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**Country programmes and related matters**

Draft Regional Programme Document for Africa (2022-2025)

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## Programme Rationale

1. The Regional Programme for Africa (2022-25) comes at a critical juncture in the continent’s development trajectory as it grapples with the impacts of the pandemic. The COVID-19 experience has provided evidence of innovative capabilities and solidarity across Africa, but it has also created a need for all stakeholders to focus on supporting the fundamental drivers of Africa’s promise while ensuring its resilience to complex and interdependent risks.
2. In recent decades, and despite its heterogeneity, Africa’s growing progress has positively shifted its ranking on many development indices, whether concerned with growth, human development or governance and peace, and transformed the quality of life for many of its citizens.[[1]](#footnote-1) Global recognition of a new narrative on Africa’s promise has steadily expanded, attracting new partnerships.[[2]](#footnote-2)
3. Africa’s overall economic trajectory has been one of growth, increasing macroeconomic stability and a steady expansion of the private sector, spurred on by policy reforms and improvements in infrastructure. From 2010-2020, Africa experienced 48 leadership changes through electoral processes against eight resulting from violence (and a further 33 non-electoral but peaceful). [[3]](#footnote-3) These figures highlight a widespread push for greater accountability and democracy. There have been substantial declines in maternal mortality (39 percent from 2000-2017).[[4]](#footnote-4) According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO), chronic malnutrition among children under five has decreased by almost 10 percentage points from 1995.[[5]](#footnote-5) Across the continent, life expectancies are rising and the gender gap in literacy is shrinking. Since 2000, the number of African children enrolled in primary school has increased from 60 million to 150 million.[[6]](#footnote-6)
4. Behind Africa’s successes lies a surge forward in efforts by citizens, social movements, the private sector and governments alike seeking to harness Africa’s destiny. A vision of regional interdependence projected in the African Union’s (AU) Agenda 2063, and steadily expanding engagement of the continent’s Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) have supported and enabled this momentum.
5. Levers for further transformation are abundant and include rapid urbanization; a growing youthful population; improving gender parity; economic opportunities derived from ever-closer economic regional integration; and the possibilities for catalytic gains to be derived from green technologies and digitalization.
6. However, a complex set of challenges and risks are confronting the continent, some of which are intricately bound up in the very drivers of its transformation. Building sustainable peace and preventing further escalation of armed violence stands out as a necessary pre-condition to accelerating development. Governance challenges persist, with overall progress stalling from 2019.[[7]](#footnote-7) Growth has been uneven and characterized by widening inequalities. These features of the development landscape have been sharpened by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Regional analysis in focus**

