

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Evaluation recommendation 1:

UNDP's relevance in an EU accession context remains being responsive to emerging development needs and priorities of the government. Moving forward, UNDP should provide an adequate balance of policy and demonstration of viable development models. UNDP should focus more on service delivery at the local level.

Management response:

In Albania, UNDP enjoys strong alignment to the country's EU accession context. On the policy dialogue level, UNDP actively participates in joint fora with national and international development partners, e.g. Donor's Technical Secretariat and Development and Integration Partners, for coordination of assistance. Further UNDP engages actively in the Government's Integrated Policy Management Group (IPMG) architecture, which is a sector coordination mechanism. In some areas, e.g. in social policy and employment, UNDP together with UNWOMEN plays lead roles in support of EU-supported sector programs. In the water sector UNDP supports governance mechanisms to manage river basins in transboundary context to deliver better water quality and a more balanced use of natural resources.

The regional development policy, distinguished from area-based development, is a critical EU policy tool for cohesion of European regions. In Albania, policy for regional development has also been evolving. In the past programme period, UNDP supported the implementation of EU's 'Integrated Support to Decentralization' project, which aimed to establish Albania's regional development strategy and to support Albania's regions approximate the planning and institutional set up needed to engage with EU's regional development policy. The ADR provides valuable insight on the relevance and effectiveness of this work, noting also that the national policy and institutional framework objectives have been ambiguous. Going forward, UNDP will engage with national partners to support local governance mechanisms with a view to strengthen their capacities to participate in the further policy and institutional framework for regional development. Important partners are also among the international community, notably Austrian Development Agency and Swiss Development Cooperation. The Regional Development Fund is a critical asset of the Government, which can support such policy and institutional frameworks. UNDP will seek partnerships and identify strategies to support the country's newly amalgamated local government units so that the people of Albania derive measurable development gains from the evolving regional development policy of the Government. Supporting transparency and effectiveness of Fund operations as well as promoting innovative funding, including co-mingling of funds with the Regional Development Fund, towards clear, measurable performance targets at municipal levels will be explored with partners.

While most social policy is not explicitly regulated by EU Acquis, there are complex and sophisticated EU instruments to promote European standards and norms in social rights. In Albania UNDP enjoys strong partnership with national and international development partners, to support Albania's institutions in aligning to these standards and norms. Going forward, the new Country Programme of UNDP for 2017–2021, identifies social inclusion as one of its key pillars. Specific target vulnerable groups are persons with disabilities, survivors of gender-based violence, and vulnerable Roma and Egyptian populations. In this context, UNDP's gender equality agenda, both through gender mainstreaming of key national policy frameworks and legislation and through developing capacities of independent institutions to remedy discrimination against women, are key programme components going forward. UNDP's comparative advantage will be on work at local levels at the level of the newly consolidated government units.

UNDP has supported the development of the vision and strategies for social inclusion and protecting the rights of vulnerable populations. Going forward, and leveraging once again the economies of scale and capacities established by Albania's territorial administrative reform, the new Country Programme of UNDP is designed so that results are delivered at the level of local government units. The strategy of implementation of the country programme is through local government units, with indicators and targets adopted for 61 municipalities, representing also a bringing to national scale, the pilots to policy work (e.g. in community response mechanism to gender-based violence) to national coverage through the 61 municipalities.

