



**Final Evaluation of the
United Nations Development Assistance
Framework (2011-2015)**

2014

Baku

**Final Evaluation of the
United Nations Development Assistance
Framework 2011-2015
in the Republic of Azerbaijan**

FINAL REPORT¹

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CCA	Common Country Assessment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DaO	Delivering as One
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MIC	Middle-Income Country
MTR	Mid-Term Review
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
RBM	Results-Based Management
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPPRSD	State Programme for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development (2008-2015)
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

Executive Summary

Introduction and Methodology

This Final Evaluation assessment focuses on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2011-2015 in Azerbaijan and seeks to understand the extent to which the formulation and implementation of the UNDAF process and document enhanced the coherence, efficiency and effectiveness of development assistance in the country. In turn, the focus is on whether the UNDAF assisted the United Nations in Azerbaijan to be more than the sum of its parts: Did it enable the United Nations to strategically position itself in a complex and rapidly evolving environment? Did it influence programmatic choices and allocation of resources? And, had the UNDAF not existed, what would have been different? The essence of this assessment, therefore, is to determine what can be improved for the next UNDAF cycle for the period of 2016-2020.

At the same time, it is critical to note that a comprehensive Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the UNDAF was conducted in November 2013, and that very little, if anything, had changed in the development environment in the ensuing timeframe. Most significantly, a number of the constraints in terms of design, content, implementation and monitoring and evaluation, combined with notable time constraints, prevented a rigorously evidence-based analysis.

General Observations and Key Findings

In all, the UNDAF was the result of a consultative process among the UNCT, the Government of Azerbaijan, representatives of civil society and other development partners working in the country. As a result of these meetings and building on the strategic goals identified in the State Programme for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development (2008-2015), three broad areas of economic development, social development and governance were established as the basis for formulating UNDAF Outcomes; it was agreed that gender, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) would be treated as cross-cutting issues.

Some very good combined and individual Agency results have occurred during the period of this UNDAF, although not necessarily as a result of efforts framed by the UNDAF itself. Particularly with regard to individual Agencies, work in such overall areas as strengthening of legal frameworks and support to institutional reforms is notable, among many others. Critically, briefings on specific issues in terms of Delivering UNDAF as One catalysed United Nations collaboration during 2011 and 2012 and were well received; this also established a regular mechanism on programmatic issues during that period, although that has not been sustained. The national consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, although not directly linked to the UNDAF, likewise represented a real breakthrough.

The United Nations' global authority, legitimacy and neutrality represent key positive factors that continue to assist the UNCT in its work in the country. Overall, the United Nations is still seen as the main guardian of high principles and commitments, and programmatically, particularly promising opportunities have been cited as existing across a wide range of areas, particularly including South-South cooperation; strengthening national progress reporting on international Conventions; advancing gender equality; promoting inclusive education, improved services for people with disabilities, and disability mainstreaming; ensuring greater attention to youth-related issues; preventing non-communicable diseases (NCDs); strengthening the right of access to information for

all; and facilitating coordination among Ministries and other partners on emerging and/or cross-cutting issues. Important opportunities also exist for enhanced development results through strengthened linkages between programmes and business operations in support of programme delivery, and in terms of Communicating as One.

Overall, the UNDAF concept was appreciated, particularly opportunities to learn about and be sensitized to programming principles such as the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and Results-Based Management (RBM), and the UNDAF was seen as largely relevant to national policies and strategies. However, some reactions were highly nuanced, and expectations of greater flexibility were emphasized in the context of a dynamic national reform process.

The process of articulating the UNDAF was deemed relatively inclusive, but faced key challenges (1) in terms of ensuring that all participants were well-versed in effective ways to development such a five-year strategy; (2) in strengthening of participation by Government during all phases, as well as by non-government organizations (NGOs), other civil society organizations (CSOs), the private sector and academia, and by those outside the capital, Baku; and (3) in ensuring sufficient clarity around what should go into, and what should be left out of, the UNDAF document to make it a usefully authoritative reference. Having a single interlocutor in the United Nations as a whole, rather than individual Agencies, was highlighted, as was an unfulfilled need for heightened attention by Agencies to dedicated communication and advocacy work around the UNDAF.

Critically, the UNDAF was found to require greater strategic focus, implementation and monitoring. A number of interviewees criticized the UNDAF as resembling a “menu” of Agency-specific options rather than a strategic tool that informs or guides choices, and/or a document that clearly articulates United Nations positions on development issues in Azerbaijan. In terms of cross-cutting issues/UNDAF guiding principles, gender equality and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) were both found to be generally well-integrated. The United Nations Gender Theme Group (GTG) has been particularly proactive in initiating joint projects to advance gender equality and promote women’s empowerment, thereby underscoring the UNCT’s commitment, as a whole, to promote and protect women’s rights. A series of initiatives has resulted in concrete steps on improved disaggregated data collection and research, legal and policy building, capacity development, and awareness raising and advocacy. While the HRBA, as one of the UNDAF programming principles, was not explicitly included as a cross-cutting issue, United Nations Agencies, including through the United Nations Task Force on Human Rights, were active in their support to promote and protect human rights in the country, among both rights-holders and duty-bearers.

Even so, insufficient investments were made to ensure the UNDAF’s effective use. Participation was relatively strong at the beginning of the UNDAF cycle, but diminished as new challenges were encountered, a feature also common to other countries. Dialogue around the UNDAF was not sustained during the implementation phase; likewise, donor coordination was cited as requiring greater United Nations leadership, as well as Government participation. In theory, UNDAF coordination structures were relatively well-established, but in practice, the coordination structure was not well-maintained across the board and, thus, did not operate effectively. Combined with an unwieldy 82 UNDAF outputs, this resulted in M&E, the UNDAF’s third cross-cutting issue, proving highly problematic. Collaboration has been strongest when it has been issue-driven, and has not necessarily been specifically linked to the UNDAF instrument itself. The Final Evaluation, as well as

the MTR, thus, found that not all Agencies had been equally active in the UNDAF; for their part, Agencies cited a lack of sufficient human resources and sufficient time as significant UNDAF “costs.” Joint programmes, were not specifically informed by the UNDAF, but again often arose opportunistically after the UNDAF formulation, as a result of emerging needs and/or new funding sources.

Recommendations

In all, it appears that the UNDAF may have fallen short of its potential effectiveness, even as enhanced efficiency represents an area of further promise for reducing duplication and increasing value for money as a result of working more closely together between Agencies and with the Government. Recommendations have, thus, been organized around several key themes, including the overarching approach to the UNDAF: articulating focus and priorities; engaging national counterparts; improving coordination; ensuring effective M&E processes; and communication modalities. These include:

Overarching Approach to the UNDAF

- Employ a minimalist approach as much as possible, but consider a “middle path.” Keep the next UNDAF at the Outcome level, but be sure to consider the variety of drawbacks posed by such Outcome-only UNDAFs, including a global tendency toward vagueness. Overall, more focus should be given to short-term plans and priorities within the UNDAF *chapeau*.
- Consider a shift from assistance provision to partnership and cooperation.
- Use flexibility to remain strategic and relevant.
- Distribute the UNDAF document more widely and encourage its broader use as both a reference document and a planning tool.
- Ensure a balance between strategic focus and inclusivity.
- Be very demanding in terms of strategic approaches expected of all Agencies with regard to the UNDAF process.
- Create stronger incentives for collaboration, but not necessarily through Outcome and Theme Groups.
- Develop additional expertise in monitoring and evaluation to ensure better focus and benchmarks.

Articulating Focus and Priorities

- The UNCT should continue to engage in a discussion that seeks clear answers to the following questions: What do we want out of our UNDAF, and would it be useful?
- Strategic focus areas, to the extent possible, should be articulated in a non-sectoral/cross-cutting way and reflect real choices on how the United Nations engages in Azerbaijan. If focus areas fall outside of traditional United Nations sectors, this could either allow for joint action in specific areas, or could inform how Agencies go about implementing that mandate.

Engaging National Counterparts

- The UNCT should vigorously engage with the Government to discuss the appropriate structure for a light but proactive UNDAF Advisory Committee.
- Moreover, the UNCT should make a concerted effort to reach out to a broader set of national actors in the preparation of the next UNDAF.

Improving Coordination

- Modalities for engagement and respective expectations of the RC and Agencies should be formulated, signed and used as a basis for moving forward in the context of the next UNDAF.
- UNDAF-related working groups (Outcome Groups, Theme Groups or others) should serve as problem-solving entities, and not just information-sharing meetings.
- Ideally, no Agency should lead more than one working group.
- The UNCT should use its position as a reliable, impartial actor to strengthen donor coordination as well.

Ensuring Effective M&E Processes

- The UNCT should make a significant commitment to developing baselines for each of the key strategic focus areas, at the Outcome level. The need for reliable statistical data should, therefore, be made an essential component of each of the strategic Outcome areas.
- The Monitoring and Evaluation process of the UNDAF should be made as simple – and transparent – as possible. Each outcome should have only two or three indicators, which should be constructed in a way capable of measuring impact.

Deepening Communication Modalities

- The UNDAF document should be as short, concise and “high-level” as possible, and flexible enough to be able to adapt to changing circumstances. A two- to four-page summary should be made available and widely distributed among national counterparts, donors, private sector actors, and others.
- Overall, the UNCT should make a more concerted effort to communicate its activities to the people.

In all, making such modifications can help to ensure that the UNDAF 2016-2020 genuinely serves as a process that helps to address and improve the role, contribution and strategy of United Nations support in the country context of Azerbaijan.

I. Introduction

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is the common strategic framework for the development activities of the United Nations System at country level, and evaluations of the UNDAF are used for learning which strategies have been truly effective, what failures have taken place, and what lessons have been learned to guide the development of future partnership frameworks. In turn, UNDAF evaluations are intended to provide important information for strengthening programming and results at country level; specifically for informing planning and decision making for the next UNDAF cycle; and for helping to improve the United Nations coordination. Documentation of good practices can then be used for the benefit of other countries.

By objectively verifying results achieved within the framework of the UNDAF, the evaluation also enables various stakeholders in the UNDAF process, including national governments and donors, to hold the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and other parties accountable for fulfilling their commitments. This is seen as crucial, given the broad-based scope and the resources involved in most UNDAFs. In recognition of these benefits, UNDAF guidance makes evaluation of each UNDAF mandatory.

This assessment focuses on the UNDAF 2011-2015 in Azerbaijan and seeks to understand the extent to which the formulation and implementation of the UNDAF process and document enhanced the coherence, efficiency and effectiveness of development assistance in the country. It is essential to underscore that the report serves neither as an evaluation of the United Nations in Azerbaijan nor as an overview of development assistance in general. It serves solely as an assessment of the value added of the UNDAF as an instrument for articulating priorities and enhancing coordination and effectiveness of development activities. The Terms of Reference (ToR) has been clear in terms of the purpose, objectives and scope of the UNDAF Final Evaluation, and articulated a tailored set of evaluation questions used as a basis for reference (see Annex A for the full ToR).