1. Fulfilling Africa’s developmental aspirations requires a regional perspective. This recognition is informed by the manifestation of transnational effects of globalization, migration, infectious disease (including now COVID-19), climate change, exploitation of natural resources, trafficking of drugs and people, as well as the regional spill-over of (armed) conflicts and violent extremism.[[8]](#footnote-8)
2. *The AU Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want* represents the continent’s blueprint for addressing its development challenges. The AU Peace and Security Council, collaborating with the United Nations Security Council, has become a primary decision-making organ for addressing peace and security issues on the continent. The AU-UN Agenda 2063 and 2030 Partnership Framework on Sustainable Development and the AU-UN Joint Framework for Enhanced Peace and Security in Africa are evidence of global recognition of the necessity for regionalizing Africa’s development agenda.
3. Democratic shift is growing on the continent – amid setbacks in some African countries and globally.[[9]](#footnote-9) The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance represents a clear push from the AU to promote increased accountability and effectiveness in governance. Largely unarmed and peaceful popular protest as a force for political change is rising, with citizens challenging injustice and inequality and advancing a more profound democratic momentum than the continent has previously seen.[[10]](#footnote-10)
4. The long-recognized potential yield of Africa’s regional economic integration moved closer to realization when trading under the new regime of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) began on 1 January 2021. The AfCFTA is projected to create the largest free trade area globally, connecting 1.3 billion people across 55 AU member states, doubling manufacturing output by 2025, and potentially lifting 30 million people out of extreme poverty and 68 million out of moderate poverty.[[11]](#footnote-11)
5. However, Africa is currently one of the most unequal regions globally in terms of income distribution.[[12]](#footnote-12) Youth are often excluded from economic opportunity. The continent has the youngest population in the world, with 75 percent made up of people under the age of 35.[[13]](#footnote-13) The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs predicts the continent’s youth will double from present levels by 2055.[[14]](#footnote-14) 30 million youth will enter the labour market each year by 2030. Although this demographic situation presents opportunities, it also presents risks where the aspirations and choices of young people are constrained.[[15]](#footnote-15)
6. It is vital to sustain progress towards gender equality. A more inclusive environment for women is now in place across the continent, illustrated by advancements in education, health and political representation.[[16]](#footnote-16) However, significant gaps between men and women’s opportunities remain a severe impediment to Africa’s structural economic and social transformation.[[17]](#footnote-17) Women in Africa suffer some of the highest levels of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) globally.[[18]](#footnote-18) With some African countries among the top 15 performers globally in gender parity,[[19]](#footnote-19) US$316 billion could be added to Africa’s GDP by 2025 if all countries matched this progress.[[20]](#footnote-20)
7. Africa faces a unique opportunity to further harness its digitalization boom as a driver of growth and innovation, as reflected in the AU 2020-2030 Digital Transformation Strategy. COVID-19 has boosted online activity and innovations in Africa as elsewhere.[[21]](#footnote-21) 49 percent of Africa’s population lived in areas covered by 4G network by 2019. However, access to enhanced internet connectivity and coverage remains low, with only 29 percent (and significantly fewer women than men) reporting having access.[[22]](#footnote-22) Digital start-ups struggle to attract funding, and ‘traditional’ businesses are adapting slowly. Few governments are systematically investing in developing digital infrastructure, services, skills, and entrepreneurship.
8. Africa is increasingly experiencing extreme weather and climate events: cyclones, droughts, landslides and shifts in dry conditions.[[23]](#footnote-23) These events, combined with weak enforcement of conservation frameworks and pollution management, and the rapid rate of urbanization and population growth, threaten its rich natural world environment. Adverse impacts on ecosystems affect livelihoods, especially for populations depending on natural resource capital. In African nations vulnerable to extreme climate patterns, GDP exposure may grow from $895 billion in 2018 to about $1.4 trillion in 2023 – nearly half of the continent’s GDP.[[24]](#footnote-24)
9. Lastly, notwithstanding steady progress from the peak levels of armed violence that afflicted the continent in the 20th Century, armed conflict remains pervasive in Africa, especially in the Horn, the Sahel, and the Lake Chad Basin regions.[[25]](#footnote-25) While each context differs, grievances related to political and economic exclusion, limited access to justice, other forms of inequality, competition for depleting natural resources, and zero-sum political contest are recognized drivers. Violent extremist ideology and identity-based conflict between herders and farmers feature prominently. The past decade has seen a significant operationalization and implementation of the AU African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The AU and RECs/RMs have advanced attention to gender, peace and security; introduced early warning and early response tools; conflict prevention mechanisms; and peace support operations capacity.[[26]](#footnote-26) But much more needs to be done to build and sustain peace.

**Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic**

1. Despite the progress made, advancement towards Agendas 2063 and 2030 was uneven even before COVID-19 emerged. Now, an estimated 110 million African children and youth are out of school and fragile health care systems under severe pressure.[[27]](#footnote-27) COVID-19 has exacerbated inequalities between women and men and will delay the realization of most gender-related SDG targets.[[28]](#footnote-28) Slow economic activity and lockdowns have increased unemployment and debt while decreasing remittances. Development assistance and domestic revenue have declined. Estimates are that 30 million Africans were pushed into extreme poverty in 2020 as a result of the pandemic and ­that about 39 million Africans could fall into extreme poverty in 2021.[[29]](#footnote-29) UNDP’s analysis of the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic in Africa anticipates long-term disruption as much from the second- and third-order effects of the crisis as from first-order health impacts.[[30]](#footnote-30) Recent WHO warnings of another wave in Africa amid the exponential expansion of COVID-19 infection rates against a vaccination rate of just 3 percent is cause for significant concern.[[31]](#footnote-31)
2. The COVID-19 pandemic has created further complexity and a potential setback on progress that must serve to mobilize all actors to redouble efforts in supporting Africa’s promise. Experience from the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the need to place a stronger emphasis on resilience.

