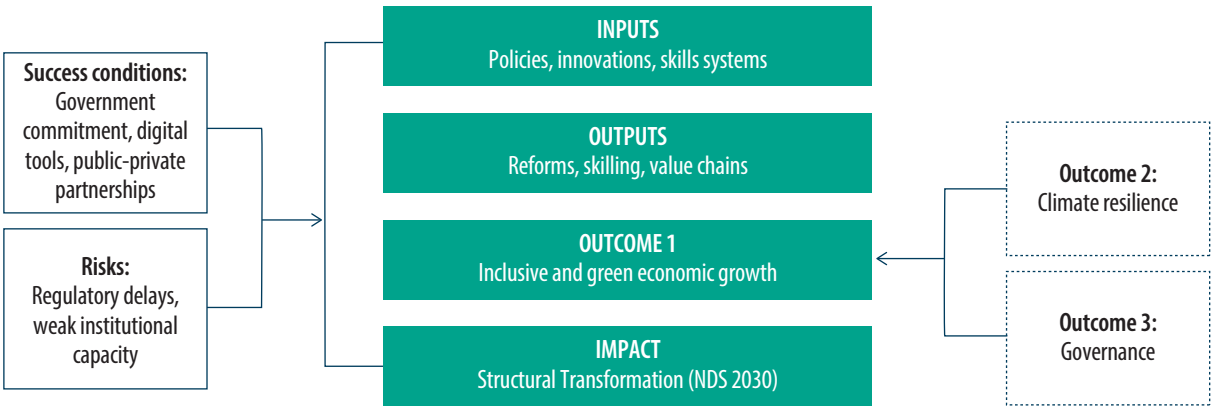
Output 1.3: People, especially women, youth and other vulnerable populations, have access to knowledge, skills and assets to enhance their employment opportunities.

⁵² UNDP Tajikistan (2023) Joint SDG Fund Financing in Tajikistan Evidence-based Final Narrative Report.

⁵³ UNRCO (2023); Republic of Tajikistan (2023) VNR.

Outcome 1 aimed to promote inclusive, sustainable and green economic growth as a pathway towards structural transformation. The Outcome ToC (Figure 5) linked economic transformation to strengthening enabling policy frameworks, scaling innovation and improving the responsiveness of the skills and employment ecosystem, particularly for women, youth and other vulnerable groups. Progress under this outcome was also expected to depend on advances in governance (Outcome 3) and climate resilience (Outcome 2), to provide the institutional and environmental foundations for inclusive and risk-informed growth. The evaluation reviewed the Outcome 1 ToC against implementation experience and analysed barriers and enabling factors influencing results during the evaluation period.

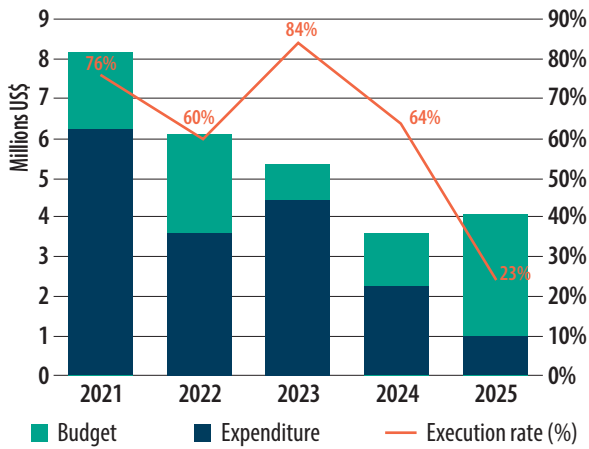
FIGURE 5: Outcome 1 theory of change



Outcome 1 represented a significant component of UNDP Tajikistan’s programme portfolio during the evaluation period. Programming focused on strengthening livelihoods and employment opportunities, supporting private sector development and innovation, promoting inclusive economic participation and advancing green and climate-resilient economic practices. Monitoring data reflected mixed progress under Outcome 1. While output-level gains were recorded - benefiting over 30,000 people through employment services by 2024 - strategic indicators on green economy legislation and financing frameworks showed limited advancement, suggesting that structural transformation lagged behind programme delivery results.

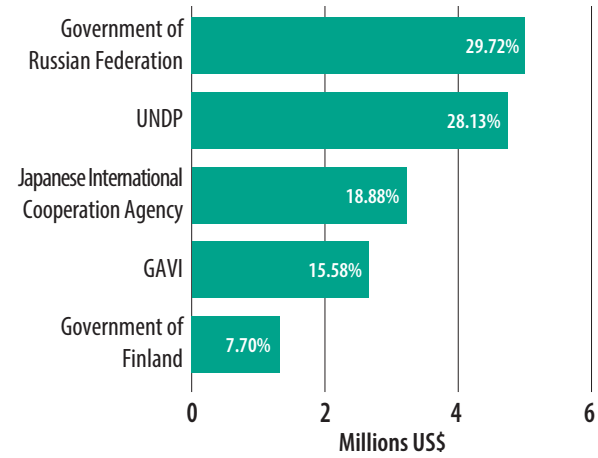
Financial data for Outcome 1 show a declining trend in budget allocations and expenditure during much of the evaluation period, with a modest recovery in 2025 (Figure 6). In 2021, Outcome 1 recorded approximately \$8 million in budget allocations and \$6 million in expenditure; by 2024 this had dropped to below \$4 million in budget allocations and just over \$2 million expenditure. In 2025, allocations increased slightly, with a budget exceeding \$4 million. Resources were mobilized from various sources, including the Russian Federation (29 percent), UNDP core resources (28 percent), JICA (18 percent), GAVI (15 percent) and Finland (7 percent) (Figure 7). Execution rates fluctuated, peaking at 84 percent in 2023, dropping to 64 percent in 2024. By July 2025, the execution rate stood at 23 percent for the year.

FIGURE 6: Outcome 1 budget, expenditure and execution rate (2021–July 2025)



Source: UNDP Atlas and Quantum data, as of July 2025.

FIGURE 7: Top five donors for Outcome 1 (2021– July 2025 expenditure)



Finding 5. Policies, laws and budgets support inclusive, risk-informed economic transformation.

UNDP helped to lay institutional foundations for integrating inclusive, green and risk-informed principles into Tajikistan’s economic policy and reform agenda. Through upstream technical support and public-private dialogue, often when no other actor was engaged, UNDP helped to initiate and shape reforms in a volatile post-COVID and regional crisis context.

UNDP supported the Government to develop and improve 10 key policy and regulatory frameworks supporting inclusive and green economic transformation. These included the MTDP 2021–2025, which introduced a green and digital economy focus and strengthened attention to combating GBV, as well as private sector development strategies and regulatory reforms supporting entrepreneurship, innovation and business formalization. UNDP provided technical assistance on venture financing frameworks, supported development of an Entrepreneurship Support Fund under the State Business Incubator and contributed to revision of the Law “On Technoparks” in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies. Public–private dialogue processes facilitated by UNDP also informed amendments to the Tax Code aimed at encouraging business formalization and digital financial transactions.⁵⁴

Following new external shocks, including the Ukraine war, UNDP supported the integration of green and inclusive growth principles into crisis response and long-term development planning. It advanced private sector reforms, strengthened the capacity of trade and business support institutions, and supported climate-resilient livelihood initiatives, including demonstration sites promoting climate-smart agricultural practices and initiatives supporting interregional and cross-border cooperation. UNDP also facilitated public-private dialogue on policy areas such as e-commerce, paperless trade, climate finance and venture investment, contributing to alignment of national frameworks with green and inclusive growth objectives.

UNDP further supported development of policy and legislative frameworks to strengthen green and inclusive economic transformation, including the National Green Economy Strategy to 2037, employment programmes targeting youth, women and persons with disabilities, revisions to electronic commerce legislation, the National Investment Policy review with UNCTAD, and amendments to the Law “On

⁵⁴ UNDP Tajikistan (2021) ROAR.

Strategic Planning and State Forecasting” and related by-laws to incorporate SDG principles. While these interventions strengthened policy coherence and institutional frameworks, progress in translating reforms into implementation outcomes remained constrained by financing gaps, enforcement capacity and private sector development challenges.

Following Government adoption of a green growth agenda in 2023, UNDP supported integration of green growth priorities into subnational development planning, including updates to district development plans in Khatlon region and Rasht Valley.⁵⁵ UNDP also provided technical assistance for preparation of the Voluntary National Review (VNR), and first Voluntary Local Review (VLR) for Dushanbe, to raise awareness of the opportunities and challenges for green growth and its inclusion in urban planning. The VNR and VLR validated structural shifts supported by UNDP, as outcomes of systems that UNDP helped to build.

UNDP contributions also supported preparation of the forthcoming MTDP (2026-2030), led by the METD.⁵⁶ Stakeholder interviews confirmed that this process reflected increased national ownership, enabled by UNDP long-term capacity investment. It also supported strengthening of national M&E systems, draft monitoring regulations aligned with the Presidential Decree mandating M&E focal points across ministries, and preparation of an SDG data matrix, laying the groundwork for systematic results tracking.⁵⁷

Despite these advances, several assumptions underpinning the CPD ToC did not fully hold, limiting the depth and durability of reforms. These included inadequate digital infrastructure, limited availability and use of disaggregated data and M&E, staff turnover, and limited capacity for financial planning and monitoring of development policies at regional and local levels.⁵⁸

UNDP support played an essential role in designing and enabling people-centred, green, risk-informed policy frameworks that might otherwise not have been developed or prioritized. However, the achievement of long-term structural transformation required adequate financing, national coordination, implementation capacity, and sustained inter-ministerial collaboration—which UNDP alone could not provide. In select cases—such as the VNR/VLR processes and SDG localization—UNDP contributions were directly enabled by its technical leadership, convening role, and upstream engagement.

■ **Finding 6. Innovative solutions promote green value chains, trade and sustainable livelihoods.**

UNDP helped to advance inclusive and green value chains and **trade-enabled** livelihoods. Its interventions bridged institutional gaps, supported MSME promotion, influenced enabling reforms and piloted scalable models for local economic development. UNDP also supported the expansion of rural and cross-border livelihood opportunities, contributing to more resilient, diversified and inclusive growth.

The country’s limited integration into regional and global value chains, marked by low product diversification, weak infrastructure and high logistics costs, posed significant barriers to inclusive growth. Against this backdrop, the UNDP regional Aid for Trade (Aft) initiative proved critical. By supporting the Law on Export Promotion and operationalizing the Export Development Programme (2021–2025), UNDP helped to address structural gaps in trade governance. However, these efforts were not always anchored in broader economic governance reforms. Its role in establishing institutions such as the Export Agency and the State Institution for Entrepreneurship Development signalled a shift towards more coordinated, state-led trade facilitation.

⁵⁵ UNDP Tajikistan (2024) ROAR.

⁵⁶ See National Development Council under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan - <https://developmentcouncil.tj/news/>.

⁵⁷ UNDP Tajikistan (2024b) Capacity for SDG acceleration through more efficient national planning, M&E and knowledge management.

⁵⁸ UNDP Tajikistan (2023) ROAR; UN Women Data Hub Country Fact Sheet <https://data.unwomen.org/country/tajikistan>.

Low trust in product quality and inconsistent quality national infrastructure constrained trade in Central Asia. AfT supported strengthening of quality assurance systems, produce standards and export readiness through deployment of a mobile food safety laboratory, digital trade information platforms and MSME certification processes aligned with international standards. These interventions represented important contributions in the short-to-medium term, particularly in the absence of other actors combining upstream and local integration. However, AfT remained focused largely on enterprise-level trade facilitation and did not extend to transit corridor development or large-scale digital trade infrastructure, while cross-border engagement remained limited.

In 2021, in response to the social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and evolving security dynamics, UNDP supported livelihood opportunities for rural communities and vulnerable groups through job creation and apprenticeships and skills training for youth, unemployed, women and returned migrants, and direct support to hundreds of MSMEs.⁵⁹ UNDP livelihood interventions strengthened agro-processing capacity and supported market access, and community initiatives supported the introduction of innovative solutions to rural economic development.⁶⁰

UNDP value chain interventions, under initiatives such as LITACA, supported rural livelihoods by combining infrastructure rehabilitation, enterprise development, and skills development for women and youth through digital platforms. These initiatives helped to address geographic and institutional gaps and supported economic participation in underserved areas like Khatlon and GBAO, where two cross-border markets were reactivated. However, integration of infrastructure, enterprise development and skills components was insufficient, limiting delivery especially in fragile, underserved areas.

Interviewees confirmed that UNDP further supported cross-border knowledge exchange and expanded market access through the optimization of Free Economic Zones.⁶¹ It introduced digital platforms to improve business services and promote e-commerce, and facilitated trade and investment forums, to position local enterprises (particularly in Sughd) for greater regional and global integration. Despite these efforts, value chain diversification and regional trade integration progressed slowly, constrained by infrastructure limitations, informal trade barriers, regulatory fragmentation, poor logistics and inadequate border infrastructure.⁶²

UNDP support to MSMEs faced structural constraints. The private sector remained dominated by small-scale enterprises facing high tax burdens, limited fiscal incentives and restricted access to public procurement. UNDP interventions were not fully aligned with national financial architecture, limiting sustainability. Broader constraints, such as an underdeveloped innovation ecosystem, regulatory ambiguity, governance gaps and limited access to finance continued to affect private sector growth, confirming risks noted in the ToC.⁶³ However, ongoing reforms aimed to reduce government interference in business activities, introduce corporate governance principles, protect creditors and borrowers, eliminate administrative barriers and lower business costs.⁶⁴

The contribution of UNDP to inclusive value chains and trade development enabled coordinated interventions across policy, institutional and enterprise levels. Through AfT, UNDP addressed regulatory and institutional gaps, supported business service platforms and piloted enterprise and livelihood models that demonstrated early results. Few actors combined upstream policy engagement with local delivery in the same way. While long-term sustainability will depend on broader structural reforms, improved financing and regional integration, UNDP support enabled reforms to take root and demonstrate initial impact.

