

4. Recommendations and Management Response

Recommendation 1 [Linked to findings 7-9 and crosscutting RQs on COVID-19 and positioning] – UNDP Mongolia should further refine and communicate its business case for 2021/2022 by further clarifying its offer and specifying how it intends to contribute to UNDAF objectives as well as COVID response and recovery in the immediate future.

UNDP should intensify its efforts to help the government mitigate the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19, specifically on groups severely affected by the pandemic. This may involve institutional strengthening of the Cabinet Secretariat’s Office as main influencer during the crisis, as well as the provision of country-specific analyses and solutions, focusing on the most sensitive governance and economic issues only a trusted partner like UNDP can tackle. To clarify its offer for 2021/2022, the CO should produce a concise theory of change diagram visualizing in an attractive format who UNDP Mongolia is and how it makes a difference. A short accompanying narrative should identify new intervention areas, synergies and coherence across portfolios, linkages with other actors, opportunities for innovation and new partnerships, as well as the main underlying assumptions and risks. Such a document can serve as UNDP’s business case positioning the office as a key partner with a distinct profile in Mongolia’s dwindling donor landscape. It can also guide the CO in identifying activities with sustainability potential and serve as communication tool to clarify UNDP’s role vis-a-vis the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office, which has been a source of confusion.

Management response: Recommendation accepted.

UNDP will intensify its efforts to communicate its work supporting the government in the COVID response and recovery of the socioeconomic impact, while continuing to contribute to the UNDAF. This will build upon the joint work initiated with the Cabinet Secretariat as a government operational arm of the national programmes implementation. Capitalizing on the UNDP’s previous offer on the national strategy for COVID response, the focus will be to clarify and communicate within UNDP, the UNCT and external partners UNDP’s role in the rest of the current programme cycle and transition to the Country Programme in 2023-2027. The business case will be based on the 7 distinct transformative missions suggested in the Mission-Oriented Framework, which is mapped in the Strategic Argument during the sense-making journey. The Strategic Argument that UNDP developed in late 2020 aimed to design portfolios of mission for UNDP to help Mongolia transform in the post-Covid world.

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
1.1 Organize an internal meeting to explore and identify the focus in the Covid response (using analysis of the current conditions along with the data captured in the relevant surveys, portfolio areas recommended in the Strategic Argument and the UN-info). The discussion and the roadmap will be	End April 2021	CO management, M&E		Initiated

documented to guide the next steps in 2021/2022 and to transition to the next programme cycle smoothly.				
1.2 A concrete design and roadmap for the portfolios will be developed based on stakeholder consultations.	Q4 2021	CO Management, M&E		
1.3 Regularly communicate through social media, UNDP website, CO monthly newsletters, blogs, and news releases to UNCT, external partners and the public its programmatic work and results achieved as a contribution to the UNDAF, SDGs attainment, and COVID response and recovery.	Q4 2022	CO Communications		Initiated
<p>Recommendation 2 [Linked to findings 3, 4, 10 and 12, RQ 2 and crosscutting RQs on COVID-19 and positioning]: UNDP Mongolia should immediately review its staffing structure and tweak its results framework to ensure it is realigned with recent adjustments and fit for purpose.</p> <p>Staffing for programme delivery needs to be reviewed as soon as possible. The office may require additional headcount to implement pipeline projects starting in 2021 which is challenging given a relatively high existing management efficiency ratio. In addition, programme leads need more headspace to engage in innovation, strategic and thought leadership work, including on UNDP's normative position to be conveyed through advocacy and policy advisory (see recommendations 3 and 5). As a preliminary step to act on recommendation 1, the results chain for the vast existing outcome 1 must be reviewed to ascertain that the CO can prove contribution. To ensure that progress can be fully demonstrated by the end of the programme cycle, adjustments to the measurement of results (e.g. tweaking indicators, revising targets, including disaggregation where possible) should be made as soon as possible and in line with the updated theory of change. New programmes (GCF, KOICA, EU) will also need to be reflected adequately in both outcome areas and should not be made to fit under existing headings where contribution lies elsewhere. This will help demonstrate the full extent of the CO's results and position UNDP as the partner of choice on a wide range of issues for the 2023-2027 period.</p>				
<p>Management response: Recommendation accepted.</p> <p>The CO is reviewing its staffing structure with support from the Bangkok Regional Hub. The review was requested in February 2020 and initiated in November 2020. The TOR evolved adapting to the changing environment. In line with the first recommendation, the CO will review and explore the portfolio designs and tweak/adopt the results framework indicators as interim solution for the rest of the current programme cycle and to transition to the next programme.</p>				
Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)