**Designing the new Regional Programme for Africa 2022-2025**

1. UNDP’s engagement in Africa, as powerfully articulated in the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) Renewed Strategic Offer in Africa, is grounded in the intention to shift the global narrative away from a problem to a promise lens. The new Regional Programme design is predicated on analysis of the fundamental drivers of Africa’s successes as well as emerging opportunities and entry-points for further enabling these gains.
2. UNDP has been at the fore of identifying integrated mechanisms that link regional, sub-regional, national, and sub-national development planning processes for greater effectiveness and results in Africa. The design of the Regional Programme in successive cycles is premised on recognizing the importance of a regionalized lens and approach that informs and shapes strategic and contextualized interventions.
3. The 2018-2021 programme cycle achieved significant results across all priorities, nested against the six strategic impact areas put forward in the RBA Strategic Offer.[[32]](#footnote-32) The Regional Programme was successfully delivered amid the COVID-19 crisis. The team pivoted adroitly to respond, adapting its interventions to the new working conditions, and taking up emerging priorities to support regional institutions in their responses to the pandemic.[[33]](#footnote-33)
4. Lessons learned and good practices outlined in the independent mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the Regional Programme 2018-2021, the performance audit, the independent evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-2021) and numerous other assessments underpin the 2022-2025 Regional Programme design. An extensive series of internal and external consultations reflecting on the Regional Programme’s achievements, strengths and challenges as seen by its partners and stakeholders further informed the design and ensure the programme is fully aware of, and aligned to, the relevant efforts of others.[[34]](#footnote-34)
5. The ‘relevance’ of the 2018-2021 Regional Programme received the highest score in the MTE based on its close alignment with Agendas 2063 and 2030, the UNDP Strategic Plan and its evidence-based design informed by a series of knowledge products and research. The MTE recognized the programme’s flexibility and responsiveness to changing contextual factors and commitment from the outset to explicitly address the needs of women and youth. Furthermore, the MTE highlighted the programme’s regional ‘value add’ and commended coherence and linkages with other actors as well as UNDP´s contribution to improving the capacities of regional implementing partners, especially the AU, to advocate and deliver results in priority areas.
6. The evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-2021) underlined the importance of regional hubs in streamlining policy expertise and country office engagement through support platforms and Global Policy Network deployment. Close engagement of UNDP’s thematic experts deployed across Africa in the design of this programme has reflected this function.
7. The most significant substantive lessons from the previous cycle emerging from the MTE and reflected in this Regional Programme Document are:

* Ensuring inclusiveness, not only of women and youth but also persons with disabilities and displaced, indigenous and borderland communities;
* Investing more in South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC), including through connecting communities of experts across the region;
* Scaling-up digital transformation, social protection for communities and the informal sector, AfCFTA and free movement, and entrepreneurship for women and youth interventions;
* Deepening the already strong partnerships with regional institutions, notably the AU and RECs/RMs.

**Opportunities for UNDP**

1. The AU will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2022. To mark the anniversary, the AU and UNDP are undertaking a data-driven assessment, ‘AU at 20: A Renewed Call to Action for the 21st Century’ that will measure progress and chart a renewed call to action towards achieving Agendas 2063 and 2030. The collaboration indicates the multi-layered and robust partnership between UNDP and the AU, RECs/RMs and forms a central component of UNDP’s niche and opportunity through the Regional Programme.
2. The Regional Programme’s emphasis on women and youth resonates clearly with Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 that calls for “An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth”.
3. The ongoing AU institutional reforms that followed the 2017 Kagame Report have led to a reconfiguration of the internal governance arrangement within the AU, including the creation of the new AU Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), and the revitalization of the AU Peace Fund. The programme is closely engaged in these processes, including through the deployment of embedded technical experts. The emphasis on accelerated regional integration in African development discourse positions the Regional Programme as a primary tool for supporting change.
4. The Regional Programme thus responds directly to recommendations from the 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), which explicitly calls on the United Nations system to: “strengthen the quality of its partnership and coordinated regional efforts in Africa and to align its support for the region to the specific needs and priorities of Africa, with a special focus on, inter alia, improving data and statistics, the implementation of the AU-UN Framework on the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, enhancing economic transformation and diversification, harnessing the demographic dividend, leveraging new technologies for inclusive development, accelerating energy access and transition, and promoting investment in climate change mitigation and adaptation in Africa”.[[35]](#footnote-35)
5. The programme’s specific regional added value, highlighted in the MTE, was also consistently welcomed in design phase consultations. Stakeholders pointed especially to the Regional Programme’s strong working partnerships with the AU and RECs/RMs, focused on enhancing capacities to deliver across Agendas 2063 and 2030 and in critical priority areas; ability to connect country-level interventions and learning into a greater whole; provision of thought leadership on continent-wide trends and ability to serve as an innovative catalyst for new initiatives; and capacity to address cross-border development challenges and opportunities in Africa.
6. These regional qualities combine with UNDP’s globally recognized strengths: presence on the ground as the world’s largest development organization; convening capacity; collaborative relationships with member states; partnerships; excellence in key thematic areas of expertise; and innovative practice. Taken together, these factors render the Regional Programme a formidable player in Africa’s development context, with the influence and scope to effect real positive change.