⁵⁹ UNDP Tajikistan (2021) ROAR.

⁶⁰ UNDP Tajikistan (2023) ROAR; UNDP Tajikistan (2024) ROAR.

⁶¹ UNDP Tajikistan (2025c) Final Report Russian Federation - UNDP Trust Fund for Development Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley.

⁶² Bertelsmann Stiftung (2024). United Nations Tajikistan (2021) Common Country Analysis.

⁶³ Republic of Tajikistan (2023) VNR, UN Tajikistan (2021) Common Country Analysis.

⁶⁴ Republic of Tajikistan (2023) VNR.

■ Finding 7. Vulnerable groups gain skills, assets and opportunities for decent employment

UNDP made a strategically relevant but uneven contribution to human capital development by addressing employment barriers through vocational training, digital innovation and **youth-focused** economic empowerment. UNDP delivered integrated subnational interventions to upgrade skills, facilities and institutional linkages, though this was not transformative due to fragmented Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) governance, weak private sector engagement and structural inequalities.

Early in the programme cycle, poverty reduction and economic growth were not matched by adequate job creation.⁶⁵ National TVET governance remained fragmented, with outdated curricula, limited employer involvement and weak articulation of labour market needs by the private sector.⁶⁶ UNDP responded with a comprehensive package of vocational training and employment support targeting women, youth, unemployed people and migrant returnees—groups acutely vulnerable to economic shocks and social exclusion. The programmes included job placements, start-up support to youth, and capacity development for staff of TVETs and Adult Education Centres.⁶⁷ New vocational training modules were introduced and delivered in partnership with 52 educational institutions across Tajikistan, although they were not scaled within the national TVET system.

Most TVET institutions faced structural challenges, including outdated infrastructure, student accommodation and equipment. UNDP addressed gaps by equipping 12 facilities with practical training equipment and renovating dormitories, especially for female students. These interventions improved training environments and access, but remained localized and did not fully resolve system-wide infrastructure constraints.

UNDP also invested in digital skills development, establishing three Digital Innovation Centres and five online platforms for employment and entrepreneurship.⁶⁸ These initiatives supported over 5,500 participants, including youth, women and trainers, to develop digital literacy and entrepreneurship and e-governance competencies, building a diverse talent pipeline from educational and public institutions, though leaving some vulnerable groups out. With funding from the Russian Federation, UNDP supported youth start-ups through Business Incubator initiatives and seed investments. However, limited and costly internet access, especially in rural areas, and low digital literacy among target groups constrained the reach of these initiatives, highlighting the impact of persistent digital inclusion gaps.⁶⁹

UNDP strengthened linkages between skills development and labour market opportunities through support to internships and partnerships with private sector actors in technology, finance and services. This responded to weak collaboration between the private sector and vocational lyceums and TVET colleges, and weak articulation of labour market skill demands by the private sector.⁷⁰ To address these constraints, UNDP facilitated the development of digital employment, mentoring and volunteering platforms (subsequently transferred to the Government) to improve job matching and recruitment processes. While these platforms expanded opportunities for young people seeking jobs, those without online access were less able to benefit.

In parallel, UNDP supported regulatory and policy reforms related to entrepreneurship, innovation, techno-parks and vocational education, and facilitated public-private dialogue to strengthen alignment between skills development and labour market needs. These efforts demonstrated emerging progress in linking vocational and digital training to future economic sectors. However, coherence across digital

⁶⁵ UNDP Tajikistan (2022) ROAR, ADB (2021) Technical and vocational education and training in Tajikistan and other countries in Central Asia key findings and policy options.

⁶⁶ UN (2021) Common Country Analysis Tajikistan.

⁶⁷ UNDP Tajikistan (2025c).

⁶⁸ UNDP Tajikistan (2023) ROAR.

⁶⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung (2024), UNDP Tajikistan (2023) ROAR.

⁷⁰ ADB (2021).

innovation, vocational training and enterprise support remained partial, with pilot initiatives progressing faster than systemic integration. Further investments were needed to promote green jobs and prepare the workforce for emerging sectors such as renewable energy, waste management and eco-enterprises.

UNDP made a strategically supportive contribution to skills development in Tajikistan, particularly by addressing delivery and coordination gaps at sub-national level. While systemic transformation of the TVET and skilling ecosystem depended on broader institutional reforms and multi-partner investment, UNDP added value through integrated interventions linking infrastructure, curricula development and digital skills training, and by connecting policy engagement with localized delivery. Its support complemented other development partners and positioned UNDP as a trusted integrator of innovation and institutional capacity, though greater impact would require stronger alignment with a coherent national skilling strategy and sustained resourcing.

2.3 Outcome 2 - Integrated management of climate and environmental risk

Outcome 2: By 2026, natural resources management is inclusive and sustainable with integrated policy frameworks and actions to enhance climate-change resilience and livelihoods of vulnerable groups.

Output 2.1: Sustainable management of ecosystems enhanced through conservation management policies and action on environmentally sound waste management.

Output 2.2: Innovative, sustainable and inclusive natural resource management, integrated water resource management, climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) solutions designed and implemented.

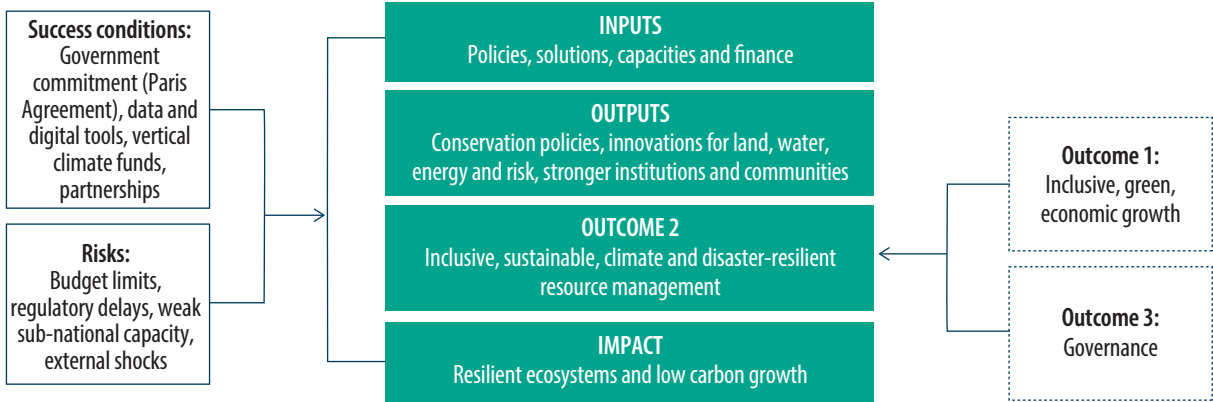
Output 2.3: Institutions have strengthened capacities to develop, manage and deliver policies, strategies and actions for climate resilient, disaster responsive and green/low carbon development.

Output 2.4: Solutions developed, financed and applied at scale for structural transformation of the energy sector and promotion of renewable energy.

Outcome 2 sought to make natural-resource management in Tajikistan inclusive, sustainable and climate- and disaster-resilient. Its ToC connected that goal to three outputs: robust policies and regulations for conservation and low-carbon growth; innovative, gender-responsive solutions for land, water, energy and risk management that lift vulnerable groups; and stronger institutional and community capacities, backed by climate finance, to plan and act on integrated environmental priorities. Success hinged on sustained government commitment to Paris Agreement targets, adequate data and digital tools, vertical climate-fund resources and effective public-private-community partnerships. Key risks included limited domestic budgets and sub-national capacities, slow regulatory uptake and external shocks that delay approvals or restrict regional cooperation. Progress under this outcome was also contingent on the broader governance and economic context—particularly institutional effectiveness (Outcome 3) and investment in green, inclusive growth (Outcome 1). The evaluation further refined the Outcome ToC by analysing actual barriers encountered during the programme implementation (Figure 8).

Monitoring trends reinforced this pattern: beneficiaries of community-based climate and district development initiatives increased to over 11,000 by 2024 and local capacities improved. However, several national policy frameworks—including biodiversity, water governance and ozone-depleting substance phase-out measures—experienced delays or limited updating, constraining systemic impact.

FIGURE 8: Outcome 2 theory of change



Financial data for Outcome 2 show fluctuations in annual budget allocations and expenditure during the evaluation period, highest allocations in 2022 at over \$8 million, and lowest in 2025 at under \$5 million. Expenditure also fluctuated, peaking at nearly \$5 million in 2021 and 2024, and registering a low point of around \$3 million in 2023. Execution rates peaked at 70 percent in 2021, dropping to 42 percent in 2022. By July 2025, the execution rate was at 54 percent for the year (Figure 9). Resources were mobilized from various sources, including vertical funds such as Global Environment Facility (GEF) (32 percent), Adaptation Fund (31 percent) and GCF (10 percent), UNDP core resources (8 percent), and Japan (18 percent) (Figure 10).

FIGURE 9: Outcome 2 budget, expenditure and execution rate

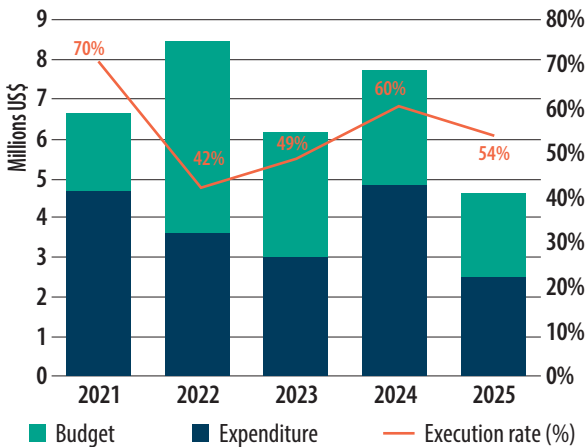
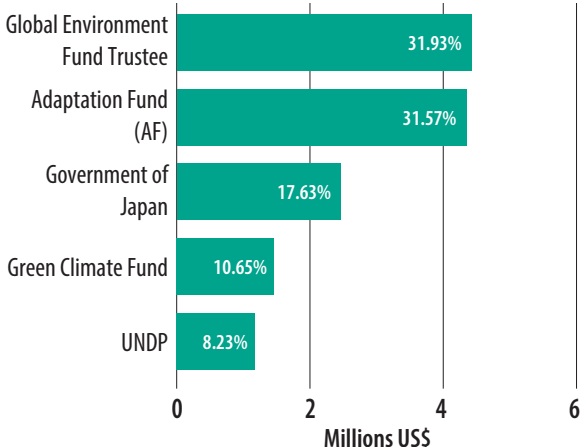


FIGURE 10: Top five donors for Outcome 2 (2021- July 2025 expenditure)



Source: UNDP Atlas and Quantum data, as of July 2025.

■ ■ Finding 8. Biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management.

UNDP laid the groundwork for progress in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management, through long-term partnerships, global expertise and financial instruments that supported policy alignment, institutional capacity and integrated conservation pilots, acting as a foundational enabler. In specific transformative cases, such as establishing the Snow Leopard Information Management System and repositioning the snow leopard as a flagship national conservation symbol, UNDP acted as a lead implementing contributor, directly enabling high-level national and regional outcomes.

Tajikistan faced significant challenges in achieving environmental sustainability, particularly in the sustainable management of ecosystems and biodiversity. Deforestation, land degradation and water scarcity threatened ecosystems and the livelihoods of communities.⁷¹ UNDP biodiversity interventions combined landscape-level action, protected area governance, integration into national planning and community-driven solutions that mobilized resources and piloted scalable conservation models.

Through large-scale interventions, UNDP expanded protected areas under effective management by over 434,000 hectares (13.6 percent of Tajikistan's protected areas), and rehabilitated over 16,000 hectares of forest and pasture.⁷² It also conducted comprehensive assessments of land resources, forestry units and protected areas that informed planning and management decisions. These efforts were complemented by the development of management and monitoring frameworks and facilitation of transboundary cooperation through formal agreements.⁷³ UNDP further supported upstream alignment of Tajikistan's biodiversity strategies with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework through rapid policy reviews and development of tailored conservation tools, management plans and plant micro-reserve monitoring programmes, under a broader GEF-funded framework.⁷⁴

UNDP comparative advantage in biodiversity lay in its integrated, multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach, aligning local interventions with global frameworks, fostering multi-stakeholder participation and embedding gender-responsive and capacity-building elements. Over the evaluation period, GEF resources financed several initiatives, while other partners supported complementary ecosystem and policy interventions. National implementation was anchored through the Committee for Environmental Protection (CoEP) and its National Biodiversity and Biosafety Centre, while UNDP broadened participation through a cross-ministerial finance platform, community-based natural resource management institutions, and targeted awareness and benefit-sharing initiatives, targeting women. Gender analysis was embedded in newer designs. These efforts improved institutional arrangements, promoted ecosystem management and cross-sectoral policy reforms and strengthened environmental governance.