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Key action (s)	Time-frame	Responsible unit (s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
1. Regional Development: i) Engage in renewed dialogue with partners on the basis of ISD programme experience, expertise from the region (e.g. Ch22 related scoping exercises) and experience of other development partners to identify entry points of support to development effectiveness of the government's regional development policy instruments; ii) Support the consolidation of local government units as agents of regional development policy;	Q2 2016 Q2 2016-2018	Senior Management STAR2 Project; STAR PAR Multi Donor Projects (Outcome 1 of the new CPD)		
2. Social development beyond Acquis Chapters: CPD Outcome 3 dedicated to human rights and social inclusion	2017-2021	RR/CD/Programme		
3. Focus on local services delivery: Draft CPD delivers assistance through the 61 newly amalgamated municipalities. Specific output targets identified in all four Outcomes of the CPD related to support towards delivery of policy/strategy through local government units.	Q2 2016	RR/CD/Programme		
Evaluation recommendation 2: UNDP should continue to strengthen its efforts for resource mobilization. It should also explore cost-sharing options or technical service modalities fully financed by the Government.				
Management response: The Country Office acknowledges that a critical mass of programme funding is essential for achievement of development results supported by UNDP. The experience of the Country Office has been that UNDP's support, when linked to a nationally driven reform agenda, and delivered in coherence, partnership and collaboration with other development partners, has been effective in attracting also financial resources. National ownership and drive of results are critical. UNDP will concentrate resource mobilization efforts, not as a fund-raising effort towards UNDP projects, but rather as ensuring that national reform programmes are adequately resourced. To date, as underlined in the ADR, Government Cost Sharing towards UNDP-supported programmes and projects has not been substantial. However, the more UNDP focuses on delivering national reform programmes, the more national resources can be attached to programme results. During the past programming cycle the Country Office progressively dispelled the notion that UNDP is a donor. The Country Office will continue to offer a problem solving approach towards delivering of national reform agendas to government partners at central and local levels. This in turn will encourage pooling and comingling of national and international resources towards mutually agreed targets, some of which are most effectively delivered by UNDP. Comparative advantages lie not only in substantive command of areas such as rights of vulnerable communities, gender-based violence, local governance, but also in operational and managerial capacities for co-management with government and other national partners different sources of funding towards reform objectives. Local government partners will play an increasing role in such partnerships going forward, as they themselves will become more financially stronger actors. Further UNDP's project delivery strategies, through good governance mechanisms, participation, due process, transparency and effective utilization of funds (procurement, recruitment, contract management etc.) are instruments applicable in a variety of substantive areas. The Government's reform agendas all require additional and innovative funding sources, some of which can be built through UNDP partnerships. Notable possibilities are energy-efficiency or innovative municipal financing mechanisms, or financing mechanisms for protected areas. Co-mingling with Government funds through such instruments will increase scale and impact of programmes.				

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Key action (s)	Time-frame	Responsible unit (s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
1. Replicate pooled funding mechanisms of STAR for broader range of partners' contributions, including Government and EU, towards shared goals	2016 Q2	STAR2 Project; STAR PAR Multi Donor Projects (Outcome 1 of the new CPD)		
2. Strengthen the capacities of the Country Office staff in Government cost-sharing approaches and benefits by engaging IRH support and staff secondment	2016	UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub / Programme Unit	Detail assignments	
3. Strengthen programme approach to enable innovative funding and financing mechanism for development	2017-2021	Programme Unit (Climate Change Team; Protected Areas Team; Tirana Smart City Team)	New programme period	
<p>Evaluation recommendation 3: UNDP should strengthen partnership and knowledge cooperation with other development actors and should focus on scaling up impact.</p> <p>Management response: UNDP notes that development knowledge and replicable experience often sits with partners outside UNDP. This is also true in Albania. Some of the most important best practices in municipal services delivery, for example, have been accomplished through programmes supported by our partners across the country (SDC e.g. in Functional Areas; One Stop Shops; USAID on municipal finances; fiscal decentralization). UNDP support to the Government's reform programmes will need to be based on bigger investments on the side of the Country Office in learning from and leveraging the knowledge of other development partners, government units, civil society and academia. UNDP's programme design and management tools, such as Local Project Appraisal and Steering Committees, are formal and collaborative mechanisms (involving leadership of development partners, national institutions) for ensuring that such knowledge and experience is reflected upon, assessed, and brought to scale, as relevant in UNDP-supported reform programmes. Going forward UNDP will deploy more intent to knowledge management through these formal mechanisms as well as through other mechanisms such as project visits, experience exchange and more structured dialogue.</p> <p>The recommendation to focus on scaling impact is at the heart of the strategy for delivering the Country Programme 2017-2021. It is also the Country Office's key strategy for UNDP Strategic Plan alignment parameter of scale. UNDP has been part of successful experiences of scaling pilots to policy levels. One such example has been the experience of the coordinated community responses to gender-based violence (CCR). Going forward, a virtuous cycle of pilot to policy will be closed with bringing this response mechanism to scale through the agency of the 61 newly amalgamated municipalities (Evaluation of the CCR in the Context of Territorial Reform refers). Further the Country Office notes that scaling of UNDP-supported pilots or strategies may also be achieved through programmes supported by other development partners. For example UNDP pilots and models for financing for protected areas (2016 onward) provide inputs to broader policy and wider replication impact through EU-Italian Cooperation programme for Natura2000; or EU Climate Change Programs.</p>				
Key action (s)	Time-frame	Responsible unit (s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
1. Knowledge Management: Pre PACs and PACs dedicate agendas to knowledge management in collaboration with partners (e.g. site visits to SDC supported One Stop Shops in the context of STAR2)	Immediate	CD, Programme / Outcome Boards		
2. Scaling: The Country Programme 2017-2021 establishes specific targets for national scaling of past/evaluated pilots (e.g. CCR; municipal service delivery models; municipal energy tracking tools; one stop shops; archives etc.) to 61 municipalities balancing local government autonomy with standardization benefits. (This action is linked/and comprises same set of activities with Action 3 in response to Recommendation 1)	Immediate	Program/ STAR Team; Climate Change Team; Protected Areas Team; Gender Team		

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Evaluation recommendation 4:

UNDP should apply a multidisciplinary approach to cross-cutting issues, including human rights, gender equality, social inclusion and environmental management.