The Final Evaluation, thus, assesses the UNDAF strictly as an instrument, focusing on: the formulation/consultation process for identifying and aligning with Government priorities; the coordination architecture that oversees, and monitors, implementation of the UNDAF; and the choice of results (Outcomes and outputs) reflected in the document itself. In turn, the focus is on whether the UNDAF assisted the United Nations in Azerbaijan to be more than the sum of its parts: Did it enable the United Nations to strategically position itself in a complex and rapidly evolving environment? Did it influence programmatic choices and allocation of resources? And, had the UNDAF not existed, what would have been different?

The UNDAF is a time-consuming process, and if the costs outweigh the benefits, strategic changes need to be made. The preparation of the UNDAF, as well as its monitoring and evaluation, place significant pressure on the United Nations at a time when resources are scarce; it cannot afford to use these precious resources in a way that does not improve its ability to serve the people of Azerbaijan. But, if those resources can be catalysed to compound and, in fact, multiply the impact that United Nations Agencies are able to have by working together, then the UNDAF's benefits outweigh the costs. The essence of this assessment, therefore, is to focus on what can be improved for the next UNDAF cycle for the period of 2016-2020.

II. Background

The preparation phase for the current UNDAF began in May 2009, a time of high overall economic growth in Azerbaijan despite the global economic downturn. Nonetheless, a need to make national growth more inclusive and sustainable existed, through broadening of the economic base beyond hydrocarbon wealth and creation of a strong private sector. These development challenges persist, as does a second defining factor in the formulation of the UNDAF 2011-2015: the need for long-term reforms and significant support for capacity development to the enabling environment, as well as among institutions and individuals.

Overall, Azerbaijan has become a confident State in the post-Soviet era and an upper Middle-Income Country (MIC) that is experiencing one of the most exciting periods in its history. New socio-economic systems have been established, and the necessary infrastructure to support expanded economic activities is taking shape; all of this has generated economic dynamism and significantly reduced poverty rates. Economic growth particularly accelerated after 2005, although it has moderated considerably in recent years as oil revenues have fallen sharply. The country also is striving to become an information and high technology hub for the region.

While progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has been largely positive, other indicators of human development have been more mixed or remain challenging. For example, the distribution of economic wealth is uneven between rural and urban areas, leaving a considerable number of vulnerable people just below or above the poverty line, and the private sector is underdeveloped. In addition, the national labour market is characterized by a significant mismatch of demand and supply, high youth unemployment, and a rise of vulnerable and informal work, particularly among women.

The overall quality of social services, particularly education and health care, represents a concern despite notable progress; perceptions also are widespread of corrupt practices needed to ensure the effective delivery of many social services. In all, availability and reliability of data, as well as constraints in disaggregation and analysis, remain a particularly significant challenge. The urgent addressing of environmental issues is also becoming increasingly important to protect the environment from the negative impact of harmful economic activities, while the country is highly vulnerable not only to climate change but also to natural disasters including earthquakes, seasonal floods and landslides.

The UNDAF was built on the 2009 Country Analysis (CA) and was aimed to align with the main development policy of that time, the State Programme for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development (SPPRSD) 2008-2015. The timeframe of the UNDAF also was harmonized with the deadline for achievement of the MDGs.

In all, the UNDAF was the result of a consultative process among the UNCT, the Government of Azerbaijan, representatives of civil society and other development partners working in the country. As a result of these meetings, and building on the strategic goals identified in the SPPRSD, three broad areas of economic development, social development and governance were established as the basis for formulating UNDAF Outcomes; it was agreed that gender, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) would be treated as cross-cutting issues.

The final three UNDAF Outcomes were: (1) *“By 2015, non-oil development policies result in better economic status, decent work opportunities and a healthier environment in all regions and across all social groups;”* (2) *“By 2015, vulnerable groups enjoy increased social inclusion, as well as improved and equal access to quality health, education and social protection services;”* and (3) *“By 2015, the State strengthens the system of governance with the involvement of civil society and in compliance with its international commitments, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups.”*

2.1 Methodology

A light and independent UNDAF Final Evaluation was undertaken within a limited timeframe in April-May 2014, and with limited resources. It was conducted in compliance with United Nations Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) and UNDAF guidelines, and in parallel with the new Country Analysis for the next UNDAF 2016-2020. This involved a country visit, a desk review of reference material from UNCT members and, especially, key interviews before the drafting of the preliminary findings and the final report.

An effort was made to be as inclusive as possible; in this spirit, more than 20 individuals were interviewed, including representatives of the Government of Azerbaijan, the United Nations System, and donors (for a complete list, see Annex B). All interviews were conducted anonymously, and therefore, while individuals’ names are listed in the Annex to this document, no statements are attributed to any specific individual or organization in the context of this report. All quotes are, however, accurate and extracted directly from these interviews.

At the same time, it is critical to note that a comprehensive Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the UNDAF was conducted barely six months before this Final Evaluation, and that very little, if anything, had changed in the development environment in the ensuing timeframe. Throughout the document, the Final Evaluation, thus, draws heavily upon the findings of the MTR, with which its own findings are, not surprisingly, congruent.

Lastly, this assessment could not, and did not, undertake an Outcome-by-Outcome analysis. The time limit, combined with the fact that the Final Evaluation takes place some 18 months before the end of the UNDAF cycle, means that such an analysis would be premature. Perhaps most significantly, a number of the constraints in terms of design, content, implementation and monitoring and evaluation, all outlined in Section III below, also prevented a rigorously evidence-based analysis.

III. General Observations and Key Findings

Azerbaijan, as a Middle-Income Country, has a special relationship with the United Nations that is evolving quickly into more of a partnership than one of requiring development assistance. Close attention to this fact will need underpin future United Nations planning, with effects in terms of (1) the focus of support, to ensure that the most vulnerable groups are increasingly prioritized; (2) the forms of such support, to more strongly build on United Nations comparative advantages while still addressing national priorities; and (3) a fundamental shift in the development paradigm as the dichotomy of “donors” and “recipients” fades and South-South partnerships for peer learning and experience sharing emerge.

Some very good combined and individual-Agency results have occurred during the period of this UNDAF, although not necessarily as a result of efforts framed by the UNDAF itself. Particularly with regard to individual Agencies, work in such overall areas as strengthening of legal frameworks and support to institutional reforms is notable, among many others. Critically, briefings on specific issues within the 'Delivering UNDAF as One' initiative catalyzed United Nations collaboration during 2011 and 2012 and were well-received; this also established a regular mechanism on programmatic issues during that period, although that has not been sustained.

The national post-2015 development consultations, although not directly linked to the UNDAF, likewise represented a real breakthrough. In this 2013 effort, which focused on the Agency coordination, the United Nations partnered with the Government and worked with national counterparts, donors and development partners, representatives from academia, the private sector, civil society and the media to ensure their participation in the national dialogue to generate recommendations for the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Interviewees highlighted that the Government's broad commitment to, and respect for, the United Nations' global authority, legitimacy and neutrality represents a key positive factor that continues to assist the UNCT in its work in the country. Overall, the United Nations is still seen as the main guardian of high principles and commitments, several interviewees noted. Nevertheless, as one interviewee stated: "As a Middle-Income Country, the Government wants to feel it is not being approached like those countries that are starving to death or are failed States." Another said, "The Government, understandably, doesn't want to be lectured. I think we avoid that, but it's still important to recall."

Programmatically, particularly promising opportunities have been cited as existing across a wide range of areas, particularly including South-South cooperation, which can assist Azerbaijan to showcase its best practices so it can serve as a role model for other countries, and to learn from other countries' experiences. "The UN is setting the standards," a Government interviewee said. "Without the exposure to international best practices, our reforms would be impossible." Other areas mentioned by interviewees for key potential United Nations assistance include (1) strengthening national progress reporting on international Conventions; (2) advancing gender equality, for example, through enhanced sensitization of judicial personnel, development of legal frameworks, and collection of an evidence base for informed policymaking; (3) promoting inclusive education, improved services for people with disabilities, and disability mainstreaming; (4) ensuring greater attention to youth-related issues; (5) preventing non-communicable diseases (NCDs); (6) strengthening the right of access to information for all; and (7) facilitating coordination among Ministries and other partners on emerging and/or cross-cutting issues such as e-waste, thus building important bridges and deepening strategic partnerships. .

Important opportunities also exist for enhanced development results through strengthened linkages between programmes and business operations in support of programme delivery. These will need to be maximized to ensure that the next UNDAF occurs in a "business unusual" environment. In all, the quality of support to business operations is critical for the quality of programme delivery, and Operating as One provides a business model with an outline for strategic and cost-effective common operational support to implementation that capitalizes on Agency operational capacities and consolidates service provision. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are available globally for

countries wishing to provide a more joined-up approach that results in more overall impact, even if not as part of a formal United Nations Delivering as One (DaO) effort.

In the Azerbaijan context, the UNCT plans to integrate three elements of these SOPs in its business operations strategy, namely, One Leader, Operating as One, and Communicating as One. In turn, these are expected to strengthen the reputation of the United Nations as a strategic, coherent and cost-effective partner working together in Azerbaijan. Particularly in terms of Communicating as One, this will help to ensure coherent messaging from the United Nations, improve the quality of dialogue with the Government, increase advocacy, and further highlight results achieved by the UNCT. Communicating as One is critical for ensuring clear and consistent strategic positioning of the United Nations at its vision at the country level and must not be overlooked.

3.1 Appreciation for the UNDAF Concept, but Expectations of Greater Flexibility

Among Government, United Nations and donor representatives alike, there exists an overall appreciation for what the UNDAF concept seeks to achieve, in terms of articulating strategic priorities. Government representatives indicated that the document gives credibility and impartiality to the development agenda and provides a source of consensus. Others from the Government also found it useful to have one document that provides an overview of United Nations activities, given that their interactions with the United Nations are multiple and numerous. Opportunities to learn about and be sensitized to UNDAF programming principles such as the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and Results-Based Management (RBM) were particularly appreciated. As one Government official said, "Overall, the added value of the UNDAF is that it integrates all elements of a Government multi-sectoral approach and helps us to achieve national goals."