2.1 Targeted review support on staffing structure that fits for purpose developed, with BRH technical advice and support.	End April 2021	BRH and CO management		Initiated
2.2 Internal meeting looking at the indicators and the business case (combined with the action outlined above under 1.1 above to make adjustments to results framework for better alignment with changing environment.)	End June 2021	CO management and M&E		
2.3 A roadmap and discussions outlining/documenting the design of the programme approach (portfolios) with an independent insight from consultancy support and will feed into the new CPD theory of change and design (informed by the CCA and new UNSDCF theory of change)	Q4 2021	CO management and M&E		

Recommendation 3 [Linked to findings 1-9 and 11, and RQ 1] – In the next programme cycle, UNDP Mongolia should further enhance its focus on knowledge brokering, analysis and technical leadership, specifically in the realm of socio-economic analysis.

An emphasis on ‘upstream’ work is expected from UNDP in middle-income countries. Delinking from the UN coordination role has freed space for UNDP Mongolia to focus on its key strengths and take on a more substantive leadership role, as demonstrated in the socio-economic response to COVID-19. In its 2023-2027 CPD, UNDP needs to position itself clearly as a thought leader and promote its added value in policy advisory and knowledge brokering across the UN system and beyond. UNDP has the necessary clout to lead transformative, green and gender-responsive change in Mongolia and must now take decisive steps to model a whole-of-society approach engaging broadly beyond the government. Programme area leads need to adapt and operationalise the latest corporate guidance for the context of Mongolia, build on recently initiated socio-economic and poverty analysis, and invest in demonstration projects to ensure proof of concept by collaborating with the upcoming A-Lab. The office is well positioned for analytical work in some of the programmatic areas that were left aside in 2017-2022 such as skills/employment and youth and could consider re-engaging more strongly, if a consolidated portfolio allows. International and national partners are available to collaborate, including the National Statistical Office, ILO, UNFPA and various civil society platforms (see recommendation 5).

Management response: Recommendations accepted.

UNDP will use its strength and substantive leadership role that was demonstrated in the socio-economic response to COVID-19 and position itself as a thought leader and knowledge broker. Capitalizing on its partnership with IFIs and other partners on analytical works, UNDP continue to focus on the socio-economic analysis to capture multiple-angles with a whole-of-society approach.

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
3.1 Hiring of an International economist at the P4 level with in-depth expertise to bring an expertise to the programme and elevate the socio-economic work, particularly related to COVID-19 recovery, also as a contribution to the development of the next CPD	End May, 2021	BRH, CO Management		Initiated
3.2 Leveraging the CCA, the programme environment and design will be explored through internal consultations/dialogue (combined with actions 1.1 and 2.2)	End April, 2021	CO Management, M&E		
3.3 A-lab roadmap and the frontier challenges further elaborated	End May, 2021	CO Management, A lab		Initiated
3.4 Discussions initiated and meetings organised with IFIs (quarterly/bi-annual basis) to explore ideas and collaboration opportunities for further analytic work. This will be building up on the earlier successful collaborations, e.g. with the ADB on SDG budgeting, and knowledge products, such as the Study on Covid-19 Impact on Women and Girls in Mongolia.	End 2021	CO Management, International economist		Initiated

Recommendation 4 [Linked to findings 1-6 and 11, and RQ 1] – Programmatically, UNDP Mongolia should add depth to its governance programme and consolidate its portfolio on the environment-poverty nexus. There are significant opportunities to push for a “green recovery” from COVID-19 that UNDP could capitalize on.

