



Independent  
Evaluation  
Office

United Nations Development Programme

# REFLECTIONS

**LESSONS FROM EVALUATIONS:**  
LEARNING FROM THE PAST  
FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



**REFLECTIONS. LESSONS FROM EVALUATIONS:**  
LEARNING FROM THE PAST  
FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE  
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**ABOUT THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OFFICE OF UNDP**

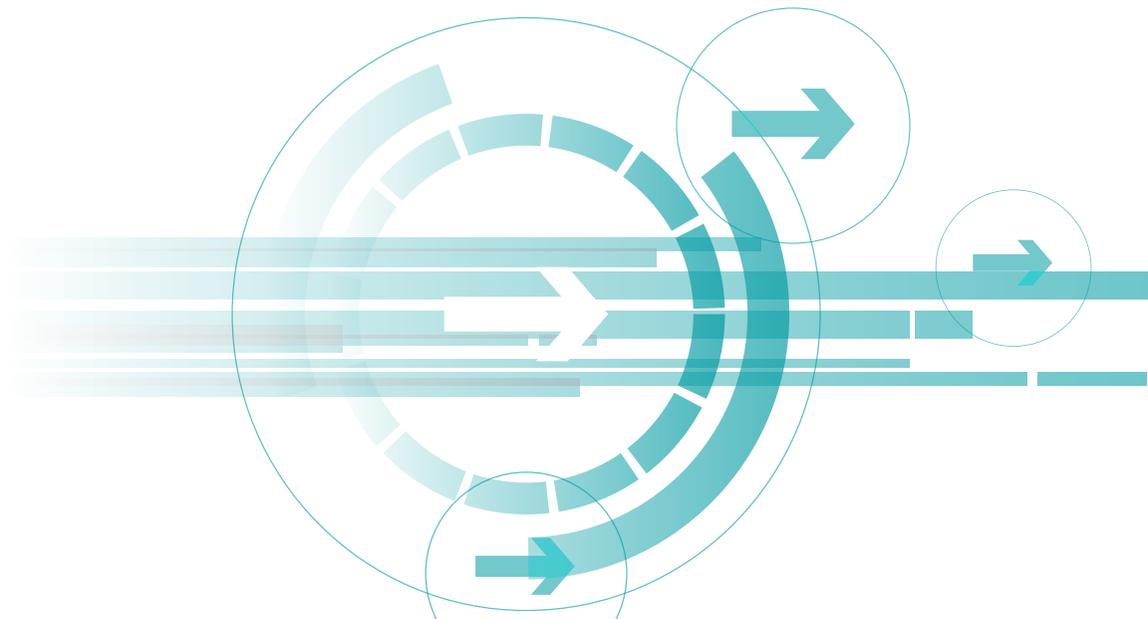
By generating evaluative evidence, the IEO supports UNDP to achieve greater accountability and facilitates improved learning from experience. The IEO enhances the development effectiveness of UNDP, through its programmatic and thematic evaluations and contributes to organizational transparency.

**ABOUT REFLECTIONS**

The *Reflections* series looks into past evaluations and captures lessons learned from work across the programmes of UNDP. These rapid evidence assessments mobilize evaluative knowledge to provide valuable insights for improved decision-making and better development results. This edition offers lessons from evaluations of UNDP work in the three key areas of: COVID-19 recovery and financing; efforts to leave no one behind; and environmentally-sensitive programming. Lessons are primarily aimed at supporting UNDP decision-makers, especially at the country level to move toward a sustainable future.

# REFLECTIONS

**LESSONS FROM EVALUATIONS:**  
LEARNING FROM THE PAST  
FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE





## FOREWORD

Development depends on learning lessons. Many of these lessons are generated as a direct result of evaluations, which combine evidence and data with sharp analysis to provide actionable insights for development practitioners. This is a key role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Independent Evaluation

Office (IEO), which through its evaluations, is playing a key role in allowing UNDP to continuously improve and refine its development projects and programmes in 170 countries. This willingness by UNDP to integrate the latest knowledge and cutting-edge practices is crucial as the organization works side-by-side with countries and communities to co-create solutions that can make breakthroughs across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - everything from driving down poverty and advancing gender equality to enhancing climate action and restoring our natural world.

This second book of the IEO *Reflections* series provides an accessible snapshot of 85 lessons learned from UNDP global engagement in 11 key areas. It focuses on: the UNDP role in supporting countries' socio-economic recovery from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic; its efforts to put the leave no one behind principle into action; and its engagement to advance the protection and restoration of our natural world.

*Reflections* highlight approaches that work across cultural and geographical spaces, such as the importance of including men in programmes to increase women's political participation and challenge restrictive gendered social norms. The *Reflections* series is also a platform for UNDP country offices to present their own successes and challenges in translating the SDGs into local action. For instance, it asks: What have been the key factors to drive forward women's empowerment in Kyrgyzstan? By how much are clean cooking initiatives reducing indoor air pollution in Senegal? Or, how can innovative financing mechanisms better advance humanitarian, peace and development efforts in countries suffering from crisis including the

Sahel region of Africa? Crucially, this analysis highlights the enablers and obstacles in each specific context. Ultimately, it extrapolates accessible lessons that can be adapted and utilized to inform programming by UNDP, the wider United Nations family, and our development partners across the globe.

Harvesting insights from evaluations is not only crucial to design development projects and programmes with the greatest positive impact for countries and communities. This emphasis on evaluations is also helping to foster a continuous research and development mindset amongst the future-smart personnel of UNDP. Indeed, as we consider the future of development, our common global challenges now require us to harness the immense power of our collective intelligence. To this end, *Reflections* is providing the new evidence, data and understanding needed to design development support that can break our global uncertainty complex and drastically improve the health and well-being of both people and planet.



Achim Steiner  
Administrator  
United Nations Development Programme



## PREFACE

In the two years since the last *Reflections* book was published, the world has changed enormously. The normal of our pre-pandemic lives is gone forever, but the “new normal” in which we find ourselves is, among other things, characterized by a resolute hope for better times ahead.

For an organization like UNDP, continuous learning is crucial for accurate and effective development action, in which the Independent Evaluation Office has an important role to play. It supports accountability through independent, credible and useful evaluations. It also provides a great contribution to learning in UNDP in support of preparedness, response and recovery from crises. The *Reflections* series, which began in 2020 at the height of the pandemic, garners lessons from evaluations from the last ten years to provide rapid evidence in support of the urgent policy decisions UNDP faces.

It is our intention that the second *Reflections* book captures some of those lessons to inform the next steps. The first section of the book opens on the fissures the pandemic exposed in development programming and finances, but the papers in this section are equally a reminder that the legacy of the pandemic is also one of innovation. Great adaptability and innovation were displayed during the worst years of the pandemic. Digital transformation leapt forward with transparent and economical options for critical services, which, even when weighed against the risks of widening the digital divide, proved by and large to be a positive outcome.

The papers in the first section cover UNDP support to the COVID-19 response, development financing channels and e-governance measures. A fair and equitable global recovery hinges on closing the gaps that the pandemic widened, and making meaningful efforts to empower the people who have suffered the most. UNDP has a crucial role to play in reigniting progress in human development, including supporting countries to “future proof” their governance systems, and mobilizing financing for the global recovery, especially for those who are furthest behind.

Implementing the leaving no one behind principle is not just a stand-alone goal, but a means of achieving broader development aims including the SDGs. The core lesson of the second section of the book is that while disadvantage is a sliding scale and there is no silver bullet, traditionally marginalized groups like women and youth are crucial agents of change where there is long-term support and an enabling atmosphere. In the arenas of work and political participation the continued presence of individuals from these groups is itself a proven catalyst for further change.

From where we stand, the road toward a greener and more equitable future does not look easy. Navigating the way forward is the focus of the third section, which asks how we should deal with the impact of climate change as a global community, especially given the unfairness of the people hardest hit often being those who have contributed to it the least. Reaching remote populations and integrating realistic approaches to delivery, resources and capacity means that progress requires practicality, agility and the strength and resources of multi-lateral partnerships.

Rapid evaluations and synthesis studies like the *Reflections* series offered real-time learning opportunities for the development community through this difficult time. As we emerge on the other side of the pandemic it is vitally important not to cast aside these lessons as we throw off the masks, social distancing and fear of the pandemic years. The papers in this book do not pretend to offer simple answers, but contribute to the evidence base on which decisions can be made for the benefit of people and planet. It is time for us to take those lessons forward, as we move toward a sustainable future for everyone.



Oscar A. Garcia  
Director  
Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP





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# ACRONYMS

<b>3RP</b>	Regional Refugee Response Plan
<b>AIDA</b>	Artificial Intelligence for Development Analytics
<b>CBO</b>	Community-based organization
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>ERC</b>	Evaluation Resource Centre (UNDP)
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>GHG</b>	Greenhouse gas
<b>GIA</b>	Global Industry Alliance
<b>GoAL WASH</b>	Governance, Advocacy and Leadership in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>GRES</b>	Gender Results Effectiveness Scale
<b>ICCA</b>	Indigenous and local community conservation areas
<b>ICPE</b>	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
<b>ICT</b>	Information communication technology
<b>IEO</b>	Independent Evaluation Office (UNDP)
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>ISWIS</b>	Integrated Social Welfare Information System (Montenegro)
<b>IW:LEARN</b>	International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network
<b>IWRM</b>	Integrated water resource management
<b>LDC</b>	Least developed country
<b>LGBTQI+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people
<b>MIC</b>	Middle-income country
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament

<b>MSME</b>	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NORAD</b>	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
<b>PMU</b>	Project Management Unit
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SEIA</b>	Socioeconomic Impact Assessment
<b>SERP</b>	Socioeconomic Response Plan
<b>SGP</b>	Small Grants Programme (GEF)
<b>SIDA</b>	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
<b>SIDS</b>	Small Island Developing State
<b>SPA</b>	Special protected areas
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and vocational education and training
<b>UNCDF</b>	United Nations Capital Development Fund
<b>UNDAF</b>	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>UNSDG</b>	United National Sustainable Development Group
<b>UNV</b>	United Nations Volunteers Programme
<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary National Review
<b>VRA</b>	Vulnerability reduction assessment
<b>WASH</b>	Water, sanitation and hygiene
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# INTRODUCTION

Anchored in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and committed to the principles of universality, equality and leaving no one behind, the UNDP vision is to support countries through sustainable development, democratic governance and peace building, and climate and disaster resilience.

In May 2020, IEO launched *Reflections*: a knowledge product that captures lessons from past evaluations to provide valuable insights for organizational learning and decision-making for better development results. The *Reflections* papers respond to long-standing requests from UNDP managers for IEO to provide syntheses and draw out lessons from the thousands of evaluations of UNDP development activities carried out over the past decades. The unique added value of this product is the rapidity with which evidence is assessed: *Reflections* synthesize the findings of a range of relevant evaluations quickly, to answer urgent questions facing policymakers.

The series was conceived as a contributing source of evidence for the UNDP response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic has waned, *Reflections* has evolved, changing its focus to generate knowledge to support implementation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, addressing topics under the Signature Solutions, “enablers” and “directions of change”.<sup>a</sup> The papers in the book follow this course, organized into three sections with an increasingly forward momentum, as the global community moves to recover from the multiple crises that hit the world after 2020, and toward a sustainable future and achievement of the SDGs.

Leaving no one behind, the subject of the second and largest section of the book, is the glue that binds the narrative together. The pandemic widened the gap between the world’s richest and poorest, as the burdens of COVID-19 were spread unevenly, causing human development to grind to a halt and, in some cases, go into reverse. The urgency

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<sup>a</sup> UNDP six signature solutions are: poverty and inequality, governance, resilience, environment, energy and gender equality. The three enablers are: digitalization, strategic innovation and development financing and the three drivers are: building resilience, structural transformation and leaving no one behind.

of integrating the ‘leaving no one behind’ principles of equity, equality and non-discrimination into development interventions, to support countries to recover from the crises and mitigate the impact of climate change on their citizens, is paramount, as is the importance of placing these principles at the heart of redoubled efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

**This book presents 85 lessons learned from past evaluations in 11 key areas. It is divided into three chapters:**

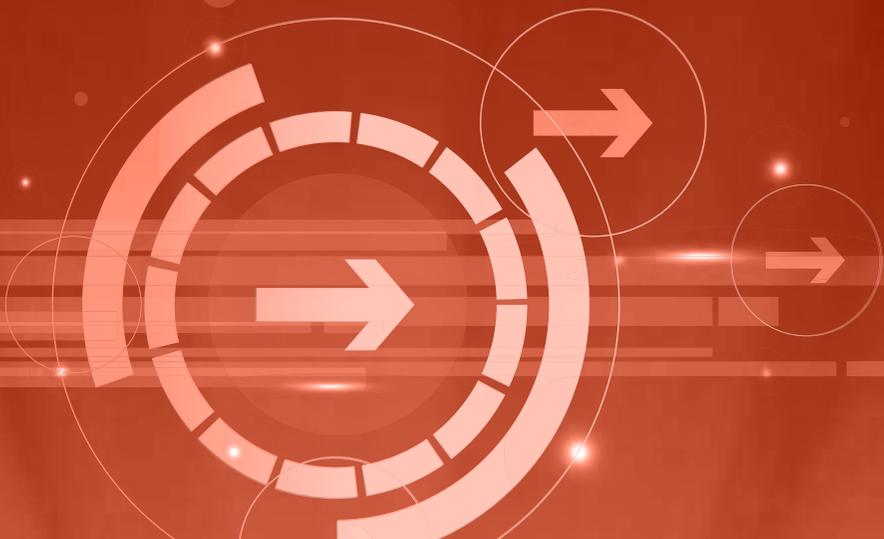
- ➔ **first**, the UNDP role in supporting countries’ socioeconomic recovery from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic;
- ➔ **second**, the organization’s efforts to put the ‘leave no one behind’ principle into practice; and
- ➔ **third**, UNDP engagement to advance the protection and restoration of our natural world.

Throughout the book, references to countries in brackets refer to IEO Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs), unless otherwise specified in an endnote. Full references are included in Annex 1.

# 1. WHERE ARE WE NOW?

## Closing the pandemic gap

UNDP has a pivotal role to play in the global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the first section of this book covers areas of UNDP work that are critical for closing the pandemic gap. Papers in this section focus on enabling development financing to reignite progress towards the SDGs, and supporting countries to “future-proof” their governance systems with accountability mechanisms to boost participation and better manage risk, including e-governance tools.



# THE UNDP COVID-19 ADAPTATION AND RESPONSE: WHAT WORKED AND HOW?

**Lead author:** Richard Jones

**Research associate:** Landry Fanou

## Introduction

In 2019, the world committed to a Decade of Action to push for the achievement of the SDGs, in response to recognition that achievement of the 2030 Agenda was becoming increasingly unlikely.<sup>b</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic threatened this commitment, pressuring past SDG gains in many countries, and threatening further regression in yet more.

COVID-19 required UNDP and many of its projects to 'pivot' to address the new and prominent issue of a global pandemic and its socioeconomic consequences, especially on the most vulnerable. The pandemic led many projects and agencies to be flexible and innovative in addressing this new challenge, assigning funds for COVID-related support, broadening target groups to include those impacted, or including new needs.

This paper explores some of the emerging evaluative evidence of the challenges faced by UNDP projects and programmes during COVID-19, and whether projects would be able to return to their original objectives when the world emerged from the pandemic. This, after having reassigned budgets away from core goals, expanded beneficiaries and expectations, or lost commitment from partners now focused on the pandemic.

This paper offers some early lessons from UNDP COVID-19 adaptation and response from March 2020 to May 2021: what worked and how? The lessons draw broadly on nine ICPEs and 90 decentralized evaluations, regardless of the settings, posted to the UNDP ERC between April 2020 and May 2021.

<sup>b</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/decade-of-action/>

Initial evaluative evidence from 2020 does not go into detail on the approaches UNDP used in responding to COVID-19, though this built during 2021. It is important to note that this *Reflections* paper was developed at the early stages of the UNDP response to COVID-19, relying on emerging evaluative evidence, and was designed to help inform the ongoing response and recovery work of the organization. Some important aspects of the UNDP COVID-19 response could not yet be covered, including support for the vaccine roll-out, the implementation of United Nations country teams' Socioeconomic Response Plans (SERPs), as well as the toll of the pandemic on the wellbeing of UNDP staff.

## AT A GLANCE – Lessons Learned

1

Successful pandemic responses integrated longer-term planning into UNDP support to government-led COVID-responses, to build forward better.

2

Accelerated adoption of digital tools ensured the continuity of government services as well as UNDP operations, strengthening the COVID-19 response.

3

Robust, reliable and flexible procurement systems are indispensable to allow organizations to quickly respond to crises in an accountable and transparent ways.

4

In-built flexibility in the design of interventions can help UNDP adjust and adapt to urgent and unexpected needs and reach new beneficiaries when a crisis hits.

5

Challenges in project implementation have highlighted the need for clear risk management plans, flexible programme design and measurable results frameworks to minimize the regression of results during the crisis.

6

Pandemic crisis responses were strengthened by ensuring consideration of the impact of the pandemic on the longer-term achievement and possible regression of the SDGs.

7

Evaluation has proved relevant, adaptable and possible during the crisis through the rapid adoption of technology, thus ensuring safety.

## Lessons Learned

**1**

**Successful pandemic responses integrated longer-term planning into UNDP support to government-led COVID-responses, to build forward better.**

While support to initial government-led responses focused on immediate pandemic needs, such as supporting health and response efforts, stronger UNDP responses considered the longer-term impact of the pandemic, including the possible regression of the SDGs. In doing so, UNDP was able to build on its strong and long-standing relationships with governments.<sup>1</sup> However, close relationships with government sometimes also slowed responses and hindered UNDP agility, as government systems and their ability to respond to project needs were slowed by the pandemic (Ethiopia).<sup>2</sup>

The development of detailed Socioeconomic Impact Assessments (SEIAs), and timely UNDP support in these areas in the first few months of the pandemic, illustrated to governments the relevance of UNDP (Nepal, Mongolia).<sup>3</sup> The development of SEIAs by country offices, United Nations Country Teams and governments evolved during the pandemic in response to demand, with some moving away from broad economic analysis to more specific thematic areas relating to government support to vulnerable groups, small businesses (Zambia), employment (Montenegro), human rights, women and girls (Botswana, Nepal, Mongolia, Montenegro), enabling sectors and other thematically-focused support.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the development of SEIAs and the impact of COVID-19 enabled discussions on the need for equality, inclusive economic growth and better social protection (Nepal<sup>5</sup>) during and after the pandemic, opening new space for UNDP support to governments (Mongolia, Honduras). However, UNDP leverage of this role through SEIAs was not always guaranteed, and often depended on both the government's view of UNDP and its services, and the role of international financial institutions in the countries (Tanzania).

The support and global expertise of UNDP Regional Bureaux were critical for the drafting of technical documents such as SEIAs and SERPs, and ensuring that response and recovery plans were grounded in contextual realities (Asia-Pacific, Mongolia, Barbados, Honduras, Montenegro, Belize, Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia and Saudi Arabia).<sup>6</sup> In the Asia-Pacific region, the regional hub was able to galvanize a network of 20 economists (under the Global Policy Network) to generate policy options for country offices and inform SEIA development across the regions. The Network, only recently established when the pandemic hit, saw a considerable rise in demand for its support across a range of policy areas, including economics. It has also been key adviser in a number of areas (Mongolia, Asia-Pacific, UNDP Strategic Plan) and saw an acceleration of its use during the pandemic.<sup>7</sup>

2

Accelerated adoption of digital tools ensured the continuity of government services as well as UNDP operations, strengthening the COVID-19 response.

The COVID-19 pandemic enhanced the relevance of the UNDP Digital Strategy, and was a reminder of the importance of organizational adaptability to ensure rapid innovation and engagement with digital transformation initiatives. UNDP was positioned to support and leverage digital transformation through its rapid deployment of digital tools, and was called on by governments to support the continuity of government business and service delivery during the pandemic (Zambia). This support enabled the continuation of essential government services and, in some cases, parliament sessions through video conferencing facilities (Jordan, Lao PDR, Nepal, Botswana).<sup>8</sup> At the same time, provisions such as ‘virtual courts’ were put in place to support the continuation of critical legislative procedures ensuring fair access to justice (Gambia<sup>9</sup>). In Honduras, the Government called on UNDP support to digitize three key services central to COVID-19 economic recovery, while promoting transparency and efficiency and facilitating connectivity for various actors. UNDP often built on past digital engagements to accelerate the adoption of digital tools, leveraging existing work and examples of digital platforms (Moldova<sup>10</sup>).

On the other hand, the sudden need to adopt digital solutions was sometimes challenging, and required a comprehensive strategy and technical and human resource support (Lao PDR<sup>11</sup>), recognising the limited technical infrastructure and connectivity issues in many countries (Gambia<sup>12</sup>). While some projects were able to use technology to move activities forward, especially online training, challenges demonstrated a key concern regarding digitization, namely the risk of exacerbating existing inequalities by widening the digital divide. This was particularly highlighted in relation to work with disadvantaged youth (Pakistan, YouthConnekt<sup>13</sup>) and young girls and women,<sup>c</sup> where those with access to technology and the internet were able to continue their education and participate in the project, creating a 'digital learning gap'.

The adoption of digital solutions and partnership with governments provided an opportunity for UNDP to further step up its digital transformation agenda, balancing supply-side provisions (network infrastructure, accessibility issues, endowment with adequate equipment, digital security provisions, etc.) with demand (especially digital literacy and inclusion) (Moldova, Pakistan, YouthConnekt<sup>14</sup>). Past reflections on evaluation findings on digitization have found that digital transformation is not just about the adoption of technology or digital solutions, but also requires talent development to ensure ongoing and sustainable digital transformation.