United Nations actors also recognized the potential benefits of the UNDAF concept, describing it as an essential strategic tool that creates a platform for looking ahead, creating synergies and enabling Agencies to go above and beyond the specific concerns of their own entity and see the broader whole. Some underlined that it could also be used as a highly effective fundraising tool with donors, and similarly presents a much-needed opportunity to communicate with the public. Some Agencies, particularly specialized and/or non-resident Agencies, indicated they find it useful to refer to UNDAF as the overarching *chapeau* for their work, including for inter-sectoral work and for building partnerships.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that some overall reactions to the UNDAF were highly nuanced (see Section 3.2). Some interviewees felt that what was described as a "Soviet-style" five-year plan might not be appropriate for a country where Agencies often must work opportunistically in a rapidly changing development environment. For example, when environmental health became a priority during 2012, declared as the national Year of Environment, the United Nations needed to swiftly advocate with multiple relevant Ministries. Meanwhile, other interviewees felt that even a two-year framework would need space for amending strategic goals; often, United Nations managers and others cannot predict what the development situation is going to be. "It's hard to stay relevant when things change fast," one reported, "and some priorities changed significantly since this UNDAF was prepared." In addition, it was pointed out that in the context of a comparatively small UNCT, an UNDAF may be redundant when there is little or no programmatic overlap.

Many interviewees for the Final Evaluation emphasized the need for greater flexibility of any United Nations framework. In addition, during the UNDAF Mid-Term Review (MTR) retreat,² which brought together United Nations Agencies, national counterparts and civil society representatives in late November 2013, it was noted that the Government's national reform process is a dynamic one that results in new tasks and challenges for national institutions, and that may require the United Nations to flexibly provide additional technical expertise to stakeholders. In so doing, such flexibility could assist United Nations Agencies to contribute to effective implementation of new state programmes and initiatives.

3.2 Formulation and Design of the UNDAF: Strengthening Relevance and National Ownership

The process of articulating the UNDAF was deemed to be relatively inclusive. The participatory discussions leading to the formulation of UNDAF Outcomes, as well as Agency Outcomes and Outputs, were launched with representatives of Government agencies, national non-Government organizations (NGOs) and donors alike. Representatives of Agencies of the UNCT, including those from non-resident Agencies, met with Government counterparts at a discussion forum chaired by the Deputy Minister of Economic Development, given that the (now-) Ministry of Economy and Industry represents the United Nations' principal Government partner.

Two further workshops were held under the chairmanship of the Resident Coordinator. At the first, members of the donor community were given opportunities to participate in the process and invited to put forward their vision and proposals for UNDAF priority directions. At the second, representatives of national NGOs were invited to share not only their vision of priorities, but also of their role in future United Nations programmes with the Government.

Broad agreement on the priority areas was reported by participants in the drafting phase, and some Government participants felt that the process gave them additional clarity on their own work plans. There were, however, five main challenges during this process that affected its results:

- First, a wide diversity of individuals participated in the process, both from the United Nations and the Government. Some organizations sent their more senior staff, while others sent technical or even senior administrative staff. A critical point raised by several United Nations Agencies is that even within the United Nations itself, not all participants were well-versed in the most effective way to develop an UNDAF. This was reflected particularly in the formulation of a number of outputs, some of which were written at Outcome level, while some were at activity level.
- In addition, while only United Nations so called ExCom Agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and WFP) are required to participate in the UNDAF, other Agencies are "encouraged" to do so, with the result that some Agencies felt the need to maximize visibility and to be reflected as much as possible in the UNDAF document. This led to serious issues in the later implementation phase (see Section 3.5). "It's difficult to bring Government entities together, but it can be even more so for the UN," observed one interviewee. Moreover, specialized and non-resident Agencies, in particular, highlighted that they "don't have the resources, knowledge, and so forth to help the Government diversify the economy or institute e-governance."

² *United Nations Development Assistance Framework in Azerbaijan (2011-2015) Mid-Term Review Report*. Baku, 2014.

- Second, and on a related note, a number of interviewees emphasized that the United Nations also should support the Government to clearly identify and integrate its most relevant officials in the UNDAF process. The idea was to specifically involve key middle managers and technical personnel who serve as critical links both to the higher Minister/Deputy Minister level, as well as to the lower levels of personnel. Keeping in mind the complexities of inter-institutional and interpersonal relationships will be necessary. “You have to know who is talking to each other.” However, in turn, it was felt, this could deepen national ownership of the UNDAF document by the Government from the political level to the technical level, where a need for strengthened knowledge about the UNDAF was frequently cited as a shortcoming.
- Overall understanding among a wide range of the Government representatives about the purpose of the UNDAF process was a challenge during the formulation phase, and remains so for the next UNDAF. National ownership has also been observed to suffer from a need for more functioning mechanisms at central level to track progress.³ In addition, because of continuous turnover among Government officials, one interviewee observed, “It’s like starting the [UNDAF] process from scratch every time.”
- Third, although civil society was represented, participation by independent non-government organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations (CSOs) required further strengthening, as did the range of interlocutors from the private sector and academia. This represented a key missed opportunity. However, this does not mean that NGOs or other CSOs are not committed to several country programme outputs, but that, in general terms, their participation at the strategic level of the UNDAF remains limited; they also should be involved in UNDAF monitoring processes.
- Fourth, participants were largely “Baku-centric,” with few representatives from the regions, the municipalities or the field. This constrained the discussion among a broad variety of voices of manifestations of key development priorities.
- Fifth, and most importantly, perhaps, in the coming UNDAF there exists a need to ensure sufficient clarity around what should go into, and what should be left out of, the draft UNDAF document. This is likely the singularly most important contributing factor to success or failure of the entire process; experiences from other UNDAF processes specifically, as well as strategic planning processes in general, indicate that clarity and leadership are the starting points for an effective plan. While it may be stating the obvious, failure to forcefully articulate the objective and purpose of the process and document has a “domino” effect on the rest of the five-year process, with the document ultimately ceasing to be a usefully authoritative reference in making programmatic decisions.

Critically, despite the engagement of Government entities in the UNDAF process, collaboration with the Government on the UNDAF was seen as requiring significant further strengthening, during all phases from formulation to implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Numerous interviewees indicated that, in many ways, the UNDAF is still considered as a “UN tool” in Azerbaijan, as it is in many countries; some, however, said they viewed it more as a “combined product.” This strong need for enhanced national ownership may be a key reason that Government partners and some

³ Ibid.

United Nations Agencies reported at the MTR retreat that the UNDAF implementation is not sufficiently prioritized by all parties, who do not see this instrument as a fundamental one.⁴

As also highlighted in the UNDAF MTR document, the Government may benefit from a clearer United Nations contribution to the country's development strategies through having one key interlocutor (the United Nations as a whole), rather than all United Nations Agencies in a dispersed fashion. Unanimously, all Government interviewees for the Final Evaluation cited their work with individual Agencies rather than the United Nations as a single entity. This also applied with other development partners as well. In addition, an unfulfilled need for heightened attention by Agencies to dedicated communication and advocacy work around the UNDAF, with different Ministries and national institutions, has constrained overall ownership and "buy-in" from the Government. While this scenario is almost inescapable in the framework of future partnership strategies too, given the comparative advantages of different United Nations Agencies, increased ownership – coupled with a stronger monitoring of the United Nations' contribution to Azerbaijan's development (see Section 3.5) – has the potential to reinforce the accountability of different actors.

Overall, the UNDAF is seen by interviewees to have been largely relevant to national policies and strategies as set out in the SPPRS. For example, at the MTR retreat, the Social Development Outcome Group found the UNDAF to be relevant to the needs of the country, as well as to a number of national programmes, including the new State Strategy for Education Development (2013-2020).⁵ However, as national priorities have swiftly evolved, relevance has been hard to hang onto at times (see introduction to Section III). "It's generally easier for the UN to access the Government than for someone like us, but most UN projects have to be approved by the Government, and a Memorandum of Understanding can be delayed. So UN projects may be outdated by the time they start," one donor said. As another example, at the MTR retreat it also was pointed out that some key Ministers have been changed, who have new priorities that could affect Agency-specific results significantly. In addition, after some United Nations Agencies closed their offices in Azerbaijan during the current UNDAF cycle, others have been challenged to sustain results achieved from outside of their own programmes.⁶

At the same time, the people-centred MDGs, to which the SPPRS itself was aligned, remain relevant. Thus, United Nations Agencies' activities have contributed to national policies and to actions planned in various national plans and strategies. Even so, it is critical to point out that the focus in the next UNDAF will need to remain firmly on relevance to key national development priorities, rather than on encompassing most of the United Nations Agencies' programmatic areas (see Section 3.3). Key to this is the alignment with the *Azerbaijan: Vision 2020* strategic plan, which represents the Government's new medium-term planning instrument; such alignment for the upcoming UNDAF already is under way among UNCT members.

3.3 Content of the UNDAF: Ensuring Better Coherence

A strategic UNDAF is intended to galvanize United Nations actors to jointly think through how to create an effective governance environment, how to empower and develop local regions, and how to improve social as well as economic development, while also mainstreaming key development

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

issues such as gender equality and human rights. While the UNDAF 2011-2015 reflects most of the activities of United Nations Agencies and was a significant effort from all who participated, overall it would have benefited from greater strategic focus, implementation (see Section 3.4) and monitoring (see Section 3.5).

- Outcomes of the UNDAF, at both UNDAF and Agency levels, were made deliberately broad enough to be able to encompass a very wide selection of outputs. The result was a document with only three UNDAF Outcomes, but nine Agency Outcomes and an unwieldy 82 outputs. A number of interviewees criticized the UNDAF as resembling a “menu” of Agency-specific options rather than a strategic tool that informs or guides choices, and/or a document that clearly articulates United Nations positions on development issues in Azerbaijan.
- Even so, it should be pointed out that a closer look at the UNDAF document reveals the vast amount of effort that has gone into producing it. At the same time, it also should be noted that the UNDAF process attempts to coordinate so many United Nations Agencies, Government entities and civil society actors that it is inherently complex. This is further complicated by the fact that not all United Nations programme planning cycles actually align with the UNDAF, so that some Agencies already have priorities and projects in mind, thus “retrofitting” their plans to the UNDAF.
- These constraints, however, highlight important questions that will need to be answered at the outset of the new UNDAF process: What is the UNDAF for? It does not need to be a detailed work plan, unless the UNCT wants it to be. It also does not need to go down to the output or project level, unless the UNCT sees value in doing so. It can, however, be used to prioritize, to mobilize funds, to communicate with the public and partners, and to position the United Nations effectively in line with its comparative advantages. As one interviewee stated: “The UNDAF should find the Government’s weakest points and focus on making them stronger.”
- In terms of cross-cutting issues/UNDAF guiding principles, gender equality and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) were both found to be generally well-integrated. The United Nations Gender Theme Group (GTG) has been particularly proactive in initiating joint projects to advance gender equality and promote women’s empowerment, thereby underscoring the UNCT’s commitment, as a whole, to promote and protect women’s rights. A series of initiatives has resulted in concrete steps on improved disaggregated data collection and research, legal and policy building, capacity development, and awareness raising and advocacy.
- In particular, these initiatives by the GTG have addressed a wide range of issues, but particularly have encompassed those related to domestic violence and gender-based violence. Under this approach, a centre of support for victims of domestic violence and their children has been jointly piloted; victims have been empowered with enhanced socio-economic capacities; a nationwide survey was launched to measure the prevalence rates of cases of domestic violence against women; a series of qualitative assessments was conducted to explore the mechanisms behind the increasing number of child marriages; and the rural population in particular has been sensitized on gender equality and the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence. Notably, these joint efforts of the United Nations assist the Government annually in observing 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. In other indications of the effectiveness of gender initiatives, the Government has been supported to develop a “road map” for short- and

long-term national plans for implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); to better assess the major reasons for the highly imbalanced sex ratio at birth; and to build knowledge and improve support for migrants' spouses and family members who stay behind in Azerbaijan. NGOs were supported to mainstream gender equality into work with the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), refugees and asylum seekers. However, it has been noted that a gap remains in focusing contributions to gender-responsive budgeting at the central Government level.⁷