Management response:

UNDP's work in Albania with UNWOMEN and other UN agency partners was recently recognized by the undg as a case study of strengthening normative and operational linkages as called for in GA resolution 67/226 translating normative framework (CEDAW) into results in Albania in the legal framework as well as at civil society and popular levels for increasing voice and participation in demand of rights. https://undg.org/main/undg_document/eight-case-studies-on-integrating-the-united-nations-normative-and-operational-work/ The Country Office notes however that such successes need to be made more horizontal across all outcome areas of the UNDP Country Programme going forward. Therefore, the Country Office has volunteered to apply the Gender Seal to its programme and operations in 2016. Further, effective use of programme design tools such as pre-appraisals, appraisals and monitoring and evaluation are already yielding results in stronger mainstreaming of gender across the portfolios, with most recent examples being STAR2 and STAR-PAR pooled funding programmes in support of local governance. Stronger follow up Special Procedures of Treaty bodies 'recommendations for Albania as well as the Universal Periodic Review findings will also be integrated into the Country Programme, going forward.

Environment – UNDP Country Office is regularly integrating Social and Environmental Standards in its programs as per applicable policy. Going forward, it will be important not only formalistically meeting the Standards, but using the SES as basis for advocacy and further project design, e.g. integrating longer term disaster and climate change scenarios into floods rehabilitation works under ongoing program. More significantly, supporting the national mechanisms for mainstreaming of environmental and climate-related concerns in development and sectoral policy is a development challenge UNDP seeks to address through its upcoming Country Programme (2017-21) for which specific output targets to this regard have been agreed to and specified. The interministerial committee on climate change is a relatively young coordination mechanism for climate change mainstreaming. UNDP will support the governance and capacities of this committee to lead on policy direction that must be complied by line ministries.

Quality Assurance system for Country Office programming will be used throughout the new programme period. The Country Office has already mobilized other mechanisms for pursuing an issues-based approach that cuts across outcome areas They include the establishment of solution teams to support Tirana Municipality in follow up to the Smart City conference and multisectoral work plan of the Municipality. Further the Country Office's systematic use of Open Government and Open Data Partnerships including the Trust in Institutions Surveys help feed multidisciplinary assessments, performance monitoring into programme work across portfolios.

Key action (s)	Time-frame	Responsible unit (s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
1. Gender Seal – Gender Seal Action Plan and Gender Equality Strategy for the Country Office prepared and implemented	2016	RR/CD; Gender Seal Team		
2. Gender mainstreaming ensured through all phases of programme development (pre-PAC and PAC mechanisms) and implementation collaboratively with development partners and Government	2016	CD/Programme Unit	(Starting with STAR PAC scheduled for March)	
3. UPR recommendations integrated in the Country Programme (Outcome 2)	2016	RR/CD/ Gender Team; Social Inclusion Team; Roma and Egyptian Programme Team; Governance Team		
4. Environment: UNDP will support the governance and capacities of the Inter ministerial committee on climate change committee to lead on policy direction that must be complied by line ministries. This is captured as a result in our CPD Outcome 4	2017-2021	CD/Environment Team	Country Programme Outcome 4	
5. Support Open Data Partnership including Trust in Institutions Surveys that cut across multiple issues	2017-2021	RR/CD		
6. Integrated support to Tirana Municipality to help address multidisciplinary issues	2017-2021	CD/ Programme		

Evaluation recommendation 5:

UNDP should prepare a long-term strategy for its development support to Albania during the course of the EU accession process. The strategy should outline UNDP's key areas of support to Albania in moving forward with EU membership.

Management response:

The UNDP Country Programme 2017-2021 presents greater focus and credibility to our work going forward. Its alignment to the NSDI and the overarching goal of promoting rule of law and good governance with the ultimate objective of Albania's European integration outlines UNDP's strategy of support to Albania in moving forward with EU accession. In this context, the Country Office will explore in 2016 further entry points to support especially the anti-corruption and rule of law actors by expanding its current work. This can be further broadened in the frame of public administration reform including transparent business processes and effective public services delivery, to see how anti-corruption and rule of law support contributes to broader EU accession priorities. Each programme outcome area will be provided with the European integration relevance rationale in the Country Programme.

Key action (s)	Time-frame	Responsible unit (s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
1. Country Programme preparation and appraisal	By end Q2 2016	RR/CD		
2. Identify relevant SDG targets and indicators and promote discussions on inequalities following IRH development dialogue	End 2017	RR/CD		