Equally, the adoption of digital tools and approaches by UNDP itself was key for the continuous implementation of UNDP projects under constrained conditions. This included the provision of virtual training or technical assistance to governance-related projects in Nepal and medical waste management projects in the health sector in Africa, to ensure continued implementation.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>c</sup> See also *Reflections*: Digitalization <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/reflections/pages/s3/digitalization.shtml>

## 3

**Robust, reliable and flexible procurement systems are indispensable to allow organizations to quickly respond to crises in an accountable and transparent ways.**

UNDP past experience in supporting crises and health challenges, as well as its robust procurement systems, positioned the organization to respond to COVID-19 and gain the trust of governments. This positioned UNDP to support the timely procurement of medical, health and information and communication technology (ICT) equipment and software (Honduras, Montenegro, Zambia). By June 2021, UNDP expenditure on support to medical systems and digital disruption was US\$ 578 million, over 50 percent of all COVID-19 financial support. However, COVID-19 support goals needed to be realistic and, in some cases, were held back and delayed due to UNDP procurement procedures, impacting the timeliness of support responses (Lao PDR, Pakistan<sup>16</sup>).

## 4

**In-built flexibility in the design of interventions can help UNDP adjust and adapt to urgent and unexpected needs and reach new beneficiaries when a crisis hits.**

Many projects had to refocus or pivot funds and interventions to support the COVID-19 relief and response, and sustain a pace of implementation despite COVID-19-related constraints. This was possible due to flexible structures and decision-making that allowed interventions to reallocate funds towards COVID-19 activities or beneficiaries, pivoting to refocus activities including on new and emerging needs and vulnerabilities, and new beneficiary groups impacted by the pandemic.

Existing flexibility in the implementation of interventions proved to be key for adaptation, and could be a key parameter for consideration in the design of post-pandemic interventions, especially recognising that the needs of beneficiaries change over time. For instance, the beneficiaries of eco-tourism or transportation projects were highly impacted by pandemic-related travel restrictions, significantly impacting livelihoods and reducing incomes. This impacted implementation and required new approaches as needs changed (Kenya; Bhutan; Montenegro<sup>17</sup>). In some cases, previous implementation goals

were no longer appropriate or became too difficult to implement, for example when working with private sector firms that, in some cases, were facing financial difficulties or had gone bankrupt (Armenia<sup>18</sup>).

In Bangladesh, the Partnership for a Tolerant, Inclusive Bangladesh project repurposed the social media tools they had developed to fight violent extremism to curb COVID-19 disinformation.<sup>19</sup> The flexible structure of the project theory of change was a key enabling factor for the project to pivot its focus. The flexible approach of UNDP Accelerator Labs enabled some country offices to leverage their interventions and partnerships to meet pandemic needs, including national partnerships for mask delivery and advocacy through social media (Tanzania<sup>20</sup>).

Several initiatives in Nepal responded to the changing needs. A labour skills-development project adapted to support the participation of returnee migrants in COVID-19 relief activities through the mapping of their skills.<sup>21</sup> Access to justice interventions were adjusted to address gender-based violence, which was exacerbated by lockdowns, including developing guidelines on providing legal services during the pandemic.<sup>22</sup> UNDP adjusted its parliamentary support to ensure that human rights issues were considered as part of the COVID-19 response and support business continuity of the parliament through the procurement of ICT tools.<sup>23</sup>

**5**

Challenges in project implementation have highlighted the need for clear risk management plans, flexible programme design and measurable results frameworks to minimize the regression of results during the crisis.

The pandemic exacerbated implementation delays and management issues, which needed to be addressed in a timely manner rather than being allowed to build. It also highlighted weaknesses in oversight structures that allowed ongoing delays in project implementation (Azerbaijan, Cambodia,<sup>24</sup> Georgia). In addition, some interventions may have blamed the pandemic for previous failures to address project implementation challenges and delays (Bhutan<sup>25</sup>).

Where projects faced challenges in management arrangements prior to the pandemic, such as delays in bringing management boards together, these further constrained the ability of projects to react to COVID-19 and made decision-making more problematic (Ethiopia<sup>26</sup>), limiting the ability to respond. Though the pandemic was unprecedented, it illustrated the need for stronger adaptive management structures, monitoring and risk management across interventions and existing country programming approaches (Mongolia, Malawi<sup>27</sup>). Furthermore, some interventions had been unable to cope with crises in the past and did not have adequate risk mitigation plans (Kenya, Ethiopia).<sup>28</sup>

As country programme documents were realigned to COVID-19 and the new context (Kenya, Ethiopia<sup>29</sup>), and to changing demand for support (Malawi<sup>30</sup>), results frameworks and overall objectives and goals also needed to be reconsidered and adjusted accordingly. In many cases, theories of change (Asia-Pacific region, Ethiopia) also needed to be adjusted.<sup>31</sup> A strong element of the COVID-19 pandemic response was United Nations and UNDP strategic planning, built on the SEIAs,<sup>d</sup> and United Nations country team SERPs.<sup>32</sup> SEIAs articulated the impact of COVID-19 across society and economies, and in many cases helped governments to strengthen their own response plans, while SERPs outlined the areas of work for United Nations agencies in the country to support the government in response to the pandemic (Mongolia, Montenegro).

**6**

**Pandemic crisis responses were strengthened by ensuring consideration of the impact of the pandemic on the longer-term achievement and possible regression of the SDGs.**

Where UNDP interventions were unable to adapt to the pandemic, they were understandably constrained and slowed, with some seeing the reversal of previous achievements. In some cases, livelihood-related interventions needed to first address the negative impacts of the pandemic on their beneficiaries and on the project itself (Jordan), before being able to move forward.<sup>33</sup> Other interventions simply could

<sup>d</sup> <https://www.undp.org/coronavirus/socio-economic-impact-covid-19>

not continue under lockdown, such as the demarcation of indigenous forest borders (Zambia<sup>34</sup>), or experienced significant delays, such as the signing of international treaties on wildlife trade (Ethiopia<sup>35</sup>). Travel restrictions due to the pandemic reversed some previous achievements, especially impacting tourism revenues (Kenya<sup>36</sup>).

The urgency of the pandemic shifted the priorities of UNDP and governments, to develop strategies and approaches to address COVID-19. This meant that some interventions saw a reduced focus and response from governments,<sup>37</sup> while others found that partners were not available to plan or approve interventions, slowing down implementation (Botswana, Ethiopia, Zambia<sup>38</sup>).

Government partners also faced financial constraints as resources were redirected to the pandemic response (Samoa<sup>39</sup>). This meant that some ongoing projects lost the priority focus of the government and fiscal constraints meant that government co-financing and financial contributions were not there (Armenia, Cambodia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Mongolia<sup>40</sup>). Reduced government cost-sharing due to the pandemic and delays in the implementation of projects, especially those requiring consultation activities (Belize, Honduras, Tanzania, Zambia), held many projects back. Furthermore, UNDP itself also needed to reallocate project funds to meet pandemic needs, further constraining existing projects (Kosovo<sup>41</sup>).



Evaluation has proved relevant, adaptable and possible during the crisis through the rapid adoption of technology, thus ensuring safety.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant constraints for the implementation of evaluations, impacting data collection, stakeholder consultations and the observation of project interventions. The majority of evaluations reviewed and referenced here detailed the challenges and limitations caused by the pandemic. Many evaluations were implemented remotely, with national consultants not able to go out for data collection, increasingly the use of ICT and virtual interviews, and relying on deeper desk reviews to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on stakeholder consultations and observations.

This remote modality highlighted the availability of national evaluative expertise, to mitigate the impact and restrictions of the pandemic. The immediate benefit of using national expertise is to mitigate data collection constraints, such as the limited ability to conduct field missions to undertake site observations and ensure the inclusion of direct interactions with stakeholders and beneficiaries (Cabo-Verde, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Mongolia, Zambia<sup>42</sup>). This was key for the triangulation of evaluative evidence collected through desk review. In most cases national consultants conducted project site visits (Armenia, Cambodia, China, Papua New Guinea, Malawi, Cabo Verde, Samoa, Viet Nam, Tanzania, Sierra- Leone<sup>43</sup>) and in-person, face-to-face or telephone interviews with local stakeholders (Armenia, Cambodia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea<sup>44</sup>). In some cases, national consultants also provided online interpretation during interviews or enabled the use of local languages, supported the organization of virtual interviews, and provided an improved understanding of the local context (Belize, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Samoa<sup>45</sup>).

The use of national consultants and teams sometimes came with limitations, as they were constrained by prevailing in-country travel restrictions, limiting their access to stakeholders.<sup>46</sup> Coordination between the local and remote (international) evaluation team members was necessary (Sierra Leone<sup>47</sup>), especially in the use of data collection approaches (Papua New Guinea<sup>48</sup>).

The appropriate use of ICTs ensured successful stakeholder consultations. Most evaluations conducted in 2020 and 2021 used virtual meeting platforms to conduct interviews (Zoom, Microsoft Team, Skype, WhatsApp, email and phone calls). However, to ensure the optimal use of these technologies, virtual interviews required greater organization and flexibility in timing. This included informing interviewees in advance of the evaluation and its goals and agenda (Tunisia<sup>49</sup>), and providing a detailed description of the evaluation process and its confidentiality (Montenegro). Flexibility in the timing of evaluations and online meetings was key to the maximization of stakeholder consultations (Armenia, Pakistan, Kenya, United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation<sup>50</sup>). Where Internet connectivity was poor, phone interviews were often successfully used, in some cases supplemented by online surveys (Bhutan, China, Kosovo<sup>51</sup>).

Access to beneficiaries, especially for the evaluation of projects or programmes which targeted poor and vulnerable groups, was a major limitation, with the use of national consultants or virtual communication platforms only partially helping to overcome this (Cambodia, Nepal<sup>52</sup>), especially with COVID-related travel restrictions (Nepal<sup>53</sup>). Where possible, evaluation teams used two key strategies to reach out to beneficiaries: interviews with grassroots civil society organizations (CSOs) working with beneficiaries as a proxy for their perspectives on project performance (Montenegro, Nepal<sup>54</sup>) and bilateral online interviews (Armenia and Kosovo<sup>55</sup>).

# DEVELOPMENT FINANCING

**Lead author:** Vijayalakshmi Vadivelu

**Co-author:** Andrew Fyfe (UNCDF)

**Research associate:** Elizabeth Wojnar

## Introduction

The SDGs are a bold commitment to end poverty in all forms and dimensions by 2030. It is widely acknowledged that current development financing for the SDGs significantly falls short of the estimated needs, and that COVID-19 further widened this gap. The mobilization of private sector investments and consolidation of overseas development assistance is therefore seen as a way forward to bridge some of the development financing gaps.

This paper focuses on those development financing lessons crucial for addressing the SDGs and COVID-19 resource challenges. It is part of a series of knowledge products from IEO, focusing on important areas of UNDP support to countries. This paper also draws on insights from the work of the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), a fund associated to UNDP with a mandate to support the unlocking of development finance for the poor in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The paper is jointly produced, drawing on evaluation insights from both organizations. The lessons broadly draw on 64 evaluations posted to the IEO ERC over the past decade.

## Context

UNDP and UNCDF programme support recognizes that progress on the SDGs will require significant additional investment across many thematic and sectoral areas and from a variety of funding sources. In this regard, the commitment by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development,<sup>e</sup> and the New Way of Working

<sup>e</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/frameworks/addisababaactionagenda>

to reverse recent declines in overseas development assistance,<sup>f</sup> assume importance. In line with the four priority financing pillars of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Financing for Development refers to the resource landscape for countries to invest in national sustainable development, and includes Overseas Development Assistance (i.e. bilateral and multilateral development funds, crisis response and humanitarian grants), concessional sovereign financing, multi-partner thematic and vertical funds, foreign direct investment and philanthropy. It also includes instruments such as 'blended' finance (combinations of concessional and non-concessional financing), impact investment and various kinds of bonds (green/blue, social impact, Islamic) that focus on catalysing domestic finance to support the development priorities of partner governments.

Under their respective mandates, UNDP and UNCDF support efforts to boost development financing at national and local levels. Besides specific initiatives, the UNDP integrator role within the United Nations system emphasizes enabling development financing. UNCDF promotes development financing at the local level, through catalytic financing in both the public and private sectors. This paper discusses development financing lessons across country contexts, with a focus on LDCs and conflict-affected countries.

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<sup>f</sup> The New Way of Working (NWOW) calls on humanitarian and development actors to work collaboratively together, based on their comparative advantages, towards 'collective outcomes' that reduce need, risk and vulnerability over multiple years, <https://www.un.org/jsc/content/new-way-working>.

## AT A GLANCE – Lessons Learned

1

In complex crises, multi-donor interventions and pooled funding modalities enhance compatibility and contribute to coherence.

2

International cooperation modalities should prioritize strengthening country-level capacity support to improve avenues for development financing.

3

In protracted crisis contexts, there is relevance in simultaneously financing humanitarian and development efforts through an integrated framework.

4

Political economy analysis enables policy and other bottlenecks to be addressed and the adoption of concrete development financing options.

5

Local development financing mechanisms can catalyse resource mobilization and support capital market development.

6

Addressing policy bottlenecks and using new and alternative financial instruments to enhance private sector engagement will increase development financing.

7

Aligning the needs of environment vertical funds and government is essential to catalyse development financing.

8

Fragmented COVID-19 responses weaken efforts to address SDG reversals.

## Lessons Learned

**1**

**In complex crises, multi-donor interventions and pooled funding modalities enhance the compatibility of responses and contribute to coherence in reconstruction. They can also be applied in COVID-19 responses and non-crisis contexts.**

In crisis contexts with strategic and security interests, bilateral donors have enabled a substantial flow of international assistance (Somalia, Yemen, Iraq and Afghanistan). Funding structuring has important implications for donor compatibility and applicability. Pooled funding mechanisms were introduced in 2004 with the UNDP-hosted Iraq Trust Fund. UNDP managed a joint World Bank-United Nations mechanism for Iraq reconstruction support, which attracted donor funding and led to other common trust funds (Iraq). Used in several countries since then, these fund mechanisms are seen as less politicized than bilateral aid in politically-sensitive contexts. Joint donor interventions and pooled financing modalities contributed to strengthening existing national structures, with investments to strengthen government services. There were opportunities for greater impact through leveraging combined resources, where initiatives yield greater returns from a coordinated, system-wide approach rather than multiple individual donor projects (e.g. elections, rule of law, reconstruction), especially for donors with smaller allocations. They offer a trusted, transparent and lower-risk investment, and a compelling value proposition in contexts with high programming and security risks.<sup>56</sup>

Balancing quick, short-term impact interventions with longer-term sustainable and transformational development interventions requires the leveraging of multi-donor funding to mobilize further investment (Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya). Managing the trade-off between conforming to donor funding conditionalities and engaging government and other actors for longer-term investments is fundamental to the success of multi-donor trust funds and pooled financing mechanisms (Iraq, Libya).

The integrated SDGs financing framework efforts can be strengthened by pooled or basket funding modalities.

## 2

Strengthening national capacity to access multiple development finance streams can accelerate progress on the SDGs. International cooperation modalities should prioritize strengthening country-level capacity, to improve avenues for development financing.

Across development contexts, short-term capacity-development efforts did not usually succeed in generating national human resource and policy capacity for the mobilization of development financing. Accessing development financing requires more consistent efforts to address institutional constraints at national and sector levels. Often, international agencies do not consider a government's incentives for change for effective development cooperation.

Efforts to address the fragmentation of aid were not fully successful (Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan), as key stakeholders had incentives to retain areas of control, or political shifts exacerbated fragmentation and lack of cooperation across government entities and the continuity of efforts (Afghanistan, Burundi<sup>57</sup>). In Burundi, the political crisis exacerbated fragmentation and lack of cooperation across government entities, and the basket fund modality was no longer functional.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, disparities in financing were more apparent in countries of lower donor interest (Gabon) or where there had been political restrictions on international cooperation (Togo).<sup>59</sup>

While questions about the accuracy and completeness of international aid and other financing data remain a common challenge; aid management databases do not fully incorporate all international funding streams and are often not linked to national budget systems and processes. In several cases, countries have parallel systems for managing humanitarian aid, concessional loans and development funds (Sudan, Sierra Leone<sup>60</sup>). Addressing constraints in coordination between ministries responsible for aid management, budgeting and sector management is central to streamlining external aid, as well as leveraging it for other sources of development financing.

## 3

In protracted crisis contexts, there is relevance in simultaneously financing humanitarian and development efforts through an integrated framework.

The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), jointly coordinated by UNDP and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for the Syrian refugee response, provided a framework for the activities of the United Nations and other agencies to simultaneously address humanitarian and development issues. The Plan successfully brought together two interrelated dimensions of the Syrian refugee response under a common framework: humanitarian support, and a resilience-based development approach to strengthening institutions, communities and households.<sup>61</sup> Addressing underlying development constraints in host countries is fundamental to comprehensive and conflict-sensitive refugee responses.

3RP has been successful in mobilizing resources and enabling multi-year funding. Meeting the international commitment of the Grand Bargain, an agreement at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul between key donors and humanitarian organizations was intended to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action. Since the 2016 Summit, the interagency resources allotted for the resilience component have increased. High-level events such as the Resilience Development Forum, and continued UNDP advocacy for resilience at the regional level, resulted in an increase of 3RP resilience funding to 44 percent in 2019 (or \$1.1 billion of \$2.5 billion), an increase from about 27 percent in 2015 (or \$486 million of the \$1.82 billion). While the 3RP framework and financing may not be suitable for all crises, it has important lessons for other protracted crises, where an integrated financing approach can improve humanitarian and development programming synergy. Although addressing the development challenges in protracted crises is essential, in some cases a coordinated funding framework was not pursued, for example in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa.<sup>62</sup> A lack of coordinated financing mechanisms to address the complexity of the crisis response continues to be an issue.

In protracted crisis responses, when medium- to long-term development support is needed, an extended humanitarian phase has negative implications for both the host communities and refugees. A skewed

funding architecture predisposed towards humanitarian support undermines more sustainable development solutions that would benefit host communities and refugees.

4

Political economy analysis enables policy and other bottlenecks to be addressed, and the adoption of concrete development financing options.

Development financing needs to consider the political dynamics of aid, as well as national development trajectories. Donor funding interests, foreign policy considerations and governance and human rights are determinants of aid allocations more than development performance, and are also accelerators of peace and development. Context analysis and periodic review of political economy dynamics should inform development financing strategies.

Where competing power centres and territoriality between government actors were sufficiently recognized and mitigated, projects made some technical advances but did not achieve more ambitious goals of integrated and comprehensive aid coordination. Poor analysis of political crisis, development trajectories or political shifts that affected associated ministries exacerbated fragmentation and lack of cooperation across government entities, making well-conceived modalities such as basket fund or pooled funding dysfunctional (Burundi,<sup>63</sup> Afghanistan).

5

Local development financing mechanisms have the potential to catalyse resource mobilization in least developed and middle-income countries. Their successful mobilization in LDCs and fragile contexts depends on policy measures to support the development of capital markets.

Finance remains a challenge for local infrastructure projects in areas such as women's economic empowerment, climate change, clean energy and food security, particularly for mobilizing private investment. Evaluations of UNCDF local finance initiatives emphasize the difficulties of mobilizing private finance in LDCs, linked to weak financial sectors

with scarce long-term funding and an aversion to risk. Limited local capacities in the development of 'bankable' investment projects in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) impede opportunities for finance options. Sufficient resources are also needed to support simultaneous policy and institutional reforms to strengthen the enabling environment and enable private finance to make a return on investments.

Local-level private sector partnership for adaptation was challenging in remote rural areas of LDCs, demanding innovative approaches, geographic concentration and complementarity with other initiatives. The UNCDF Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility, for environmental performance grants to local governments, has been effective in building capacity and integrating climate change adaptation at the local government level, and met many key targets. However, such initiatives did not meet the target of a 10 percent increase in climate financing from the private sector as envisioned by the UNCDF small business grants. While this was beneficial for MSME start-ups, it remains unsustainable and had limited success in supporting microfinance institutions in fragile and conflict settings.<sup>64</sup>

Significant gaps in the supply of services to developed businesses, notably access to financial services, remain a major constraint in value chain development. Efforts to support microfinance institutions were not successful when institutional frameworks were absent, as was the case in LDCs, or were not linked with national policy processes in middle-income countries (MICs) (Jordan, Lebanon). In situations where conflict is widespread, investor confidence is low, limiting opportunities for support to microfinance institutions (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo<sup>65</sup>).

Support for the development of market systems for inclusive finance needs to work simultaneously with regulators, financial service providers, telecommunications companies and fintech companies to create new markets for financial products in sectors such as agriculture or clean energy. Such approaches also increase the number of unbanked and underbanked populations with access to financial services, including women, though evidence around how these products are then used is more mixed (Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia).

## 6

## Addressing policy bottlenecks and using new and alternative financial instruments to enhance private sector engagement will increase development financing.

UNDP and UNCDF are well positioned to facilitate greater private sector participation and galvanize key actors. But the pace and thrust of support to private sector engagement in LDCs, as well as MICs, needs acceleration. The enabling environment in LDCs in particular needs a more catalytic push to de-risk and troubleshoot efforts to blend local and foreign private capital with concessional funds.<sup>66</sup> Given the structural constraints in harnessing market forces, private sector tools should be customized to LDC contexts. New and alternative financial instruments for facilitating development financing need concrete measures and full government support to be successful. UNDP should partner with financial intermediaries that are expanding their businesses in areas of UNDP support. UNDP should strategize to use its United Nations integrator role at the country level to facilitate impact investment. Instead of leaving the support open-ended, UNDP should present a concept of private sector development that targets specific gaps in inclusive growth and employment in those sectors most prevalent in LDCs, for example, service delivery and agri-based sectors.