## II. Programme Priorities and Partnerships

1. The Regional Programme contributes directly to the approved UNDP Strategic Plan (2022-2025) across its three change directions and six signature solutions. It mirrors the Strategic Plan’s critical enablers with targeted efforts to harness these drivers of transformation for the African continent. It will serve to advance the new Gender Equality Strategy 2022-25.
2. The Regional Programme is anchored in the AU Agenda 2063 and further contributes to the six impact areas of the RBA Strategic Offer.
3. The new Regional Programme coalesces UNDP’s regional interventions under four critical priorities articulated to resonate with Agenda 2030 in this final decade of action: People, Prosperity, Planet and Peace.
4. The Regional Programme’s overarching theory of change can be summarized as follows:

At a critical time in which challenges such as the COVID-19 crisis, widening inequalities, the climate and environmental emergency, and conflict threaten Africa’s development progress of recent decades and drivers of its success, renewed efforts are required to capitalize on progress and build resilience. Regional-level initiatives are a crucial dimension of action in the context of a regionalized development discourse and Agenda 2063.

Therefore, if:

* Regional institutions’ capacities are enhanced to meaningfully engage with African citizens (especially women and youth) as well as member states in critical policy areas.
* Policies, strategies and institutional frameworks are defined and implemented to build accountable governance systems in which transparency and accountability are operationalized, and the social contract strengthened including through improved domestic revenue collection.
* Digital opportunities at all levels are harnessed to connect citizens to governments, with people’s rights, voice and participation upheld.
* Inclusive, sustainable, diversified and regionally integrated economic growth is enabled including in the informal and private sectors, especially through opportunities for youth and women entrepreneurs.
* The most vulnerable access social protection.
* Resilience, mitigation and adaptation capacities to climate and environmental risk are built, green energy pathways unlocked, and governance of Africa’s natural resource capital improved.
* Further escalation of violent conflict is prevented, and sustainable peace built through robust peace infrastructures at all levels, proactive engagement of women and youth peacebuilders and with inclusive processes to prevent violent extremism and stabilize conflict-affected regions.

And assuming that:

* The prevailing security situation does not deteriorate unexpectedly in existing or new conflict zones.
* The pandemic trajectory and climate shocks in Africa do not derail development progress and implementation of interventions beyond what is already anticipated.
* Current momentum towards regional integration is sustained.
* Youth and women constituencies are willing to dynamically engage in shaping Africa’s future.
* African leaders have the political will to meaningfully advance changes sought.
* Regional institutions are sufficiently resourced and engaged to pursue regional tier responses to development priorities.
* The wider development financing environment enables targeted resource mobilization in support of Africa’s promise.

Then more effective change in these critical areas, translated from regional initiative to impact at national and sub-national levels, will together yield a resilient and prosperous Africa that is able to reach its promise leading to transformative change in the quality of life for all.

1. Five strategic delivery principles, reflecting UNDP’s comparative advantages, experience, expertise and priorities, will guide the new Regional Programme**:**

**(i) ‘Leave no one behind’, gender equality and enabling people’s choice.** A push for ‘people-centred’ programming across all areas will fuel the Regional Programme. Effective reform processes require the concrete engagement of citizens to articulate their demands in policy formulation and oversight. Mindful of UNDP’s mandate in transforming the conditions of the poor and marginalized, the Regional Programme will prioritize gender equality and specifically target the needs of women and girls in all initiatives. All programming areas will focus and tangibly reflect youth perspectives, talents and dynamism. People with disabilities will be prioritized given their status among the most excluded in Africa. The programme will also deepen its focus on marginalized populations living in Africa’s underdeveloped borderlands. Developing a UNDP Digitalization Strategy for Africa will help shape and build improved outcomes from tech advances concerning pro-poor service delivery and improved governance.