As a GEF implementing partner and provider of global biodiversity finance and planning tools, stakeholders confirmed that UNDP addressed technical and institutional gaps by strengthening protected area management capacity, introducing monitoring and anti-poaching systems (including the Snow Leopard Information Management System⁷⁵) and institutional capacity-building. However, the long-term impact and sustainability of newer interventions remained contingent on political will, domestic financing and reduced reliance on external technical support.

⁷¹ World Bank (2024b).

⁷² <https://www.protectedplanet.net>, UNDP Tajikistan (2024c) Amu Darya Project Progress report.

⁷³ UNDP Tajikistan (2022a) Snow Leopard project terminal evaluation report.

⁷⁴ UNDP Tajikistan (2024c); UNDP Tajikistan (2024d); Prodoc Global Biodiversity Framework Early Action Support.

⁷⁵ UNDP Tajikistan (2022a).

A particularly transformative contribution was UNDP support to reframe the snow leopard from a pest to a flagship conservation icon. This contributed to the adoption of the State Programme for Snow Leopard Conservation in 2024, and strengthened transboundary cooperation through formal agreements with neighbouring countries.⁷⁶

UNDP played a pivotal role in initiating and enabling national biodiversity efforts by providing technical expertise, mobilizing and managing international environmental financing and supporting new foundational ecosystem planning and institutional capacity-building processes. However, long-term, system-wide change depended on broader national ownership, domestic financing and sustained multi-partner engagement beyond UNDP direct implementation.

■ ■ Finding 9. Integrated water resource management.

UNDP was key in integrating water resource management, creating essential policy and institutional foundations for improved governance, service delivery and innovation in the sector. It was also a lead implementing contributor in capacity-building and introduction of innovative billing systems that would not have occurred without its engagement. UNDP linked water management with ecosystem protection, gender equality and livelihoods.

Tajikistan's water sector continued to face entrenched challenges, including outdated infrastructure, inefficient service delivery and limited access to irrigation and drinking water in rural and agricultural areas. These problems were compounded by weak metering systems, low payment collection and water-related land degradation.⁷⁷ In this context, UNDP strategically positioned itself within the Government's broader water reform agenda, focusing on strengthening governance, policy frameworks and institutional capacity; the "soft infrastructure" required for sustainable water resource management. UNDP supported development of the National Water Strategy 2040, adoption of the Law "On drinking water supply and wastewater" and related by-laws, while facilitating inter-ministerial coordination and national water governance mechanisms. Water sector reforms were supported by a wide range of development partners, including the Islamic Development Bank, the World Bank and European Union-funded initiatives, alongside bilateral and multilateral actors working on infrastructure, governance and service delivery. These efforts also extended to revising technical standards for rural water and sanitation.

UNDP introduced integrated approaches linking water management with ecosystem protection, gender equality and sustainable livelihoods. By advancing wastewater management and pollution prevention, supporting the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus and mainstreaming gender (including drafting a gender chapter for the National Water Strategy) UNDP contributed to a more climate-resilient and inclusive water sector.⁷⁸ These efforts also generated livelihood benefits by improving agricultural productivity, farm incomes and rural resilience. Stakeholder interviews reported productivity and income increases, and increased participation of farmers in Water User Associations in targeted areas, although systemic monitoring data were limited.

UNDP played a significant role in strengthening institutional capacity within the water sector. Targeted training for staff of the Agency for Land Reclamation and Irrigation (ALRI), Water User Associations in Khatlon and support to River Basin Organizations strengthened human capital essential for reform

⁷⁶ Republic of Tajikistan (2024) Resolution #68 On the State programme for the conservation of the Snow Leopard for 2024-2028.

⁷⁷ UNDP Tajikistan (2024c) Annual Report of the project Improvement of Water Resources Management in Khatlon Region.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

and responded to Ministry of Energy and Water Resources (MoEWR) priorities.⁷⁹ UNDP also supported inter-agency coordination and strengthened Tajikistan’s international engagement in water diplomacy, including leadership of the 3rd International Water Conference. The emphasis of UNDP on policy and capacity-building, while necessary, could not compensate for limited complementary “hard” investments, such as irrigation infrastructure modernization and metering systems. As confirmed by the 2023 VNR, budget allocations for water-related DRR and infrastructure remained limited, constraining full implementation of sector reforms, and underscoring the need for coordinated investment, policy reform and domestic resource mobilization to fully realize and sustain water sector transformations.

UNDP emphasized financial sustainability of water authorities and service providers, through tariff setting, billing modernization and introduction of cashless payment systems. Building on the pilot billing system initiative of the World Bank, UNDP expanded digital irrigation billing systems across eight districts in Khatlon, significantly improving transparency and fee collection rates, according to interviewees.⁸⁰ The digital billing system also improved data availability for water resource accounting and financing, contributing to sector reform scaling.⁸¹

The UNDP contribution was essential in initiating water governance reforms, particularly through legal frameworks, institutional strengthening and financial management innovations. However, long-term outcomes depended on sustained government financing, infrastructure investment and staff retention. UNDP interventions were sufficient to bring about observed changes, underpinned by its integrated approach, which would likely not have occurred otherwise.

■ Finding 10. Climate change mitigation.

UNDP played a central role in initiating and shaping Tajikistan’s climate change mitigation agenda. It built the technical, institutional and policy foundations needed to meet international reporting obligations and advance initial emission-reduction measures. These efforts enabled compliance with the Paris Agreement and related global commitments, mainstreamed climate priorities into national planning and introduced low-carbon technologies and regulatory frameworks.

Tajikistan, as a Party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, faced challenges in strengthening climate measurement, reporting and verification systems and developing greenhouse gas inventories. UNDP played a central role in supporting the transition from Biennial Update Reports to the Paris Agreement-mandated Biennial Transparency Reports, strengthening institutional and technical capacity across national and subnational partners. UNDP facilitated preparation and timely submission of key reporting instruments, including the First Biennial Update Report (2019), Fourth National Communication (2022) and First Biennial Transparency Report (2024). UNDP also supported mainstreaming of climate mitigation priorities into national development frameworks, including the NDS 2030 and NDCs, mobilizing technical expertise and building the technical, administrative and leadership capacity of government institutions and sector stakeholders to plan, implement and monitor mitigation actions and low-carbon development strategies.

UNDP was also a key partner to the Government of Tajikistan to comply with obligations under the Montreal Protocol and Kigali Amendment, including phasing out hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) ahead of schedule and phasing down high-global warming potential and ozone-depleting substances.

⁷⁹ UNDP Tajikistan (2024e). Final Report of the project Improvement of Water Resources Management in Khatlon Region. Johan Holmberg (2011) Final Report External Review of the SIDA support to the UNDP Water Governance Program 2008 – 2011.

⁸⁰ UNDP Tajikistan (2024e).

⁸¹ Ibid.

This included the development and adoption of legal and regulatory acts such as HCFC import quotas, licensing amendments, and the introduction of a single-window system for monitoring import and export of ozone-depleting substances. UNDP supported CoEP to comply with reporting obligations under Article 7 of the Montreal Protocol and strengthened the institutional capacity of the Committee for Environmental Protection and sector partners.

UNDP also supported transfer and localization of mitigation technologies, energy efficiency and low-carbon solutions, building local technical capacity in the refrigeration and air-conditioning sector. More than 700 technicians were trained in alternative technologies and improved handling practices to reduce leakage and strengthen HCFC recovery, recycling and reuse. Training institutions were upgraded with modern equipment, including natural refrigerants, and a mobile training, recovery and recycling facility was established to reach remote areas.⁸² However, implementation of more complex reforms and sustained institutional performance depended on the active engagement of implementing partners.⁸³ Administrative delays and risks related to the retention of trained personnel demonstrated that, while UNDP acted as an essential catalyst, broader systemic enablers remained necessary.

The UNDP contribution was critical to initiating national climate reporting, strengthening mitigation policy integration and building institutional capacity. These achievements would likely not have occurred in the same timeframe without the technical leadership and coordination of UNDP. However, the sustainability of results depended on government follow-up, inter-agency cooperation and long-term resourcing.

■ Finding 11. Climate change adaptation.

UNDP played a critical role in advancing climate change adaptation in Tajikistan by combining institutional capacity, policy development and community-based action. It initiated adaptation planning, integrated CCA with DRR, promoted ecosystem-based approaches and climate-smart agriculture, strengthened livelihoods, institutionalized climate risk management and enhanced readiness for climate finance.

Tajikistan remained highly vulnerable to climate change, ranking 131st for vulnerability and 144th for readiness (ND-GAIN, 2022).⁸⁴ Adaptive capacity was constrained by weak intersectoral coordination mechanisms, limited institutional preparedness and underinvestment in resilient infrastructure.⁸⁵ Tajikistan adopted its National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change 2030, in 2019. UNDP put significant emphasis on the integration of CCA with DRR, forging close links between climate impacts, disaster preparedness and resilience. Within this comprehensive framework, UNDP supported national adaptation planning by strengthening implementation of the strategy and developing six sectoral adaptation plans through consultative processes involving national and subnational stakeholders. These plans were later consolidated into the National Adaptation Plan at the request of the Committee for Environmental Protection.

UNDP promoted ecosystem-based adaptation approaches that combined biodiversity protection, ecosystem restoration and climate-resilient livelihoods.⁸⁶ Interventions included forest restoration, planting of fruit trees on degraded land and rehabilitation of forest ecosystems using drip irrigation and integrated

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Republic of Tajikistan (2023) VNR.

⁸⁴ University of Notre Dame (2023) ND-GAIN Country Index <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>.

⁸⁵ Republic of Tajikistan (2023) VNR.

⁸⁶ UNDP Tajikistan (2024f) Progress report of the project 'An integrated landscape approach to enhancing the climate resilience of small-scale farmers and pastoralists in Tajikistan'; UNDP Tajikistan (2021a) Final report of the BCRAW project.

micro-watershed rehabilitation that combined structural and nature-based measures to mitigate flood and debris flow risks. Site visits and stakeholders confirmed that these climate-smart agriculture techniques directly benefited local agrarian livelihoods.⁸⁷

UNDP also strengthened climate risk management systems across administrative levels. It supported development of 14 hydrological risk models using HEC-HMS software to inform flood and drought planning.⁸⁸ These models were complemented by ongoing efforts to establish Automated Weather Stations to enhance climate monitoring and early warning capacity.⁸⁹ 14 *Jamoat* Watershed Action Plans supported ecosystem-based adaptation planning, with several integrated into district development plans using gender-sensitive monitoring frameworks.⁹⁰ In these examples, evidence showed that UNDP played a critical role, especially to institutionalize climate risk management, enable data-driven decision-making, enhance local early warning capacity and align local planning with national adaptation and disaster preparedness goals.

Interviewees confirmed that UNDP further strengthened national institutional capacity by supporting the establishment of the Centre for Implementation of Investment Projects and facilitating accreditation to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), improving Tajikistan's readiness to access international climate finance. UNDP capacity development initiatives included training for over 60 Hydromet professionals, development of a climate adaptation course with the University of Central Asia, and public awareness campaigns such as the youth-focused "Climate Caravan". UNDP also supported regional climate security collaboration, strengthening dialogue and coordination across Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, resulting in more ambitious commitments within Conferences of the Parties to UNFCCC.

Stakeholder interviews confirmed that UNDP introduced National Implementation Modality (NIM) and facilitated access to vertical funds, supporting the Government to reduce donor dependency and embed CCA priorities into key policy frameworks.⁹¹ Several international development partners, including bilateral, multilateral, IFIs and United Nations agencies, contributed to climate adaptation efforts as direct funders, implementers or key stakeholders. Vertical climate finance mechanisms, including GCF and the Adaptation Fund, financed key UNDP interventions in this area, while the European Union, United Kingdom, World Bank and the Russian Federation-UNDP Trust Fund supported national, subnational and regional climate resilience and adaptation interventions. However, limited domestic financing and insufficient complementary investments in infrastructure, energy and markets constrained the scale and sustainability of adaptation interventions.

UNDP played a necessary role in initiating national adaptation planning, strengthening institutional capacity and piloting local adaptation measures. These contributions were essential to enable progress, though long-term, systemic change remained dependent on sustained government financing, institutional coordination and investment in complementary sectors. The integration of climate adaptation, disaster preparedness and resilience offered a distinctive contribution of the UNDP approach.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ UNDP Tajikistan (2024f).

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ 'Jamoats' are the lowest level of local self-government in Tajikistan, grouping several villages—in rural areas—or towns and cities—in urban areas.

⁹¹ UNDP Tajikistan (2024g) NAP Project Report 2024.

■ Finding 12. Disaster risk reduction.

UNDP played a central role in advancing Tajikistan's DRR agenda, integrating risk reduction into national planning, strengthening institutional coordination mechanisms and piloting risk assessments, data platforms and early warning pilots. It combined institutional capacity-building with localized structural interventions, benefiting around one million people, while mobilizing significant vertical climate financing and technical innovations.