- DRR also served as a key cross-cutting area for UNCT operations. Dialogue with the Government on future cooperation continues. Even so, the Government has been supported, for example, to strengthen capacities of the national health system to cope with potential epidemic and pandemic diseases and to effectively manage health crises. In addition, DRR has been assessed in some Agency-specific evaluations as mainstreamed in all three UNDAF Outcomes.⁸
- While the UNDAF programming principle of a human rights-based approach was not explicitly included as a cross-cutting issue, United Nations Agencies, including through the United Nations Task Force on Human Rights, were active in their support to promote and protect human rights in the country, among both rights-holders and duty-bearers. The Government was supported to fulfil its commitments under international treaties such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), CEDAW, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Particular attention also has continued to be given to building the capacity of the Ombudsman's Office as the national human rights entity, as well as to the role of NGOs in implementation of the national human rights programme.

3.4 Implementation of the UNDAF: Coordination Architecture in Theory and in Practice

To be effective, the UNDAF process requires coordination structures that help maintain the life of the document after it has been sent to print. For the United Nations, this means coordinating a large number of Agencies and other relevant stakeholders, which have different operational cultures and working methods. For the Government, this means coordinating between the main UNDAF focal point in Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Economy and Industry, and the respective line Ministries. Lastly, for civil society actors, this would also normally mean coordinating among NGOs, although in the Azerbaijan context this has been a challenge. Often, a Steering Committee supervises and leads all these coordination structures, which is helpful for mobilizing joint United Nations and Government leadership around the UNDAF.

Key findings from both the MTR and the Final Evaluation show that, while the design of the UNDAF was time-consuming, insufficient investments were made to ensure its subsequent effective use. Participation was relatively strong at the beginning of the UNDAF cycle, but diminished as new challenges were encountered, a feature also common to other countries. Critically, dialogue around the UNDAF was not sustained during the implementation phase, and, while the Government has been involved in some key joint interventions such as assistance to victims of domestic violence, in

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ United Nations Development Programme, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery. *Disaster Risk Reduction Mainstreaming into UNDAF Documents: Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States*. New York, 2014.

others its participation requires significant further strengthening. This is not to say the United Nations and line Ministries did not work together. In fact, there appears to be a strong and close collaboration between United Nations Agencies and the Government, one largely appreciated on all fronts. However, this collaboration did not seem to be fully enhanced or made more strategic by the presence of the UNDAF. Likewise, donor coordination was cited as requiring greater United Nations leadership, as well as Government participation, to take it beyond the information-sharing forum that comprises its primary result at this juncture.

As noted in Section 3.2, Government interviewees spoke about working directly with individual Agencies, but very little, if at all, about working with the United Nations as a whole. United Nations Agencies likewise maintained a decidedly Agency-specific focus, with UNDAF needing to be moved closer to the forefront of their thinking. “To me, I’m implementing my programme, not the UNDAF,” one United Nations interviewee said. Thus, the UNDAF has remained largely “on the shelf” in terms of implementation, with a limited sense of mutual accountability between the Government and the UNCT for UNDAF development results. This has occurred despite the presence of a strong Resident Coordinator’s Office whose positive contributions to catalyzing UNCT collaboration were appreciated by several interviewees.

In theory, UNDAF coordination structures were relatively well-established, with three Outcome Groups (Economic Development, Social Development, and Governance) supporting the UNDAF Outcomes. Separately, United Nations Theme Groups and/or Task Forces exist on Gender, Human Rights, Disaster Risk Reduction, AIDS and Communications,⁹ as does the Operations Management Team. The UNCT’s initial intention reportedly was to set up an Inter-Agency M&E Group to devote considerable effort to monitoring and evaluating the UNDAF. However, because of insufficient in-house M&E capacity, the UNCT’s final decision was to integrate M&E into all annual work plans of UNDAF Outcome Groups and United Nations Theme Groups.

In practice, however, the coordination structure was not well-maintained across the board and thus did not operate effectively. Several groups have struggled to find their own rationale or to come up with a comprehensive working agenda, and M&E, the UNDAF’s third cross-cutting issue, has proven highly problematic. The burden for coordinating Outcome Groups or Theme Groups has not been equally shared across Agencies, and most groups require major strengthening; some are basically dormant, others little more than occasional information-sharing entities. As also mentioned in the introduction to Section III, collaboration has been strongest when it has been issue-driven, and has not necessarily been specifically linked to the UNDAF instrument itself. At the same time, it should be noted that the “integration” approach has proved efficient for entities such as the United Nations Gender Theme Group, which has been able to monitor its processes.

Overall, the Final Evaluation, as well as the MTR, thus found that not all Agencies had been equally active in the UNDAF, with some committing more staff and time to the process, especially the formulation phase, again, follow-up and implementation have been less successful, they stated. At the same time, some Agencies, especially non-resident Agencies, have only one person on the ground in Azerbaijan, so that makes it difficult from their perspective. The MTR also noted that some Agencies saw significant decreases in their staffing and funding, which challenged United Nations

⁹ Early this year, the UN Resident Coordinator has been appointed the Director of the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC).

capacity to implement the Outcomes planned.¹⁰ Repeatedly, all Agencies cited a lack of sufficient human resources and sufficient time as significant UNDAF “costs.” Outcome Group meetings that did occur were reported to often consist of no more than three or four people, “and could have been better done over lunch,” according to one interviewee.

The “Government side” of the UNDAF process is also quite complex. Outside of the United Nations, an understanding of the UNDAF concept as part of a broader and more strategic process remained largely theoretical, even as appreciation was expressed for specific Agency support. This reflects not only the Government’s relationship with United Nations Agencies, but also its own vertical organization, interviewees indicated; for example, a burdensome preparatory process is required even for basic United Nations-Government meetings. The Ministry of Economy and Industry, as the United Nations’ primary counterpart, is not the equivalent of a planning ministry, and major decisions have to be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers; the Ministry of Economy and Industry’s status further complicates its efforts to act as a coordinating body on development assistance. Thus, not only did some Government counterparts not fully “buy in” to the UNDAF, but many may not necessarily have been aware of it at all; in turn, the UNDAF process has largely not been integral to the work of the Ministries. The UNDAF MTR in late 2013 began new attempts to seek further clarity on the underlying purpose and objective of the UNDAF process in order to inform the upcoming UNDAF (2016-2020).

Joint programmes, planning and implementation, in particular, are subject to well-known challenges. The day-to-day issues prove to be the most time-consuming, such as sharing information or moving forward with decision-making processes, and concrete results may not justify heightened transaction costs. Despite the notable successes cited in such cases as prevention of violence against women, joint programmes were not specifically informed by the UNDAF, but again often arose opportunistically after the UNDAF formulation, as a result of emerging needs and/or new funding sources. Building on these experiences, it is expected that the UNCT will be better positioned in the next UNDAF cycle to undertake additional joint programmes and joint programming initiatives in such important emerging areas as youth-related issues.

3.5 Monitoring and Evaluation of the UNDAF: How to Measure Effectiveness?

Monitoring and evaluation of the UNDAF, so that effectiveness and impact can be measured and recorded, has proven to be a complex issue in Azerbaijan. The effectiveness of the UNDAF is defined as the progress toward achievement of development results, and implementation of better processes to achieve those results. Interviewees consider that the UNDAF, generally, was effective in achieving the development results it had set, with almost all activities planned being achieved or to be achieved by the end of the cycle. Moreover, it is clear that inter-agency collaboration and cooperation are taking place, with additional efforts to collaborate and keep other partners informed of activities undertaken even by individual Agencies.

M&E processes, or the lack thereof, perhaps represent the heart of all the challenges encountered during the UNDAF 2011-2015 and require significant further strengthening to enable the next UNDAF to be adequately evaluated according to the prescribed guidelines. Efficient RBM requires, and recommendations of global UNDAF Guidelines highlight the benefits of, rigorous Annual UNDAF Reviews to ensure effective and relevant UNDAF implementation. This Annual Review process,

¹⁰ UNDAF MTR Report, op.cit.

which should have involved the United Nations and the Government alike, could have fostered a systematic exchange of information, strengthened mutual accountabilities, and allowed strategic management of the UNDAF. However, Annual Reviews have not been conducted, in part because of some of the challenges noted below. Meanwhile, RBM principles further specify that indicators be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound, or “SMART;” this implies SMART Outcomes and outputs, as well as a precise definition of indicators, specific baselines for each indicator, indications of the source(s) of information, and identification of key risks and assumptions for the achievement of results.

Without regular updating the UNDAF Results Matrix, however, it was almost impossible to evaluate as it stands; baselines, if available at all, were very broadly defined, and targets have been missing entirely. In part, interviewees pointed out, this may be due to the longstanding issues of a serious lack of some empirical data in the national context; most State programmes, together with *Vision 2020*, do not have an M&E framework, and the institutional culture for M&E within the government agencies is limited. In addition, data on sensitive issues are particularly difficult to access.

Lastly, while the Results Matrix does define risks and assumptions, a more systematic review of these in light of the rapidly evolving country context would have been useful, as the MTR document also notes. If this occurs during the upcoming UNDAF cycle, this can strengthen the UNCT’s capacity to anticipate and plan.

Process issues aside, it appears to have been assumed during the UNDAF that, if all the outputs (projects) were completed, then this would automatically contribute to achievement of the Outcome. There is, however, no way to substantiate this theory because of the lack of baseline data and the absence of indicators at Outcome level. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether the activities in the context of the UNDAF are the right ones or not, and whether the sum of these activities is actually helping the United Nations to significantly contribute to achieving the Outcomes, which measure results at the macro level.