**(ii) Regional approaches.** The Regional Programme will advance its support to the AU and RECs/RMs in realizing continent-wide aspirations, ratifying and domesticating its treaties and commitments, and improving alignment and harmonization among RECs/RMs. It will continue to break new ground with specific development responses to cross-border factors and facilitate connections among different countries to solve and share experiences concerning critical shared development priorities. It will enable South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC), which the programme will explicitly advance through continuous stakeholder convening and consultation.

**(iii) An integrator.** The Regional Programme will enable closer integration among different tiers of activity undertaken by UN entities, governments and other partners across all levels to support Africa’s promise. It will support African engagement in international processes, and work to further leverage the private sector’s investment in attaining Agendas 2063 and 2030 (with financing for development a cross-cutting enabler of the programme). It will foster synergies between regional and national levels by ensuring the UN and other international partners anchor their work in regional frameworks and policies. It will ensure responsiveness to Africa's heterogeneity, which comprises diverse sub-regions, leveraging the new UNDP structure of sub-regional Hubs that is simultaneously deepening thematic Global Policy Network (GPN) expertise at continent-level.

**(iv) Thought leadership and an incubator of innovative development solutions**.The Regional Programme has developed a distinctive character, offering a unique facility for incubating new and innovative programming streams based on thought leadership, evidence and analysis of current and upcoming development trends and priorities. Broad dissemination, high-level visibility engagements, and strategic events to inform policy and programming have contributed substantially and positively to UNDP’s reputation and credibility with diverse institutions and stakeholders, including funding partners. The new programme will further advance these strengths. It will also continue to invest in the Accelerator Labs network across Africa and through the Country Innovation Facility to assist countries in overcoming the hurdles to innovation, and in harnessing creative and innovative solutions including those derived from digital technologies. Strategic innovation will be a cross-cutting enabler informing all areas of programming.

**(v) Scale and impact through priority projects.** While pursuing its innovative character, the Regional Programme will also focus on priority initiatives that it will build to scale through a portfolio approach in the coming programme cycle. Further, the programme will invest in improved results-based monitoring, extending its capacity to understand, monitor, evaluate and narrate its impact, including through harnessing data-driven analytics, continually learning and supporting its team and programme partners to do the same. It will coordinate tracking the impacts of wider UNDP regional initiatives in Africa against intended results areas e.g. those led by headquarters or through sub-regional Hubs.

**Priority 1 – “People”. African citizens (especially women and youth), in a context of reinvigorated social contracts, have a stronger voice and influence in AU and RECs/RMs’ policymaking and implementation processes.**

1. Establishing effective, accountable, inclusive and responsive institutions, protecting and promoting human rights, gender equality, transparency, social cohesion, and enhancing the quality of governance and the rule of law are critical determinants for achieving both Agendas 2063 and 2030. Enabling active citizen engagement and a robust ‘human capital’, while ensuring that ‘no one is left behind’ are complex but necessary priorities to be taken forward that will infuse and drive the Regional Programme.
2. The programme will support the AU and RECs/RMs, also leveraging country presence, to better engage women and youth and other marginalized groups in regional, national and subnational decision- and policymaking processes while also supporting key partnerships with regional civil society umbrella platforms demanding improved accountability. Vital to achieving this outcome is upscaling of the facility on Supporting Inclusive Transitions in Africa; the implementation of initiatives such as the African Young Women Leaders’ Fellowship Programme and the Africa Fellows Programme; and supporting the African Peer Review Mechanism to fulfil its mandate. The programme will also contribute to reinvigorated social contracts between governments, regional institutions, citizens and the private sector through supporting the use of technology to facilitate better vertical and horizontal trust-building and improved governance performance, while ensuring the digital gender gap is addressed; and supporting the vision of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for a “new health order” including by boosting capacity for vaccination production in Africa. It will enable advances in domestic resource mobilization and budgetary oversight.