Concerted efforts are needed to bolster private sector engagement in employment generation and service delivery in MICs. In several countries, partnerships with Chambers of Commerce have served as promising channels for support services for businesses and entrepreneurs, and for connecting small businesses to markets and value chains, particularly for countries in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Uzbekistan 'Aid for Trade' project supported the Chamber of Commerce Business Training Centre to provide specialized training and consultancy for start-ups and mature businesses, and facilitated contact with government institutions in commerce.<sup>67</sup> In Turkey, UNDP facilitated private sector resources in the areas of tourism, SDGs, competitiveness and energy efficiency (Turkey). In the competitiveness area, UNDP Turkey partnered with the Ankara Chamber of Commerce in a public-private partnership to build a 'model factory', which is being replicated in other cities. Measures such as the establishment of the Impact Investment National Advisory Board, together with the Presidency Investment Office in Turkey, have the potential to increase resources for the SDGs.



## Aligning the needs of environment vertical funds and government is essential to catalyse development financing.

UNDP has enabled support through vertical funds such as Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund, provided incentives for government investments, mobilizing sector financing and strengthening national institutional structures and systems. Vertical funds with longer-term financing frameworks have largely provided more stable funding than bilateral support. Evaluations point out that this by itself was not always sufficient to consolidate fragmented sector resources and funding or develop a concrete model for SDG sector financing.

UNDP is a key implementing agency for GEF (the Green Climate Fund) and the Japan-funded Africa Programme. While this has enabled financing for national environment, adaptation and mitigation efforts to be mobilized, the potential of these funds is yet to be fully utilized. Better targeting of key sectoral issues is important for increasing environmental and climate financing. Inherent systemic issues are constraining the scale-up of environmental interventions, for example, the underfunding of relevant ministries (often the Ministry of Environment) with insufficient budget allocations that limit co-financing, poor coordination with the infrastructure sector, and weak capacity to mobilize private sector financing. UNDP has made efforts to tackle this issue with some success, supporting Public Expenditure Reviews which resulted in increased cost-sharing commitments for some key sectors. The pace of improving capacity to mobilize private sector financing or leveraging other government infrastructure investments remains slow, and also impacts the contribution of vertical funds.

There are examples where UNDP-enabled private sector energy efficiency investments in complex contexts led to transformational outcomes. For example, in Sudan, vertical funds were used to promote solar power (solar pumps for groundwater for irrigation) which, besides substituting fossil fuels and emissions, created an expansion of agricultural livelihoods, including a second (summer) cropping cycle in rainwater-dependent areas. The creation of a programme implementation ecosystem to facilitate the installation and maintenance of the solar power generation systems, and private sector engagement, contributed to this success in financing energy efficiency efforts in Sudan. To enable farmers easy access to finance the solar pumps, a

Photovoltaic Fund was instituted, in a tie-in with financial institutions and microfinance organizations. Solar energy has also been deployed in the healthcare service sector in Darfur. Evidence from positive examples such as this one, and not so successful ones, suggests that public-private partnerships should be more systematically pursued, and that vertical funds have an important role to play.<sup>68</sup>

In LDCs and lower MICs, investment in the energy sector in general is impeded by poor access to affordable financing and capital scarcity due to a lack of legal frameworks, underdeveloped economies and weak financial sectors. This presents a challenge for scaling up sustainable energy solutions, as even small-scale solutions require considerable resources. Developing an enabling environment, such as a policy framework and support to regulators, would attract the private sector into energy efficiency efforts.

## 8

### Fragmented COVID-19 responses weaken efforts to address SDGs reversals.

At the country level a new way of working is yet to take shape, as the multilateral and bilateral COVID-19 responses continue to be fragmented. A coordinated international response can enhance efforts to create new jobs, address social inequities and accelerate social protection measures.

Most socioeconomic assessments point to a deficit in both domestic and international financing for achieving the SDGs, even before the pandemic.<sup>9</sup> The pandemic exponentially increased development financing needs. At the same time, there has been a significant reduction in domestic revenues and external private financing flows, coupled with increases in government spending to deal with the health and socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic. Mobilizing short-term aid is not sufficient for UNDP to address the significant development financing gaps. Recent UNDP efforts, such as support to national integrated frameworks for SDG financing, boost national and external resource mobilization. Concrete areas need to be identified for enabling specific development financing solutions. It is also important to pay sufficient attention to long-term solutions, such as increasing domestic revenue, as the pandemic provides opportunities to strengthen revenue-generating systems and processes.

<sup>9</sup> <https://data.uninfo.org/Home/DocumentTracker>.

# UNDP SUPPORT TO E-GOVERNANCE<sup>h</sup>

**Lead Author:** Xiaoling Zhang

**Research Associate/co-Author:** Cheayoon Cho

## Introduction

The SDGs are a bold commitment to end poverty in all forms and dimensions by 2030. As a central actor in the United Nations Development System, UNDP is helping countries to address emerging complexities by “future-proofing” governance systems, through anticipatory approaches and better management of risk.

This paper focuses on lessons from UNDP support to e-governance over the last decade and, wherever possible, focus was given to e-governance interventions during the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery process. The lessons draw broadly on 39 independent country programme evaluations, 11 thematic evaluations, and 48 decentralized evaluations of e-governance and digital government uploaded to the ERC, dated from 2012 to 2022. Five evaluations from UNCDF were also used for generating lessons learned. Publications including strategic documents, studies and reports from UNDP and other international organizations, academia and think tanks were consulted to cross-check development implementation results in similar areas to the extracted lessons, to validate their applicability and generalizability.<sup>i</sup>

## Context

With advancing technology and digitalization, e-governance has the potential to improve government transparency and accountability, expand service coverage and accessibility, and engage citizens

<sup>h</sup> © Xiaoling Zhang and Cheayoon Cho, UNDP | ACM 2022. This is a minor revision of the work published in 15th International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance, October 04–07 2022, Guimarães, Portugal, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3560107.3560193>.

<sup>i</sup> See the detailed methodology note in annex. This includes 33 publications from UNDP (23), United Nations University Operating Unit on Policy Driven Electronic Governance (3), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2), and other international organizations, academia and think tanks (5). For more information, please see the detailed methodology note in annex.

in public discourse and policymaking. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted and fast-tracked the use of e-governance tools for service continuation and citizen participation, where social distancing and other measures restricted service delivery through physical sites and contact. At the same time, the digital divide may exacerbate inequalities, leaving vulnerable communities further behind. The requirements for e-governance, such as regulation, digital infrastructure and literacy, and data protection, remain largely unmet, especially in least-developed and low-income countries.

UNDP support to countries for digital transformation emphasizes a whole-of-society approach to digitalization, connecting people, businesses, government, regulation and infrastructure.<sup>j</sup> UNDP e-governance support addresses the three interlinked core components of e-administration, e-service delivery and e-participation, as well as three crosscutting components of policy environment and regulation, access to ICT and connectivity, and access to information.

## AT A GLANCE – Lessons Learned

1

E-governance solutions can enhance interoperability and the efficiency of public service delivery and promote service continuity, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2

Making digital public services accessible and inclusive for vulnerable and underserved populations requires targeted interventions adapted to their specific needs and capacities.

3

One-stop-shops, combining digital technology with a human/physical interface, can reduce time and costs, and reinforce localized public service delivery in rural and remote areas.

4

Transforming public administration requires both modernization and reform, where the introduction of technology and capacity is accompanied by updated regulations and changes in the work culture.

5

Digital tools can promote open government initiatives and facilitate citizen participation in decision-making processes

<sup>j</sup> [UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and Digital Strategy 2022](#)

## Lessons Learned

**1**

**E-governance solutions can enhance interoperability and the efficiency of public service delivery and promote service continuity as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

E-administration systems can improve the efficiency of the public sector. In Argentina, digital government initiatives, such as the introduction of digital signatures and the digitalization of civil registration, significantly reduced processing time and improved administrative efficiency (Argentina). In countries such as Bangladesh, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan<sup>69</sup> and Moldova,<sup>70</sup> UNDP supported digital records and documentation management systems, allowing for electronic storage, exchange and tracking of data, as well as documentation and requests, to improve efficiency and transparency. The process of introducing the system itself, however, can be complex and time consuming,<sup>k</sup> and a lack of baseline data at times renders it impossible to quantitatively assess the improved effectiveness of the system.<sup>71</sup>

Past evaluations highlighted UNDP support to digital social registries and national ID systems, where UNDP technical expertise in digitalization intersected with public service delivery. For example, UNDP supported the development and implementation of digital identity and registration mechanisms in Malawi<sup>72</sup> and Tajikistan; and a comprehensive cross- sectoral electronic database for institutions of social welfare, public health, education, internal affairs, judiciary and CSOs in target municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>73</sup>

Montenegro is a prominent example, where the digital social registry has proven to improve the interoperability and delivery of public services. Long-term UNDP support to the development of the Integrated Social Welfare Information System (ISWIS, commonly known as e-social card) has contributed to improving the efficiency, inclusion and coverage of beneficiaries of the social welfare system.

<sup>k</sup> UNDP supported the Ministry of Justice in digitalizing the civil registry archives, by first piloting the digitalization of files in seven districts but ultimately envisaging to include 35 million files in the national archive. These initiatives are important investments, particularly in smaller communities that face issues with registering or obtaining personal documentation.

ISWIS provides sex-disaggregated analysis for modelling social transfers and allowing e-referrals of vulnerable children, adults, persons with disabilities, and the elderly for placement in social welfare institutions. UNDP support to the development of the country's Single Information System for Electronic Data Exchange helped to ensure interoperability between key electronic State registers, the domestic violence database and the court IT system, to improve the efficiency of the justice and social welfare system (Montenegro). Subnational platforms helped to integrate administrative data on population, education and employment, among others, for the development and implementation of social policies at provincial and municipal levels.<sup>74</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, ISWIS was used to implement social measures in the Government's emergency COVID-19 response, enabling increased coverage of social rights and allowing for uninterrupted and targeted social welfare support.<sup>1</sup>

COVID-19 has highlighted the role of technology to ensure the continuity of public services and access to up-to-date information (Peru, Nepal). UNDP provided videoconferencing technology, such as Zoom licenses, to governments and judiciaries to ensure the continuity of communication and other functions (e.g. Nepal, Zambia, Uganda). In South Sudan, UNDP supported the Peace and Reconciliation Commission to develop and pilot the Conflict Early and Response mobile application (South Sudan). Overall, UNDP support for the use of modern technology and strengthening of e-services outreach was particularly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, to overcome restrictions on the fulfilment of basic administrative tasks (Egypt).



## 2

**Making digital public services accessible and inclusive for vulnerable and underserved populations requires targeted interventions adapted to their specific needs and capacities.**

People in vulnerable and marginalized situations are often excluded from access to digital government and citizen-government interaction, due to a lack of resources, skills, equipment, infrastructure and

<sup>1</sup> E.g. ISWIS was used to assess right to and process the payment of cash transfers to the poor and vulnerable.

connectivity, as well as geographic isolation.<sup>75</sup> COVID-19 revealed the unequal access to e-governance services for vulnerable and marginalized groups. For instance, the UNDP-supported digitalization of legal services in Moldova resulted in 82 percent of legal aid requests being submitted online as of June 2020; but COVID-19 clearly demonstrated that online services did not offer equal access to services for vulnerable groups such as the elderly. Consequently, additional support was provided, including the expansion of paralegal services in villages (Moldova).

It is important for e-services to establish in-person or physical contact points for those who are not digitally literate to receive assistance. In the Pacific islands, UNCDF-supported financial inclusion initiatives used local agents in villages to assist rural consumers with mobile banking services. This has proven to be an effective way to promote e-service usage, while at the same time addressing the challenges brought by the low levels of digital literacy and weak infrastructure in remote and underserved areas.<sup>76</sup> In Serbia, a call centre was established alongside digital platforms to provide services to those who were not digitally literate.<sup>77</sup>

Partnering with the private sector for mobile money has promoted e-payment to the poor and people in remote areas in some countries. In Egypt, for example, UNDP support to the modernization of Egypt Post contributed to the introduction and dissemination of payment cards through agreement with Visa International and MasterCard, and “Easy Pay” prepaid cards, which according to stakeholders were especially important for people in remote areas (Egypt). Partnership with the private sector was also one of the success drivers for the “mobile money for poor” interventions carried out by UNCDF in Africa and Asia.<sup>78</sup>

E-inclusion challenges are particularly acute for people with disabilities. Good practices in this regard include accessibility mapping and the provision of targeted services (Kazakhstan).<sup>m</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP assisted Egypt’s National Telecommunication

<sup>m</sup> In Kazakhstan, UNDP supported the Government in developing a social service portal with an accessibility map that outlines all service providers across the country, to enable identification and connection of the needs of persons with disability to social services in proximity.

Regulatory Authority to develop a mobile application with a sign language chatbot to provide access to emergency services for people with hearing or speech impairments. This was particularly relevant for people with hearing disabilities to check their symptoms and get proper health support (Egypt). In Belarus, UNDP supported the implementation of an e-module for submitting electronic appeals to State agencies, including a pilot special application for people with visual impairments (Belarus).

3

**One-stop-shops, combining digital technology with a human/physical interface, can reduce time and costs, and reinforce localized public service delivery in rural and remote areas.**

Public service delivery in rural and remote areas can be lengthy, irregular, and have unclear bureaucratic procedures. Due to their remoteness from public service providers, populations in rural and remote areas need to travel long distances with financial and time costs. In response, UNDP has been promoting e-services for public service delivery, establishing e-governance systems, creating service centres, and simplifying administrative processes (Uzbekistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria,<sup>79</sup> Bangladesh, Montenegro, Georgia, Turkey).

Digitalization is not a panacea. E-services provision in rural and remote areas needs to be balanced with physical presence for flexible and localized service delivery. One-stop-shops created at local, or community levels can complement digital technology with a human/physical interface and help to increase accessibility and overcome a lack of internet or electricity connection and digital literacy in rural and remote areas (Georgia, Serbia,<sup>80</sup> Bangladesh).

In Bangladesh, for instance, UNDP supported Access to Information (a2i) interventions to provide easy access to simplified and digitized public services for underserved communities. The one-stop-shop model was applied to create a network of Union Digital Centres in remote and rural areas, for citizens to access e-services and help to overcome poor connectivity. A wide range of public services were made available at these Centres across the country, and, on average,

they reduced service waiting times from seven days to one hour and travel distances from 35 to three kilometres (Bangladesh). In Georgia, a UNDP-supported one-stop-shop e-services model integrated a total of 468 civic and business services and has contributed to improved public accessibility. The one-stop-shop saw a surge in usage sparked by COVID-19 restrictions.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, in Serbia, an e-government support centre played a significant role as a one-stop-shop for citizens to access digital services during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>82</sup>

However, in Bhutan, the lack of information on the kinds of services provided by one-stop-shops and the administrative processes of e-services, has limited e-service usage in rural communities.<sup>83</sup> The results of community surveys conducted in Moldova highlighted the importance of promoting the benefits of using e-services, to boost confidence in the security of online public services, and thus increase e-service usage.<sup>84</sup>

For one-stop-shops, revenue generation can be a major challenge to sustainability. In Bhutan, for example, almost all of the community centres established by the Government-to-citizen project faced sustainability issues, mainly due to unsatisfactory revenue generation.<sup>85</sup> In Bangladesh, the continued operation of local one-stop-shops was dependent on revenue, as they were run by local entrepreneurs.<sup>86</sup> In Lao PDR, the One Door Service Centre that was piloted in two regions saw an increase in revenue collection due to its transparent and reasonable fees, and reported an improved relationship between local authorities and citizens.<sup>87</sup>



## 4

**Transforming public administration requires both modernization and reform, where the introduction of technology and capacity is accompanied by updated regulations and changes in work culture.**

The promotion of open government using digital technology has been a key feature of UNDP in-country support to public administration reform. For example, in Uruguay, UNDP has been supporting open government, digital government and transparency policies since the creation of the Electronic Government and Society for Knowledge and

Information Agency in 2005. UNDP supported the development of the electronic government strategy and the digital strategy, as well as the implementation of the digital government agenda, through which most central administration procedures have been digitalized (Uruguay).

E-Justice is a sector of growing significance in e-governance development, including in crisis-affected and fragile contexts.<sup>88</sup> In Chad, Eritrea<sup>89</sup> and Trinidad and Tobago,<sup>90</sup> digitalization eased the flow of information, and improved the efficiency of courts and other justice sector institutions. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, UNDP support contributed to the endorsement of an e-Justice matrix by justice institutions, setting out a roadmap for the operationalization of e-services, including the roles of each institution.<sup>91</sup>

Digital technology alone is not a guarantee of change in practice. The 2010 evaluation of earlier UNDP support in Georgia, for example, found more success in introducing ICT to public administration than in introducing e-governance.<sup>92</sup> Building technical capacity for the use of digital systems and tools is essential. In Montenegro, an evaluation found that the UNDP upstream-downstream model for e-governance support responded to changing priorities at central and local government levels, and brought reform to the local level, where institutional capacity development was most needed (Montenegro).

In addition to the establishment of digital infrastructure, it is necessary to update laws and regulations to establish data sharing and protection requirements and procedures in the public sector. The safe and reliable exchange of data between authorities in Montenegro, as discussed above, was enabled by the Law on General Administrative Procedures, drafted with the support of UNDP (Montenegro). Similarly, in Serbia, UNDP supported the preparation of the Information Security Act and related rules and procedures.<sup>93</sup> A good practice introduced in Malawi was to develop a local-level Memorandum of Understanding template for data sharing with service providers.<sup>94</sup>

Moreover, it is important to institutionalize practices and capacity, and change the working culture in public administrations (Egypt). Good practices in this regard include the assessment of local government

capacity and will for e- transformation,<sup>95</sup> and empathy training for public servants to better understand the needs and user experience of citizens, in order to change their mindsets and enable more service- and people-centric solutions.<sup>96</sup>



### Digital tools can promote open government initiatives and facilitate citizen participation in decision- making processes.

Digital technology can help to improve citizen participation in local governance processes. In Albania, UNDP supported the creation of an e-participation tool to solicit and incorporate citizen feedback into local governance processes, such as budgeting, urban planning and quality public service delivery (Albania). In Ukraine, as a result of amendments to the Law on Access to Information, several CSOs were able to obtain copies of local development plans, allowing citizens to participate in local administration decision-making.<sup>97</sup> However, e-participation in local governance may be hampered by unequal access to technology and different levels of digital literacy. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, local and cantonal governments used online channels to engage citizens in development planning and management processes during the COVID-19 pandemic, which proved problematic for social groups that did not have digital literacy or access to digital equipment.<sup>98</sup>

Similarly, e-Parliament activities at national and local levels can facilitate interaction between citizens and elected officials and enhance public participation in the legislative process. UNDP supported open/e-parliament initiatives in Ukraine, Serbia and Armenia.<sup>99</sup> In Armenia, for instance, citizen engagement via e-Parliament promoted public participation in the legislative process and resulted in several legislative amendments and greater parliamentary responsiveness. At local level in Bhutan, UNDP helped to set up *Virtual Zomdu*, a video conferencing platform that allowed the Parliament to organize community meetings and connect with voters nationwide (Bhutan).

In the area of elections, in Haiti, a web-based voter registration system has improved the quality of election administration and increased the overall credibility, transparency and efficiency of the process.

This allowed voters to check their registration and polling sites, reduced confusion at polling stations, standardized procedures, and reduced the space for preferential treatment and fraud.<sup>100</sup>

Digital tools can also help governments to solicit citizen feedback and improve citizen-oriented public engagement. In Moldova and Georgia, UNDP supported local public administrations to use e-tools to solicit citizen perceptions on the level of information and participation in local decision-making processes and their satisfaction with local government and public services.<sup>101</sup> In Uzbekistan, UNDP supported the establishment of the Public Council on Openness, whose website published a ranking of the openness and transparency of the activities of different government agencies, from the perspective of citizens.<sup>102</sup>

# 2. WHO IS WITH US?

## Leaving no one behind

The papers in this section cover UNDP support to people at risk of being left behind: a key direction of systemic change in the current UNDP Strategic Plan and a critical element of achieving the SDGs. The core lesson of this section is that while there is no simple solution, traditionally marginalized groups like women and youth are crucial agents of change where there is long-term support and an enabling environment.

The papers in this section examine the most important lessons from UNDP efforts to incorporate the 'leave no one behind' principles into its work, covering endeavours to empower marginalized groups, boost women's political participation, enhance the economic empowerment of young people, and engage civil society in leave no one behind programming, as well as the role gender equality can play in accelerating the achievement of the SDGs.



# UNDP SUPPORT TO EMPOWERING MARGINALIZED GROUPS

**Lead author:** Jin Zhang

**Research associate:** Anna Kunová

## Introduction

Some individuals and groups are at heightened risk of discrimination or deprivation because of certain characteristics and the interplay between them, such as gender, age, ethnicity, religion, health status, disability, sexual orientation, education, income or geographical location. Who exactly is discriminated against or marginalized depends on the context, including the social norms and power relations in a given society or community. Some individuals or groups may do well on development indicators, but are nevertheless discriminated against or stigmatized, denying their rights to equal opportunities. More often, belonging to (or being perceived to belong to) a marginalized group heightens the risk of deprivation based on inequalities in access to rights and services. Supporting the empowerment of marginalized individuals and groups is therefore key to achieving the SDGs, and central to advancing human development. This is “about empowering people to identify and pursue their own paths for a meaningful life”, anchored in expanding freedom and increasing agency.<sup>n</sup> Empowerment is both a right in itself (having a voice that counts and making one’s own choices), and a means to an end (achieving development outcomes).<sup>103</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to provide evidence- based advice to UNDP country offices on ‘what works’ (or doesn’t) and ‘how’, regarding the design and implementation of such programmes. Instead of discussing lessons by target group,<sup>o</sup> the paper looks at how marginalization was

<sup>n</sup> “Expansion of freedom is viewed [...] both as the primary end and as the principal means of development”, according to *Development as Freedoms (1999)* by Amartya Sen. Agency is “the ability to participate in decision-making and to make one’s desired choices”. Human Development Report 2020.