At the same time, having 82 UNDAF outputs makes the task of monitoring very burdensome under the best of circumstances. Moreover, as highlighted in Section 3.4, the coordination mechanisms that normally would have provided monitoring oversight for the UNDAF (UNDAF Outcome Groups), using indicators, baselines and targets, have been described as particularly weak and also largely did not involve partners at all. It is also unclear from the interviews whether higher-level Agency-specific results can be attributed to the UNDAF. Moreover, Agencies, generally, do not undertake a systematic review of their respective contributions to the UNDAF, which further limits monitoring and reporting on implementation. One suggestion put forward by an interviewee was for United Nations Agencies to invite all counterparts to, at least, join quarterly, or semi-annually, for sharing of information and lessons learned, if not actual evaluation. Lastly, it remains unclear whether the UNDAF allowed a better mobilization of resources and a more predictable and un-earmarked funding; resource mobilization appears to be undertaken at the sector programme level rather than via the UNDAF.

At least some institutions within the Government appear to have considered M&E as the provenance of the United Nations, related to the wider perception of a “UN document.” Thus, it would appear that the UNDAF as a coordination mechanism has not been entirely useful for

enhancing effectiveness within the United Nations in Azerbaijan. In the end, the MTR did not undertake a detailed assessment of development results achieved, in large part because of the absence of UNDAF Annual Reviews and limited reporting overall. In turn, the Final Evaluation has done likewise.

Therefore, in terms of effectiveness, has the UNDAF reached its objectives? Since the objectives of this particular UNDAF were not clearly articulated from the beginning, it is difficult to state whether it reached them or not. Many activities have been undertaken by individual Agencies, sometime with notable success, and inter-agency cooperation has improved. However, if the UNDAF is meant to help the United Nations System be more than the sum of its parts, then the current UNDAF (2011-2015) may have fallen short of its potential effectiveness, based on the interviews and other evidence noted above. Thus, it will require further thought and efforts for the new UNDAF to deliver better results than what individual Agencies would have.

3.6 Efficiency of the UNDAF: An Area of Further Promise

Potentially, the UNDAF is an excellent vehicle for reducing duplication, increasing value for money, and obtaining efficiency gains as a result of working more closely together between agencies, and with Government. The United Nations in Azerbaijan has adopted different measures to enhance its efficiency, including the initiation of some joint programmes (see Section 3.3) and nascent plans to integrate several Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) elements into its common business operations (see introduction to Section III). The UNDAF process has clearly helped to ensure this greater collaboration among Agencies, which have benefited from more opportunities to meet and discuss issues of common concern. For example, regular discussions among the UNCT and in United Nations Theme Groups took place to avoid duplication and optimize the use of resources.

In terms of United Nations premises, Agencies are greatly spread out across Baku, which gives rise to duplications and extra costs. This also increases the cost of security and raises some security issues. Subject to a safety review, the effective use of the new space in a renovated UN House is being determined to lower these costs by relocating several Agencies there. This new proximity is likely to allow Agencies to work more closely together. Again, however, no rigorous evaluation can be undertaken to determine whether the UNDAF has genuinely reduced transaction costs overall.

3.7 Sustainability of the UNDAF: Expanding the Number of Benefits Gained

Will the benefits of the UNDAF continue? How? Clearly, it will be important to sustain what achievements have occurred during the cycle of the UNDAF (2011-2015). The key will be to expand the number of benefits arising from the next UNDAF. While the jury remains out on whether the costs – human, financial, time – have outweighed the benefits, many feel the UNDAF exercise is still very much justified, at least, in principle. “What the UNDAF is supposed to do is important,” one interviewee stated. “I just don’t think it necessarily does it. But I do believe in the ideal.” Other interviewees echoed this, in comments such as “Even though it’s flawed, I still believe in the UNDAF,” and “The costs are high, but ultimately the idea of something like this is still worth it.” And as one Government interviewee pointed out, “It’s in our interests for this [United Nations partnership] to continue. It strengthens Azerbaijan’s overall image, adds value to capacity building, and helps us to deliver better.”

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

As the report indicates, the UNDAF has partially achieved what it set out to do, although genuinely measuring its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, given the limitations of the process and the document noted above, is very difficult indeed. At the same time, it is clear that much more can be done to strengthen all these elements in the next UNDAF (2016-2020). In addition, while all interviewees, from all arenas, said they believe the UNDAF should be “strategic,” there appeared to be a need for more coherence on what a “strategic UNDAF” would actually look like. The key lesson, as the MTR also noted, is that there exists a need to rethink how to use the UNDAF in the next cycle before designing it, and to make it simple in a context of rapid national socio-economic changes, the United Nations’ evolving role in a Middle-Income Country, increasing limitations on the human and financial capacities of the United Nations in Azerbaijan, and a critical need for strengthened joint monitoring of the process by Agencies and partners alike.

In light of these findings and others presented in the report, recommendations have been organized around several key themes, including the overarching approach to the UNDAF: articulating focus and priorities; engaging national counterparts; improving coordination; ensuring effective M&E processes; and communication modalities.

4.1 Overarching Approach to the UNDAF

- **Employ a minimalist approach as much as possible, but consider a “middle path.”** Keep the next UNDAF at the Outcome level, but be sure to consider the variety of drawbacks posed by such Outcome-only UNDAFs, including a global tendency toward vagueness. Critically, also consider a “middle path,” which may include an UNDAF Annex indicating Agency-specific areas for cooperation and/or annually produced specific outputs. Overall, more focus should be given to short-term plans and priorities within the UNDAF *chapeau*.
- **Consider a shift from assistance provision to partnership and cooperation.** Linked to this is the further need to better articulate the United Nations’ comparative advantage in upper Middle-Income Countries, where traditional Official Development Assistance is no longer the primary financing driver. All this gives momentum to an overall shift away from the assistance paradigm. In addition, expand the traditional partnership base and focus on reaching out to the private sector and civil society, while building on the post-2015 consultation platform.
- **Use flexibility to remain strategic and relevant.** The flexibility to formulate the common programming framework at the Outcome level will help to ensure this in a fast-evolving development context.
- **Distribute the UNDAF document more widely and encourage its broader use as both a reference document and a planning tool.** Since it is signed at a high level, the Government, in particular, should be supported to use the UNDAF more as a complementary strategic framework to *Vision 2020*.
- **Ensure a balance between strategic focus and inclusivity.** In other words, give special attention to a well-calibrated balance between the normative and development work of the United Nations in the upcoming UNDAF.
- **Be very demanding in terms of strategic approaches expected of all Agencies with regard to the UNDAF process.** Make clear that it is not simply a matter of

being "included" in the Results Matrix, but rather, that substantive technical and financial follow-up throughout the UNDAF cycle are required.

- **Create stronger incentives for collaboration, but not necessarily through Outcome and Theme Groups.** Bear in mind the enthusiasm and results demonstrated by issue-specific discussions and partnerships.
- **Develop additional expertise in monitoring and evaluation to ensure better focus and benchmarks.**

4.2 Articulating Focus and Priorities

- The UNCT should continue to engage in a discussion that seeks clear answers to the following questions: What do we want out of our UNDAF, and would it be useful? There are different options: Should the UNDAF represent all the development activities of all of the UN Agencies working on development, or only those that contribute to joint strategic priorities? Or should the UNDAF only present results requiring joint action between two or more entities? Or should it include only crosscutting issues? Or should it set rules for how to achieve priorities, with the emphasis being more on the *how* than the *what*? Depending on the answer to these questions, some of the following recommendations may also be relevant.
- Strategic focus areas, to the extent possible, should be articulated in a non-sectoral/cross-cutting way and reflect real choices on how the United Nations engages in Azerbaijan. If focus areas fall outside of traditional United Nations sectors, this could either allow for joint action in specific areas, or could inform how Agencies go about implementing that mandate.

4.3 Engaging National Counterparts

- The UNCT should vigorously engage with the Government to discuss the appropriate structure for a light but proactive UNDAF Steering (Advisory) Committee. Positions on the Committee should be reserved for high-level national counterparts, the UNCT and civil society alike. Such a Committee should have, at least, two meetings a year, with the possibility for events on the ground to trigger ad hoc meetings as and where necessary to revise the approach articulated in the UNDAF.
- Moreover, the UNCT should make a concerted effort to reach out to a broader set of national actors in the preparation of the next UNDAF. This includes NGOs, private sector actors, academia and regional organizations. Linked to the general recommendation of placing additional demands on Agency follow-up throughout the UNDAF cycle, criteria for engagement in the context of the UNDAF should be formulated in advance of such an outreach process (see first Coordination recommendation below).

4.4 Improving Coordination

- Modalities for engagement and respective expectations of the RC and Agencies should be formulated, signed and used as a basis for moving forward in the context of the next UNDAF.
- UNDAF-related working groups (Outcome Groups, Theme Groups or others) should serve as problem-solving entities, and not just information-sharing meetings. Each Group session must have clear deliverables. Internally, more focus should be given to agreement on the most effective way to engage with Government (who, when, how),

not only as a way to reduce transaction costs, but also to increase internal coherence and discipline.

- Ideally, no Agency should lead more than one working group. Agency leads should represent the Agency performing the coordination role, and the agency responsible for liaising proactively with the Resident Coordinator's Office on development and any pressing issues. The lead Agency need not be the Agency doing the majority of the work, since all Agencies are working toward common goals.
- The UNCT should use its position as a reliable, impartial actor to strengthen donor coordination as well. Indications are that United Nations-facilitated forums for donor coordination – involving United Nations entities, Government and civil society actors – would be very well-received by the donor community. Donor coordination, as well as internal United Nations coordination, would be greatly facilitated by a clear and concise mapping of which actors are doing what and where.

4.5 Ensuring Effective M&E Processes

- The UNCT should make a significant commitment to developing baselines for each of the key strategic focus areas, at the Outcome level. The need for reliable statistical data should, therefore, be made an essential component of each of the strategic Outcome areas. The UNCT should further improve the availability of reliable data through comprehensive advocacy for and support to strengthened national monitoring processes.
- The Monitoring and Evaluation process of the UNDAF should be made as simple – and transparent – as possible. Each outcome should have only two or three indicators, which should be constructed in a way capable of measuring impact. Clarity should be sought on what the UNCT is monitoring, and for what purpose it is monitoring results: national counterparts should be an inherent part of the M&E process in order to reinforce mutual accountability.

4.6 Deepening Communication Modalities

- The UNDAF document should be as short, concise and “high-level” as possible, and flexible enough to be able to adapt to changing circumstances. A two- to four-page summary should be made available and widely distributed amongst national counterparts, donors, private sector actors, and others. All Agencies, United Nations counterparts and NGOs should strive to make the document available on their websites, in English and in the Azerbaijani languages.
- Overall, the UNCT should make a more concerted effort to communicate its activities to the people; it can use the UNDAF as a platform to communicate its development approach and achievements by also engaging more proactively with the media, including new media.