Tajikistan's high disaster exposure was compounded by weak integration of DRR into national and spatial planning.⁹² To support implementation of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy, UNDP adopted a people-centred, gender-sensitive and risk-informed approach to promote participatory governance and long-term environmental planning.⁹³ Building on previous programme cycles, UNDP strengthened institutional coordination among government and development actors within the Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team (REACT). Partnerships with the Committee of Emergency Situations, Hydromet, ALRI and academic institutions supported the mainstreaming of DRR into development planning and facilitated regional collaboration, particularly in the Ferghana Valley.

Evidence-based approaches were central to UNDP support. Climate risk and vulnerability assessments in transboundary areas, combined with Geographic Information Systems mapping and hazard profiling, informed watershed management and basin planning.⁹⁴ Stakeholders confirmed that these efforts were complemented by pilots of community-based early warning systems, nature-based flood management strategies and remote sensing applications.⁹⁵ UNDP also supported the introduction of multi-hazard risk assessments and a national geospatial risk platform, strengthening preparedness, response planning and evidence-based policy-making as system-wide improvements to disaster governance. However, scale-up and integration of these innovations into national systems depended on complementary investments and infrastructure, beyond the remit of UNDP.

Recognizing the localized nature of disaster risks, UNDP combined structural risk reduction with strong local ownership. More than 85 subprojects, including canal rehabilitation, riverbank reinforcement, erosion control and tree-planting, reached around one million people by reducing exposure to floods and mudflows.⁹⁶ These interventions were complemented by early warning pilots, the creation and training of Community Emergency Response Teams and public awareness activities to embed a culture of preparedness.⁹⁷ A strong gender focus ensured that women made up over 60 percent of direct beneficiaries, with female-headed households reporting both safety and livelihood benefits.⁹⁸

Given the low national budget allocations for DRR, UNDP demonstrated comparative advantage through its ability to leverage vertical climate funds, apply Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) and integrate technical expertise across sectors. Complementary bilateral and multilateral partners contributed to disaster preparedness, emergency response and environmental risk management initiatives. UNDP leadership in the development and submission of large-scale climate finance proposals directly resulted in the mobilization of approximately \$20 million in external financing, facilitated by its technical expertise and accredited status.⁹⁹

⁹² ADB (2024) Tajikistan National Urban Assessment.

⁹³ Republic of Tajikistan (2019) National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for 2019-2030; UNDP Tajikistan (2024h) Progress report of the project Climate Change and Resilience in Central Asia.

⁹⁴ UNDP Tajikistan (2021) Prodoc Climate Change and Resilience in Central Asia and 2023, 2024 progress reports.

⁹⁵ UNDP Tajikistan (2022b) Final report on the project Strengthening Disaster Risk Reduction and Response Capacities.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ UNDP Tajikistan (2022a); UNDP Tajikistan (2023/2024) Progress reports of the project Climate Change and Resilience in Central Asia; UNDP Tajikistan (2023c) Final report of the project Uranium Legacy Remediation in Central Asia Phase II;

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ UNDP Tajikistan (2022a).

UNDP played a critical enabling role by supporting national policy alignment, technical and institutional capacity and piloting risk reduction measures. These contributions were necessary to advance disaster resilience, although long-term effectiveness and scalability depended on sufficient domestic funding, strong governance and sustained partner capacity. While the role of UNDP was catalytic and necessary, systemic resilience ultimately requires broader and more consistent national ownership and resourcing.

■ Finding 13. Green energy solutions.

UNDP played an important role in expanding renewable energy access and promoting green growth in Tajikistan, by piloting innovative technologies, mobilizing concessional finance and linking clean energy solutions with rural development and climate commitments. UNDP interventions contributed to emission reduction, winter energy access and local resilience.

UNDP interventions strategically framed renewable energy as both a mitigation measure and a rural development accelerator, addressing Tajikistan's acute winter energy shortages that affected around 70 percent of the population.¹⁰⁰ Dependence on seasonal hydropower and inefficient use of firewood left rural households vulnerable, with energy expenditure consuming up to a third of household income and contributing to deforestation, carbon emissions and environmental degradation.¹⁰¹ UNDP support advanced Tajikistan's low-carbon transition by piloting renewable technologies such as solar systems and biodigesters that reduced emissions while demonstrating scalable small-scale, low-emission solutions.

Following the 2021 Midterm Review, UNDP shifted its implementation model from market support towards facilitating green loans through microfinance institutions and NGOs. This proved a more viable mechanism for distributing renewable energy technologies to rural households and MSMEs. By 2024, UNDP supported more than 1,395 subsidized "green loans" (\$845,000) for solar panels, benefiting an estimated 17,867 people (62 percent women). National stakeholders confirmed that these interventions generated 479,887 MWh of clean energy, 31 times the original target, and avoided an estimated 394,762 tCO₂e emissions, demonstrating a catalytic impact.¹⁰² High repayment rates demonstrated strong beneficiary ownership and acceptance of renewable energy solutions, though sustainability of the financing model remained dependent on continued interest-rate subsidies (36 to 50 percent).¹⁰³ This suggests that, while effective under programme conditions, replication by commercial lenders would require stronger incentives and improved market conditions.

These initiatives strengthened Tajikistan's ability to meet its NDC commitments by combining technology deployment with policy support, including recommendations to exempt biodigester equipment from value added tax and customs duties and facilitating access to climate finance. While these proof-of-concept models received limited government uptake, broader expansion was constrained by incomplete regulatory frameworks, slow market-enabling reforms and investor risk concerns.¹⁰⁴ Heavy reliance on subsidies also raised questions about long-term sustainability.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ UNDP Tajikistan (2018) Prodoc Green Energy Small and Medium Enterprise Development.

¹⁰¹ UNDP Tajikistan (2018) and UNDP Tajikistan (2024) Empowering Rural Women Through Access to Renewable Energy via Biodigesters.

¹⁰² UNDP Tajikistan (2018); UNDP Tajikistan (2025) Terminal Evaluation Report of the project Green Energy SMEs Development.

¹⁰³ UNDP Tajikistan (2025).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Republic of Tajikistan (2023) VNR.

By diversifying household energy sources and reducing reliance on seasonal hydropower, UNDP interventions contributed to improved energy reliability in rural areas. However, systemic reforms including regulatory incentives and stronger private sector engagement, remained necessary to scale these solutions nationally. International development partner engagement in decentralized renewable energy remained limited, mostly by specific NGOs focused on rural development.

UNDP played a critical role in the introduction and demonstration of renewable energy solutions in Tajikistan. UNDP direct support through piloting technologies, facilitating concessional finance and generating policy evidence, established a technical and institutional foundation for renewable energy uptake. However, long-term scale-up and sustainability remained contingent on broader conditions beyond UNDP direct control, including regulatory reform, increased private investment and improved affordability for end users.

2.4 Outcome 3 - People-centred governance and rule of law

Outcome 3: By 2026, governance is more inclusive, transparent and accountable, serving to protect human rights, empower women, and reduce violence and discrimination in alignment with the international commitments of Tajikistan.

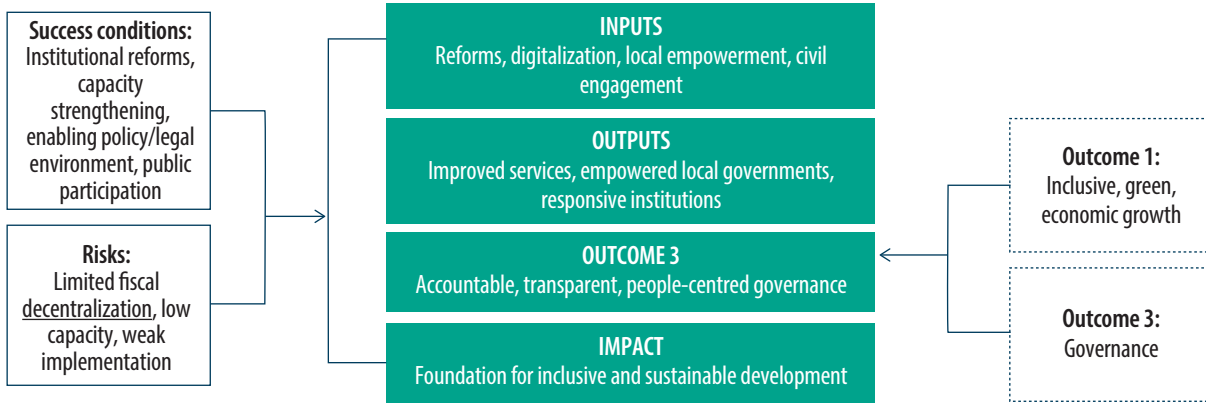
Output 3.1: Institutions at national and local levels have improved capacities and use innovative solutions to provide accessible, quality public services to the people and economic actors.

Output 3.2: Governance institutions at national and local levels have strengthened capacities and systems in place to support access to justice and remove structural barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Output 3.3: Governance institutions and processes are made more transparent, and accountable and use technological innovations to engage the larger society in participatory policy formulation, planning, implementation and oversight.

Outcome 3 aimed to strengthen accountable, transparent and people-centred governance as a foundation for inclusive and sustainable development. The outcome ToC linked governance transformation to improved public service delivery, digitalization, local empowerment and enhanced civic engagement, with a focus on women, youth and other vulnerable groups. Success was conditional on institutional reform, strengthened national and local institutional capacity and an enabling legal and policy environment promoting rights-based approaches and responsive governance. Risks were identified as systemic constraints such as limited fiscal decentralization, low institutional capacity and weak implementation mechanisms. Progress under this outcome was also contingent on the other two outcomes, specifically inclusive economic opportunities (Outcome 1) and resilient environmental systems (Outcome 2), to reinforce the legitimacy and effectiveness of governance reforms. The evaluation further refined the Outcome ToC by analysing actual barriers encountered during the programme implementation (Figure 11).

FIGURE 11: Outcome 3 theory of change



Outcome 3 focused on strengthening accountable, transparent and people-centred governance by expanding access to legal identity, justice services and inclusive institutional frameworks. UNDP supported the development of a digital, interoperable and citizen-centred civil registration system to ensure timely access to documentation such as birth, marriage and death certificates, which are critical for accessing rights and public services, particularly for women, children, persons with disabilities and rural populations. The programme also strengthened legislative and policy frameworks, promoted inter-agency interoperability and supported awareness raising among underserved communities.

In parallel, UNDP supported efforts to build a more inclusive and rights-based justice system through legal reforms, institutional capacity development and expanded access to legal aid services. This included strengthening training systems, supporting legal education platforms and reinforcing national accountability institutions. Preventing Violent Extremism programming complemented governance efforts by supporting rehabilitation and reintegration approaches, social cohesion initiatives and regional cooperation in sensitive contexts.

Monitoring data showed substantial expansion in service access. Digital civil registration coverage increased from 432,000 users in 2021 to 1.67 million in 2024, and access to justice beneficiaries tripled. However, public satisfaction with services declined from 63 percent in 2021 to 35 percent in 2024, indicating that rapid expansion of services may not have been matched by improvements in quality or user experience.

FIGURE 12: Outcome 3 budget, expenditure and execution rate

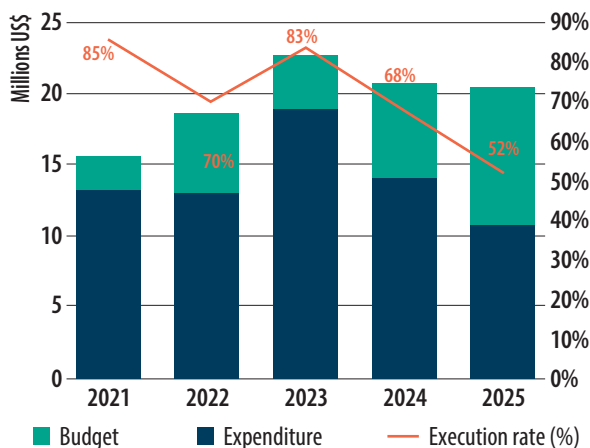
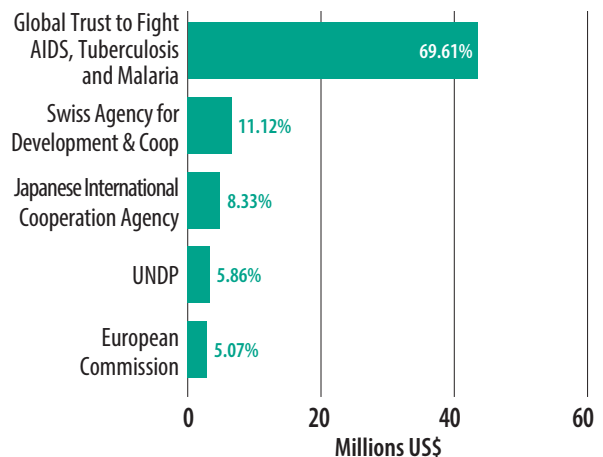


FIGURE 13: Top five donors for Outcome 3 (2021- July 2025)



Source: UNDP Atlas and Quantum data, as of July 2025.

Financial data for Outcome 3 show an increasing trend in annual budget allocations during the evaluation period, peaking in 2023 at over \$22 million, and declining to just over \$20 million in 2025 (Figure 12). Expenditure also fluctuated, peaking at over \$18 million in 2023 and declining to around \$14 million in 2024. By July 2025, programme expenditure stood at around \$10 million of a projected \$20 million allocation for the year. Execution rates peaked at over 85 percent in 2021, dropping to 70 percent in 2024, and stood at 50 percent by July 2025. Resources were mobilized from various sources, including the Global Fund (69 percent), bilateral donors such as Switzerland (11 percent), JICA (8 percent) and the European Commission (5 percent), and UNDP core resources (5 percent) (Figure 13).