UNDP Mongolia must make some tough choices regarding its highly fragmented portfolio on sustainable development, streamlining it and perhaps emphasizing some new areas going forward (see recommendation 3). A particular promising area to bundle some existing work and partnerships is “green recovery” from COVID-19 where significant national and donor interest is noted. Such a focus would need to be operationalized further but could build on various assets in the office (history of engagement around climate and environmental issues; incoming GCF funding; etc.). In the governance area, UNDP’s portfolio could be more ambitious and normatively based, to include a strong focus on anti-corruption, gender and human rights. Emphasis on citizens’ voice needs to be reinstated as a core area of what UNDP does, believes in and stands for. Development financing is an additional growth area where UNDP’s expertise is sought and valued. Mongolia CO is beginning to make a name

for itself as a lab for experimentation in this area. This should be continued and knowledge, including of failed pilots and experiments, should be documented and shared widely across the region and globally.

Management response: Recommendation partially accepted.

With regard to adding depth to the governance programme, while efforts are being made by the CO to enhance and add-depth to the governance portfolio, it is still challenging to raise funding for governance work.

The Country Office has an annual allocation of \$ 350,000 under TRAC funding, the majority of which during the cycle has been allocated under the governance portfolio.

While the Country Office relies heavily on vertical funds and traditional donors, there are ongoing efforts to engage with non-traditional partners including from the private sector and IFIs, to expand the governance portfolio. The A-lab in Mongolia CO for example is working on digitalization for public service delivery, an area where private sector and possibly IFIs may be leveraged.

The CO will continue its work on “green recovery” and several initiatives are being launched in 2021 in this area.

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
4.1 Further strengthen its existing actions and concerted efforts on the green recovery (including enhancing livelihoods options, pilot initiative to introduce goat milk as a new livelihood option especially for women, address challenges faced by the cashmere sector due to COVID through the cashmere platform, rollout new initiative on sustainable tourism, and debt for nature swap.)	End 2022	CO management, Environment portfolio		Initiated
4.2 Explore further on ideas and issues with National Human Rights Commission and the National Gender Equality Commission to step up its existing partnership and work.	End 2021	CO management, Governance portfolio		Initiated

Recommendation 5 [Linked to findings 5-7 and 9, RQ 2 and crosscutting RQs on positioning] – UNDP Mongolia should branch out its partnerships, with particular focus on civil society.

Being a thought leader and knowledge broker includes broad engagement and consultation, moving beyond servicing the government of Mongolia, and promoting multidisciplinary solutions. Conducting a comprehensive landscape analysis of development partners and resources to ‘build forward better’ could provide entry points. Such a piece could build on the work of this review and its by-products such as the ‘formative analysis’. Partnership with civil society, or indeed, strengthening civil society per se in its role to hold government accountable and to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs should be a key focus of UNDP’s work in Mongolia. This implies support beyond grant management to include areas such as improvement of legal frameworks for

civil society engagement, capacity development in the realms of advocacy, policy analysis and international fundraising, as well as facilitating direct engagement with government authorities at different levels. Partnerships with other non-state actors, such as foundations or the private sector, should also be examined and pursued where strategic, ethical and feasible.

Management response: Recommendation accepted.

Strengthening its existing work with civil society, particularly the platform supported by UNDP Mongolia for the Civil Society contribution to the VNR, it will revive/adapt the civil-society advisory group to promote multidisciplinary solutions to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. Recognizing the difficult environment for engaging private sector due to its small size in Mongolia and sensitivities related to the extractive industry, the CO will take a cautious, yet pro-active approach based on the partnership/stakeholder analysis to reach out to private sector in and outside of the country.

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status (Initiated, Completed or No due date)
5.1 Leverage Sounding board members to collect solutions and multidisciplinary views and validation on the potential partnership and work with civil society (combined/added as a step to the action 1.1. and 2.2 for a validation)	Q2, 2021	CO Management ALab		
5.2 Civil Society Advisory group (forum) established by reviving or adapting from the SDGs civil society platform.	Q1, 2022	CO Management, SDGs portfolio		
5.3 Develop Civil society engagement strategy (with components focusing on both engagement and advocacy; clarifying if a quota to be established for civil society representation percentage in the various project boards). The Strategy will be developed engaging the existing civil society platform and validated by the group.	End 2021	CO Management		

* Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the ERC database.