**Priority 2 – “Prosperity”. African citizens (especially women and youth) benefit from a regionally integrated, structurally transformed, and inclusive economy.**

1. To meet commitments linked to Agendas 2063 and 2030, Africa must pursue a growth trajectory that is deliberately inclusive with an emphasis on opportunities for women and youth. Acceleration in support to Africa’s domestic private sector to flourish in productivity and competitivity, servicing and providing for its expanding markets, and creating new and sustainable job opportunities are priority pathways to achieving structural transformation. It is equally critical to focus on the informal sector, where the poor (and especially poor youth and women) find their livelihoods and opportunities.[[36]](#footnote-36)
2. The programme will support and collaborate with the AU, RECs/RMs and member states to, among others, support enhanced regional capacity to integrate the 2063 and 2030 Agendas in national and local development plans, budgets, financing strategies and statistics; implement the Africa Mining Vision and the work of the African Minerals Development Centre; promote age and gender-sensitive value chain development based on demand-driven approaches; implement policies that enable inclusive private sector development through flagship initiatives such as the Africa Inclusive Markets Excellence Centre and the Ecosystem Development Approach, with a particular emphasis on green and digital opportunities; support the design and implementation of social protection schemes and a more proactive engagement of the informal sector; support employability and emerging job opportunities, in particular for young women and men, building on successful collaborations and partnerships (for example with YouthConnekt Africa); and advance opportunities for women and youth arising through closer regional economic integration under the AfCFTA.

**Priority Area 3 – “Planet”. African citizens (especially women and youth), supported by the AU and RECs/RMs, build a resilient Africa.**

1. Building resilience, both by mitigating and adapting to the consequences of Africa’s twin climate and natural world crises, is vital. The crises present frontier opportunities for: regionally focused and innovative development solutions; engaging the private sector to fund mitigation and adaptation initiatives and protect business and various economic sectors from the climate crisis impacts; and innovating with new business opportunities in sustainable food, water and land-use systems.
2. The Regional Programme will further strengthen Africa’s resilience and capacities for adaptation and disaster risk reduction, leveraging its strong partnerships with the specialized institutions and agencies of the AU, RECs/RMs and member states. It will advance integrated and innovative SDG and Nationally Determined Contributions financing in Africa and proactively support calls for a clean energy revolution to deliver on the promise of Agendas 2063 and 2030 and the Paris Agreement, and as a driver of recovery from the pandemic through initiatives such as the Energy4Sahel project, the Congo Basin Climate Commission with its new funding mechanism, and the Africa Minigrids Programme. In so doing, it will actively promote adherence to the Paris Agreement commitment to gender equality as well as the Lima Work Programme on Gender. It will support a range of initiatives designed to ensure regional, national and sub-national actors have access to relevant tools and knowledge to improve the management of natural resource assets, including coastline, water, forests, biodiversity and land.

**Priority Area 4 – “Peace”. African citizens (especially women and youth), supported by the AU and RECs/RMs, achieve measurable progress towards sustainable peace.**

1. Building sustainable peace on the continent is a fundamental priority, without which development gains will remain fragile and, in many settings, out of reach or reversible. COVID-19 has created further pressure on the drivers of conflict by sharpening stigma in divided societies and deepening vulnerabilities, rendering this priority even more urgent.
2. The Regional Programme will work to support AU and RECs/RMs’ capacity to anticipate, prevent and manage conflict, violent extremism, and climate-related insecurity, leveraging its partnerships with the specialized institutions and agencies; its ground-breaking work advancing development solutions to stabilization in the Lake Chad Basin and Liptako-Gourma region; and on preventing violent extremism. It will build resilience and address the drivers of fragility at Africa’s borderlands through UNDP’s recently established Africa Borderlands Centre; while addressing grievances including those related to limited access to justice; and be prepared to respond to emergent risks and opportunities at a regional level. It will support the establishment and improved effectiveness of regional, national and sub-national peace infrastructures, and in particular the role of women and youth as participants and leaders in peacebuilding and transition processes; Security Sector Reform (SSR), Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), non-proliferation, and Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) control.