■ ■ Finding 14. Institutions deliver better public services through stronger capacity and innovation.

UNDP drove reforms in civil registration and border management, supporting the Government to transform access to legal identity, modernizing services through digital systems and mobile units and upgrading border infrastructure with a people-centred approach, acting as lead implementing contributor. In HIV and TB programming, UNDP acted as a foundational enabler, sustaining critical services, extending diagnostics and treatment to underserved regions and advancing legal protections for key populations during periods of donor withdrawal.

In the area of civil registration reform, UNDP contributions were transformative in expanding accessibility and quality of civil registration services through support to digital infrastructure, mobile units, institutional capacity and legal frameworks. Through upstream and downstream interventions, UNDP supported development of a digital, interoperable and people-centred registry system that improved access to legal identity and public services, particularly for vulnerable groups, and compliance with international conventions and frameworks. UNDP reached several million citizens with the rollout of the CROIS-2 digital registry, enabling digitalization of up to 4 million civil registry records between 2016 and 2025. These reforms contributed to institutionalization of the national legal aid system, now financed and managed by the MoJ with 65 operational legal aid centres. Civil registration procedures were simplified, contributing to an 86 percent satisfaction rate among users. The 2023 VNR reported that access to legal identity remained an SDG enabler, with UNDP playing a central role in this shift.¹⁰⁶

In HIV and TB programming, UNDP acted as a key implementer and systems enabler under Global Fund financing, maintaining service continuity in high-risk and underserved regions such as GBAO and Kulyab. The work of UNDP expanded coverage, improved diagnostics and advanced legal protections for key populations. Antiretroviral therapy coverage reached 75 percent in 2024, with 93 percent viral suppression, and nearly all HIV-positive pregnant women received treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission.¹⁰⁷ Community outreach extended to more than 35,000 individuals, and community-based TB contact screening and treatment was scaled up, contributing to high treatment success rates. UNDP also supported rights monitoring systems like REACT, documenting and resolving violations affecting key populations.¹⁰⁸ Advocacy efforts contributed to key gains, including Supreme Court guidance on HIV decriminalization and continued rights monitoring in detention. The role of UNDP was especially important during the withdrawal of other donors, though structural weaknesses in the health system, persistent stigma and dependence on external funding remained key risks.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ UNDP Tajikistan (2024i) Civil Registry Project Annual Report.

¹⁰⁷ UNDP Tajikistan (2024j) HIV and TB Programme Annual Report.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ UN (2021) Common Country Analysis; Republic of Tajikistan (2023) VNR

The UNDP Border Management Programme (BMP) combined infrastructure development, institutional capacity-building and community-level resilience. The portfolio strengthened the capacity of border and customs institutions, supported modernization of border crossing infrastructure, and promoted cross-border trade and cooperation. BMP III adopted a human security and prevention approach, establishing 15 disaster risk management committees and rehabilitating 14 infrastructure sites.¹¹⁰ Interventions prioritized groups at heightened risk of being left behind, such as women traders, rural entrepreneurs and Afghan refugees, through market rehabilitation, installation of surveillance and power infrastructure and support for cross-border trading posts.¹¹¹ These interventions were aligned with national and regional stability priorities, and needs identified in the United Nations Common Country Analysis and VNR, though sustained interinstitutional coordination and buy-in, fiscal sustainability and follow-through under the new Border Management Strategy 2025–2035 remained uncertain.¹¹²

UNDP played a decisive role in catalysing foundational reforms in civil registration, and maintaining critical service delivery in health and border governance where operational gaps were significant. While UNDP contributions were essential to deliver meaningful and stabilizing change during the programme period, the achievement and sustainability of systemic change depended on a complex interplay of institutional, financial and policy factors beyond its control.

■ Finding 15. Justice systems and governance support gender equality and women’s empowerment.

UNDP drove justice sector reforms by creating and institutionalizing Tajikistan’s national legal aid system, expanding access through digital solutions and mobile units, and embedding service delivery models within the MoJ—where no other actor operated at comparable scale or continuity, acting as lead implementing contributor. In GBV prevention and youth and women’s empowerment UNDP acted as a foundational enabler, initiating important work such as legal reform, community mobilization and PVE programming in sensitive areas, while promoting inclusive engagement approaches that involved youth and men.

UNDP justice and rule of law programming demonstrated the clearest trajectory towards long-term institutionalization. The legal aid system, once donor-dependent, became embedded under the MoJ and fully state-funded, with legal aid centres serving over 11,000 people per year, more than 60 percent women, including outreach to remote areas with mobile services.¹¹³ UNDP introduced the model, convened stakeholders and supported national rollout as the only actor with the mandate and presence to do so. According to the VNR, accessibility of justice services improved, especially for vulnerable populations, due in large part to UNDP support for institutional and legal reforms. UNDP also supported e-justice and digital transformation, including piloting an e-justice system within the Supreme Court, development of a national e-justice roadmap and digitalization of key civil case processes. Complementary support included legislative reforms for access to judicial information, modernization of court websites and the development of the State Agency Legal Aid Centre as the national system for legal aid statistics.¹¹⁴ However, continued alignment of legal frameworks with digital processes, including data protection, cybersecurity and digital inclusion, remained necessary.

UNDP partnered with Government, United Nations and CSO actors to implement initiatives under GBV prevention and gender equality, addressing both prevention and response through legislative reform, judicial accountability, integrated referral systems, and awareness and empowerment activities. UNDP introduced trauma-informed justice practices through training modules for legal professionals, a national

¹¹⁰ UNDP (2024) BMP III Annual Report 2024.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² UN (2021) Common Country Analysis; Republic of Tajikistan (2023) VNR.

¹¹³ UNDP Tajikistan (2024k) Access to Justice II Annual Progress Reports 2022-2024.

¹¹⁴ UNDP Tajikistan (2022) Access to Justice Annual Report; UNDP Tajikistan (2021) Access to Justice end-phase report.

CSO platform, and public outreach, though advances remained vulnerable to sustainability risks.¹¹⁵ The closure of the GBV hotline, despite proven effectiveness, illustrated continuing challenges relating to national budget absorption and inter-ministerial ownership. While Tajikistan ratified relevant frameworks such as CEDAW and committed to addressing persistent gender-based barriers, issues such as limited women's political participation and social norms continued to affect policy uptake and service institutionalization.¹¹⁶

UNDP conducted pioneering work in PVE, including the first penitentiary rehabilitation framework and gender-sensitive case management, addressing a sensitive governance area where programming space was limited. Its comprehensive approach combined dialogue, conflict prevention and good governance with efforts to address root causes—such as exclusion, intolerance and lack of opportunity—through youth engagement, gender equality, education and livelihoods. Projects like the Spotlight Initiative engaged men and boys in GBV prevention, including outreach campaigns and gender equality training for male law enforcement and judiciary officials. However, scale-up and sustainability were constrained by coordination gaps and short funding cycles, and limited integration with labour markets and policy frameworks. Country analyses and stakeholder interviews noted that progress on youth exclusion and PVE required systemic reform and multisectoral engagement beyond the scope of UNDP.

UNDP played a central role in designing, scaling and institutionalizing the national legal aid system through sustained technical and operational engagement. However, the effectiveness of its pioneering work on GBV prevention and PVE was constrained by limited government ownership, financing, policy continuity, interagency collaboration and other social and contextual factors.

■ **Finding 16. Transparent, accountable and participatory governance through technology.**

UNDP contributed to more participatory policy processes by improving services in civil registration, legal aid and gender-responsive justice, and advancing e-governance infrastructure. UNDP contributions to inclusive governance were strongest in service delivery and legal empowerment, with more limited results in strengthening civic space and participatory decision-making.

National analyses highlighted persistent governance challenges in Tajikistan, including limited transparency in public administration, weak civic participation, underdeveloped parliamentary oversight and low digital innovation in public service delivery.¹¹⁷ Citizens' engagement in public decision-making remained low, particularly among women, youth and rural populations, while public trust in governance and rule-of-law mechanisms was also limited, highlighting weaknesses in institutional transparency and responsiveness.

Against this context, UNDP made notable progress in expanding access to civil registration, legal aid and gender-responsive justice, strengthening inclusive service delivery and legal protections for women, youth and refugees. UNDP also supported key legal reforms, including the National Human Rights Strategy, and institutional strengthening. However, broader initiatives to strengthen participatory policymaking, oversight or digital inclusion were limited to VNR and VLR preparation. The 2024 UN e-Government Survey moved Tajikistan to high E-Government Development Index status, reflecting progress in digital infrastructure, but digital tools were not leveraged to institutionalize participatory governance or real-time citizen feedback, leaving a gap between digital infrastructure and inclusive use. Similarly, no dedicated interventions addressed parliamentary strengthening, public financial management transparency or participatory governance, despite being articulated in the CPD. However, over time, UNDP investments in

¹¹⁵ UNDP Tajikistan (2024i) SGBV Annual Progress Report

¹¹⁶ UN (2021) Common Country Analysis Tajikistan; Republic of Tajikistan (2023) VNR.

¹¹⁷ UN Tajikistan (2023) Common Country Analysis, Republic of Tajikistan (2023) VNR

youth engagement and leadership, including legal education, civic engagement and PVE, could contribute to capacity for civic engagement and accountability, shifting social norms, rebuilding public trust and expanding space for inclusive and democratic governance in the country.

Progress on participatory governance in Tajikistan was shaped by structural constraints including limited civic space, centralized decision-making and constrained parliamentary oversight. Within this context, UNDP contributions focused on establishing entry points through service delivery, digital tools and youth engagement. Expansion of civic participation over the longer term ultimately depended on nationally driven reforms and political commitment.

2.5 Country programme design and implementation and other cross-cutting issues

Finding 17. Sustaining conditions for sustainable development.

UNDP meaningfully strengthened the enabling conditions for sustainable development by supporting national systems, fostering institutional resilience and promoting integrated approaches aligned with the country's long-term development vision. UNDP support had greater traction where economic, environmental and social goals were connected and embedded in governance systems.

UNDP support was well aligned with the NDS 2030, which explicitly positioned sustainable development as a convergence of economic modernization, social inclusion and environmental protection, anchored in effective public administration and regional integration. UNDP contributions to civil registration, legal aid and SDG institutionalization directly supported this vision by reinforcing national systems, enabling long-term planning and institutionalizing inclusive service delivery. These areas benefited from legal mandates, state budget allocations and multi-actor coordination—strengthening their potential for durability and scaled impact.

Across other areas, particularly climate adaptation, MSME development and green economy programming, UNDP introduced innovative models and catalysed government engagement. However, the extent to which these efforts translated into systemic shifts varied. Many initiatives remained dependent on donor financing or centralized decision-making with limited integration across sectors. For instance, environmental interventions often lacked strong linkages with local economic development or social equity outcomes, reducing alignment with the integrated development logic of the NDS 2030.

The long-term presence, upstream partnerships and cross-sectoral mandate of UNDP positioned it as a key enabler of sustainable development. Its ability to combine policy engagement with operational pilots created important foundations for further progress. Sustaining these gains will require future programming to strengthen local institutional ownership, promote earlier budget integration and foster more synergy across economic, social and environmental pillars, moving beyond effective implementation towards systemic transformation.

Finding 18. Management and operational efficiency.

UNDP recently undertook internal reforms to improve delivery and align with programmatic priorities, including staff restructuring, integration of programming approaches and initial steps towards NIM. Despite these internal reforms and adaptive strategies to improve management and delivery efficiency, the speed, coherence and continuity of its programming was limited by persistent internal and external challenges.

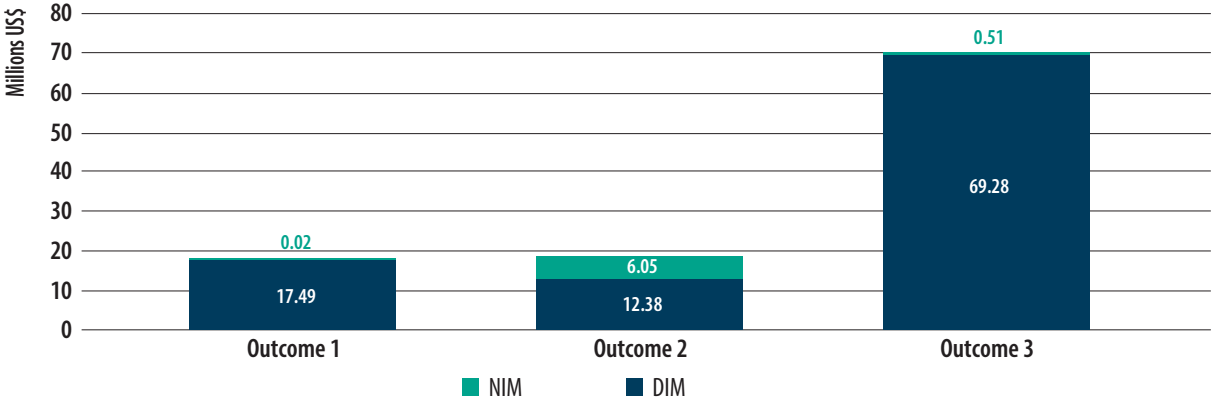
The 2022–2024 realignment process: This process aimed to align staffing with programmatic priorities. However, the transition period, combined with prolonged vacancies in technical and managerial positions, affected staff turnover, institutional memory, continuity of stakeholder engagement, project execution and closure processes, and implementation of procurement and vendor management procedures. This resulted in delays across the portfolio, reflected in fluctuating delivery performance between 2022 and 2024, compared to the relatively higher execution rate in 2021 (Figure 12). Several development partners indicated reduced confidence in delivery timeliness during this period. Despite these challenges, UNDP made strategic investments in strengthening coordination mechanisms and oversight. 66 posts were filled in 2024, marking near completion of the realignment process and contributing to improved human resource stability. Technical capacity was re-established across core portfolios and strategic communication and resource mobilization functions gained renewed momentum.