<sup>o</sup> Many lessons in this regard have been discussed in other *Reflections* papers focusing on a specific theme. The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) also presents evidence on what works in international development based on evaluations and synthesis of studies.

defined, how marginalized persons were targeted and reached, and, subsequently, the lessons that can be identified from the process. Country-level evaluations conducted by IEO were an important source for the lessons in this paper. High-quality decentralized evaluations commissioned by country offices were also considered, as well as some additional resources.

## Context

*Empowerment* is the process of enabling people to gain ownership and control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives. It is meant to increase people's resources and build their capacity to gain access, partners, networks and voice.<sup>104</sup> There are different approaches to empowerment, such as economic, social, political and legal.<sup>105</sup>

Many UNDP interventions contribute to empowering marginalized groups: in contributing to (em)power *within* (a sense of rights, dignity and voice, along with basic capabilities); (em)power *with* (ability to organize, express views); and (em)power *to* (ability to influence decision-makers).<sup>106</sup> These include economic empowerment and social protection programmes, enhancing the quality and accessibility of services, promoting civic and political participation, strengthening capacity and expanding opportunities for civil society and community networks to engage decision-makers, building capacity of national and local authorities to be inclusive, responsive and accountable, and creating and supporting the enabling environment (legal and policy frameworks and institutions), etc. These interventions either work directly with marginalized groups, or indirectly benefit them.

## AT A GLANCE – Lessons Learned

**1**

UNDP had most impact where it could clearly identify who was marginalized and measure the results of empowerment beyond counting those targeted.

**2**

Addressing multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities contributes to more effective targeting and better results.

**3**

Interventions targeting marginalized groups were most transformative where they adapted to the local context and addressed the root causes of vulnerability, including discrimination.

**4**

“Nothing about us without us.” Inclusive and participatory processes give voice to marginalized people and strengthen their ability to influence decision-makers.

**5**

Integrated approaches tend to better address complexity and increase the scalability and sustainability of empowerment results.

**6**

Empowerment requires long-term commitment with measurable pathways for achieving transformative and sustainable results, one milestone at a time.

**7**

The effective implementation of policy change in favour of marginalized groups is more likely where UNDP supports national and local government ownership and strengthens CSOs.

## Lessons Learned

**1**

UNDP had most impact where it could clearly identify who was marginalized and measure the results of empowerment beyond counting those targeted.

Universalism remains the aspiration within the United Nations family. But targeted actions are needed to reach those who are marginalized and usually disproportionately represented among those left behind.<sup>107</sup> A GEF/UNDP evaluation found that the extent to which different groups in the same community benefited from the same intervention varied in the protected areas visited.<sup>108</sup> For instance, in three areas of Mexico, the evaluation found that salt mine operators, owners of tourist operations and vacation homeowners (who usually had a higher economic status and educational level), were in a better position to exploit opportunities and take advantage of the new livelihood skills introduced, as they had sufficient capital, entrepreneurial knowledge, access to information and political contacts. On the other hand, indigenous and small farmer communities were highly affected by constraints placed by the protected areas, as their livelihoods depended on natural resources. This situation helped to reignite old conflicts among the local population, which negatively affected the delivery of results. In order to put in place effective responses, five key factors should be assessed to understand who is vulnerable and why. These are discrimination, geography, governance, socioeconomic status, and shocks and fragility.<sup>109</sup>

How vulnerable groups and their challenges have been defined in UNDP-supported initiatives is a mixed picture. Some initiatives have been positive and inspiring. For instance, the 'Unified Beneficiary Registry', the national social registry in Malawi, is an example of using the national identification system to improve targeting and as an effective information system for social protection.<sup>110</sup> In Rwanda, UNDP used a traditional long-standing practice and culture of mutual assistance, *Ubudehe*, to identify the most vulnerable beneficiary populations and address inequality, especially in disaster-affected districts (Rwanda). After Hurricane Mitch in Nicaragua, UNDP worked with the municipality, using a participatory process to select beneficiaries,

and the local population was involved in the design and construction of 400 low-income housing units and basic services for victims affected by the catastrophe (Nicaragua).<sup>p</sup> A study of social welfare programmes in Indonesia (not a UNDP intervention) found that self-targeting was a more effective and cost-effective way to identify people living in poverty than community-based targeting or means-testing proxy surveys. However, communities were more satisfied with community-based targeting of vulnerable households or individuals than self-targeting, as allocations were closer to the community's beliefs on welfare.<sup>q</sup>

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many country offices conducted analyses or assessments of the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19. This helped to identify the most vulnerable groups and how the crisis has impacted them, and subsequently contributed to the development of evidence-based strategies. For instance, UNDP conducted a 'Rapid Socioeconomic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Groups and Value Chains in Mongolia' and evidence showed that it influenced the COVID-19 Law, which profiled the impact of the crisis on those 'left behind' such as the elderly, women-headed households and the families of herders (Mongolia). In Viet Nam, UNDP conducted the SEIA of COVID-19 on micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, poor households and ethnic minorities. This fed into an assessment by the National Centre for Socioeconomic Information and Forecast under the Ministry of Planning and Investment and informed the SERP (Viet Nam). UNDP Ukraine developed an online tool, the Compounded Vulnerability Index, to present a disaggregated analysis of the pandemic consequences on socioeconomic, demographic and other pertinent variables in all regions of the country. It helped to identify the most affected regions and inform evidence-based decision-making for UNDP and the Government of Ukraine (Ukraine).

<sup>p</sup> The sustainability of this intervention, according to the evaluation, depended on the existence of ongoing flow of resources for housing, which at that time were not fully secured.

<sup>q</sup> Self-targeting imposes requirements on the programme that have differing costs for poor and rich people, dissuading the rich but not the poor from participating. Proxy means testing collects information on assets and demographic characteristics to create a proxy for household consumption or income. This proxy is then used for targeting. Community targeting allows the community or some part of it (for example, local leaders) to select the beneficiaries through a pre-specified process. International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (2019).

However, vulnerable groups are sometimes identified on a more *ad hoc* basis, which has led to mistargeting or simply missing target groups. Some social protection systems are gender-blind, thus short-changing women and girls of their rights and options.<sup>111</sup> In entrepreneurship development in Ethiopia, although the selection criteria partly identified excluded and worse-off groups such as women and youth, there was no clear guidance on how those living with HIV/AIDS and the elderly could be included by the project (Ethiopia).

Identifying vulnerable groups without good coverage in implementation may create conflict among the groups. For instance, in Nepal, out of the 30 percent identified as most vulnerable, excluded and economically disadvantaged households, only 8 percent were covered midway through the project, leading to a situation in which the remaining 22 percent of vulnerable households were reluctant to cooperate with the community members covered.<sup>112</sup>

In addition, although target numbers are important indicators to measure the reach of interventions, they are not sufficient to reflect changes at outcome level, which require additional data and evidence. For instance, as found in a 2013 evaluation, in some pilot microfinance projects, numbers of beneficiaries and participants were used as indicators of progress and no information was provided regarding the effects on their economic situation (either short- or long-term).<sup>113</sup> As a result, there was a lack of data on the changes made to people's lives or impact. In Somalia, through UNDP-supported interventions, access to justice for women increased. However, after many years' work, UNDP and its Somali and international partners were unable to produce detailed evidence on the impact of rule-of-law interventions on building public trust and confidence in the police and justice system, on shifting public support from insurgents to the Government, or on reducing crime rates. As a result, it is impossible to indicate with confidence whether the rule of law improved over this period, or whether Somali citizens felt safer or better served (Somalia).

## 2

## Addressing multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities contributes to more effective targeting and better results.

The challenges faced by marginalized groups intersect, often compounding deprivation and reinforcing their disadvantage. For example, climate change and climate variability can worsen existing poverty and exacerbate inequalities, especially for those disadvantaged by gender, age, race, class, caste, indigeneity or disability.<sup>114</sup> In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic not only revealed how interconnected and vulnerable we all are, but also amplified existing inequalities. Marginalized groups have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>115</sup>

Paying attention to intersecting disadvantages and challenges contributes to more effective targeting and better results. For example, UNDP identified disadvantaged groups of youth using criteria such as geography (poor regions, rural areas), gender, ethnic minorities, length of unemployment or informal employment, educational attainment and work experience, in order to effectively engage them in technical and vocational training, as well as targeted active labour market programmes (Kosovo,<sup>116</sup> Kazakhstan, Albania, North Macedonia, Ethiopia). For initiatives focusing on women's economic and political empowerment, increased efforts were made to address the intersection of vulnerabilities, including women's access to productive resources and participation in democratic processes. The UNDP programme for electoral support in Zimbabwe showed that gender-focused interventions that address the intersecting vulnerabilities of women at government and community levels, while collaborating with the Zimbabwe Gender Commission, could bring notable results for both women's empowerment and a successful democratic process (Zimbabwe). Another promising example in Zimbabwe is the 3X6 plus approach, used for sustainable livelihoods where communities face drought, cyclone and floods amidst conflict.<sup>117</sup>

However, evaluations note that intersecting vulnerabilities are often not addressed through programming. For instance, gender inequalities are often not analysed in relation to other social, economic and political inequalities.<sup>118</sup> A 2016 evaluation found that, in UNDP work on gender,

when disability is referenced at all it tends to be an afterthought instead of being part of an integrated and systematic approach designed to secure effective and lasting change.<sup>119</sup> Another example showed that most efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria have not actively included individuals with disabilities as their beneficiaries. This explained why materials on ways to reduce the risk of contracting these diseases are often produced in inaccessible formats.<sup>120</sup>

A lack of processes to support a more integrated approach to planning and programming, which addresses intersecting elements of multiple crises, often resulted in multiple simultaneous responses to different drivers without complementarity and synergy.<sup>121</sup> In conflict-affected countries, for example, Mali and South Sudan, the intersection between conflict, drought, internal displacement and food insecurity was missed in UNDP-supported interventions. UNDP had projects on each driver of conflict and displacement, food insecurity and lack of services, but these were compartmentalized.<sup>122</sup> While supporting the Syrian refugee crisis, UNDP missed the opportunity to adopt an intersectional perspective to address different economic, social and safety concerns. This further exacerbates the multiple intersecting forms of discrimination and violence experienced by women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people in conflict-affected situations, and subsequently continues to reinforce deeply rooted inequalities and undermines efforts toward sustainable peace.<sup>123</sup>

**3**

**Interventions targeting marginalized groups were most transformative where they adapted to the local context and addressed the root causes of vulnerability, including discrimination.**

There are guidelines for successful empowering interventions, but no exact and universal standards. The approach is context-specific, and therefore, to a significant extent, interventions must be tailor-made. They must be created adapting to local context and tackling the context-specific roots of inequities, including by being sensitive to the needs of community members. In addition, since interventions are context-specific, the negative influence of local cultures and practices and biases concerning the engagement of marginalized groups should

be considered at design and implementation stages. For instance, women's involvement in waste management can generate income, but may also lead to stigma in some cultures. The experiences of women involved in cash-for-work and waste recovery activities vary across countries, with higher sensitivities reported in Indonesia and Syria than in Haiti or in African countries (Malawi,<sup>124</sup> Gabon, Ethiopia).

Evaluations found that interventions paying special attention to the needs and concerns of vulnerable groups had a clearer pathway in programme design and implementation, and were effective in informing more inclusive intervention strategies and equitable policies (Colombia, Albania, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan<sup>125</sup>). For example, in Kyrgyzstan, a peace and development programme focused significantly on empowering youth as agents of change, recognizing the role of disenfranchised and unemployed youth as drivers of conflict (Kyrgyzstan). In Mauritania, functional literacy training was provided to improve the access of women and youth to income-generating activities, to address the additional barriers they often face due to inadequate basic education (Mauritania). In Azerbaijan, since the lack of formal qualifications can impede employability and access to the formal education system, UNDP assisted the Government in identifying international assessment protocols to acknowledge evidence of previous learning, including the validation of non-formal and informal learning (Azerbaijan). In Côte d'Ivoire, the strategy of adapting projects to local needs and taking into account the specific characteristics of each region strongly contributed to their success in improving the income sources of vulnerable people (including youth, women and internally displaced persons) and local communities (Côte d'Ivoire).

Good results were also achieved when materials were made available in accessible formats (local languages, braille, voice-assisted technologies, etc.), addressing discrimination and using inclusive language (including in terms of gender) (Egypt, Dominican Republic, Cuba).<sup>126</sup> Ensuring that communications strategies use inclusive language (including acknowledgement of transgender people) and address stereotypes, stigma and sociocultural patterns, has helped women to access health services (Dominican Republic, Cuba).<sup>127</sup>

Community interactions, and interventions to address practical needs through service delivery and access to resources, work best when the root causes of discrimination, inequalities and conflicts are addressed.<sup>128</sup> The Assessment of Development Results for Jordan found that despite some positive results and high participant numbers,<sup>r</sup> focusing primarily on the inclusion of women as beneficiaries or the number of women participants did not necessarily lead to gender equality or women’s empowerment results (Jordan). For this, it was necessary to distinguish the needs or situations of men and women, address the cultural and social roots of gender inequality, and support women’s advocacy for greater equality, empowerment and participation in decision-making processes. A better approach would have required addressing traditional norms and beliefs that hinder girls and women from being treated as equals in all spheres of life, and soliciting support from civil society and community leaders.

Failure to address the causes of challenges leads to unsuccessful results. In Cameroon, women’s participation in an entrepreneurship innovation competition was low, failing to meet the targets not only for participation but also for results, as women do not have the same chances of initiating and managing business projects as men. This demonstrates the importance of integrating gender analysis and the adaptation of programmatic approaches to address the different needs of women, who still face challenges overcoming traditional roles and societal expectations (Cameroon).



**4** “Nothing about us without us.” Inclusive and participatory processes give voice to marginalized people and strengthen their ability to influence decision-makers.

The most effective empowerment strategies are those that build on and reinforce voice and participation, promoting autonomy in decision-making, a sense of community and local bonding, and the

<sup>r</sup> For example, 80 percent of the youth participating in internship and civic engagement programmes were female, and 85 percent were female in the vocational training; training women parliamentarians while building the capacities of MPs on gender issues and human rights conventions. Women were involved in meetings to discuss the new property tax law. Sex-disaggregated data were used and a gender strategy was developed.

psychological empowerment of the community members themselves.<sup>129</sup> For instance, the formulation of effective disability-inclusive strategies requires consultation with people with disabilities and their representative organizations, as well as their participation in developing responses.<sup>130</sup> In Lebanon, UNDP brought together communities to undertake conflict assessments and identify solutions to address some of the conflict drivers. Months were spent in discussions and negotiations to guarantee the buy-in and ownership of stakeholders, with good progress achieved in designing components for the professionalization of municipal police.<sup>131</sup> In Somalia, the introduction of social entrepreneurship, and particularly the focus on stimulating self-directed livelihood generation ideas, empowered beneficiaries while departing from a supply-driven approach (Somalia). Other examples are from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mongolia and Sierra Leone, where participation of the poor and the vulnerable in water governance committees ensured that their voices were heard. This helped to improve water services.<sup>132</sup>

In general, marginalized groups should participate as active change agents in the planning and implementation of interventions. However, this does not always happen. Individuals with disabilities have typically been targeted in UNDP-supported government social protection programmes, but this is often framed in the context of passivity and vulnerability, as beneficiaries of services rather than active and informed change agents to be consulted.<sup>133</sup> Viewing marginalized groups as beneficiaries, rather than supporting them as agents of change, undermines transformative outcomes. For instance, viewing women simply as beneficiaries is a minimalist approach to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) in conflict responses, early recovery, peacebuilding and state-building, and has significantly undermined peace and security efforts.<sup>134</sup>

5

**Integrated approaches tend to better address complexity and increase scalability and sustainability of empowerment results.**

An integrated approach to development, as opposed to a siloed approach, is cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder (involving a broad range of actors) and multilevel (at one or more levels, for instance

from national to local levels). Integrated approaches tend to address the complex context for, and roots of, marginalization. As such they are able to fulfil the diversity of needs and priorities of targeted groups, and enable space for synergies. Successful integrated interventions increase the scalability and sustainability of results.

In contrast, evaluations found that fragmented or siloed approaches undermine the UNDP contribution to government strategies and development results, for instance, in poverty reduction (Somalia, Albania, Viet Nam).<sup>135</sup> For example, poor people tend to depend disproportionately on access to natural resources for their livelihoods, and development and poverty reduction programmes have significant effects on the environment, meaning that addressing the poverty-environment nexus is essential.<sup>136</sup> In Côte d'Ivoire, the implementation of a joint programme for poverty reduction suffered from a siloed approach. The programme was not able to build synergies among different partners, and consequently compromised the sustainability of the results achieved (Côte d'Ivoire).

A few examples show the benefits of an integrated approach. In Belarus, a project aiming to improve local governance systems and practices engaged with central and local government institutions, CSOs, the private sector and academic/ training institutions, with disability inclusion well integrated and reflected in the results framework.<sup>137</sup> In Albania, Roma and Egyptian communities multiple levels (from grassroots to central), in multi-stakeholder partnerships including government, civil society and communities, and through cross-sector involvement including education, employment, health, social services, infrastructure, etc. (Albania<sup>138</sup>).

At the community level, in Rwanda, Green Villages have generated positive changes for poor households from disaster-prone areas relocated to safer places with basic and environmentally friendly infrastructure. This demonstrated how integrated sustainable natural resource management could help to reduce poverty, enhance environmental sustainability, empower communities and improve the quality of life of the poor and the most vulnerable. Following the successful model, all district development plans in Rwanda include

the objective of establishing at least one Green Village.<sup>s</sup> In Tanzania, improved land-use practices, income-generating activities and access to microfinance and microcredit were introduced to the highlands of Kilimanjaro, where 43,882 hectares of land were under sustainable land management. Activities have been streamlined and incorporated into the district annual plans, which enhances the sustainability of results.<sup>t</sup>

For all its positive aspects, an integrated approach has its own challenges, which have to be kept in mind. In particular, while tackling a lot of issues, the approach has to remain mindful of the need to coordinate the different fields of intervention, and maintain a sense of priorities among the different areas addressed. This is important, to make the most of limited resources.

## 6

**Empowerment requires long-term commitment with measurable pathways for achieving transformative and sustainable results, one milestone at a time.**

Effective empowerment requires planning and long-term commitment. Moving to transformational results is context-specific, takes time and requires a long-term programming perspective, including approaches to monitoring, evaluation and learning. The right balance must be found between following a clear plan and adapting to an evolving situation when needed. For instance, in Albania, UNDP has been learning and replicating or adapting pathways that work for different groups. UNDP interventions for the economic and social inclusion of Roma and

<sup>s</sup> "As a result of the introduction rainwater harvesting systems to the Green Villages, the use of biogas residue as fertilizer, tree planting and terracing, food security for the community has increased and excess production is being sold to generate income. Terracing has helped to reduce landslides which used to cause damage to property and, in extreme cases, loss of lives. The sale of milk and fertilizer has brought in additional income, improving the livelihoods of the households. Having water closer to home and biogas for cooking has saved significant time, and women and children can spend their time on more productive activities including schoolwork, as they no longer travel long distances to fetch water and/or collect firewood." (ICPE: Rwanda 2017, pp. 18-19)

<sup>t</sup> With the multi-pronged interventions, beneficiaries reported increased economic activities and incomes (i.e. the adoption of alternative income-generating activities such as bee-keeping; improved coffee farming through trainings; development of markets for products such as honey, coffee and mushrooms, etc.) and better sustainable land management (i.e., increased awareness for sustainable land management practices, rehabilitated gullies to reserve soil loss; more households with woodlots; increased use of alternative sources of energy and maize harvest; improved conservation of the water catchment areas; development of Land Management Policy) (ADR Tanzania 2015).

Egyptian communities have evolved gradually over several programme cycles. The theory of change of these interventions follows the successful paths of how UNDP has promoted gender equality since the late 1990s in the country: a critical mass of awareness and demand for policies and services was established; followed by the implementation of these policies and legislation through capacity-development initiatives for the national Government as well as through direct support to local authorities and communities (Albania). In Cuba, through continuous and holistic support, UNDP is positioned as a key government partner for the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Sexually-Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS, covering several priority areas and vulnerable target groups (Cuba).

The UNDP contribution is limited when it focuses on short-term approaches. For example, an evaluation found that, in employment generation for Syrian refugees, a short-term approach to livelihoods, enterprise development and sustainable job creation did not enable viable solutions at scale, and considered that the impact would have been higher if multi-year funding were available (Lebanon). In Tunisia, with a limited scope of interventions due to constrained funding, UNDP work on job creation and entrepreneurship development lacked the long-term focus required to achieve expected results (Tunisia).