In all, making such modifications can help to ensure that the UNDAF 2016-2020 genuinely serves as a process that helps to address and improve the role, contribution and strategy of United Nations support in the country context of Azerbaijan. “It’s still important to have an UNDAF, or something like it, so the UN speaks with one voice,” one interviewee said. “But it’s a matter of refining the reality of it.”

Annex A: Terms of Reference for Combined Country Analysis and Final UNDAF Evaluation in Azerbaijan

Duration of the contract: 12 March – 30 May 2014

Location: Baku

I. Background Information

The Republic of Azerbaijan is located in the South Caucasus, bordering Iran and Turkey in the south, the Russian Federation in the north, Georgia in the northwest, and Armenia in the west. According to the State Statistics Committee, the population is 9.296 million (2012), of which 47 per cent are living in rural areas. Formerly part of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan regained independence in 1991. Despite the conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Azerbaijan has established itself as a confident, relatively stable State in the post-Soviet era.

The high levels of economic growth in Azerbaijan over the past years have led to considerable improvements in the many key socio-economic indicators and a significant decline in poverty rates from 46.7 percent in 2002 to 5.3% in 2013. Azerbaijan's HDI value for 2012 is 0.734—in the high human development category—positioning the country at 82 out of 187 countries and territories.

Azerbaijan makes significant strides towards its development goals and continues with democratization of its social order and state system through increased transparency, accountability and participatory decision making. '*Azerbaijan: Vision 2020*', national strategy plan, was approved in 2012, providing a framework for the transition from a traditional economy to a knowledge-based, competitive and diversified economy, building on the latest socio-economic achievements. However, there still remain challenges that might prevent the country from reaching its full potential. The key challenge is to maintain growth and diversify the economy. The Government announced 2014 the Year of Industry, and, as part of implementation of *Vision 2020* strategy, the State Programme on the Development of Industry (2015-2020) will be formulated by April 2014. Achieving rapid and sustainable development of the non-oil economy will entail improving infrastructure, making social development more inclusive by reducing regional economic disparities, promoting good governance, and improving the climate for private sector growth. The UN system in Azerbaijan will continue to provide its concerted support to the Government on the policy front, building national institutional capacity to more effectively manage the ongoing reforms and more substantively address unfinished development agenda.

Azerbaijan joined 87 pilot countries to facilitate national dialogue on shaping the next generation of sustainable development goals, as part of the global Post-2015 Development Agenda. For the first time in its history, the United Nations provided a unique opportunity for the people of Azerbaijan to share their aspirations for the world they want to live in beyond 2015, the target year for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Several UN agencies, jointly with the World Bank, led consultations on a wide range of development issues, which were aligned with the priorities articulated in *Azerbaijan: Vision 2020* strategy,

and generated collective suggestions that were shared with the Government to promote national policy response and citizen engagement to the issues and priorities raised by the people of Azerbaijan as the essential building blocks for their sustainable future and well-being. The analytical and advocacy work of the UN is central in support of accelerating the progress towards the MDGs and contributing to the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The UN Country Team will continue the follow-up dialogue with the Government and stakeholders in the next two years and onwards.

II. The UN System in Azerbaijan

The UN Country Team in Azerbaijan comprises 16 organizations: UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, WHO, World Bank, IMF, IOM and non-resident agencies (FAO, IFAD, ILO, OHCHR, UNODC, UNESCO, UN Women, and OCHA). The agencies vary in the levels of representation, scope of their work and staff resources available for joint UN activities. Three United Nations Development Assistance Framework Outcome Groups -- on Economic Development and Governance (chaired by UNDP), and on Social Development (chaired by UNICEF) -- as well as the UN Task Force on Human Rights (chaired by UNICEF), UN Theme Group on Gender (chaired by UNFPA), Joint UN Team on AIDS (led by WHO), the UN Communications Group (chaired by UNDP), and Operations Management Team (led by UNDP) are operational.

III. Country Analysis and UNDAF Evaluation in Azerbaijan

The mid-term review (MTR) of the current UNDAF for 2011-2015 was conducted in November 2013. The MTR concluded that ‘the UNDAF in Azerbaijan is seen as an important instrument for the UN System; however, the UNDAF is not at the forefront of agencies’ thinking and is more on the shelf than on the desk of UN agencies’.

The UN in Azerbaijan will soon launch the next UNDAF (2016-2020) formulation process which will be aligned with national goals that are articulated in the *Azerbaijan: Vision 2020* strategy of the Government of Azerbaijan to facilitate ‘inclusive growth’, and will follow up the recommendations generated by the post-2015 national consultations, as well as the conclusions and recommendations resulting from the UPR, CEDAW, CRC and other relevant international treaties’ review process, as well as the ‘ICPD Beyond 2014’ Operational Review in Azerbaijan (2013).

At the retreat held in November 2013, the UN Country Team in Azerbaijan opted for a ‘hybrid strategy’ combining a review of the existing national, sector and thematic studies, and conducting a complementary ‘gaps analysis’ of the national framework of results, as the first step to prepare for the forthcoming programming cycle. By departing from a more standard approach to the Common Country Assessment (CCA), the UNCT in Azerbaijan will conduct a Country Analysis in March 2014 ‘with a human face’, with people at its core, to provide insights into the key development challenges being faced by the country to be addressed in the next five-year UNDAF, which will outline the key areas of the joint work.

In compliance with the QCPR and UNDAF guideline requirements, the UN Country Team will also conduct UNDAF evaluation, which is critical to enhancing the UN’s accountability. The UNDAF evaluation process will be light, to the extent possible, and the lessons learned generated through UNDAF evaluation will inform both the substantive content of the new programming framework, and processes of engagement and consultation with national partners and stakeholders. The evaluation process will follow an inclusive approach,

involving a broad range of stakeholders and partners. The process will include stakeholder mapping in order to identify various stakeholders and partners including those who do not work directly with the UNCT, yet play a key role in the national context. These stakeholders may include representatives from the Government, civil society organizations, the private sector, other multilateral organizations, bilateral donors, etc. It is essential for evaluation to be credible, independent, impartial, transparent and useful.

The UN Country Team in Azerbaijan formulated the current UNDAF (2011-2015) jointly with the Government, development partners and other stakeholders. The UNDAF document outlines the United Nations' support to the country, serving as a framework for focused and coordinated development assistance in the areas where UN has comparative advantages. The UNDAF aims to support achieving national development priorities articulated in the State Programme for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development (2008-2015), which is aligned with the MDGs. The UNDAF document identifies three broad areas (*economic development, social development, and governance*), as the pillars of the programmatic contributions, initiatives, and synergies of the UN system in Azerbaijan, considering gender, disaster risk reduction, and Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) identified as cross-cutting issues. UNDAF Azerbaijan has the following three UNDAF outcomes:

UNDAF Outcome 1: By 2015, non-oil development policies result in better economic status, decent work opportunities and a healthier environment in all regions and across all social groups;

UNDAF Outcome 2: By 2015, vulnerable groups enjoy increased social inclusion, as well as improved and equal access to quality health, education and social protection services; and

UNDAF Outcome 3: By 2015, the State strengthens the system of governance with the involvement of Civil Society and in compliance with its international commitments, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups.

Azerbaijan's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) took place on 30 April 2013; the UPR report was successfully submitted and the Government accepted 158 recommendations (out of 162 that were received). In recent years, Azerbaijan has been reviewed by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2013), UN Committee on Migrant Workers (2013), the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2012), UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (2009), UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (2009), the UN Human Rights Committee (2009), and the UN Committee Against Torture (2009). Azerbaijan is in preparation for upcoming CEDAW review by February 2015. In May 2012, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health visited the country, for the first time, and shared with senior government officials his conclusions and recommendations. In November 2013, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, including its causes and consequences, visited Azerbaijan - the final report with the findings will be discussed at the session of the Human Rights Council this year. An extensive range of recommendations in a diverse range of human rights are now with the government for action.

In this context, the UNCT seeks the combined consultancy services to undertake Country Analysis (mainly, a desk review), and light UNDAF evaluation, which will use standard OECD/DAC criteria (*relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of results*) as well as the key issues of *design, focus and comparative advantage* of the UN system, as basis for its objectives and key questions. Its major focus is on policy and strategy

coherence, donor co-ordination, development effectiveness and organizational efficiency. In addition, the UNDAF evaluation will address how the intervention sought to mainstream the five UNDAF programming principles: Human Rights Based Approach, Gender Mainstreaming, Environmental Sustainability, Result-Based Management, and Capacity Development. Human rights and gender equality assessments will be mainstreamed throughout all aspects of the UNDAF evaluation.

The Country Analysis process will result in:

- Strategic analysis which will identify the root causes of the existing and emerging development challenges and their effects on the population, particularly on youth, women, persons with disabilities, displaced persons, people living with HIV/AIDS, migrants, etc.;
- The identification of capacity gaps of rights holders to make claims and duty bearers to meet their obligations;
- An analysis of opportunities for (and obstacles to) free, active and meaningful participation in national governance and development processes and outcomes;
- A substantive contribution to the next UNDAF which will reflect national priorities and other internationally agreed development goals and treaty obligations;
- A substantive contribution to strengthening national capacities for data analysis, collection of accurate sex-segregated data and statistics, and Monitoring & Evaluation.

UNDAF evaluation will pursue the following purposes:

- To support greater learning about what works, what doesn't and why in the context of an UNDAF. The evaluation will provide important information for strengthening programming and results at the country level, specifically informing the planning and decision-making for the next UNDAF programme cycle and for improving United Nations coordination at the country level.
- To support greater accountability of the UNCT to UNDAF stakeholders. By objectively verifying results achieved within the framework of the UNDAF and assessing the effectiveness of the strategies and interventions used, the evaluation will enable the various stakeholders in the UNDAF process, including national counterparts and partners, to hold the UNCT and other parties accountable for fulfilling their roles and commitments.

The **objectives** of the evaluation are:

- to assess the contribution made by the UNCT in the framework of the UNDAF to national development results through making judgements using evaluation criteria based on evidence (**accountability**).
- to identify the factors that have affected the UNCT's contribution, answering the question of why the performance is as it is and explaining the enabling factors and bottlenecks (**learning**).

- to reach conclusions concerning the UN's contribution across the scope being examined.
- to provide actionable recommendations for improving the UNCT's contribution, especially for incorporation into the new UNDAF (2016-2020). These recommendations should be logically linked to the conclusions and draw upon lessons learned identified through the evaluation.