**Partnerships**

1. Partnerships are fundamental to the design and delivery of the programme and will continue to deepen and expand in the upcoming cycle. UNDP’s current Regional Programme revolves around overlapping relationships with 99 partners and 12 donors. These existing partnerships with the AU Commission and its policy organs and specialized institutions and agencies, as well as RECs/RMs (particularly SADC, IGAD, ICGLR, ECCAS, ECOWAS, and Lake Chad Basin Authority), CSOs, the private sector, philanthropic organizations and policy think-tanks and academia will provide a basis on which to build. The programme will continue working collaboratively and providing capacity, financial and technical support to partners across priority areas.
2. The Regional Programme will advance its strong partnership base with United Nations organizations. These include the UN Office to the African Union (UNOAU), UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and UN Special Envoys in the Great Lakes, Horn, and Sahel; International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) on social protection and on youth empowerment; International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on borderland migration; UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) on the SDGs and extractive industries; UN Environment Programme (UNEP) on cross-border development in the Horn of Africa; the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on engagements on human rights including the support to National Human Rights Institutions; and UN Women in its cross-programmatic focus on women’s empowerment in Africa. It will promote development effectiveness in line with the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and Goal 17-related indicators.
3. New models for delivery and resourcing will also be explored. As the programme places people at the centre of its work, building its partnership base with umbrella CSO networks especially those advocating the priorities of women and youth will be an integral dimension of delivery. Closer, long-term and more coherent relationships with international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank, European Investment Bank, KfW Group, African Development Bank,African sub-regional development banks and Islamic Development Bank, will be a further direction with key areas for partnership identified in design-phase consultations (for example in relation to clean energy and climate change resilience).

# III. Programme and Risk Management

**Accountability**

1. This Regional Programme Document outlines UNDP’s contributions to regional results and serves as the primary accountability unit to the Executive Board for results alignment and resources assigned to it. The organization’s [Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/operations/accountability/programme_and_operationspoliciesandprocedures.html) (POPP) and I[nternal Control Framework](https://info.undp.org/global/popp/rma/Pages/internal-control-framework.aspx) describe the accountabilities of managers at the country, regional and headquarter levels regarding regional programmes. Per Executive Board decision DP/2-013/32, all direct costs associated with project implementation should be charged to the concerned projects.
2. The Regional Programme Accountability Framework complements the corporate policies and frameworks.[[37]](#footnote-37) It provides detailed guidance to ensure all partners participate in, and benefit from, effective and efficient implementation. The Framework outlines work planning and budgeting processes; knowledge product management; partnership and interagency relations management; results monitoring, evaluation, and reporting; and the management accountability of regional projects.

**Advisory Board**

1. The Regional Programme Advisory Board is responsible for a) providing strategic advice to the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) Director on current and emerging development issues which the Regional Programme could address; b) reinforcing oversight and accountability mechanisms; and c) ensuring that the design of regional projects and initiatives fulfil the regional dimensions of the Strategic Plan. The Board’s membership draws from the full range of regional programme stakeholders: the prime inter-governmental regional bodies, the private sector, CSOs, donors, UN Agencies and UNDP.

**Oversight and implementation**

1. The RBA Director provides overall strategic direction and oversight of the Regional Programme with support from the Deputy Regional Director and the Director of the Regional Service Centre for Africa (RSCA).
2. The Regional Programme Coordinator and Team (RPCT) coordinate, monitor and implement the Regional Programme; identify new areas; and support the development and management of strategic partnerships for effective implementation of and resource mobilization for the programme. The RPCT is responsible for leading any innovative and flagship initiatives/research. Furthermore, the RPCT team will develop the necessary systems and tools for programmatic coordination, partnership and resource mobilization, including establishing a data analytic capacity and enhanced communication capabilities. The RPCT works closely with the regional hub managers and the GPN to achieve the priorities of the Regional Programme.
3. The RSCA’s Results-Based Management Team and Programme Management Support Unit support the implementation and quality control of Regional Programme projects and initiatives.