**Effective implementation of policy change in favour of marginalized groups is more likely where UNDP supports national and local government ownership and strengthens CSOs.**

An important part of UNDP interventions to empower marginalized groups is upstream work to enable legal and policy frameworks for inclusive development. Evaluations show that, in many cases, UNDP has been successful at aligning national policies with international frameworks. However, transformation may not take place without adequate implementation. A global UNDP IEO evaluation found that, while important progress was made in different areas of the justice sector, improved systems and policies did not always result in better justice services due to structural challenges in the implementation of legislation and policies, as well as limitations in national ownership and sustained efforts by governments.<sup>139</sup>

Because many implementation solutions are decentralized, the ownership, capacity and adequate resources of local government and communities to take initiatives forward are critical. For instance, the UNDP '4M' economic empowerment initiative in Viet Nam developed a platform for local authorities, business sectors and local ethnic minority women to meet, discuss and match supply and demand.<sup>u</sup> This grassroots model, and the lessons learned, has been integrated into the National Targeted Programme on Social Economic Development in Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas, for further scale-up. However, due to lack of funding and leadership changes, the follow-up plan to support the application of the multidimensional poverty concept in urban settings was delayed, thus generating gaps in the knowledge, understanding and models of how multidimensional poverty analysis could be implemented in urban settings (Viet Nam). In Thailand, UNDP community-based policy implementation has been found to be highly effective. This approach involves and mobilizes stakeholder participation, whether in demonstrative environment projects, HIV/AIDS prevention, or the restoration of tsunami-affected areas. However, if local government ownership is not strong, in areas such as public utilities that require financial resources to maintain, the sustainability of the community-based approach is limited (Thailand).

CSOs with sufficient capacity can contribute significantly to effective policy implementation, especially when government ownership and resources are lacking. In Albania, UNDP systematic support to mainstreaming policies around diverse communities at all government levels has been appreciated. However, even though awareness of the challenges associated with improving opportunities for minorities has significantly increased across different government levels, the implementation of laws and strategies has been hampered by inadequate resources, insufficient and inefficient coordination at local and central levels and among different institutions (such as various registration entities, birth and residency), and limited awareness and attention by local government actors.<sup>v</sup> Critical services for the Roma minority in Albania are largely provided by CSOs and financed by international donors rather than the government (Albania). In Viet Nam,

<sup>u</sup> 4M refers to meet, match, mentor and move.

<sup>v</sup> Such as the Law Against Discrimination (2010), the National Strategy on Roma (2003) and the Plan of Action for the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2009).

notable achievements were observed in the integration of human rights principles and a rights-based approach into key legal documents, but implementation mechanisms for programmes to safeguard legal rights and access to justice were limited. To advance this, UNDP provided support to strengthen CSOs, which in turn provided a preliminary and meaningful contribution to raising awareness and enhancing legal aid for vulnerable groups (Viet Nam).

In brief, the role of UNDP could be critical in advocating and supporting the formalization of government visions for social inclusion and the empowerment of marginalized groups, including proper budgeting, as well as in strengthening CSOs for empowering marginalized groups and providing services. In an innovative example from Cambodia, UNDP in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), worked with the Government to support the inclusion of disability provision in the national budgeting process, and buttressed strong national ownership from national to provincial to grassroots levels, in addition to empowering organizations of people with disabilities.

# UNDP SUPPORT TO GENDER EQUALITY AS AN SDG ACCELERATOR

**Lead author:** Ana Rosa Monteiro Soares

**Research associate:** Rakesh Ganguli

## Introduction

The SDGs are a bold commitment to end poverty in all forms and dimensions by 2030.<sup>w</sup> As a central actor in the United Nations Development System, in its Strategic Plan 2022-2025 UNDP has matched its commitment to *“expand people’s choices for a fairer, sustainable future, to build the world envisioned by Agenda 2030 with planet and people in balance”*.

This *Reflections* paper focuses on lessons from UNDP work which aimed to promote gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (GEWE) as an SDG accelerator. Additionally, this paper presents lessons that might provide directions to UNDP COVID-19 response initiatives and emerging strategies for improved alignment, and could further sharpen the gender focus in post-COVID-19 SDG pursuits.

Country- level, corporate and thematic evaluations conducted by IEO were the key sources of data for this paper, drawing on 49 ICPEs and 20 thematic evaluations posted to the UNDP ERC between January 2018 and September 2021. In addition, in drawing up these lessons, high-quality decentralized evaluations commissioned by country offices were also considered along with seven Annual Reports of the Administrator for further triangulation, and several other credible external references and discussion papers.

<sup>w</sup> Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

## Context

GEWE is a stand-alone goal in Agenda 2030 as well as the UNDP Strategic Plan and Gender Equality Strategy,<sup>x</sup> and SDG 5 (gender equality), but is also envisioned as cutting across the remaining 16 SDGs, reflected in 45 targets and 54 indicators measuring UNDP achievements.<sup>140</sup> The assumption that GEWE is not only a pre-condition but also an accelerator to realizing the SDGs, making SDG 5 unique. This assumption is directly linked to the need for fair representation, the acknowledgment of differential needs and for equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status and rights of diverse genders. Ultimately, as an accelerator, the aim is for changes in norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of inequalities that address discrimination against vulnerable people, especially girls and women and gender minorities.

Past and current UNDP strategic plans have recognized that advancing GEWE calls for a holistic view of programmes, rather than a fragmented one that focuses on single or a select few areas of intervention. Limited integration and synergies among thematic areas and strategic partners constrain the achievement and the sustainability of results in GEWE and all areas.

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<sup>x</sup> This strategy is for the period 2018 – 2021, but a new one is currently under development.

## AT A GLANCE – Lessons Learned

1

Advancing GEWE in all programme areas accelerates progress towards the SDGs, including those not explicitly targeting GEWE. Recognizing multiple gender inequalities is an essential first step.

2

A better understanding of intersecting discriminations and stronger gender analysis are key to the success of a Leave No One Behind approach with GEWE, to accelerate the SDGs.

3

Shared responsibility and partnerships are key to integrating multidimensional approaches to advance GEWE and accelerate the SDGs, helping transform 'stakeholders' into 'stake-winners' in the interest of GEWE.

4

Women are key agents of change in regard to sustainable environment and energy, but initiatives must address discrimination and social/ cultural norms that often prevent women from accruing the benefits of results, beyond participation.

5

Crisis prevention, response, recovery, stabilization and peacebuilding initiatives that adequately integrate gender-responsive approaches achieve more sustainable results and more durably advance women's empowerment.

6

The UNDP Gender Seal enhances attention to gender equality in programmatic areas and promotes the integration of approaches that accelerate results beyond GEWE achievements.

7

Adequate resources for GEWE are an absolute must, but without concrete commitment from country offices and partners for sustained action they are no guarantee for transformative gender outcomes.

## Lessons Learned

**1**

**Advancing GEWE in all programme areas accelerates progress towards the SDGs, including those not explicitly targeting GEWE. Recognizing multiple gender inequalities is an essential first step.**

The approach of the UNDP Strategic Plan to integrating GEWE in all areas of work has proven to be a key accelerator of development results. UNDP is gradually moving away from counting beneficiaries by sex, to engaging in more gender-responsive approaches that address the different needs of men and women.<sup>141</sup> Strengthening linkages between upstream and downstream interventions, while ensuring integration between thematic areas and building synergies, are proving essential to enhance the chances of achieving more gender-transformative change, therefore accelerating the SDGs (Panama, Uruguay, Zambia). It has also proven important to identify interventions and approaches leading to structural and transformational change, in order to create a socioeconomic and cultural environment that provides the opportunity for women and girls to participate effectively in public, political, social, economic and cultural life at all levels.

UNDP has been more successful in achieving and accelerating results when it has looked beyond employment and income-generation to strengthening gender equality in national planning and addressing structural barriers to women's economic empowerment, including critical determinants such as the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work (Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uruguay).

Furthermore, UNDP has been more successful in achieving integrated results when partnering across government ministries to ensure that SDG planning, implementation and reporting were gender-responsive. This included support for sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis, the integration of gender analysis into Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), and the use of gender-responsive budgeting to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources associated with national or subnational plans.<sup>142</sup>

Accelerating the pace of advancing gender equality in all programme areas also accelerates progress towards achieving the SDGs. In Turkey, grant projects were selected based on gender criteria, and all grant-holders received gender mainstreaming training (Turkey). In Madagascar, the majority of people who access the services of legal clinics supported by UNDP are women (78 percent in 2017). Leveraging this point of access, UNDP supported efforts to realize the right of women to participate in the country's public affairs as voters (Madagascar). Advancing GEWE calls for a holistic view of programmes rather than a fragmented one.

The UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021 was key to promote the importance of GEWE as an accelerator of development results. Under the new Strategic Plan 2022–2025, and with a new gender equality strategy under development, UNDP can more clearly articulate how gender-integration approaches enable the delivery of more gender-transformative results in all areas of development. In addition, the use of clear frameworks like the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) can help in the design, measurement and acceleration of programmes to achieve the SDGs. As mentioned in the Strategic Plan Evaluation, a key constraint continues to be the lack of adequate financial and human resources.<sup>143</sup>

## 2

**A better understanding of intersecting discriminations and stronger gender analysis are key to the success of a Leave No One Behind approach with GEWE, to accelerate the SDGs.**

The intersectionality of discriminations is widely acknowledged as a phenomenon affecting GEWE and the socioeconomic status and access to entitlements and opportunities of individuals. This has yet to be translated into a results framework from a Leave No One Behind perspective at UNDP.<sup>144</sup> In Uruguay, UNDP has made relevant contributions to ensure the necessary legal frameworks for gender and ethnicity equality are in place (Uruguay). In the case of Uruguay, further attention is needed to the early care system and the care of persons with disabilities and the elderly, all of which pose structural impediments to achieving GEWE.

In addition, recognizing diverse genders and sexual identities, as much as intersecting identities of men, women and non-binary persons, can be a challenge for UNDP programmes. It requires programmes to carefully develop and implement sound gender analysis. Part of this gender analysis is to showcase and understand how sex/gender intersects with other categories of discrimination like race, ethnicity or sexual orientation, age, identity, etc. Multiple ICPEs substantiate this work, not necessarily under GEWE, but rather aligned with Leave No One Behind, precisely because of the potential as an accelerator of multiple SDGs (Panama, Uruguay, Zambia).

UNDP has worked on gender equality and human rights, but it has often missed opportunities to engage in more transformative work with Leave No One Behind approaches, which are needed to accelerate the SDGs to bring about changes in social determinants. Greater engagement in such transformative work is also essential to integrate economic transformation for poverty reduction, resilience-building and social cohesion through the lens of Leave No One Behind (Mozambique). More skills and capacities are needed to further advance Leave No One Behind with GEWE, in order to capture the intersection points of different types of discrimination and the complexity of dimensions of gender inequalities.

The mere targeting of men and women in projects can overlook their socioeconomic status, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity or other factors. UNDP can further build its capacity to better understand how gender interacts with other social variables, beyond a focus on the individual, and how this leads to inequalities within broader structural systems of power and discrimination.

A significant example of UNDP support to countries has been its technical inputs and financial assistance in preparing Leave No One Behind assessments for national SDG reports and VNRs. New technologies and macroeconomics are specific subjects absent from Leave No One Behind plans and strategies, while dimensions like poverty, displacement and sexual orientation and identity are also left out of the analysis of these reports and national reviews. Key target groups, such as people with disabilities, women and children and elderly people, were

considered in almost all such reviews but lacked a proper analysis of the gender dimensions of each group. Less than half of the reports considered poor people, ethnic minorities and LGBTQI+ groups.<sup>145</sup>

There is limited evaluative evidence focusing on the intersectionality of gender with other markers. A 2019 meta-synthesis of United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluations with a gender lens looked at the extent to which the documents had been able to address the Leave No One Behind principle. The meta-synthesis revealed that the definition of vulnerable groups differed according to the country context and UNDAF. Of the 443 references to human rights and/or gender equality, only 189 referred to at least one vulnerable/marginalized group. Upon further examination, the analysis showed that the vulnerable groups included and integrated were predominantly comprised of women (35 percent), such as rural and/or poor women or women and girls who were victims of gender-based violence. A total of 14 percent of the references were to youth, and 29 percent to other vulnerable groups such as displaced people, refugees, the LGBTIQ community and prisoners.<sup>146</sup> It is common to place women and girls in the same category as many of the other vulnerable groups, and is a disservice to both gender equality and the needs of other vulnerable groups. Until there is a better understanding of the intersection of different discriminations, and stronger gender analysis of each vulnerable group, the most excluded may continue to be left behind and countries will not achieve GEWE.



### 3

Shared responsibility and partnerships are key to integrating multidimensional approaches to advance GEWE and accelerate the SDGs, helping to transform 'stakeholders' into 'stake-winners' in the interest of GEWE.

UNDP has gradually moved towards multi-stakeholder platforms during 2018-2019. In Asia and the Pacific, the 'Transforming the Future of Work for Gender Equality' initiative is a platform focusing on financial inclusion, that works with policymakers, business leaders, regulators and civil society. As a result of interventions in the Pacific Islands connected to this platform, nearly a million women are expected to get improved

access to digital delivery of agriculture and financial services, including market vendors and rural women micro-entrepreneurs.<sup>147</sup> In Uruguay, UNDP has been able to strengthen gender-responsive public policies through its catalytic platforms, which focused on better data and information, and deeper partnerships between municipalities, urban planners, academia and policymakers.

UNDP engaged in gender analysis for a set of urban mobility programmes and, through an alliance with the Development Bank of Latin America, integrated a gender perspective into the first mobility survey for Montevideo and its metropolitan area. This led to several diverse initiatives and research, including an Urban Mobility Lab (Uruguay). UNDP has also established itself as a preferred development partner in Azerbaijan, developing close ties with key ministries from the Government and national and international stakeholders promoting the work of CSOs, particularly around gender and social inclusion issues (Azerbaijan). In Angola, UNDP has helped the Ministry of Women's Affairs to implement gender policies at national and local levels and improve the capacity to collect, analyse and report on gender data. UNDP technical support to the Government helped to strengthen institutional development and enhance policy formulation in the Ministry, leading to a broadening of the policy debate on gender-responsive budgeting. At the legislative level, UNDP supported the drafting of the National Gender Policy and supported the Ministry to promote and monitor it, and design the Domestic Violence Law (Angola).

Private sector partnerships are critical in amplifying SDG advocacy. Examples range from inviting millions of smartphone users to crowd-source climate policies, to co-founding a fund for global brands and the advertising industry to support conservation and biodiversity.<sup>148</sup> UNDP has been a key partner supporting the Global Compact, and has provided technical assistance for adoption of the SDGs by its members. In this framework, UNDP has advocated for the integration of human rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability issues into private sector agendas. UNDP is generally perceived by private sector partners as a valued and trusted facilitator for public-private partnerships. There has also been a high level of engagement on gender equality with small producers from the private sector (Argentina).

Successful strategic partnerships on gender with other United Nations agencies are noted in some of the programme evaluations analysed for this paper. UNDP helped to establish a framework for addressing intimate partner violence in Kosovo through the combined efforts and expertise of UNDP, UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This collaborative effort helped to raise public awareness, and promote gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence as part of the Justice 2020 Programme (Kosovo). In Côte d'Ivoire, in partnership with the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV), UNDP contributed to increasing the employability of young men and women through a new national volunteer programme. The initiative led to the creation of useful management and monitoring tools to implement the programme, as well as a draft law awaiting adoption by Parliament (Côte d'Ivoire). In Belarus, in partnership with UNICEF, UNDP supported the National Statistical Committee to develop a national platform for reporting on the SDG indicators. A gender portal, complementary to the SDG database, is under development. Activities for building statistical capacity for SDG monitoring have been included in the Strategy for the Development of Government Statistics of the Republic of Belarus to 2022 (Belarus).

A key role of UNDP has been promoting the involvement of multiple stakeholders and bringing non-governmental actors into discussions around the SDGs. In Azerbaijan, in addition to the panels on SDG implementation organized with the National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development, which brought together different groups such as parliamentary representatives, CSOs, women, youth and academia, UNDP is supporting the creation of a platform for dialogue on the SDGs between the government and civil society and building CSO capacity to apply gender-responsive approaches to SDG implementation (Azerbaijan).

Diversified partnerships can accelerate GEWE in achieving the SDGs. Through an innovative partnership with the European Union and other United Nations agencies under the Spotlight Initiative to End Violence Against Women, UNDP was a key force in developing and mobilizing funds for a large United Nations joint programme with the National Women's Commission under the President of Kazakhstan. The programme aimed to promote the political rights and economic empowerment of women in Kazakhstan and their effective contribution

to achieving the SDG Agenda (Kazakhstan). Globally, in 2020, with the support of the Spotlight Initiative, 189 official dialogues were held in 19 countries, with the meaningful participation of women's rights groups and relevant CSOs, including representatives of groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. As a result, 79 jointly agreed recommendations on policies to end violence against women and girls and increase the accountability of perpetrators were developed. These were implemented in Argentina, El Salvador, Honduras, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tajikistan and Uganda. Altogether 341 women's right groups and relevant CSOs, with support from Spotlight Initiative programmes, increased their use of citizen audits, shadow reporting, or other accountability mechanisms.<sup>149</sup>

**4**

**Women are key agents of change in regard to sustainable environment and energy, but initiatives must address discrimination and social/ cultural norms that often prevent women from accruing benefits from results beyond participation.**

Energy and environment initiatives often rely on the assumption that women will automatically benefit from simply being involved in programmes, but failure to consider social and cultural norms and power structures often prevent women from fully benefiting from opportunities in these areas. Results achieved in energy initiatives focused on ensuring gender parity or the improved participation of women. However, decision-making over the benefits was often overlooked. Women continue to face challenges in converting the support received by UNDP into changes to their economic status, often because initiatives failed to consider or address social norms regarding women's livelihoods and financial control (Argentina, Bangladesh, Panama, Turkey). In Cuba and Maldives, clean energy initiatives reduced the risks associated with firewood consumption and women's labour and health, but failed to bring about structural changes with regards to the unequal gender division of labour (Cuba, Maldives). The greatest risk is the prevalent assumption that women will automatically benefit from energy access and are not subject to further discrimination in the new technologies, business models or institutional positions that accompany renewable energy.<sup>150</sup>

In 2019, 74 countries reported that they had integrated gender into environmental and climate policies, plans and frameworks, while 97 countries reported strengthening women's leadership and decision-making in natural resource management.<sup>151</sup> UNDP serves as a leading member of the GEF Gender Partnership, a network of experts working on gender and to ensure the work is gender responsive. To support the integration of gender considerations into multilateral environmental agreements, in 2020 UNDP supported the development of the Gender Plan of Action for the Convention on Biological Diversity for the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.<sup>152</sup>

More contributions to gender mainstreaming can be seen in the GEF-funded Small Grants Programme (SGP), which aims to ensure that women make up at least 47.5 percent of those participating in planning and management of the programme. In Afghanistan, with SGP support, Ebtakar Inspiring Entrepreneurs of Afghanistan Organization implemented a project to promote renewable energy through solar-powered food carts. The project supported 70 women from underprivileged communities in Kabul by offering them employment opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The women were trained to run their food businesses from 35 solar food carts developed by the project, and each woman earned around \$11 per day through the initiative. In Indonesia, grants have contributed to closing the gender gap in access to and control over resources through organic farming, agro-forestry, and the production and use of energy efficient stoves (Indonesia). Overall, 83 percent of the completed GEF projects under the initiative were found to be gender-responsive, and 31 percent were led by women.<sup>153</sup>

The recognition and involvement of women as key stakeholders in environment and energy-related programming at all levels can be a particularly vital element to improving national decision-making processes. In Cambodia, women now represent at least 40 percent of water management committee members, and, because of improved water management, farmers doubled their rice crop yields and were better able to adapt during drought and dry spells. In Guatemala, the successful integration of gender aspects in interventions at local and institutional levels helped with monitoring the implementation of

the National Environment Gender Policy and the development of a course for sustainable forest management with the inclusion of gender considerations.<sup>154</sup>

Recognizing women's collective organization as a powerful force to advance resilience, UNDP increased its support to strengthen women-led community-based associations from 41 countries in 2018, to 57 in 2019.<sup>155</sup> In 2018, UNDP climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction initiatives in Bangladesh promoted a human rights-based approach to climate change adaptation with special emphasis on women and girls and indigenous people (Bangladesh). Ecuador incorporated gender equality into its nationally determined contributions, the by-law of the national environmental law, and the national strategy for climate change.<sup>156</sup> In Somalia, UNDP aimed to close the energy gap by improving access to and use of alternative energy by selected communities, enabling selected households to perform an energy switch and reduce biomass and kerosene use (Somalia). In Jordan, UNDP put women in the driver's seat of environmental change, with ground-breaking solid waste management, creating sustainable livelihoods for local communities, with salaries, business training and shareholder incentives for women employees.<sup>157</sup>

Despite progress, almost all countries that participated in UNDP GEF-funded "Technical Support to Eligible Parties to Produce the Sixth National Report" project<sup>y</sup> on the Convention on Biological Diversity, faced challenges while trying to mainstream gender into the national reporting processes.<sup>z</sup> Most countries did not have the capacity to produce, collect and use sex-disaggregated data. Many countries

<sup>y</sup> UNDP GEF-funded project "Technical Support to Eligible Parties to Produce the 6NR to the CBD" provides technical support to GEF-eligible Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in their work to develop a high-quality, gender-responsive and data-driven 6NR that improves national decision-making processes for the implementation of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans; that reports on progress towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Target's; and that informs both the CBD's fifth Global Biodiversity Outlook and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. UNDP is supporting 64 countries to develop their 6NR in North Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Central America, Western and Central Asia, South Asia, South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific. UN Environment is supporting an additional 73 countries through a similar project.