The **scope** covered by the evaluation includes examining UNDAF programming principles (human rights-based approach, gender equality, environmental sustainability, results-based management, capacity development), overall strategies and outcome/output specific strategies included in the UNDAF itself. The UNDAF will be evaluated against the strategic intent laid out in the UNDAF document and specifically its contribution to the national development results included in the UNDAF results framework. The light UNDAF evaluation process will be based on desk review of the reports, surveys, mid-term progress reviews, and assessment reports relating to UNDAF evaluation.

Purpose of the external evaluation:

- According to the ToR, the external evaluation should satisfy the following objectives:
 - 1) Assess the role and relevance of the UNDAF in relation to the issues and their underlying causes and challenges identified by the CCA and in the context of national policies and strategies; and as a reflection of the internationally agreed goals, particularly those in the Millennium declaration, and international norms and standards guiding the work of the agencies of the UN system and adopted by the UN member states.
 - 2) Assess the design and focus of the UNDAF, i.e. the quality of the formulation of results at different levels, the result chain.
 - 3) Assess the validity of the collective comparative advantages of the UN System.
 - 4) Assess the effectiveness of the UNDAF in terms of progress towards agreed UNDAF outcomes, including an assessment of the performance of its Joint Programs.
 - 5) To the extent possible, assess the medium term impact of UNDAF on the lives of the poor, i.e. determine whether there us any major changes in UNDAF indicators that can reasonably be attributed to or be associated with UNDAF, notably in the realization of MDGs, National Development Goals and the national implementation if internationally agreed commitments and UN Conventions and treaties.
 - 6) Analyze to what extent results achieved an strategies used by the UNDAF are sustainable as a contribution to national development and in terms of the added value of UNDAF for cooperation among individual UN agencies.

Evaluation criteria: The contribution of the UNCT to the development outcomes will be assessed according to a standard set of evaluation criteria to be used across UNDAF evaluation:

- **Relevance.** The extent to which the objectives of UNDAF are consistent with country needs, national priorities, the country's international and regional commitments, including on human rights (Core human rights treaties, including CEDAW, CPRD, CRC, ICCPR, ICESCR, ICERD, etc.) and the recommendations of Human Rights mechanisms (including the treaty bodies, special procedures and UPR), sustainable development, environment, and the needs of women and men, girls and boys in the country.
- **Effectiveness.** The extent to which the UNCT contributed to, or is likely to contribute to, the outcomes defined in the UNDAF. The evaluation should also note how the unintended results, if any, have affected national development positively or negatively and to what extent have they been foreseen and managed.
- **Efficiency.** The extent to which outcomes are achieved with the appropriate amount of resources and maintenance of minimum transaction cost (funds, expertise, time, administrative costs, etc.).
- **Sustainability.** The extent to which the benefits from a development intervention are likely to continue after the current UNDAF will have been completed in 2015.

Given below are standard issues that can be assumed to affect performance:

- **UN Coordination.** Did UN coordination reduce transaction costs and increase the efficiency of UNDAF implementation? To what extent did the UNDAF create actual synergies among agencies and involve concerted efforts to optimise results and avoid duplication?
- **Five UNDAF Programming Principles.** To what extent have the UNDAF programming principles (human rights-based approach, gender equality, environmental sustainability, results-based management, capacity development) been considered and mainstreamed in the UNDAF chain of results? Were any shortcomings due to a failure to take account of UNDAF programming principles during implementation?
 - To what extent did the UNDAF make use of and promote **human rights** and **gender equality standards and principles** (e.g. participation, non-discrimination, accountability, etc.) to achieve its goal?
 - To what extent did UNDAF strengthen the capacities for data collection and analysis to ensure disaggregated data on the basis of race, colour, sex, geographic location, etc. and did those subject to discrimination and disadvantage benefited from priority attention?
 - Did the UNDAF effectively use the principles of **environmental sustainability** to strengthen its contribution to national development results?

- Did the UNDAF adequately use **RBM** to ensure a logical chain of results and establish a monitoring and evaluation framework?
- Did the UNDAF adequately invest in, and focus on, national **capacity development**? To what extent and in what ways did UNDAF contribute to capacity development of government, NGOs and civil society institutions?
- **Other factors** that have affected the performance of the UNCT in the framework of the UNDAF will also be examined:
 - How well did the UNCT use its partnerships (with civil society and Academia /the private sector/local government/parliament/national human rights institutions/ /international development partners) to improve its performance?
 - Regarding ownership of objectives and achievements, to what extent was the “active, free, and meaningful” participation of all stakeholders (including non-resident agencies) ensured in the UNDAF process? Did they agree with the outcomes and continue to remain in agreement? Was transparency in policies and project implementation ensured? What mechanisms were created throughout the implementation process to ensure participation?
 - Did the UNCT undertake appropriate risk analysis and take appropriate actions to ensure that results to which it contributed are not lost? To what extent are the benefits being, or are likely to be, maintained over time.
 - How adequately did the UNCT respond to change (e.g. natural disaster, elections) in planning and during the implementation of the UNDAF?
 - To what extent harmonisation measures at the operational level contributed to improved efficiency and results?

The Consultant will examine the following issues for the UNDAF Evaluation:

📌 ***To assess the contribution of UN system to national development targets through the UNDAF outcomes):***

- a. To assess the role, relevance and effectiveness of the UNDAF: (i) in relation to the issues, their underlying causes, and challenges identified by the CCA at the beginning of the current programme cycle and in the context of national policies and strategies; (ii) as a reflection of the internationally agreed goals, particularly those in the Millennium Declaration and relevant human rights guidance, and international norms and standards guiding the work of agencies of the UN system and adopted by UN member states; and (iii) in terms of progress towards agreed UNDAF outcomes:

Evaluation Questions:

- Has the UNDAF document been used by UN agencies and Government institutions in planning their activities, setting goals, and in cooperation?

- Do the UNDAF outcomes address key issues, their underlying causes, and challenges identified by the CCA? Was the UNDAF results matrix sufficiently flexible and relevant to respond to new issues and their causes as well as challenges that arose during the UNDAF cycle?
 - Have the UNDAF outcomes been relevant in terms of internationally agreed goals and commitments, norms and standards guiding the work of agencies of the UN system (including the Millennium Development Goals, all international human rights treaties binding on Azerbaijan, and other relevant human rights standards and evaluations)
 - To what extent did the UNDAF succeed in strengthening national capacities (including national execution), building partnerships, the realization of human rights and promoting gender equity and equality?
 - Were human rights and gender equality delivery during the period done to the maximum extent of available resources?
- b. To assess the efficiency of the UNDAF in terms of progress towards achievement of UNDAF outcomes:

Evaluation Questions

- What progress has been made towards the realization of UNDAF outcomes as a contribution to the achievement of nationalized MDGs and in terms of indicators as reflected in the UNDAF M&E Plan?
 - Which are the main factors that contributed positively or negatively to the progresses towards the UNDAF outcomes and National Development Goals?
 - To what extent and in what ways did UN support promote national execution of programmes and / or the use of national expertise and technologies?
- c. To assess, to the extent possible, the impact of UNDAF on the lives of the poor, vulnerable and marginalized persons:

Evaluation Questions

- Is there any major change in UNDAF indicators that can reasonably be attributed to or be associated with UNDAF, notably in the realization of MDGs, national development goals and the national implementation of internationally agreed commitments and UN Conventions and Treaties?
 - How have human rights and gender equality been included in work undertaken under UNDAF at minimum with a particular view to the following vectors: i) human rights and gender equality mainstreaming; and ii) targeted human rights and gender equality work.
- d. To analyse to what extent results achieved and strategies used in the frame of the UNDAF are sustainable: i) as a contribution to national development, and (ii) in terms of the added value of UNDAF to cooperation among individual UN agencies:

Evaluation Questions

- To what degree did the UNDAF contributed to the UN role in establishing and enhance the critical factors for progress towards national development goals?
- How flexible and appropriate was the UNDAF in adapting to the major development changes in the country?
- To what extent and in what way have national capacities been enhanced in government, civil society and NGOs?
- Have complementarities, collaboration and/or synergies fostered by UNDAF contributed to greater sustainability of results of Donors intervention in the country?
- To what extent has institution-building and institution-strengthening taken place in human rights and gender equality terms?

For the purpose II (To assess the process of UN system contribution through the UNDAF to the national priorities and goals)

e. To assess the design and focus of the UNDAF i.e. the quality of the formulation of results at different levels i.e. the results chain:

Evaluation Questions:

- To what extent is the current UNDAF designed as a results-oriented, coherent and focused framework? Are expected outcomes realistic given the UNDAF timeframe, resources and the planned Country Programmes, projects and programme strategies?
- Assess the extent and the ways the risks and assumptions were addressed by UNDAF design and later during the implementation of programmes and projects?
- Is the distribution of roles and responsibilities among the different UNDAF partners well defined, facilitated in the achievements of results and have the arrangements largely been respected in the course of implementation?
- Does the UNDAF help achieve the selected priorities defined by national development framework?
- Do the UNDAF and Country Programmes respond to the challenges of national capacity development and do they promote ownership of programmes by national partners?
- To what extent have human rights principles and standards been reflected or promoted in the UNDAF? To what extent and in what ways has a human rights approach been reflected as one possible method for integrating human rights concerns into the UNDAF?
- To what extent and in what ways the concepts of gender equity and equality were reflected in UNDAF (in terms of specific goals and targets set, sex disaggregated data and indicators etc.)

- How have human rights and gender equality considerations been mainstreamed throughout UNDAF implementation? Has the design been appropriate for a sustainable mainstreaming of human rights and gender equality considerations throughout all programming?
- What gaps exist in human rights and gender equality terms?

f. To assess the validity of the stated collective comparative advantage of the UN System in Azerbaijan:

Evaluation Questions:

- To what extent and in what way have the comparative advantages of the UN organizations been utilized in the national context specifically in relation to other Development Partners active in the country (including universality, neutrality, voluntary and grant-nature of contributions, multilateralism, and the special mandates of UN agencies)?

g. To assess the effectiveness of the UNDAF, as a coordination and partnership framework:

Evaluation Questions:

- To what extent and in what way has the UNDAF contributed to achieving better synergies among the programmes of UN agencies with an effect on the progress towards the National Development priorities? Has the UNDAF enhanced joint programming by agencies and /or resulted in specific joint programmes?
- Did the UNDAF promote effective partnerships and strategic alliances around the main National development goals and UNDAF outcomes areas (e.g. within Government, with national partners, International Financial Institutions and other external support agencies)?
- Have agency supported programmes been mutually reinforcing in helping to achieve UNDAF outcomes? Has the effectiveness or programme support by individual agencies been enhanced as a result of joint programming?

h. To assess the efficiency of the UNDAF as a mechanism to minimize transaction costs of UN support for the government and for the UN agencies:

Evaluation Questions:

- To what extent and in what way has the UNDAF contributed to a reduction of transaction costs for the government and for each of the UN agencies? In what ways could transaction costs be further reduced?
- Were the results achieved at reasonably low/lowest possible cost?
- To what extent have the organizations harmonized procedures in order to reduce transaction cost and to enhance results?