Delayed project completion: UNDP Tajikistan largely delivered projects in accordance with annual workplans. However, several strategic initiatives, including regional initiatives, experienced delays, particularly in procurement-intensive and policy-sensitive areas. This was supported by the UNDP Scan report, which indicated that the average bidding and contract issuance timelines were significantly higher in Tajikistan than regional and global averages. The country office introduced quarterly sensemaking reviews to realign delivery timelines and mitigate risks of underperformance. While UNDP introduced mitigation measures, including adaptive scheduling, mobile delivery and project extensions, some delays persisted. Though not always leading to cost overruns, these delays affected programme implementation and the sustainability of reforms.

Integrated programming: The country office introduced integrated programming to strengthen synergy across governance, environment and economic transformation outcomes. This enhanced operational coherence, enabled technical resource sharing and promoted integrated delivery. Notable examples included joint implementation between BMP and LITACA livelihood initiatives in border regions, which leveraged cross-portfolio assets to enhance trade facilitation and community resilience. Similarly, the governance and rule of law cluster enabled thematic convergence across access to justice, GBV prevention, civil registration and PVE, strengthening responsiveness and enabling cost-effective knowledge sharing.

Implementation modality: From 2021 to 2024, UNDP Tajikistan operated predominantly through DIM, which accounted for around 94 percent of total expenditure (\$99.15 million), reflecting a strong reliance on DIM. Only 6 percent of expenditure across 72 projects was managed through NIM (Figure 14).¹¹⁸

FIGURE 14: Expenditure by Outcome and implementation modality, 2021-2025



¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Although UNDP made progress in institutional capacity-building - particularly in digital transformation, justice sector reform, green economy policy, CCA and water management - governance constraints related to transparency and accountability, management of State-owned enterprises and NGO oversight continued to limit the expansion of NIM. These reflected persistent challenges in implementation capacity, including limited public administration systems, fiduciary assurance constraints, and fragmented accountability mechanisms. Where NIM was applied (notably under Outcome 2 – see Figure 14), it was concentrated in sectors with stronger technical agency capacity, such as environmental management. The country office questionnaire revealed that strategic shifts were underway to strengthen national systems, though national ownership and donor support remained critical determinants for scaling NIM use.

Mobilized planned resources: UNDP Tajikistan mobilized resources from a diversified donor base, including the European Union, vertical climate funds and bilateral partners, achieving 92 percent of planned funding targets and providing a relatively stable funding base for national programmes in civil registration, justice reform and energy efficiency.¹¹⁹ Continued efforts were needed to address funding pipeline gaps, which varied across areas. The country office secured government financing for health procurement; the only government-funded Project Initiation Plan to date. Other national partner contributions were primarily in-kind and fragmented. Strategic use of UNDP (TRAC) resources and catalytic co-financing supported the launch and scale-up of key interventions. However, the war in Ukraine and other geopolitical shifts diverted donor attention and constrained development financing. The country office submitted ten funding proposals between December 2024 and June 2025, with at least six more in the second half of 2025.¹²⁰

Finding 19. Strategic partnerships.

UNDP sustained a wide network of partnerships across government, donors, United Nations agencies, academia and civil society. While partnerships in governance and rule of law enabled systemic reforms in line with the ToC logic, other collaborations remained fragmented, project-driven or insufficiently positioned to address institutional weaknesses identified in the Common Country Analysis. This limited the overall ability of partnerships to contribute to the outcomes, as interdependent enablers of the NDS 2030.

The ToC positioned good governance and rule of law (Outcome 3) as the enabling condition for progress on inclusive economic growth and environmental sustainability (Outcomes 1 and 2). Consistent with this logic, the strongest UNDP partnerships supported institutional reforms at critical entry points. For example, long-term collaboration with MoJ facilitated institutionalization of free legal aid and civil registration reform, embedding inclusivity into state systems. Similarly, donor diversification secured a new partnership with USAID, expanding financing for GBV prevention during periods of declining traditional funding. A concept note for the Korea International Cooperation Agency was shortlisted, and a full proposal submitted in January 2025, incorporating green economy components. These examples illustrate how partnerships contributed to addressing the enabling conditions for systemic change noted in the ToC.

In contrast, partnerships in other sectors did not sufficiently address institutional weaknesses identified in the 2021 Common Country Analysis. Despite UNDP leadership of two UNSDCF Results Groups, and extensive interagency operational services, joint programme design was limited. United Nations agency collaboration often lacked structured co-design, with siloed implementation reducing the potential for collective advocacy in sensitive areas such as PVE and refugee inclusion. The reliance of UNDP on service

¹¹⁹ UNDP Tajikistan (2025a).

¹²⁰ Ibid.

delivery partnerships also limited opportunities to strengthen CSOs as accountability actors capable of reinforcing Outcome 3 objectives. These gaps in enabling governance and institutional strengthening factors envisaged in the ToC risked limiting the effectiveness of projects in Outcomes 1 and 2.

Private sector engagement was confined to isolated pilots in entrepreneurship and cross-border trade, without a strategic framework for mobilizing business or finance for systemic reform. UNDP collaboration with key external actors, including IFIs, regional trade bodies and national planning institutions, was limited. Coordination with development partners working on broader private sector reforms or trade integration was not institutionalized, reducing leverage and limiting opportunities to embed pilots within national investment pipelines or scale them through joint platforms. As a result, upstream support to trade facilitation, MSME development and innovation ecosystems was not embedded within broader public financing or policy frameworks, constraining scale and sustainability.

Integrated programming approaches introduced from 2023 reflected a corrective shift. By clustering donor-funded projects in areas such as water governance, rule of law and PVE, UNDP established mechanisms for shared steering, cross-learning and resource pooling. This approach demonstrated growing recognition of the need to structure partnerships around the ToC sequencing and layering, rather than networks of actors, to collectively address governance bottlenecks and unlock systemic progress. While new, these mechanisms signalled a shift from *ad hoc* cooperation towards more structured partnership models.

Finding 20. Gender focus.

UNDP made meaningful progress in integrating gender equality as a **cross-cutting** priority across its programming and institutional mechanisms. Most projects were gender-sensitive or responsive, and institutional capacity for gender analysis and results tracking improved. However, the absence of dedicated expertise and uneven integration limited progress towards more transformative change.

The CPD 2023–2026 explicitly recognized gender equality as a cross-cutting priority. In 2024, UNDP established a gender equality support team, chaired by senior management, to guide institutional alignment with gender equality objectives. However, the country office lacked formal gender focal points within thematic units, and did not have a dedicated full-time gender specialist. As a result, accountability for gender integration relied mainly on project-level gender markers and reporting, rather than systematic enforcement through performance frameworks or M&E systems. This weakened incentives for consistent gender mainstreaming and progress-tracking across outcomes. The absence of dedicated focal points constrained the integration of gender analysis across the project cycle and monitoring of gender-transformative outcomes, limited systematic partnerships with women’s organizations, constrained staff capacity for gender mainstreaming and contributed to gaps in costed gender action plans and budget allocation.¹²¹

Between 2021 and 2025, most UNDP programmes mainstreamed gender considerations in design and delivery, accounting for 62 percent of expenditure (figures 15 and 16). However, only a small share of resources (2.2 percent) targeted gender equality as the principal objective, concentrated on justice, human rights and participation programming. Funding for these initiatives fell sharply over the period, from \$776,000 in 2021 to \$85,000 in 2025. While many activities addressed gender issues in targeted or responsive ways, including LITACA, Aid for Trade, youth skills and Spotlight, very few addressed broader and more transformative results and structural drivers of gender inequality.

¹²¹ UNDP IRH (2025) Report: Portfolio review with the gender lens UNDP Tajikistan.

FIGURE 15: Distribution of expenditure by outcome and gender marker

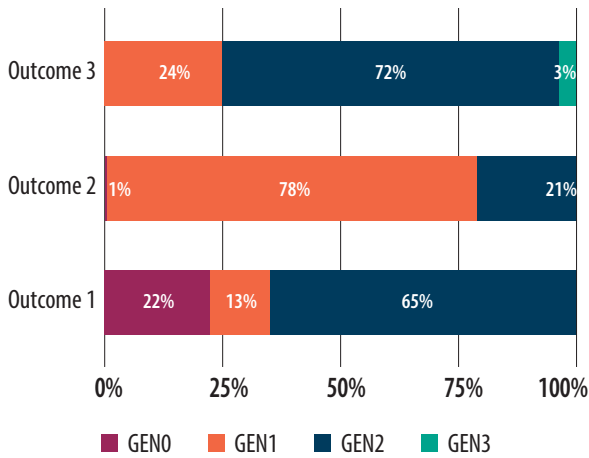
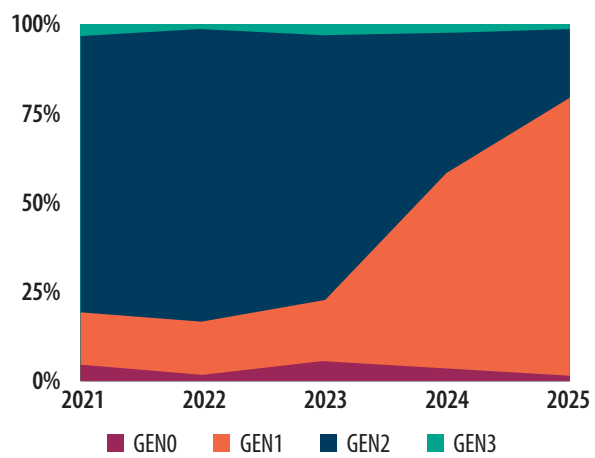


FIGURE 16: Evolution of expenditure by gender marker and year



GRES ratings similarly indicated that UNDP gender programming during 2021–2024 was predominantly gender-responsive, with a small number of earlier initiatives demonstrating gender-transformative elements, largely within Outcome 3. For example, within governance programming, partnerships with national institutions, civil society and academia supported GBV prevention, legal reform, access to justice and gender-inclusive participation. Flagship initiatives strengthened women-led organizations and expanded gender-sensitive professional and leadership opportunities, contributing to incremental shifts in participation and professional access.

UNDP also contributed to strengthening the legislative and policy framework on GBV, including amendments to 14 significant laws and policies, aligned with international standards across the justice, security, health, education and labour sectors, as well as the adoption of a non-discrimination law and integration of GBV prevention into district development plans.¹²² UNDP contributed to the revision of the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and the adoption of the 2025–2030 State Programme on GBV Prevention. Service delivery expanded through state-funded legal aid centres, referrals and survivor livelihood support, including GBV hotlines which were later closed, addressing differentiated needs. Initiatives to raise awareness of the new State Programme on Women’s Entrepreneurship 2027 and leadership pipelines also introduced norm-shifting pilots.

However, programming largely focused on expanding participation and service access, rather than addressing entrenched norms and structural drivers of inequality. The closure of Spotlight and GBV projects left a gap in gender-transformative programming. Across outcomes, gender mainstreaming was applied primarily through cross-cutting components. Institutional constraints - including the lack of designated gender focal points, gender strategy, intersectional data, norm-change mechanisms and costed gender action plans - limited systematic integration of gender across the programme. The Gender Portfolio Review noted such gaps, and the need for systematic partnerships and resourcing to transition towards consistent gender-transformative programming as defined under GRES.¹²³

¹²² UNDP Tajikistan (2021) ROAR.

¹²³ UNDP IRH (2025).

Finding 21. Leaving No One Behind.

The UNDP Tajikistan approach to the LNOB principle was highly relevant, but uneven. While targeted initiatives - particularly in legal aid, civil registration, PVE and pilots for women and remote communities - reached some vulnerable groups, there was no explicit LNOB strategy. LNOB achievements were concentrated in governance and justice and remained fragmented and urban and peri-urban focused in the inclusive growth outcome rather than programme-wide.