<sup>z</sup> Article 26 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) requires Parties to submit periodic national reports that assess the measures they are taking to implement the CBD and the effectiveness of them in meeting the Convention's objectives. At the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13) to the CBD, Parties adopted the Sixth National Report (6NR) guidelines and reporting templates (Decision XIII/27) and agreed to submit their 6NR by 31 December 2018.

lacked mechanisms to ensure that quantitative and qualitative sex-disaggregated data and indicators were monitored and could be incorporated into the report. Commonly, national biodiversity strategies and action plans did not include gender-responsive indicators to allow national teams to capture the contribution and needs of both women and men, and therefore prepare a gender-responsive National Report.

5

**Crisis prevention, response, recovery, stabilization and peacebuilding initiatives that adequately integrate gender-responsive approaches achieve more sustainable results, and more durably advance women's empowerment.**

When allowed by social and cultural norms, women are active stakeholders in humanitarian crisis prevention, response and recovery. However, humanitarian response and recovery initiatives often treat women and girls as passive recipients of aid and support, undermining their role in, and potential contribution to, sustainable recovery and rebuilding processes. Evaluation evidence shows that advancing women's leadership in humanitarian settings remains a challenge. The share of women holding leadership positions in social dialogue and reconciliation mechanisms in 15 countries increased from 25 percent in 2018 to 35 percent in 2019. However, the number of leadership positions held by women within prevention and recovery mechanisms was dramatically low in both 2018 and 2019. To address this, UNDP developed and began rolling out its Gender and Recovery Toolkit.<sup>158</sup>

Although UNDP efforts towards prioritizing and mainstreaming GEWE in humanitarian responses are well intended, they do not necessarily translate into action and sustainable change, as sociocultural barriers pose severe challenges to this objective. While the participation of, and consultation with, affected women in needs assessments increases over the duration of a crisis response, this has not necessarily translated into women and girls being involved in decision-making regarding project activities or response management. Additionally, consultation with women on their needs was often limited to "women's issues"

as perceived by humanitarian actors – such as hygiene or sexual and reproductive health – rather than their other broader needs, or their own strengths, resilience and capacities.<sup>159</sup>

In Iraq and Syria, women survivors were involved in menial low-skill work under the cash-for-work programme of rubble removal. While from a cash-for-work point of view this might appear to be the most immediate requirement for survival and therefore a success, it does little to sustainably help improve women's status or gender equality from a building-forward-better perspective (Iraq, Syria, Viet Nam). Short-term programming at the cost of longer-term gains often undermines gender-transformative processes in humanitarian responses. Promoting resilience remains a particular challenge, in a scenario where humanitarian and development programme have divergent outlooks and mandates without a gender-responsive approach. Although humanitarian work and agencies are constantly evolving, donor strategies continue to reinforce the humanitarian-development-peace divide and promote short-term projects rather than sustainable solutions, which often leave out appropriate gender perspectives (Turkey).<sup>160</sup>

Adopting context-sensitive gender approaches and strengthening the resilience of women to negative impacts on ecosystems are crucial to the success of environmental programming, especially in the aftermath of crises.<sup>161</sup> In a UNDP project in Afghanistan, women in remote areas were not allowed to meet project staff.<sup>162</sup> UNDP adapted its strategy by training women to train other women in the remote areas, and found that they generally showed more responsibility in income-generation activities than men.

Humanitarian emergencies, disaster response and recovery, conflict resolution and peacebuilding contexts offer opportunities to recast traditional gender roles. Successful initiatives have taken advantage of these opportunities to position women in decision-making roles in crisis management initiatives, to leverage their intrinsic local knowledge and understanding of risk and recovery processes (Bangladesh, Chad, Colombia, Iraq, Nigeria, Myanmar, Palestine, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen).<sup>163</sup> The demographic imbalance after crises has in some cases presented a renewed opportunity to further pursue GEWE at the policy level (Syria). UNDP, in a joint project with UNV and local

organizations, “Enhancing Gender Equality and Mainstreaming in Afghanistan”, supported Youth Mullah Volunteer Caravans to spread key messages on women’s rights in selected communities and regions.<sup>164</sup>

The practice of interviewing only heads of households in major assessment exercises can reduce the voice of women when the heads are male. Even if women’s needs are identified, delays in revising programming exacerbate this issue and its impacts. Gender equality is often deprioritized in the first phase of a response, as it is not considered a “life-saving issue” to the same extent as other humanitarian needs, with the exception of responding to sexual exploitation and abuse or GBV among affected women.<sup>165</sup> The promotion of GEWE should be the cornerstone of the UNDP crisis response.<sup>166</sup> In Somalia, stronger engagement by women at local level led to a substantial increase in the number of projects supporting schools and health clinics, rather than road building and improvements, the number one priority for men (Somalia). In Iraq, the construction of community centres established as a safe place for promoting social cohesion have provided community engagement activities (e.g. from vocational training to the creation of a women’s football team) and psychosocial support to survivors of gender-based violence (Iraq).

GEWE remains grossly underfunded in humanitarian response and crisis management programmes.<sup>aa</sup> A gender analysis of humanitarian response reveals an implicit assumption among humanitarian programming staff that GEWE can be addressed without resources, including funding for expertise.<sup>167</sup> The so-called “GenCap” senior advisors represent a dedicated source of funding for strategic-level gender expertise, albeit time-bound, and these advisors have been a valuable resource for filling this expertise gap. When GenCap senior advisors were present, humanitarian responses showed substantial improvements in gender equality programming and coordination. Correspondingly, when GenCap senior advisors left and were not replaced by other long-term gender expertise, the quality of GEWE programming and coordination declined.<sup>168</sup>

<sup>aa</sup> Across the resilience focused interventions (Signature solution Resilience), only 2% of the expenditures were spent on projects principally advancing gender equality (Gender Marker 3) in 2018 – 2020.

## 6

## UNDP Gender Seal enhances attention to gender equality and promotes gender integration across Programmes, to accelerate results beyond GEWE achievements.

The Gender Equality Seal,<sup>ab</sup> scaling vertically across country offices and partnerships, with public and private agencies, has increased the potential for accelerating outcomes across multiple SDGs. Evaluations revealed that systematic gender analysis remains a crucial success factor for achieving strong performance. UNDP continued to partner across government ministries to ensure that integrated SDG planning, implementation and reporting were gender-responsive. This included support for improved livelihoods, sex-disaggregated data collection and the integration of gender analysis into socioeconomic plans. Good practices from the Gender Seal<sup>169</sup> show how programme portfolio reviews contribute to more responsive and transformative results and offer improved ways forward.<sup>170</sup> Efforts towards achieving a Gender Equality Seal benefit an office with significant guidance for proper gender mainstreaming in programme other than gender.<sup>171</sup>

In countries like Turkey and Panama, the Seal has served as an incentive for participating governmental and private sector entities to mainstream gender equality in their organizational culture and adopt gender-sensitive policies and strategies. Companies that volunteer for the Seal typically aim to eliminate gender pay gaps, increase the number of women in decision-making positions and make the workplace safer and more inclusive (Turkey, Panama). In 2016, Uganda became the first country in Africa to endorse the Gender Equality Seal for private enterprises, signing up the Private Sector Foundation in Uganda to implement it among members (Uganda). In Rwanda, 36 private sector companies and two public companies have signed on to the Gender Equality Seal.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>ab</sup> The UNDP Gender Equality Seal is an evidence-based initiative with established standards, has helped to improve attention to gender equality and build transformative change throughout the country offices that participate. The process is a two-year engagement that supports holistic attention on gender equality at all levels in its operations, culture, programmes, financing, policies, and partnerships. About 28 percent of UNDP country offices are Gender Equality Seal countries (48 out of 170).

The GRES analysis of ICPEs and results-oriented annual reports (ROARs), conducted for the Strategic Plan Evaluation 2018-2021 found that overall, Gender Equality Seal countries had more gender-responsive results that focus on addressing the different needs of men, women or marginalized populations and the equitable distribution of benefits, resources and status.<sup>173</sup> Non-Gender Seal countries had more gender-targeted than gender-responsive results, which focused on the number of women, men or marginalized populations engaged in initiatives. This trend is clear in the self-informed ROAR data, but also confirmed from ICPEs which consist of independent triangulated data collected by IEO.

It is not a given, but in some countries the Seal has also contributed to increasing allocation of funds for gender equality, establishing better partnerships, and expanding gender-responsive programming. Some countries have been able to increase allocations for gender-responsive programming (Turkey, Panama). Kyrgyzstan became one of 10 UNDP country offices to receive the Gold Certification of the Gender Equality Seal. Transformative results included: the adoption of a national action plan on gender equality for 2018-2020; 30 percent gender quotas introduced into the composition of local councils; promotion of a law criminalizing child marriage and bride kidnapping; and the introduction of 112 gender-based violence response hotlines.<sup>174</sup> In the 2018-2019 round of the Gender Seal, demand was higher than ever before, with 55 offices applying to the programme (36 accepted) and a retention rate of 94 percent.<sup>175</sup>

While the Gender Seal incentive certainly helps with the promotion of GEWE, more importantly it highlights that gender mainstreaming can be a critical path to results in all areas. However, the application of the Gender Seal requires strategic theories of change and sustained efforts over a period of time, not simple gender mainstreaming. Some of the useful strategies promoted include more specialized attention to the UNDP programme rationale, noting structural barriers to gender equality in other programming areas and ensuring adequate gender analysis and sex/gender-disaggregated data as key strategies for promoting equality (Cameroon, Colombia, Turkey).<sup>176</sup>

Other factors that have proven successful to advance results and accelerate progress include well-structured and informed gender teams, with activities defined in a workplan to improve the pace and quality of gender outcomes rather than one overwhelmed and siloed gender focal point per office. Positioning an entire gender focal team with shared responsibilities and commitments proves much more effective. The country office in Uzbekistan established the Gender Equality Assurance Team, composed of focal points from all programme and operations clusters and selected project specialists to support the process of gender mainstreaming throughout programmes and operations and in United Nations joint programming. The Team's interventions were directed to helping improve the integration and enhancement of the gender dimension in its interventions (Uzbekistan).



**Adequate resources for GEWE are an absolute must, but without concrete commitment from country offices and partners for sustained action they are no guarantee for transformative gender outcomes.**

Acknowledging that achieving gender equality requires institutionalizing a gender-responsive approach to financing and ensuring adequate investments to different areas, UNDP has incorporated the Gender Marker as a corporate monitoring tool to track financial investments associated with gender mainstreaming.<sup>ac</sup> The Gender Marker is operationalized through ATLAS resource planner, where every output at the project level is rated against a set of pre-established criteria of GEN 0 (no noticeable contributions to gender equality), GEN 1 (some contributions to gender equality), GEN 2 (significant contributions to gender equality), and GEN 3 (gender equality is the principal objective).

<sup>ac</sup> One of the ways in which UNDP measures gender mainstreaming is through the Gender Marker which enables UNDP to track and monitor how gender-responsive each financial allocation and expenditure is in its development programmes. The Gender Marker requires managers to rate project outputs against a four-point scale (GEN 3, GEN 2, GEN 1 and GEN 0) indicating its contribution towards the achievement of gender equality. UNDP is committed to having 15 percent of the organization's resources allocated to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Funding for GEWE has increased since Gender Markers were established, but there is no clearly established causal link between more resources and better and more sustainable gender equality results. Projecting, earmarking and then allocating funds does not guarantee gender equitable outcomes, but these variables do often correlate. Evaluations indicate that financial investments, time, strong architecture with institutional effectiveness and responsive integrated approaches are key contributing factors to achieve sustained gender results.<sup>177</sup> A robust mechanism to monitor progress and make course corrections is also essential.

Although the Gender Marker has contributed to achieving GEWE with a steady increase of resource allocations, gender equality remains underfunded overall, and the classifications, especially between GEN 1 and GEN 2, can be misleading.<sup>178</sup> More projects have been moving from one GEN to another and the reporting of figures has increased, but because a larger project is paying attention to gender does not always mean that greater attention is being paid to gender overall. In addition, analyses of the Gender Marker across countries indicate that a significant portion of programme expenditure still does not contribute to gender equality (GEN 0) or only in a limited way (GEN 1) (Angola, Argentina).

The Gender Marker scores reflect a lack of consideration of gender perspectives, and do not go deeper into the gender dimension than ensuring that monitoring and evaluation efforts include sex/gender-disaggregated data, or that women are engaging in some activities of a project (Bangladesh, China, Mauritius, Union of Comoros). Proof of the limited or misused incentive of the Gender Marker is that UNDP has so far failed to meet the suggested target of allocating 15 percent of financial expenditure to initiatives that have gender equality and/or the empowerment of women as their primary and explicit objective. An overreliance on Gender Marker scores reflects a lack of consideration of gender perspectives and a failure to go deeper into the gender dimension than just ensuring compliance at the planning stage in order to assign a number (Angola, Argentina, Bangladesh, China, Mauritius, Union of Comoros).

Lessons from evaluations indicate that the Gender Marker as a tool needs to be more carefully employed to plan allocations for accelerating GEWE processes and fully align with an action plan and monitoring and evaluation system, with flexibility for recalibration as projects get carried out. While some countries have been able to leverage the Gender Marker to advance gender equality outcomes (Azerbaijan, Kosovo, Serbia, Uzbekistan), it proved to be significantly constraining for others (Bangladesh, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius), where outcomes of GEN 3 and GEN 2 programmes fail to clearly determine pathways for the deeper integration of gender with the SDGs. Incongruity between the level of focus on gender equality suggested by the gender marker, and the actual focus suggested in project documentation, has a bearing on a thorough assessment of UNDP efforts in mainstreaming GEWE across programmes (Bangladesh, China, Maldives, Mauritius).

While it is important to have a well-designed planning and monitoring system, gender outcomes will only be transformative when backed by adequate resource allocations. Investing below the UNDP commitment of 15 percent to GEN 3 projects, among other things, reflects a lack of commitment to GEWE by UNDP.<sup>179</sup> More core resources have been allocated to gender projects since 2018, but the vast majority of projects and partners still refuse to put significant resources from their own budget lines into gender initiatives and adequate mainstreaming (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mauritius).

# BOOSTING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

**Lead author:** Anna Guerraggio

**Co-author:** Florencia Tateossian (UN Women)

## Introduction

Although women's political participation has been improving world-wide - the number of women parliamentarians has more than doubled in the last 30 years - women continue to be under-represented in political life. As of 2022, only around one in four members of parliament (MPs), and 8 percent of the world's heads of State or government, are women. The proportion of women in local decision-making bodies is higher (34 percent), but still unequal. At the current pace of progress, it will take another 40 years to achieve gender parity in politics.<sup>ad</sup>

Target 5.5 of SDG 5 (gender equality) aims to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making, including in national parliaments and local governments. Women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life is not only critical for democratic governance, but also essential to achieving the SDGs by 2030, promoting a world where the diversity of women's experiences is reflected in decisions that impact their lives.

Several countries have taken important steps to promote women's political participation, including through anti-discrimination legislation, affirmative action and special temporary measures.<sup>ae</sup> While these initiatives have contributed to valuable results, women continue to face a number of barriers to political participation, including a lack of resources and capacity, frequent threats to their security, and

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<sup>ad</sup> International Parliamentary Union (July 2022), UN Women (May 2022), and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2021)

<sup>ae</sup> Special temporary measures aim to accelerate the improvement of the position of women to achieve their "substantive equality with men, and to effect the structural, social and cultural changes necessary to correct past and current forms and effects of discrimination against women, as well as to provide them with compensation." (CEDAW, Article 4) They include preferential treatment and quota systems.

entrenched social norms. According to a 2020 survey by UNDP, beliefs and biases against women in politics continue to be very pervasive, with almost half of the global population perceiving men to be better political leaders than women.<sup>180</sup>

The paper is designed to provide a balanced synthesis of evaluative evidence posted to the UNDP ERC and the UN Women Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use database over the past decade. In total, the paper covers 95 evaluations from UNDP and 24 from UN Women. The paper also draws on seven external academic studies, in order to situate the lessons in broader learning about behavioural factors affecting women’s political participation.<sup>af</sup>

## Context

Guided by a history of international commitments to women’s representation in public life, UNDP and UN Women have long supported efforts to enhance the participation of women - as voters, candidates and elected officials – in political and communal decision-making processes.<sup>ag</sup> The strategic plans of both organizations (2022-25) acknowledge the need to simultaneously address the root causes of the inequalities underlying women’s limited political participation, by strengthening normative frameworks, policies and institutions, supporting positive social norms, and enhancing women’s voice, leadership and agency. The recently approved UNDP Gender Equality Strategy (2022) explicitly focuses on shifting discriminatory power dynamics by challenging biases around the unsuitability of the political realm for women.<sup>ah</sup>

This paper has been written as part of the UNDP IEO 2022 Reflection series, in partnership with the Independent Evaluation Service of UN Women. It aims to contribute to knowledge around the UNDP and

<sup>af</sup> The UNDP ERC is available at <https://erc.undp.org/>; the UN Women Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use database can be found at <https://gate.unwomen.org/>. External literature was sourced through a review of academic journal articles that apply a behavioural science lens to studies of diversity and inclusion, including women’s political participation.

<sup>ag</sup> Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995)

<sup>ah</sup> DP/2022/18.

UN Women strategic plans, inform the implementation of the UNDP Gender Equality Strategy, and support its goal of having better data and analysis for policymaking.

## AT A GLANCE – Lessons Learned

1

Supporting the political participation of women empowers them to contribute to decision-making, promoting greater equity in society. Women's political participation can also help to overcome political divides.

2

Continuous exposure to women leaders in politics helps to challenge entrenched social norms, which remain the hardest barrier to women's political participation. In contexts where gender equality may be a particularly delicate issue, economic empowerment can be a catalyst.

3

Capacity-development interventions need to account for women's potentially limited previous exposure and consider other roles women are expected to play in the family and society.

4

Quotas are effective in enhancing women's political participation when implementation is adequately monitored, and mechanisms for reporting non-compliance established.

5

The development of women's capacity and the inclusion of women in electoral lists are important but are insufficient conditions to enhance their participation in political decision-making and promote gender equality. Integrated approaches, aimed at gender-responsive political processes and institutions, are also required to overcome some of the challenges induced by social norms.

6

In a challenging resource climate, negotiating for thematic funding windows and leveraging grant opportunities helped to overcome some of the constraints derived from the projected nature of development work, enhancing flexibility and local outreach.

7

Partnerships with CSOs are important to ensure adequate outreach at community level and enlarge the civic space to sustain women's political participation.

8

Ensuring effective communication among national stakeholders, civil society and law enforcement is key to addressing the risk of violence against women engaging in politics, especially when complemented with other long-term initiatives.

## Lessons Learned

**1**

Supporting the political participation of women empowers them to contribute to decision-making, promoting greater equity in society. Women's political participation can also help to overcome political divides.

Evaluations recognized that, if adequately planned, women's political participation projects play an important role in bolstering the agency of women, providing them with know-how and motivation, and laying the foundations for social change from a gender equality perspective.<sup>181</sup> In transitional and post-conflict settings, women's participation in peace summits has been important to strengthen their voices, both as survivors, and contributors to solutions.<sup>182</sup> Even though the number of female representatives has often remained small, hard-to-achieve gains can bring a strong message, contributing to changes in the beliefs and attitudes of individuals and communities.<sup>183</sup>

Evaluations of both UNDP and UN Women programmes (e.g. in Georgia, Madagascar and Somalia) highlighted that stronger women's engagement in politics and decision-making, whether through formal or informal structures, resulted in a substantial increase in the approval of initiatives that promote education, health and community safety.<sup>184</sup> Evaluation findings reflect the results of some academic studies which proved that men and women differ in terms of policy priorities, and that, once elected, women leaders tend to invest more resources in securing policies that more closely pertain to women's well-being.<sup>185</sup>

In order to foster inclusion and ensure that elected women bring to bear a diversity of experiences, evaluations have highlighted the importance of working with candidates from different backgrounds, including ethnic or religious minorities, indigenous women and youth, given the often-noted need for renewal of the political class.<sup>186</sup> Evaluations of projects working with female members of minority groups, however, acknowledged additional challenges in both advocating for their inclusion in political party lists (as occurred with Roma women),<sup>187</sup> and overcoming the resistance and fear of candidates from different

backgrounds to joining mainstream political processes (as occurred with Afro-Colombian women in the political stabilization process) (Colombia).

Support to female councillors or MPs has contributed to bridging political divides. In several countries, including Nicaragua and Pakistan, women's caucuses became platforms to build consensus on priority issues for women, and to ensure that gender concerns were addressed through legislation, policies and programmes.<sup>188</sup> In Moldova, female MPs united their efforts for special temporary measures to be adopted, including a gender quota on party lists, provisions for paternity leave, and a rule against sexist advertising.<sup>189</sup>



## 2

Continuous exposure to women leaders in politics helps to challenge entrenched social norms, which remain the biggest barrier to women's political participation. In contexts where gender equality may be a particularly delicate issue, economic empowerment can be a catalyst.

Evaluations provided evidence of several factors that continue to affect the ability of women to participate in political life. These include:

- I. Knowledge barriers, due to lower literacy and education levels, lack of skills or credentials, limited experience in public leadership roles.
- II. Resource constraints, including the availability of identity documents, income, transportation, time.
- III. Psychosocial factors, such as lack of confidence, inadequate support by family and other networks.
- IV. Limited motivation to engage in "political games", especially when other livelihood concerns appear paramount, and the participation of women in politics has often led to harassment. The perceived degree of toxicity can lead women to pass over opportunities or quitting their pursuit of them.<sup>190</sup>

Politics is still often seen as a “male arena”, with entrenched social norms and expectations about the role of women as caretakers significantly challenging their participation. While public perception surveys mentioned in evaluations noted a reduction in *taste discrimination* (with more respondents stating their willingness to vote for a qualified female candidate),<sup>191</sup> *statistical discrimination* and *unconscious favouritism* have continued to influence judgements on what constitutes a “qualified candidate”. Behind many of the aforementioned barriers lies what Eagly and Karau described in their pioneer research as “role incongruity”, i.e., belief in prescriptive gender norms which do not associate the traits generally associated with leadership (such as strength and assertiveness) to be typically female characteristics.<sup>192</sup> Women’s political empowerment thus assumes great importance, as it has the potential to change people’s attitudes towards female leaders. As inconsistencies between the female gender stereotype and the qualities associated with leadership diminish, so will prejudice toward women leaders.