Evaluation Methodology. The methodology for the independent evaluation will follow the United Nations Evaluation Group Guidelines and include:

- Review of documentation;
- Semi-structured interviews with key UN staff and government counterparts, CSOs and beneficiaries;
- Drafting of preliminary findings, based on literature review and interviews with UN staff and government, to obtain feedback from the extended UNCT;
- Finalization of the draft report based upon feedback received during the debriefing session with UNCT personnel and government representatives.

Data collection methods: The UNDAF evaluation will draw on a variety of data collection methods including, but not limited to:

Collection of reference materials: The Consultant is responsible for reviewing the reference documents, reports and any other data and information provided by the UNCT/UN RC's Office.

- Document review focusing on UNDAF planning documents, UNDAF mid-term review and mid-term progress reviews undertaken by UN agencies, annual reports and past evaluation reports (including those on projects and small-scale initiatives, and those issued by national counterparts), strategy papers, national plans and policies and related programme and project documents. These should include reports on the progress against national and international commitments.
- Reviewing the inputs from key stakeholders including key government counterparts, donor community members, representatives of key civil society organisations, UNCT members, and implementing partners.
- Questionnaires with the UN Theme Groups and UN Task Forces, participants in development programmes, UNCT members, and/or surveys and questionnaires involving other stakeholders.

Data collection methods must be linked to the evaluation criteria and evaluation questions that are included within the scope of the evaluation. The evaluation process should consider gender sensitivity and data should be disaggregated by sex and age and, to the extent possible, disaggregated by geographical region, ethnicity, disability, migratory status and other contextually-relevant markers of equity.

Validation: The UNDAF evaluation will use a variety of validation methods to ensure that the data and information used and conclusions made carry the necessary depth. Triangulation of information sources and findings improved validity, quality and use of evaluation.

The key audiences for the evaluation will include not only the different evaluation stakeholders, but also wider audiences. Once the evaluation report is completed and validated, it will be made publicly available by posting in UNDG¹¹ (through UN DOCO) and

¹¹ <http://www.undg.org/>

UNCT websites. The UNCT will endorse a management response to the evaluation recommendations. This includes committing follow-up actions to the recommendations as well as establishing responsibilities for the follow-up. The lessons learned from UNDAF evaluation will be extracted and disseminated in order to contribute to strategic planning, learning, advocacy and decision-making at all levels; they will be applied in the design of the following UNDAF cycle, and will be shared with UN DOCO for consideration and further sharing publicly and within the UN system as appropriate.

Structure and content of the Country Analysis (CA) document:

The CA document will present key issues to be addressed in the UNDAF formulation process, and will contain an executive summary with a synthesis of the major findings of the analysis, followed by, at least, three sections (as described below):

- **Section 1: Introduction:**

The introduction should be brief, explaining the preparation process and scope of the CA, the efforts made to ensure national ownership of the process, and how the CA will add value to the development framework formulation.

- **Section 2: The Analysis:**

This section should contain a focused analysis of the national development situation. Major problems or challenges will be analyzed to identify trends, disparities and the most affected population groups. It will highlight progress made towards national priorities, with a clear focus on other internationally agreed development goals and treaty obligations. It will use Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and mainstream gender equality concerns to: i) Identify priority development problems and state them as inter-related and unfulfilled human rights; ii) Provide a greater understanding of their causes; and iii) Identify the individuals and groups in society who are obligated to take action, and the capacities they need to be able to take action. While identifying rights-holders and duty-bearers, their capacity gaps in terms of skills, resources, responsibility, motivation and authority will be assessed.

- **Section 3: Priority development problems and their common root causes:**

The final section will identify the priority development problems. Prioritization will guide where the UNCT can bring its comparative advantages to bear to make the biggest difference over the next five years, including: i) The magnitude of the problem and the level of national commitment; ii) Problems with common underlying root causes where programmatic responses may yield multiple impacts; iii) Whether the UNCT has the comparative advantages to help the country address the problem; iv) Sufficient human resources and funds that are available, or might reasonably be mobilized; and v) The potential for alignment with key actors within government and civil society, who have decision-making power or who can influence national priorities and support the UNCT's concerted action.

Overall structure of the final UNDAF Evaluation Report:

The final UNDAF Evaluation Report will be structured as follows, taking into account the scope and focus of the evaluation process:

- **Executive Summary**
- **Chapter 1:** Introduction (objectives, scope and methodology, limitations)
- **Chapter 2:** National development context
- **Chapter 3:** Evaluation Findings (corresponding to the UNDAF outcomes with each analyzed by evaluation criteria)
- **Chapter 4:** Conclusions and Recommendations

The final report will be kept short (50-75 pages maximum including annexes). More detailed information on the context, the programme or the comprehensive aspects of the methodology and of the analysis will be placed in the annexes. The report will be prepared in accordance with UNEG guidance (please find attached Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports).

Duties and Responsibilities

The consultant will be engaged in the following stages:

- ***Collection of reference material and desk review:*** The UNCT members, including non-resident agencies, will provide the assessments, evaluation reports, mid-term progress reports, surveys, studies that are relevant for Country Analysis and UNDAF evaluation for the consultant's review.
- ***Country visit and interviews:*** The consultant will visit the country and conduct interviews with the UNCT, government and other beneficiaries.
- ***Drafting the preliminary findings:*** The consultant will produce draft Country Analysis and UNDAF Evaluation reports for the UNCT's feedback. The revised reports will be shared with the PSG.
- ***Final Reports:*** After reviewing the feedback received from the UNCT and PSG, the consultant will produce final Country Analysis and UNDAF Evaluation reports.

Expected Duration of the Assignment:

The consultant will be hired for the period 12 March – 30 May 2014.

Payment:

The Consultant will be paid a lump sum amount including fee and per diem (not exceeding the UN rate of US\$220). The consultant should indicate the lump sum and breakdown in the financial proposal.

The Consultant's payment shall be made in two installments of:

- 20% upon submission of draft Country Analysis and UNDAF Evaluation Reports, incorporating inputs received from UN agencies and stakeholders, and
- 80% upon submission of the final Country Analysis and UNDAF Evaluation Report.

Monitoring and progress controls: The Consultant will be guided by the UN Resident Coordinator, in consultation with the UN Country Team. The RC's Office will provide

support to ensure progress of the services expected.

Competencies

Functional competencies:

Professionalism

- Good knowledge of the UN system and UN common country programming processes (CCA/UNDAF);
- Specialized experience and/or methodological/technical knowledge, including data collection and analytical skills, mainstreaming HRBA to programming, and gender considerations;
- Results Based Management (RBM) principles, logic modeling/logical framework analysis, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, and participatory approaches.

Communications

- Good communication (spoken and written) skills, including the ability to write reports, conduct studies and to articulate ideas in a clear and concise style.

Required Skills and Experience

Education

- Advanced university degree (Master's or equivalent) in social science, economics, or related field.

Experience

- 10 years of the relevant professional experience; previous experience with CCA/UNDAF evaluations and/or reviews.
- Practical experience in the CIS region and/or knowledge of the development issues in Middle Income Countries is an asset.

Language Requirements

- Excellent written and spoken English. Knowledge of Russian is an asset;
- Excellent report writing skills as well as communication skills.

Other attributes

- An understanding of and ability to abide by the values of the United Nations;
- Awareness and sensitivity in working with people of various cultural and social backgrounds.

Reporting Arrangements

- The successful candidate will report to the UN Resident Coordinator.

Duration of the consultancy: 10 weeks

Payment Modalities

Payment to the consultant will be made upon satisfactory completion of the above mentioned deliverables.

Selection criteria:

The consultant will be evaluated based on the lowest price and technically compliant offer.

Evaluation of Criteria and Weighting

The consultant will be evaluated against a combination of technical and financial criteria.

Maximum score is 100% out of a total score for technical criteria equals 70% and 30% for financial criteria. The technical evaluation will take into account the following as per the weightings provided:

- Background and minimum educational qualifications as defined in the ToR (10%)
- Practical experience in the areas of UN common country programming processes (CCA/UNDAF) (30%)
- Methodology of approach to the task (40%)
- Practical experience in the CIS region and/or knowledge of the development issues in Middle Income Countries (15%)
- English language fluency (5%)

Application Procedure

The application should contain the following:

- Achievement-based CV
- Brief proposal addressing the requirement (Methodology)
- Financial proposal (daily rate has to be mentioned)

Annex B: List of Interviewees

Government

Mr. Ruslan Rustamli, Head, Department of Cooperation with International Organisations, Ministry of Economy and Industry
Mr. Faig Gasimli, Head of Unit, Department of Strategic Planning, Ministry of Economy and Industry
Mr. Vahab Mamedov, Head, Department of Employment Policy, Ministry of Labour & Social Protection
Mr. Fuad Huseynov, Head, Department of Social Development, Ministry of Labour & Social Protection
Ms. Irada Usubova, Head, Department of International Relations, Ministry of Labour & Social Protection
Mr. Rufat Tagizade, Deputy Head, Department of International Relations, Ministry of Communications and High Technologies
Ms. Taliya Ibrahimova Head, Legal Department, State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs
Mr. Hafiz Namazov, Deputy Head, Department of International Relations, State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs
Mr. Elgun Safarov, Head, Department for Information, Analysis & Research, State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs
Mr. Fuad Guseynov, Deputy Head, State Committee for Refugees and IDPs
Mr. Mahammad Maharramov, Chief of the Apparatus, State Committee for Refugees and IDPs
Mr. Rashid Rumzada, Ombudsman's Office, Department for Public Awareness and Legal Education

UN

Mr. Antonius Broek, UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative
Mr. Mark Hereward, UNICEF Representative
Mr. Dag Sigurdson, UNHCR Representative
Ms. Nato Alhazishvili, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative
Mr. Farid Babayev, UNFPA Assistant Representative
Mr. Kamran Garakhanov, Head of WHO Office
Mr. Yashar Hamzayev, ILO National Correspondent
Ms. Tarana Bashirova, FAO Assistant Representative
Mr. Kamran Baghirov, OHCHR Programme Analyst
Mr. Serhan Aktoprak, IOM, Officer-in-Charge

International development partners

Mr. Federico Berna, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Azerbaijan
Mr. Henning Twesten, Country Manager, GIZ
Mr. Robert Lopez, Deputy Head of Mission, USAID
Mr. Kenan Mustafayev, Democratic Governance Cluster, USAID