Both CPDs covered in this evaluation identified LNOB as a strategic direction, naming women, youth, persons with disabilities, migrants, stateless persons and rural communities as priority groups, and committing to stronger data disaggregation. However, LNOB was not codified into a ToC-level strategy with intersectional targeting, indicators or accountability mechanisms. In practice, delivery clustered in areas where UNDP had established entry points. Legal aid was institutionalized, expanding from 9,110 users in 2021 to over 22,000 by 2024. Civil registration services were digitalized and advocacy supported systemic change for persons with disabilities, including the State “Accessible Environment 2021–2025” Programme, parliamentary and local advisory groups, and the Law on Equality and Prevention of Discrimination.¹²⁴ Rural resilience and climate adaptation pilots also reached vulnerable populations, including 24,505 people in 2022 and nearly 9,000 through solar and biogas access in 2023–24.¹²⁵

Coverage across vulnerable groups was uneven. Women, youth, rural and mountain communities and stateless persons were reached through multiple initiatives. Persons with disabilities benefitted primarily through policy frameworks rather than systematic mainstreaming. Migrants and returnees were only partially included through short-term employment and MSME support during COVID-19 recovery, without structured reintegration or rights-based support. Economic inclusion initiatives were largely pilot-based and concentrated in urban and peri-urban areas, leaving structural rural poverty, which affects approximately two thirds of the population, unaddressed.¹²⁶ Climate adaptation programming, while relevant, seldom incorporated gender, disability or migration vulnerabilities.

Outcome 3 demonstrated the strongest LNOB focus, particularly in governance and justice programming, but this approach was not mainstreamed across the broader programme. These patterns reflected stronger LNOB positioning in areas where UNDP had long-standing mandates and institutional entry points, such as justice, civil registration and policy reform, while engagement with migrants, refugees, the rural poor and persons with disabilities was more fragmented, pilot-driven or project-based. This reflected the absence of a programme-wide LNOB strategy or accountability framework to ensure systematic inclusion across the CPD.

Several factors limited consistent LNOB implementation. Data disaggregation lagged behind CPD commitments, intersectional analysis was limited, and accountability mechanisms were insufficiently institutionalized. Consequently, despite strong UNDP positioning to advance inclusion through justice and governance reforms, LNOB results were not system-wide, indicating the need to deepen reach to those furthest behind (see Annex 9).

Finding 22. M&E system.

UNDP Tajikistan employed a structured M&E system that aligned project-level interventions with CPD outcomes, UNSDCF results and national priorities. Monitoring mechanisms were well established and project-output linkages were clearly defined, though there was limited strategic use of evaluation and

¹²⁴ UNDP Tajikistan (2021) ROAR, UNDP Tajikistan (2022) ROAR.

¹²⁵ UNDP Tajikistan (2025b) Biennial Report: UNDP Tajikistan 2023-2024

¹²⁶ Bertelsmann Stiftung (2024).

evidence. Weak indicator feasibility, and gaps in strategic evaluation and disaggregated data constrained the ability of UNDP to demonstrate evidence-based results and enhance strategic accountability and positioning.

UNDP Tajikistan applied results-based management arrangements to track results at both project and programme levels. Oversight was exercised through project and programme boards and corporate quality-assurance tools, with all projects explicitly linked to CPD outputs and outcomes. However, feasibility concerns persisted. Several outcome indicators lacked baseline data, were marked 'TBD' or not updated beyond 2022 in the CPD. Baselines and targets were later established for some indicators in the UNSDCF Joint Work Plan, endorsed in March 2023, and monitored annually through corporate processes (ROAR/IWP), but the lag from CPD approval caused data discontinuities which limited opportunities for early outcome-level trend analysis.

Data disaggregated by sex and LNOB targets were inconsistently reported, constraining equity analysis and reflecting challenges in indicator definition, data availability and reporting alignment. Several strategic indicators were not measured, particularly on green economy, informal employment and youth not in education, employment or training, reflecting a gap between programme and monitoring capacity.

The M&E framework included quarterly progress monitoring, semi-annual mid-year reviews and annual reporting processes. However, intermediate progress tracking lacked clarity, and reporting formats varied in depth and focus, limiting opportunities for comparison or aggregation of progress and results. Monitoring partly relied on offline Excel tracking, which ensured compliance but introduced risks relating to timeliness, version control and systematic learning to support adaptive management. In addition, many indicators were framed in binary terms, limiting the ability to capture the depth or quality of change. Project monitoring reports generally provided strong output accountability but lacked analysis of outcomes and impact levels. Variations in monitoring quality across outcomes showed that reporting often remained compliance-focused, rather than systematically informing adaptive management, decision-making or learning.

Between 2021 and 2025, UNDP Tajikistan planned 15 project-level evaluations across climate resilience, civil registration, youth and economic recovery. These were aligned with programme priorities, but many were delayed, revised or cancelled due to project extensions, donor coordination requirements or scheduling constraints, pointing to the need for stronger mechanisms to ensure timely, strategic evaluation and systematic use of findings. Evidence informed some adaptive shifts, but learning remained *ad hoc*. No strategic evaluations were conducted to assess the UNDP contributions to development outcomes outlined in the country and regional programmes and thematic areas. Overall, while the M&E system provided a solid operational monitoring foundation, there was a need to strengthen indicator feasibility and coverage across projects.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



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

3.1 Conclusions

Relevance and coherence

The UNDP programme was consistently relevant to national priorities, vulnerable populations and emerging transition challenges, though systemic inclusion of those left behind was uneven.

UNDP operated in a context of institutional evolution, regional volatility, a complex civic environment and constrained public finance, alongside a growing, youthful population and emerging prospects for green growth and regional integration. UNDP aligned well with the NDS 2030, MTDP 2021–2025 and UNSDCF results areas. It responded strategically to Tajikistan’s enduring deficits in governance, climate vulnerability and economic diversification. The programme meaningfully targeted women, youth and rural populations, especially in regions such as Khatlon, Sughd, Rasht Valley and GBAO. UNDP demonstrated operational relevance through rapid crisis response and adaptation, including repurposing funds and supporting MSMEs and health services during COVID-19. However, LNOB was not consistently embedded across all outcomes, due to weak disaggregated data, limited social vulnerability analysis, skills-finance mismatches, structural labour market barriers and urban-centric modalities in parts of the economic outcome, demonstrating an uneven application of LNOB principles and limited strategic coherence in addressing demographic challenges.

Internal and external coherence varied across outcomes, with deeper integration achieved in governance, but weaker synergy across the economic portfolio.

UNDP combined upstream policy engagement with community-based delivery and institutional strengthening, contributing to coherence across outcomes. However, the core components of the economic outcome - policy reform, private sector development, innovation and skills - were not consistently integrated into a unified reform pathway. The CPD ToC was based on the assumption that strengthened governance would enable systemic progress, but in practice governance gains were not sufficient to drive integration across environmental and economic transformation without stronger cross-outcome coordination, complementary investments and national ownership. UNDP engagement with IFIs, private sector actors and national planning and budgeting institutions, including the Ministry of Finance and regional economic platforms, was largely project-driven and transactional, rather than part of a coherent reform strategy. This limited the programme’s ability to leverage broader coalitions for systemic economic reform.

Strategic positioning

UNDP positioning in Tajikistan was distinctive, providing a combination of access, convening power and technical depth that few development partners could match.

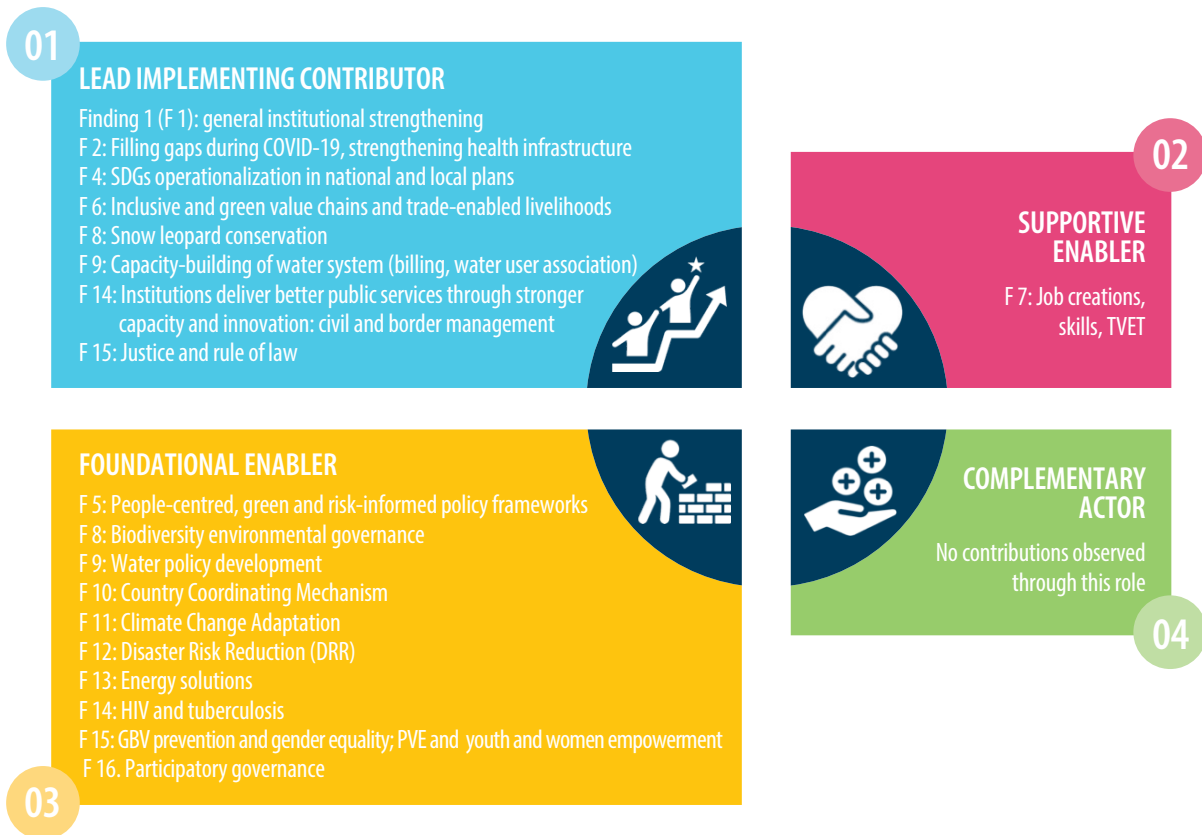
UNDP leveraged its long-standing trust, neutrality and convening power to maintain access to sensitive sectors such as governance, legal identity, PVE and HIV and TB services. Its ability to work across executive, legislative and judicial branches enabled delivery in a restrictive and shifting operating environment, enabling it to pivot from direct service provision to systemic institutional reform in several areas, including sensitive locations.

The programme effectively capitalized on the comparative strengths of UNDP as a convener and technical integrator, particularly in embedding the SDG agenda, strengthening national institutions and systems, and advancing national climate policy and inclusive governance innovations. The country office worked closely with national ministries and local authorities, often serving as a lead partner on reform initiatives. However, the government-centred positioning of UNDP, while enabling policy access, limited its engagement with private capital, civil society and innovation ecosystems, constraining wider coalition-building for reform.

Effectiveness and sustainability

UNDP delivered tangible, often catalytic results across governance, environment and SDG institutionalization, but systemic transformation was moderated by structural barriers. Patterns of UNDP contributions reflected its varying roles across outcomes. It was a foundational enabler in areas such as green policy frameworks, biodiversity, water governance, DRR, climate mitigation and adaptation, HIV and TB and participatory governance, where its support was essential but depended on complementary action by the Government and other partners. In other areas, UNDP acted as a lead implementing contributor, notably in SDG localization, civil registration and border systems, snow leopard conservation and basic service innovation; where change would not have been possible without UNDP engagement in government-led processes. UNDP played a supportive enabler role in labour market and TVET programmes, where it strengthened national processes already underway, but did not drive the reform agenda. Institutional uptake remained uneven, fiscal sustainability and national budget anchoring were partial, and absorptive capacity varied across sectors (Figure 17).

FIGURE 17: UNDP areas of contribution, by role and by finding



Source: Developed by author.

UNDP contributed to strengthening enabling conditions for sustainable development by reinforcing national systems, aligning interventions with long-term strategies and promoting integrated solutions, although the depth and durability of results varied where structural constraints and national uptake were limited. The most durable outcomes, such as in civil registration, legal

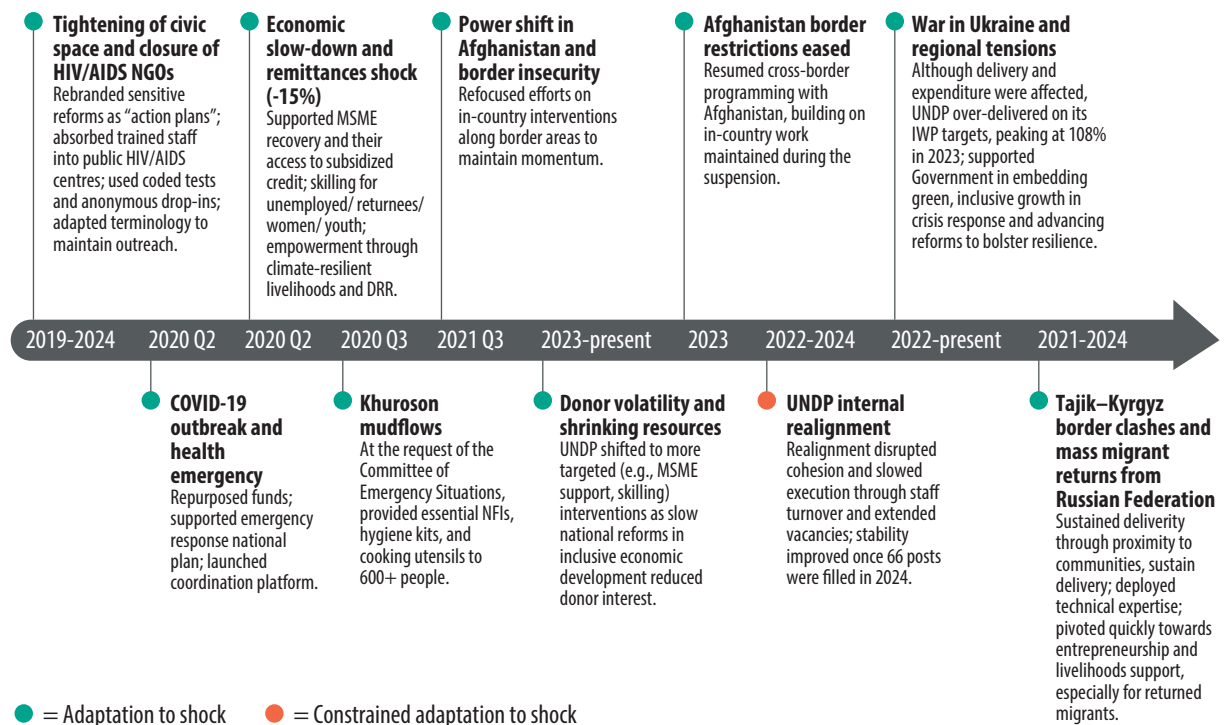
aid and SDG nationalization, were embedded within legal mandates and public systems. In contrast, systemic sustainability was uneven, limited by financing gaps, reliance on donor subsidies, centralized decision-making and limited subnational uptake. Overall, the catalytic role of UNDP was strongest where reforms were institutionalized within national systems, and more limited in areas where structural barriers persisted, such as economic transformation and private sector development.