Exposure to women in politics may initially have the opposite effect, however, where challenges to existing beliefs end up strengthening them because of *confirmation bias*. The experiment by Banerjee et al. shows that, unlike campaigns that explicitly confront gender stereotypes and tell people to overcome them, the actual, lived experience of having a female leader can more effectively change attitudes towards them (and willingness to vote for one).<sup>193</sup> Evaluations showed the valuable results of working with the media to promote women’s positive achievements in their news stories, which contributed to challenging public perceptions around social norms and overcoming stereotypes.<sup>194</sup>

In contexts where gender equality is a particularly delicate issue, politics may be a disadvantageous entry point, as noted in an evaluation of UN Women work in Asia and the Pacific (2017) which suggested that expanding the programme scope to women’s empowerment and leadership (beyond politics) would allow for higher acceptance and effectiveness.<sup>195</sup> Other evaluations showed the value of focusing on women’s economic empowerment interventions as a catalyst and driver of participation, as this allowed women to become self-sufficient and raise their profile and status. Interventions promoting women’s self-sufficiency through income-generation skills

and financial support for economic activities were found to result in greater confidence, and facilitate women's increased involvement in local decision-making bodies.<sup>196</sup>

Some evaluations noted that projects have not systematically engaged men to promote women's political participation, considered an effective strategy to influence beliefs.<sup>197</sup> The development of the HeForShe campaign by UN Women, support to parliamentary groups on women's rights which included male MPs, and/or outreach to (overwhelmingly male) traditional leaders, have all shown signs of being effective means to invite reflection on gender stereotypes and gendered power relations and, in some cases, reducing male resistance to women's advancements.<sup>198</sup> At times, however, evaluations noted the limited interest of men in participating in project activities, and commented on the insufficient attention of projects to challenging negative traditional attitudes, particularly when working with older populations.<sup>199</sup>



### 3

Capacity-development interventions need to account for women's potentially limited previous exposure and consider other roles women are expected to play in the family and society.

A high number of UNDP and UN Women interventions have focused on removing women's knowledge barriers to political participation, including through training and the provision of information materials in local languages, to ease the learning curve of candidates and newly-elected councillors and MPs. As remarked by the Corporate Evaluation of the UN Women Contribution to Women's Political Participation and Leadership (2018), communication materials need to be audience-appropriate for greater effectiveness, including the use of visuals and radio spots, and portray model female leaders to contribute to challenging public perceptions around the role of women in society.

Evaluations consistently acknowledged the need to conduct capacity needs assessments ahead of project implementation, which may reveal fewer knowledge differences between men and women than assumed.<sup>200</sup> Across contexts, evaluations of UNDP and UN Women support to women's political participation highlighted the following tools as effective for a more sustainable development of capacities:

- I. Training of trainers, including on women's leadership, knowledge of the electoral code and other laws.
- II. Opportunities for women candidates to observe the work of parliaments or local councils.
- III. Mentoring of newly elected female MPs, including through the development of informative brochures, weekly legislative alerts, and/or resource centres.
- IV. Meetings to celebrate elected women, which helped to maintain their engagement.<sup>201</sup>

Evaluations show that a thorough understanding of context, including women's time availability, is a key driver of effectiveness for capacity-building activities. The planning of training interventions needs to adequately account for the specific needs of women with children, setting activities at times compatible with childcare responsibilities and/or providing financial support to engage alternative caretakers. When this occurred, development interventions allowed all participants, including women without children, to better concentrate, for higher learning results.<sup>202</sup> Evaluations also commented on the need for training to be delivered early in an election process, to allow for sufficient time to work with potential candidates.<sup>203</sup>



#### 4

**Quotas are effective in enhancing women's political participation when implementation is adequately monitored, and mechanisms for reporting non-compliance are established.**

The adoption of special temporary measures, including gender quota legislation, has proved effective in improving women's participation in national and local decision-making. Evaluations of United Nations programmes and academic studies cited by Bertrand and Duflo showed the overall positive effects of quotas and reserved seats for women, resulting in more women running and being elected.<sup>204</sup> While often deemed necessary to break through entrenched social norms, particularly in countries where women are de facto barred from official appointments, quotas may be met with resistance and create a backlash, with beneficiaries facing additional stigma and security threats, for which mitigation plans need to be defined.<sup>205</sup>

Evaluations commented that, whilst changes to constitutions and laws are critical in removing discriminatory norms, implementation is frequently inhibited by the political “rules of engagement”, changes in power, and a lack of accountability of political parties.<sup>206</sup> An evaluation from Zambia showed that, without further elaboration of policies within political parties, it is difficult for ministries to hold them accountable, as any changes will be dependent on good will, and women’s fight to claim their rights.<sup>207</sup> For example, an evaluation of UN Women work in Egypt (2017) found that, despite all political parties being required to field female candidates, only eight of 376 women candidates made it to parliament, as most female candidates were put at the bottom of their party lists and many came from independent parties which fared poorly.<sup>208</sup> Experience in other countries showed that political parties were even willing to pay the fines rather than applying the quota system in the election lists. To mitigate this risk, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Election Law stipulated a certain sequence of placing candidates from the less represented sex on each list, and that lists not complying with these gender requirements had to be returned to the Election Commission. This led to an increase in women’s political participation, with 42 percent of candidates in 2020 being women.<sup>209</sup> Evaluations showed that support to the subnational implementation of constitutional reforms at all levels, for example through dialogue with media and civil society or judicial challenges to non-compliance, was an important area of work where United Nations agencies could play a larger role, working with national authorities on the oversight of existing norms.<sup>210</sup>

When laws do not regulate placement on party lists, much work is required to ensure voluntary commitments to promote women in politics, for example through advocates with political influence within parties. These informal approaches focusing on the party level do not guarantee parity, but have been shown to be sometimes effective in moving towards it.<sup>211</sup>

## 5

The development of women's capacity and the inclusion of women in electoral lists are important, but not sufficient conditions to enhance their participation in political decision-making and promote gender equality. Integrated approaches, aimed at gender-responsive political processes and institutions, are also required to overcome some of the challenges induced by social norms.

Lesson 1 of this paper shows that an increase in elected women is an important pre-condition for more inclusive decision-making. However, equally important than the number of women elected is the opportunity for women to actually contribute to decision-making (Bhutan). Increasing the true participation of women in politics requires sustained support, beyond discrete periods in the lead-up to elections,<sup>212</sup> as well as significant investments in institutional capacity to ensure that structures, mechanisms and processes are gender-responsive.<sup>213</sup> For that to occur, evaluations recommended that projects strengthen their focus on institutional processes and procedures, protecting the space for women to contribute, and making gender-inclusive considerations a default aspect of the approval process for laws, policies and budgets.<sup>214</sup> At local level, the creation of community scorecards (as devised by UN Women in Albania) was valuable to ensure gender-sensitive municipal decision-making, including an adequate and balanced prioritization of women's needs.<sup>215</sup>

UNDP work in Kyrgyzstan provides a good example of a portfolio/integrated approach, working on multiple drivers of participation. Greatly benefitting from strong women MPs in key leadership roles within the Parliament, the project was able to support the Forum of Women MPs to develop a Gender Equality Roadmap, and worked with the Parliament to establish the Speaker's High-Level Council on Gender Equality. These milestones were achieved in parallel to specific activities by the project and CSO grantees, to ensure the engagement of women in the work of the Parliament, resulting in changes to laws to the benefit of women and girls.<sup>216</sup>

## 6

In a challenging resource climate, negotiating for thematic funding windows and leveraging grant opportunities helped to overcome some of the constraints derived from the projectized nature of development work, enhancing flexibility and local outreach.

Women's empowerment and political participation are long-term issues which cannot be solved in a few months, and require more resources than generally available to United Nations country offices through single projects (often accorded at times of elections). Many evaluations indicated that the length of a typical project (about three years) was insufficient to bring about the desired change, including at legal and policy level, because of deeply rooted barriers to gender equality.<sup>217</sup> Evaluations also noted that the localized impact of leadership development work could be significantly increased, should opportunities for deepening and scaling up this type of support be routinely available between elections.

Provided that funding is made available continuously, single projects can be used to catalyse further investment. In Egypt, for example, a first regional workshop on affirmative action for women's political participation, supported by UNDP and UN Women (then UNIFEM) in 2005, prompted a national discussion on quotas for women in elected office. This, in turn, led to the creation of the Centre for the Political Empowerment of Women and, in subsequent phases, the establishment of the Forum for Women Parliamentarians (Egypt).

Despite the engagement of a few highly-committed donors, evaluations consistently commented on the scarce availability of resources, which often needed to be complemented by core funding.<sup>218</sup> Some evaluations of UN Women support to women's political participation recommended that they adopt a more comprehensive fundraising strategy for this area, with some country offices expressing concern that the dynamic nature of this work did not always lend itself to restrictive donor requirements.<sup>219</sup> Global thematic programmes that include direct funding for country programming windows (such as the UN Women/ Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) Strategic Partnership Framework) were mentioned as positive examples of earmarked yet flexible funding that allowed for timely

responses to emerging political opportunities. Grant-making modalities, such as those offered through the then Fund for Gender Equality, were also considered a suitable mechanism to mobilize necessary efforts at the local level and reach marginalized groups through downstream work to address social norms.<sup>220</sup>

**7**

Partnerships with CSOs are important to ensure adequate outreach at community level and enlarge the civic space to sustain women's political participation.

In a context of resource scarcity and competing demands, evaluations emphasized the importance for UNDP and UN Women to work in partnership with other organizations, building on existing programmes and focusing on scale and sustainability.<sup>221</sup> Evaluations clearly show the value of engaging with CSO networks to conduct awareness programmes and empower communities, through face-to-face meetings and national radio programmes.<sup>222</sup> CSOs with local presence and experience working with different groups drove better results and geographical coverage including peripheral and rural areas. Bottom-up, community-driven approaches also helped to garner community and family support for women's enhanced participation in politics and decision-making processes.<sup>223</sup>

Evaluations also noted that programme partnerships with CSOs contributed to strengthening the engagement of the women's movement with national normative processes, including through an innovative communications for development project that linked the voices of marginalized persons with upstream policy dialogue through an interactive app.<sup>224</sup> By working with qualified CSOs to build long-term, trusted relationships with MPs and committees, the space created for such dialogue resulted in numerous opportunities for issues to be raised, and reforms proposed.<sup>225</sup> While the combination of grassroots empowerment and national-level advocacy is considered necessary to bring about change, some evaluations noted the (time and personnel) resource constraints that country offices face when maintaining direct relationships with smaller community-based organizations (CBOs).<sup>226</sup>

## 8

Ensuring effective communication among national stakeholders, civil society and law enforcement is key to address the risk of violence against women engaging in politics, especially when complemented with other long-term initiatives.

In numerous countries, the threat of violence to women leaders and candidates has significantly affected the scale and quality of women's participation in national and local decision-making. To address the issue of violence against women and threats to women leaders and human rights defenders, evaluations commented on the importance of risk analysis to anticipate, and plan for, potential backlash and resistance.<sup>227</sup> Since 2011 and until recently, UN Women worked with national stakeholders, including police forces and CSOs, to prevent and monitor violence through women's situation rooms. This helped to bring additional attention to this issue, although reports of physical assaults and threats against women voters and candidates did not disappear.<sup>ai</sup> In Nigeria, the inclusion of police and Independent Electoral Commission desks within the women's situation rooms facilitated real-time incident reporting, with complaints received by phone directly dispatched to these officials.<sup>228</sup> In Egypt, UN Women secured women-only polling stations to encourage their safe participation.<sup>229</sup>

A 2017 UN Women learning exercise indicated that women's situation rooms could be too narrowly focused and costly, compared with other, longer-term initiatives. Advocating for legislative and policy reforms to instate electoral and/ or criminal penalties for violence against women in politics has proved challenging, however, with few examples of success (Bolivia, Mexico). Alternatively, the development of protocols and codes of conduct for political parties covering harassment, defamatory language and violence was deemed a valuable prevention measure.<sup>230</sup>

<sup>ai</sup> Based on lessons learnt, and in compliance with the United Nations Policy on Situation Rooms, UN Women shifted from this approach in 2021. For more information, see: [www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Guidance-note-Preventing-violence-against-women-in-politics-en.pdf](http://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Guidance-note-Preventing-violence-against-women-in-politics-en.pdf)

# UNDP SUPPORT TO YOUTH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT

**Lead author:** Xiaoling Zhang

**Research associate:** Gedeon Djissa

## Introduction

This paper focuses on lessons from UNDP past support to youth skills-development for employment, including self-employment. The lessons draw broadly on 39 independent country programme evaluations and 72 decentralized evaluations of youth skills-development, employment and entrepreneurship uploaded in the ERC, regardless of setting. Lessons from UNDP efforts to promote youth empowerment in other areas, such as political participation, peacebuilding and prevention of violent extremism, are not included, as this paper is part of the *Reflections* series focusing on the UNDP signature solution for keeping people out of poverty.

## Context

Youth unemployment is one of the most significant challenges our societies face today. The number of young people not in education, employment and training continues to grow. COVID-19 lockdown measures caused the closure of educational and vocational training facilities worldwide, affecting young people's access to education and skills-development. The United Nations Youth 2030 Strategy (2018) requests participating Member States and other partners to advocate for a balanced approach to stimulate the demand for youth labour and prompt improvements in skills-development systems, with the objective of easing the school-to-work transition and reducing the rates of young people not in education, employment or training.

UNDP promotes youth-focused and youth-led development and advances youth economic development. It is a partner of Decent Jobs for Youth, a global initiative to scale up action and impact on youth employment.<sup>aj</sup> UNDP skills development for youth employment efforts range

<sup>aj</sup> <https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org>

from strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems, to building institutional capacity of public employment services to deliver skills-development interventions.<sup>ak</sup> UNDP skills-development interventions are often part of larger youth employment or entrepreneurship programmes, which include enhancing the enabling environment for youth employment and entrepreneurship through support to policy development and access to financing.

## AT A GLANCE – Lessons Learned

1

Effective youth skills-development programmes use a combination of interventions to equip youth with the different types of skills necessary for accessing the world of work.

2

Youth from disadvantaged groups require targeted interventions to address their skills needs and improve their integration in the labour market.

3

Policy reform, institutional strengthening and trainer networks help TVET systems effectively transfer skills to youth.

4

The engagement of employers and connection to market demands are key success factors for youth skills-development programming.

5

Supporting national and local-level government in implementing active labour market policies and measures is key to achieving and sustaining youth skills-development outcomes.

6

Partnership with other United Nations agencies can strengthen technical inputs to youth skills-development programmes, but requires close coordination around targeted value chain development.

7

Entrepreneurship is not a silver bullet for youth unemployment. It can contribute to filling the skills gap, but youth start-ups require long-term support and continuous financing to mature and scale up.

8

Monitoring and evaluation of youth skills-development initiatives need systematic frameworks and follow-up activities to assess results beyond outreach.

<sup>ak</sup> UNESCO, 'TVETipedia Glossary', <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary/filt=all/id=474>

## Lessons Learned

**1**

Effective youth skills-development programmes use a combination of interventions to equip youth with the different types of skills necessary for accessing the world of work.

In the world of work, different types of skills are at play: technical skills, employability skills (or so-called soft skills), and job search skills.<sup>al</sup> Soft skills, such as communication skills and overall professional ethics, are often highlighted as a major missing link for youth employment. Interventions such as on-the-job training, mentoring and counselling complement classroom training to develop these skills.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNDP support to the establishment of local Youth Employment and Information Centres and delivery of training on job searching skills, such as CV writing and interview skills, has shown encouraging results in employment after training.<sup>231</sup> In Cuba, UNDP supported the implementation of a career counselling system for higher education students, which not only assisted youth to obtain employment, but also helped them feel empowered, motivated and useful for society (Cuba).

On-the-job training, including internship, apprenticeship, and other work-based learning with employers, can be an effective way for youth to strengthen specific vocational skills, obtain experience of practical work, and get exposure to the working environment so as to improve their employability (Sierra Leone, Albania, Kosovo). Some UNDP programmes established eligibility criteria to target on-the-job training to low-skilled young jobseekers, while internships were offered to university graduates to acquire work experience in their respective fields with public and private sector employers (Kosovo<sup>232</sup>). Providing incentives for employer engagement, such as employer subsidies, can motivate employers to continue to train young job seekers and keep them on board after the training period (Sierra Leone, Albania, Kosovo<sup>233</sup>).

<sup>al</sup> ILO, 'Global framework on core skills for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,' ILO 2021, [https://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS\\_813222/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS_813222/lang-en/index.htm)

Successful UNDP initiatives used a combination of interventions to support the development of various types of skills (Sierra Leone, Kosovo, Albania). In Sierra Leone, an intervention combined internship programmes, business support services, career advisory and placement services (labour market and career development information, job search skills, IT training, career development workshops), which equipped participants with skills, enabled them to gain employment, and strengthened their self-confidence.<sup>234</sup> At the micro level in Kosovo, in collaboration with vocational training institutions and the public employment service, a good practice was the development of personalized training plans for youth coupled with close monitoring and post-placement follow-up. To enhance the commitment of beneficiaries, young job seekers were informed of both their rights and responsibilities with regard to job seeking.<sup>235</sup>

For young people without previous work experience, short-term training alone might not lead to employment (Somalia, Kosovo, Syria).<sup>236</sup> Short-term skills-development programmes need to be linked to continued support to assist youth in entering the job market. For youth who were not offered employment after internships or on-the-job training, a good practice was to issue a certificate to acknowledge the competencies and skills they have gained, to facilitate future job searches, as well as to refer them to public employment services and other employment and/or entrepreneurship services for follow-up support (Kosovo, Somalia).<sup>237</sup>



## 2

**Youth from disadvantaged groups require targeted interventions to address their skills needs and improve their integration in the labour market.**

Youth from disadvantaged groups are often excluded from economic opportunities and unaware of their right to work. To address the additional barrier they often face due to inadequate basic education, functional literacy training was provided to women and youth in Mauritania to improve their access to income-generating activities (Mauritania). Disadvantaged youth often acquire skills in non-formal and informal settings, but lack a formal qualification that recognizes

their knowledge and skills. This in turn affects their employability and access to the formal education system. To help them overcome this barrier, UNDP assisted the Government of Azerbaijan to identify international assessment protocols to acknowledge evidence of previous learning, including the validation of non-formal and informal learning (Azerbaijan).

In some countries, UNDP developed criteria to identify youth from disadvantaged groups, such as geography (poor regions, rural areas), gender, ethnic minorities, length of unemployment or time in informal employment, educational attainment and work experience, and proactively engage them in technical and vocational training, as well as targeted active labour market programmes (Kosovo,<sup>238</sup> Kazakhstan, Albania, North Macedonia, Ethiopia). In Albania, a UNDP programme developed a practical guide for National Employment Service staff to address the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, which was considered a useful tool (Albania). Outreach activities such as case-worker visits have increased the participation of disadvantaged young people in employment programme activities, including young Roma individuals living in settlements, who were often unaware of their entitlements or available social and employment services (Serbia<sup>239</sup>).

Evaluations found some examples of effective interventions where special attention had been paid to the skills needs of women and girls. In Jordan and Tajikistan, vocational training and on-the-job training helped women to secure and retain employment in the garment industries in their areas of residence or from home.<sup>240</sup> In Bahrain, UNDP was able to broker a partnership with Microsoft and its private certified training provider, a government agency, and the University of Bahrain, to deliver the 'Forsati for her' programme specifically targeting women students for digital literacy and coding backed by Microsoft certifications (Bahrain). However, women's participation was low in innovation competitions for start-up funding (Cameroon) and subsequent success in creating enterprises (Tunisia). Illiteracy and prevalent cultural norms hindered women's participation in entrepreneurship development activities (Ethiopia).

## 3

### Policy reform, institutional strengthening and trainer networks help TVET systems to effectively transfer skills to youth.

TVET and skills-development systems are instrumental tools for equipping youth with skills to access the world of work. UNDP has experience in supporting the modernization and strengthening of national TVET systems and building the capacity of TVET institutions and universities (Albania, Nepal, Kenya, Tajikistan<sup>241</sup>). At the policy level, UNDP assisted national governments in developing and implementing integrated TVET policies. For instance, in Nepal, UNDP supported the Government to reform the TVET policy, which was incorporated in Nepal's national planning with a commitment to develop a TVET master plan, formulate a TVET Act and establish an integrated TVET fund. These activities helped to create an enabling environment for TVET enhancement. The UNDP-supported TVET information management system in Nepal centralized data on TVET trainings and trainees, and provided the basis for setting the national targets for SDG 4.4.<sup>am</sup>

For institutional capacity development, UNDP interventions strengthened TVET curriculum development based on market needs assessments, developed the capacity of trainers, improved accreditation and quality assurance processes, and supported the implementation of career counselling and on-the-job training. UNDP support to the modernization of TVET facilities, including upgrading infrastructure and equipment, contributed to changing the generally low social image of TVET and improving its attractiveness to students (Tajikistan<sup>242</sup>). UNDP has played the broker role for partnerships to introduce internationally recognized certification and accreditation to public and private educational and training institutes, which facilitated the recognition of skills by employers (Azerbaijan, Bahrain).