**Adaptive and risk management**

1. UNDP mainly operates in a highly complex and dynamic context characterized by the absence of well-understood cause-and-effect relationships[[38]](#footnote-38) Different parts of the continent face widely different realities and needs that are in constant flux and vulnerable to or suffering from shocks. An operating environment of this type calls for an adaptive management practice that provides RBA senior management and regional teams with the risks, evidence and analysis needed to conduct regular learning loops. The loops provide the basis for decision-making that ensures the Regional Programme is fit for purpose and contributes to the programme and project’s respective theories of change and results frameworks.
2. The main political risk is potential lack of political will in addressing key priorities as well as the volatile security situation in the targeted areas, that may undermine the programme’s ability to achieve results. SSTC and close horizontal and vertical coordination, including a joint security and conflict analysis, with CSOs, authorities at local levels and all development actors facing the same challenges will be instrumental in mitigating this risk.
3. At the programmatic level, the main contextual risks which the programme aims to mitigate are uneven growth and increasing inequality, especially inequalities faced by women and youth (outcomes 1 and 2); the substantial impact from the climate crisis (outcome 3); and growing pockets of armed conflict and insecurity characterized by violent extremism (outcome 4).
4. The latter also constitutes a significant operational risk, as it can limit access to programme areas and threaten safety of staff and partners. Mitigation includes partner implementation and monitoring techniques and application of UNDP’s Social and Environmental Standards and Accountability Mechanisms. Further, the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to affect resource mobilization, staff capacity and operational implementation. Mitigation includes continuous engagement of partners in development of new smart initiatives and projects, introducing project portfolios that will connect COVID-19 recovery activities with longer-term development priorities and undertaking scenario planning and budgeting for adaptive operational modalities.
5. UNDP will use the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers principles and processes to transfer cash to government and non-government implementing and responsible partners for effective programme financial management and financial risk mitigation. All regional and sub-regional projects will undertake comprehensive risk assessments and ensure regularly updated risk logs as the basis for sound risk management.

# Monitoring and Evaluation

1. The Regional Programme’s POPP compliant monitoring and evaluation framework, overseen by the Results-Based Management team, is an essential component of RBA’s adaptive management practice and requires continuously updated data and analysis for learning and decision-making.
2. The programme will utilize relevant regional systems and databases for identifying and monitoring indicators, baselines and targets. Where possible, the Regional Programme indicators align with the UNDP Strategic Plan indicators, SDG indicators and Agenda 2063. Following the previous MTE recommendation, the results framework indicators are SMART to a) allow progress monitoring and b) facilitate the evaluations of the programme.
3. The Regional Programme will embrace tools and methodologies, building on traditional data collection methods, harnessing new data-driven analytics to advance its monitoring processes. Where gaps exist, the team will collaborate with UN and non-UN entities to strengthen supplementary data generation systems for effective monitoring and evaluation practice.
4. Building on its excellent gender marker rating to date, the Regional Programme will continue to monitor expenditures, prioritize allocation of funding to GEN 2 and GEN 3 projects, and improve planning and decision-making and gender-disaggregated data where and when possible. Data will also be disaggregated to understand youth participation in many programme areas.
5. The programme will use various communications strategies and tools to inform audiences on results and augment advocacy efforts around crucial development issues. It will target traditional and social media platforms to tailor communications products to priority audiences. It will follow gender-sensitive communications guidance across all communications outputs.
6. The Costed Evaluation Plan (Annex B) outlines the Regional Programme and project’s evaluations. The plan includes (among others) a Mid-Term Evaluation to a) determine whether implementation is on track and in compliance with agreed targets; and b) measure relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and overall success. The programme will complement the MTE with a programme criticality exercise to consider changes in the development or financial context that may necessitate adjustments in the programme strategy.
7. RBA will allocate appropriate resources for a) monitoring and evaluation; b) the cost of communication initiatives; and c) innovative pilot projects that respond to emerging regional needs.

1. For instance the [UNDP 2011 Human Development Report](http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2011) highlighted how African countries in the lowest 25 percent of HDI rankings had improved their status by 82 percent between 1970 and 2010, representing twice the average gain worldwide; the [2020 Ibrahim Index of Africa Governance](https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/news/2020/2020-ibrahim-index-african-governance-key-findings) notes continuous overall improvement in governance over the decade from 2009-2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
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3. Data cited from [ISPI African Leadership Change project](https://www.ispionline.it/it/africa-leadership-change-project). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [Maternal mortality rates and statistics - UNICEF DATA](https://data.unicef.org/topic/maternal-health/maternal-mortality/). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [Joint child malnutrition estimates (JME) (UNICEF-WHO-WB)](https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/topics/joint-child-malnutrition-estimates-unicef-who-wb). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [Literacy rate, adult total (percent of people ages 15 and above) - Sub-Saharan Africa, World, East Asia & Pacific, South Asia, Europe & Central Asia, Latin America & Caribbean | Data (worldbank.org)](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS?end=2010&locations=ZG-1W-Z4-8S-Z7-ZJ&start=2010&view=bar). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
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