Efficiency and adaptability

UNDP maintained regular project and programme monitoring, though often output-focused and compliance-oriented. Low quality and limited disaggregation of data, and inconsistent reporting formats, constrained their use for analysis and adaptive management. Several evaluations were delayed or cancelled, and learning was more *ad hoc* than strategic. While foundational monitoring systems were in place, gaps in indicator feasibility, intermediate progress tracking and systemic evidence use limited the contribution of M&E to real-time decision-making and course correction.

UNDP demonstrated adaptability through shifts in delivery approaches and financing modalities, although systemic bottlenecks and staffing gaps constrained overall programme performance. In a fast-changing operating context including civic space restrictions, COVID-19, donor volatility and border insecurity (Figure 18), the country office adjusted rapidly, maintaining delivery in remote areas, restructuring platforms and deploying adaptive tools such as microgrants, solar solutions and digital service platforms. These adjustments preserved programme relevance and results during periods of volatility. At the same time, procedural delays, slow procurement processes and staffing gaps reduced delivery efficiency. Internal restructuring between 2022 and 2024 affected institutional continuity, staff turnover and prolonged vacancies, which further constrained the programme implementation.

FIGURE 18: Timeline of shocks and UNDP responses



3.2 Recommendations and management response

The strategic value of UNDP in Tajikistan lies in its ability to enable transition across governance, climate, digital and demographic domains, through people-centred systems reform for sustainable development. As 2030 approaches, the comparative advantage of UNDP in institutional reform, national planning and upstream–downstream integration will remain critical. The next CPD (2026–2030) must move beyond expanding activities and focus on anchoring reforms within domestic systems, cross-sector coalitions and sustainable financing. To fulfil its enabling role in Tajikistan’s development transition, UNDP will need a sharper strategic focus, stronger partnerships beyond government, and cohesive technical capacity that links innovation with reform, and delivery with accountability.

RECOMMENDATION 1.



Consolidate recent governance and institutional reforms by focusing on select mechanisms that enhance fiscal integration, accountability and the sustainability of ongoing initiatives. To operationalize this, UNDP could consider:

- a. Prioritizing, with government counterparts, two to three key reform areas for fiscal integration pilots.
- b. Exploring ways to partner with the Ministry of Finance, its subordinated bodies and relevant line ministries to embed tools such as SDG costing or gender-responsive budgeting within the next budget cycle.
- c. Strengthening partnerships with Parliament, oversight bodies and a small set of strategic civic actors to enhance accountability and service delivery.
- d. Linking project exit strategies to national planning and investment frameworks to ensure reforms transition from pilots and donor subsidies to nationally financed systems.

Management response:



UNDP partially accepts this recommendation and agrees with its strategic intent to strengthen the sustainability, fiscal integration and accountability of ongoing governance and institutional reform initiatives. At the same time, the country office notes that the scope of such reforms depends on national ownership, political feasibility and fiscal space, which may limit the extent to which UNDP can pursue the proposed measures.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.1 UNDP will continue with the Ministry of Finance to advocate for more state investments in the biodiversity area through the development of the biodiversity finance plan.	30 June 2027	Environment and Climate Change cluster	Under the global BioFin project	Initiated

1.2 UNDP intends to strengthen transparency and accountability by supporting the Government in establishing a safe corruption reporting mechanism and an effective system for the assessment of government effectiveness in implementing anticorruption measures.	30 June 2027	Governance cluster	Project Initiation Plan to be effective in January 2026	Initiated
1.3 UNDP will actively engage with the Government counterparts for financial sustainability and scale up successful pilot initiatives at the national level (free legal aid system, establishment of e-justice system, civil registration, etc).	31 December 2026	Governance cluster		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 2.



Scale up private sector and innovation systems to expand financing, job creation and inclusive green growth. UNDP should intensify engagement with the private sector and explore ways of partnering with IFIs on public finance reform, innovation systems, green investment and decent job creation as drivers of sustainable development. This could include:

- a. Identifying and promoting opportunities in green and blended finance initiatives, leveraging existing coordination with the Government, IFIs and private sector actors to mobilize additional capital and stimulate decent employment.
- b. Supporting MSME development and green innovation systems by delivering targeted support services, including programmes for women, youth, migrants, persons with disabilities and rural entrepreneurs, and advocating for and providing technical support to integrate measurable employment generation components into national strategies, financing frameworks and public-private partnerships.
- c. Facilitating private sector-TVET alignment to strengthen employability, digital and labour market linkages.

Management response:



UNDP accepts the recommendation. UNDP will continue to promote blended and green finance initiatives, support SMEs and strengthen linkages between skills development, labour market needs and access to finance. This will include efforts to engage with IFIs involved in direct budget support to push for curricular, policy reforms and, opportunity permitting, provide technical advisory and capacity-building in areas such as climate tagging of national budgets. The work in TVET systems still requires deeper analysis of needs and close coordination with other development actors. Under the new programme cycle, UNDP will put strong emphasis on building and deepening partnerships with the IFIs and private sector to unlock additional funding and drive large-scale impact.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
2.1 UNDP will explore partnership with the IFIs and private sector in the areas of access to finance, digital skills development, access to green finance initiatives etc.	30 June 2027	Country office		Ongoing
2.2 UNDP will continue implementing its ongoing initiatives on targeted programmes for women, youth, persons with disabilities and rural communities on entrepreneurship and employable skills	31 December 2026	Sustainable economic development cluster	A4T project YSD project	Ongoing
2.3 UNDP will conduct an assessment of labour market demands and skills gaps to inform future interventions on promotion of economic empowerment, TVET and skills development	31 December 2026	Sustainable economic development cluster	YSD project	Not started

RECOMMENDATION 3.



Institutionalize gender equality and LNOB as binding programme drivers. UNDP should go beyond project-level responsiveness to embed gender equality and LNOB systematically across outcomes. This could entail:

- a. Finalizing and resourcing a gender strategy, with accountability mechanisms.
- b. Developing and applying LNOB frameworks with intersectional targeting and disaggregated indicators across outcomes.
- c. Partnering with women’s organizations, disability advocates, community leaders and youth networks to strengthen accountability and norm change.
- d. Applying LNOB and gender lenses systematically in economic and climate outcomes, focusing on structural rural poverty, disability inclusion and migrant reintegration.

Management response: 

UNDP accepts the recommendation. UNDP will focus on further institutionalizing gender equality and LNOB principles across the ongoing and next CPD outcomes.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
3.1 UNDP will develop a gender equality strategy for the period 2026-2030, which will be aligned with the new CPD 2027-2030	31 December 2026	Country office	UNDP applied for Gender Seal	Initiated
3.2 The country office will apply LNOB and gender lenses systematically in designing its new CPD	30 April 2026	Country office		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 4. 

Strengthen operational resilience and national implementation capacity for adaptive and sustainable delivery, risk planning and knowledge management. To achieve this, UNDP could consider four operational priorities:

- a. Strengthening internal knowledge management systems to capture and use lessons systematically.
- b. Supporting capacity-building of select ministries and agencies to gradually transition from a heavy reliance on DIM to NIM, with clear fiduciary risk management safeguards.
- c. Developing forward-looking risk and scenario planning capacity and strengthening innovative resource mobilization (e.g., climate funds, blended finance) to sustain adaptability under protracted funding uncertainty.
- d. Promoting integrated programme design and cross-cluster planning to enhance programme coherence and efficiency.

Management response: 

UNDP accepts the recommendation. Given that the current CPD is in its final phase, the country office will ensure that the new CPD is informed by lessons learned, especially ICPE observations, results of the foresight exercise that took place in 2025 and is grounded in integrated programme design and cross-cluster planning. Capacity development will continue to be guided by HACT micro-assessments and assurance activities, supporting the gradual transition from DIM to NIM.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
4.1 The country office will introduce platforms to present knowledge products, best practices, lessons learned, to a wider audience	31 December 2026	Programme Unit	All clusters	Initiated
4.2 The country office will continue building the capacity of national agencies based on the results of HACT micro-assessments and relevant assurance activities	30 June 2027	PMSU		Initiated
4.3 The country office will ensure that the new CPD is informed by lessons learned, forward-looking risk and scenario planning, and is based on integrated programme design and cross-cluster planning	30 April 2026	Country office		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 5.



Strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning as adaptive management tools. UNDP Tajikistan should overhaul its M&E system to ensure timely and analytical use of evidence. This could entail:

- Consolidating existing indicators into an outcome-level dashboard that shows progress across outcomes and highlights linkages.
- Improving data quality and consistency by ensuring intermediary indicator updates (where applicable) and systematic data disaggregation (e.g., sex, youth, vulnerability).
- Simplifying project reporting formats to be more analytical and less descriptive, focusing on trends, explanations and implications for management.
- Planning evaluations strategically, focusing on areas where learning can inform scale-up or systemic change, rather than spreading thinly across projects.
- Creating regular reflection spaces (e.g., quarterly or annual reviews) where managers and partners can use M&E evidence to adapt programming in a timely manner.

Management response:



UNDP accepts the recommendation. The country office will strengthen the strategic use of monitoring, evaluation and learning by ensuring a clear and coherent results logic in the new CPD, improving the quality and capacity of monitoring and reporting.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
5.1 The country office will ensure that the results logic in the new CPD clearly articulates how outputs contribute to outcome-level change, supported by SMART indicators	31 December 2026	Country office		Initiated
5.2 The country office will strengthen the analytical quality of monitoring and reporting to ensure that higher-level results and trends are consistently reflected in regular programme and project reports. The country office will also further strengthen the in-house capacity on enhancing M&E skills including creating reflection spaces.	31 December 2026	PMSU		Initiated
5.3 The country office will ensure that the Evaluation Plan of the new CPD includes strategic evaluations where possible	31 December 2026	Programme Unit		Not initiated

RECOMMENDATION 6.



Advance the UNDP integrator role by embedding adaptive programming practices in future CPD design. The ability of UNDP to operate in sensitive spaces and lead on complex, multisectoral reforms remains a key asset. The next CPD could advance this role by:

- a. Institutionalizing adaptive management approaches that allow for rapid adaptation to shocks - including scenario planning, results-based reprioritization and iterative learning mechanisms -to complement reprogramming and budget adjustments in response to evolving contextual dynamics.
- b. Strengthening upstream-downstream linkages by ensuring that national policy reforms are connected with area-based delivery.
- c. Convening multi-stakeholder coordination platforms to advance sustainable development ambitions. This includes continuing support to nationally led SDG planning and financing structures and fostering coherence across social, environmental and economic outcomes.
- d. Building coalitions around climate resilience, green and just transition, gender equality and governance innovation.

Management response:



UNDP accepts the recommendation. The country office will ensure that the new CPD is informed by adaptive programming approaches and risk-informed scenario planning to respond to evolving contextual dynamics as well as providing technical leadership in area-based development programming.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
6.1 The country office will ensure that the new CPD is informed by adaptive programming approaches and risk-informed scenario planning to respond to evolving contextual dynamics.	31 December 2026	Country office		Initiated
6.2 UNDP will continue supporting multi-stakeholder coordination platforms (UNSDCF Result Groups, Development Coordination Council etc.) to reinforce its integrator role.	30 June 2027	Country office		Initiated

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

ANNEXES

Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the Evaluation Resource Centre website of the Independent Evaluation Office at <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/25374>:

Annex 1. Terms of reference

Annex 2. Project list

Annex 3. Evaluation matrix

Annex 4. Data collection methods

Annex 5. Documents consulted

Annex 6. Performance rating

Annex 7. GIS maps

Annex 8. Country office at a glance

Annex 9. Status of country programme outcome & output indicators

Annex 10. Leaving no one behind framework

Annex 11. The framework to assess UNDP's contribution

Annex 12. ICPE TOC

Annex 13. ICPE data collection details



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