Training of trainers contributed to developing a network of (master) trainers to efficiently deliver and cascade skills trainings to youth (Algeria<sup>243</sup>). To ensure training outcomes, a good practice has been to shadow training delivered by the new trainers 'on the job', and conduct

<sup>am</sup> SDG Target 4.4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

refresher training over time.<sup>244</sup> UNDP collaboration with UNV and national volunteer mechanisms mobilized national and international volunteers to serve as trainers for youth. The volunteers contributed their knowledge of the field and proximity to the targeted youth population, and thus improved the teaching capacity and bridged the gap in youth access to education (Mali, Congo).



#### The engagement of employers and connection to market demands are key success factors for youth skills-development programming.

A skills mismatch between educational programmes and market demand commonly creates barriers for the school-to-work transition. Some past evaluations have shown that UNDP skills-development interventions lacked employer engagement in programme design, and knowledge on job-growing sectors linked to both public and private employers (Somalia, Algeria<sup>245</sup>). To address the skills mismatch, in North Macedonia UNDP piloted coordination with private companies to identify training needs and search for qualified workers. The programme improved youth access to labour market information and employers through the creation of youth information clubs, where students could meet with company representatives and explore internships, volunteering and entrepreneurial opportunities (North Macedonia).

Conducting skills mapping to identify the skills supply and demand is a good practice that emerged from effective skills-development programmes to improve the employability of trainees (Nepal, Azerbaijan, Kosovo).<sup>246</sup> In Jordan, based on the learning of previous interventions on the mismatch with labour market needs, UNDP adopted a demand-driven approach to vocational training and employment for youth, where labour market needs were identified beforehand, resulting in a much higher percentage of participants landing full-time jobs after the programme compared to previous interventions (Jordan). In Nepal, skills mapping was conducted at province level to support TVET system reform and provided much-needed data to policymakers on the fragmented TVET sector.<sup>247</sup>

In Albania, public-private partnerships have emerged as a good practice for youth skills-development and employment, especially for disadvantaged youth groups. A joint programme with UNDP and the International Labour Organization (ILO) created public-private partnerships that successfully engaged a variety of partners, including the National Employment Service and its local branches, employers' organizations, chambers of commerce, trade unions, vocational training institutions, and representatives of youth organizations and youth networks. Through the partnerships, the private sector made a larger number of vacancies available to job seekers and improved the profiling of labour market demands, while public institutions continued to identify unemployed people to be supported through employment promotion programmes and public employment services. The public-private partnerships successfully placed disadvantaged youth (e.g. unemployed, those in informal employment and from marginalized groups) on work training programmes, established a revolving database of existing vacancies in the private sector, and placed Albanian students and recent graduates from abroad on internship schemes.<sup>248</sup>

## 5

Supporting national and local-level government to implement active labour market policies and measures is key to achieving and sustaining youth skills-development outcomes.

Existing evaluations point to the often-limited scope and scale of UNDP interventions in youth skills-development for decent work and livelihoods.<sup>249</sup> Although innovative pilots may flourish in tested locations, and anecdotal success stories exist, challenges often remain in replicating and scaling up initiatives when they are not embedded in a larger strategy. For example, in Timor Leste, although the UNDP-supported Kuna project has emerged as a flagship activity using a platform approach to link research, upstream policy development and downstream service delivery, the pilot faced major challenges in scaling up due to the lack of national funding commitment (Timor Leste).

Skills development is less effective and not sustainable when it is not combined with other active labour market measures. Government plays a critical role in improving and sustaining the enabling environment for

youth employment and entrepreneurship, in ensuring favourable policy conditions, providing public employment and business services, facilitating access to finance and markets, and safeguarding workers' rights. Some examples from previous evaluations documented successful UNDP upstream support to governments to create or update national policies and strategies promoting youth skills-development and employment (Albania, Nepal, Togo,<sup>250</sup> Jordan, Somalia).

UNDP interventions are most effective when they combine upstream and downstream support (Albania,<sup>251</sup> Jordan, Sierra Leone). In Albania, UNDP contributed significantly to the piloting and subsequent adoption of new active labour market measures, that proved to be an effective mechanism for assuring high rates of training completion, employment and retention of those employed, all over 90 percent. UNDP support included technical assistance to upstream standard-setting by the National Employment Service and downstream capacity-building of local employment offices on active labour market measures. Local-level interventions provided insights and feedback for central-level policymaking, informing issues of the social inclusion of vulnerable groups, and access to educational and vocational training and the labour market.<sup>252</sup>

UNDP has a comparative advantage in building the capacity of regional and local institutions, such as public employment services and business service support centres, to deliver services at the local level, thus increasing youth access to skills-development activities and other support (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kenya, Kosovo, Sierra Leone,<sup>253</sup> Argentina, Cameroon, Jordan). UNDP interventions have supported the establishment of these local institutions, strengthened coordination mechanisms between central and regional/local-level government services, and provided technical assistance and close accompaniment including through regionally or locally based UNDP staff. The partnership with the responsible department for local development within line ministries has proven to be key to the success of various UNDP local community drives in Jordan.<sup>254</sup>

Establishing a management implementation unit within UNDP responsible for multiple projects on youth, gender, TVETs and employment creates synergy to work with the complexity of youth skills issues more comprehensively and coherently, within UNDP projects and among

UNDP partnerships with different line ministries. The establishment of these units also allowed UNDP to benefit from economies of scale and save project management costs (Azerbaijan).

## 6

Partnership with other United Nations agencies can strengthen technical inputs to youth skills-development programmes but requires close coordination around targeted value chain development.

Partnering with sister agencies that have technical and normative mandates, such as ILO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNICEF and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), has brought in technical expertise in TVET systems strengthening, value chain development, labour market information and skills matching, among other relevant areas (Albania, Togo, Somalia), and in some cases helped UNDP to become a key player in the field of youth development (Albania). Joint interventions in fish value chain development in Somalia successfully brought together three United Nations agencies (UNDP, ILO and FAO) to contribute their respective expertise for a common goal. Specifically, ILO delivered an apprenticeship programme that led to youth employment by fishing companies. UNDP constructed fish processing units, provided business start-up funds and conducted business and entrepreneurial skills training. FAO equipped the processing units and trained groups in the technical aspects of fishing, cutting and processing fish. At the time of evaluation, 10 centres had been established (Albania).

Effective collaboration requires coherence and coordination. In Syria, a lack of synergy among United Nations joint programme agencies (FAO, UNESCO and UNDP) resulted in fragmented and partial implementation, and under delivery (Syria). In Somalia, the United Nations joint programme originally envisaged interventions anchored around sector value chains. However, the standard procedures of value chain analysis and market analysis were not followed, and training was not always market-relevant, linked to any of the targeted value chains or long enough, and thus insufficient to impart meaningful skills.<sup>255</sup>



**7 Entrepreneurship is not a silver bullet for youth unemployment. It can contribute to filling the skills gap, but youth start-ups require long-term support and continuous financing to mature and scale up.**

Innovation can be an important lever for the creation of economic opportunities for young people. UNDP promoted an innovation incubation model for youth entrepreneurship in several countries. It supported the establishment of one-stop innovation and entrepreneurship hubs, laboratories and business incubators at regional and local levels to deliver training to youth on skills for innovation, technology, business management, advocacy, leadership and other relevant areas (Burkina Faso, Azerbaijan, Timor Leste, Somalia). The scale of project implementation has been limited so far, and upscaling will depend on access to financing, the marketability of innovation products and services, and investment and strategic support from government. UNDP has experience supporting the skills development of young agriculture entrepreneurs, including through the replication of the Songhai model (a green incubation approach first developed in Benin) in other countries (Uganda, Sierra Leone<sup>256</sup>). Small business grant competitions for young entrepreneurs can help to concentrate limited resources to ensure support to more promising business ideas and provide incentives for innovation (Cameroon, Tunisia, Cambodia<sup>257</sup>).

Entrepreneurship support should not be delivered in a 'quick and dirty' fashion. Youth, especially those from less privileged backgrounds, need time and experience to develop an entrepreneurial mindset and act accordingly. Locally-based institutions can serve as a one-stop-shop for youth entrepreneurship support to improve synergy, coherence and efficiency. Institutions such as public employment and business services offices, TVETs and training institutions, youth associations, and employer and business membership organizations can assume this role, with the latter also promoting closer connections between the private sector and young entrepreneurs (Sierra Leone,<sup>258</sup> Cameroon). These one-stop-shops can continue to provide long-term follow-up support to ensure that programme exit strategies are duly implemented.

A common challenge for youth start-ups is the lack of sustainability and scale-up opportunity, often due to inadequate and unsustainable access to finance beyond the initial seed funding received from the entrepreneurship programmes (Kenya<sup>259</sup>). Young entrepreneurs have difficulty accessing financing from commercial banks, as they normally have little or no collateral (Ethiopia<sup>260</sup>). UNDP contributed to access to finance for young entrepreneurs by supporting links between entrepreneurs and financial institutions and the expansion of micro-financing to young entrepreneurs, including by grouping isolated or unitary microfinancing institutions to create cooperatives (Togo,<sup>261</sup> Zimbabwe), and establishing microcredit funds and programmes (Tajikistan, Kazakhstan).

The capacity development of youth cooperatives could complement interventions targeting individual youth. UNDP interventions in Rwanda trained youth cooperative members in cooperative principles, sustainable environment management and agro-forestry nursery development, and supported young people to open bank accounts in the Youth Savings and Credit Cooperative Society. This has increased young people's access to financial services in the Kamonyi district.<sup>262</sup>

**8**

**Monitoring and evaluation of youth skills-development initiatives need systematic frameworks and follow-up activities to assess results beyond outreach.**

Existing monitoring data for youth skills-development interventions mostly focus on the outputs, i.e. the number of youth trained, placed in internships or on-the-job training, and the number of young entrepreneurs supported. The percentage of youth participants in skills-development activities who were able to secure internships, employment or start-ups is assessed in some cases (Somalia, Jordan). Nevertheless, due to lack of either a monitoring framework or post-activity follow-up, the monitoring of outcome-level results, in terms of the contribution of interventions to decent job creation and improved job conditions, is seldom conducted, making it hard to assess the UNDP impact on the areas of youth skills-development and youth employment (El Salvador, Mauritania, Samoa, Uzbekistan, Togo, Sierra Leone).

In some countries, such as Azerbaijan where UNDP is implementing a suite of projects for youth skills-development and employment, the lack of a coherent monitoring and evaluation system to reconcile data from various project reports created barriers to assess overall results (Azerbaijan). In Sierra Leone, despite the comprehensive design and successful delivery of the youth employment and entrepreneurship programme, UNDP was not able to assess its cost-effectiveness or its impact at the individual level, since follow-up monitoring was not conducted with programme participants to collect data on income and business earnings.<sup>263</sup> Continued monitoring is particularly needed for emerging areas of engagement such as the digital economy, to assess the results of pilots and enable learning from experience, so as to develop a more coherent programmatic approach (Somalia).

# CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND PROGRAMMING

**Lead author:** Ben Murphy

**Research associate:** Anna Kunová

## Introduction

The Leave No One Behind principle is a political commitment by all United Nations Member States to eradicate poverty, discrimination and exclusion, and to reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that undermine the potential of individuals and humanity. The UNDP framework for implementation of the principle states that leaving no one behind “does not imply a separate course of action but is intrinsic to the action required to achieve the SDGs”.<sup>264</sup> The guidance puts forward activities for bringing the principle into development programming, including a more intentional focus on identifying who is at risk of being left behind, and then tailoring support to ensure it is accessible to these groups and improves their social, political and economic status.

CSOs have been described as important actors in ensuring that no one is left behind,<sup>265</sup> valued for their connection to people who otherwise may not be reached by the public and private sector, and recognized for drawing attention to neglected people and issues.<sup>an</sup> The examples in this paper show many CSOs fulfilling this role, whether through services for people displaced by conflict, promoting LGBTQI+ rights, campaigning against gender-based violence, or supporting vocational training for youth who have been excluded from formal education since childhood.

This paper focuses on implementation of the Leave No One Behind principle. It covers the particular features of CSO status and organization models that may enhance or detract from their ability to: 1) reach

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<sup>an</sup> The UNSDG LNOB Operational Guide for United Nations country teams states that governments remain the duty-bearers for ensuring that all people benefit, but that CSOs play a key role in identifying people at risk of being left behind and reaching them with services.

the furthest behind; and 2) work as partners with UNDP.<sup>a0</sup> The paper aims to inform the UNDP engagement strategy for CSOs and its broader partnerships with government and market stakeholders.

In total, the paper covers 41 evaluations from UNDP ERC. The paper also draws on 15 external studies, including evaluations of non-UNDP civil society programmes and academic research, in order to situate the lessons in the context of broader learning about CSOs and Leave No One Behind programming.<sup>aP</sup>

## Context

UNDP uses a broad definition of CSOs, recognizing the full range of formal and informal organizations that are outside the State and the market. This includes social movements, volunteer organizations, indigenous peoples' organizations, mass-based membership organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and CBOs, as well as communities and citizens acting individually and collectively. At country level, CSOs are engaged to provide basic services in the areas of health, education, water delivery, agricultural extension and micro-credit provision. In addition, UNDP recognizes that CSOs often serve as both a driving force in guiding development policies and a watchdog to make sure that policies are implemented, and also facilitate civil society participation in poverty reduction strategy processes, advocacy, and advancing gender equality.

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<sup>a0</sup> The paper does not directly cover the effectiveness or impact of specific CSO services, given the multitude of support they provide in nearly all development sectors.

<sup>aP</sup> External literature was sourced through: 1) a keyword search of online academic journals and the evaluation repositories of bilateral donor agencies with significant civil society programmes since 2012; and 2) expert guidance for additional material during a review of the draft paper. All external sources used as evidence were screened for their thematic relevance and against the following quality criteria: clarity of evaluation questions; inclusion of context analysis; strength of study design; link between findings, conclusion, recommendations; treatment of gender consideration; and transparency on design weaknesses.

UNDP identifies five intersecting factors that contribute to the risk of people being left behind:<sup>266</sup>

- I. Discrimination based on assumed or ascribed identity or status.
- II. Geographic location.
- III. Vulnerability to shocks.
- IV. Governance.
- V. Socioeconomic status.

As these factors suggest, in some contexts people are at risk of being left behind because they are neglected by economic growth and development planning, and in others because they are pushed to exclusion by prejudice and even violence, by society or the State. These contexts create fundamentally different operating environments for CSOs, though in certain situations the freedom to operate is ambiguous, with a level of CSO activity tolerated but without clear boundaries. It is acknowledged that civic space is shrinking in many countries,<sup>267</sup> and that CSOs have been subject to backlash for speaking out against marginalization.<sup>268</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has also aggravated the closure of civic space, especially in fragile states, constraining the role of CSOs in the drive to achieve the SDGs, where achievements have been eroding.<sup>269</sup>

## AT A GLANCE – Lessons Learned

**1**

CSOs can provide essential services where public and private options are absent or limited. This support, however, rarely changes the root causes or longer-term effects of exclusion.

**2**

CSOs often face constraints in demanding and monitoring the fulfilment of rights for those left behind, but this function can be enhanced when international partners promote its use.

**3**

People at risk of being left behind often form their own community organizations, and international organizations have been encouraged to become familiar with the attributes of their informality.

**4**

CSOs can facilitate access to local development planning for those at risk of being left behind. Bottom-up planning is more effective when coordinated and met by top-down support and social change.

**5**

Enhancing CSO networks allows local and national organizations to link excluded groups to high-level advocacy and limit the negative effects of competition.

**6**

Tailored grant mechanisms for CSOs can be an effective way to translate international goals to local contexts.

**7**

Elite capture contradicts the Leave No One Behind principle, but not enough is understood about the ways to promote representative CSO governance models.

**8**

CSOs are often taken as a proxy when donors seek to identify those at risk of being left behind. This is a good way to reach people who face discrimination until data safeguards are advanced.

## Lessons Learned

**1**

CSOs can provide essential services where public and private options are absent or limited. This support, however, rarely changes the root causes or longer-term effects of exclusion.

UNDP initiatives show that CSO service delivery can be the most viable option for providing support to people at risk of being left behind, especially where accessing public services through official means may carry risks for certain populations (Iraq, Maldives, Nepal, the Philippines, South Sudan, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Zimbabwe<sup>270</sup>).<sup>271</sup> Across these examples, CSOs offer geographic proximity to those who may need support, operate in local languages (Albania, Eswatini, Myanmar,<sup>272</sup> Maldives), and are often praised for their reach through the use of decentralized media that is inexpensive for the audience, such as door-to-door information campaigns, local events, and community radio broadcasts. Certain evaluations also recognize the ability of CSOs to navigate conflict (Iraq, the Philippines, South Sudan), which raises questions about the protection offered to these organizations by governments and international partners (South Sudan).

Although essential in certain contexts, many of these CSO services are short-term and dependent on project funding, or are activities that do not bring material benefits unless follow-up action is taken by duty bearers (such as civil registration, electoral education, human rights information or legal aid services). More substantive programmes use the outreach capacity of national CSOs to refer people into a larger system of support (Uganda, Bosnia and Herzegovina,<sup>273</sup> Sri Lanka), and in some cases build capacity of local CSOs to offer improved levels of service during outreach (Montenegro<sup>274</sup>). In Timor Leste, for example, a CSO partner organized an extensive schedule of sub-district events to raise awareness about judicial processes and provided people who could not travel to a court the opportunity to register a case.<sup>275</sup> NGO staff travelled to remote areas to provide initial mediation, which was considered the limit of legal expertise that CSOs could offer at the time.

Several evaluations show that those at risk of being left behind because of a shock or long-term social marginalization require more substantive support than project-funded CSOs can provide (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Uganda<sup>276</sup>). UNDP work in Albania highlights the longer-term effects of discrimination: staff from vocational training centres stated that local NGOs were essential to their ability to tailor training programmes to the needs of Roma and Egyptian youth, but the evaluation identified prejudice against employing these graduates in private companies, employment offices and even the training centres themselves. In South Sudan, the short-term nature of CSO engagements was considered insufficient to build the trust of communities in conflict-affected areas. An evaluation of European Union global support to CSOs noted that there were technical and administrative challenges that prevented humanitarian response organizations from switching to longer-term and broader support, and examples from UNDP projects show that converting CSO-delivered initiatives into routine services requires a handover strategy to ensure government capacity to maintain the support (Iraq,<sup>277</sup> South Sudan, Uganda).

**2**

**CSOs often face constraints in demanding and monitoring the fulfilment of rights for those left behind, but this function can be enhanced when international partners promote its use.**

UNDP recognizes that CSOs play a substantive role beyond service provision and are key in advocating for and monitoring government provision for and upholding of rights. Several evaluations show that confining CSOs to a service delivery role can limit the ability of a project to hold duty bearers to account for providing substantive support to those at risk of being left behind (Nepal, Kazakhstan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Pakistan<sup>278</sup>). A United Nations joint programme in Uganda built a successful model of psychosocial, health, security and legal assistance framed around the immediate and long-term needs of

gender-based violence survivors, organizing United Nations agency, CSO and government services into an integrated support package.<sup>279</sup> By contrast with other initiatives reviewed, it also enabled CSOs to secure high-level policy changes for women's rights and gender-responsive planning. However, this focus precluded the project from building the capacity of CSOs to hold local governments to account for service delivery, and approximately 80 percent of project resources focused on national rather than local capacity. Despite demonstrating a successful support model for gender-based violence, the evaluation noted a very high risk that gains would be reversed because local government provided minimal and only in-kind budgets.

Examples show that the role of the official project partner can influence whether top-down initiatives are open to substantive engagement with CSOs. In these cases, UNDP partners with at least one national commission with a relevant mandate for the respective population at risk of being left behind. In Nepal, the partnership limited the number of CSOs with whom the project engaged and confined them to acting as short-term contractual service providers for legal aid and psychosocial support.<sup>280</sup> The evaluation described this as a missed opportunity to engage the expertise of these organizations in human rights protection and support for gender-based violence, and also limited the project's geographic coverage and ability to work with certain castes. In Kazakhstan, the lack of fully independent CSOs was found to be a detriment to the project's ability to focus on gender issues, as the national commission was considered to have an unrealistic view of women's position in society and limited awareness of the prevalence of gender-based violence. An access to justice initiative in Tanzania provides a positive example, in which UNDP strengthened the national human rights institution's ability to fulfil the rights of women, children and marginalized groups through a well-planned engagement strategy for CSO expertise, and the project was encouraged to map all CSOs that could support legal aid services at sub-regional levels.<sup>281</sup>

The evaluation of the UNDP global human rights strengthening programme spanning 2008-2015 suggested that many country offices perceived CSO partnerships to be a potential risk to their relationships with governments.<sup>282</sup> The programme worked with 90 national human rights institutions as a "middle ground", but the limited engagement

of national and local CSOs meant that the programme missed that objective, and was considered a blind spot for the sustainability of the initiatives. The evaluation also drew attention to the perceived role of the private sector in human rights programmes, which others have highlighted as a risk, because ostensibly neutral market approaches can invalidate the political engagement of CSO advocacy functions.<sup>283</sup>


 3

CSOs can facilitate access to local development planning for those at risk of being left behind. Bottom-up planning is more effective when coordinated and met by top-down support and social change.

Where local government is present, UNDP has sought to empower people by supporting their engagement in district and sub-district development planning (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kenya, Montenegro, Mozambique, Palestine, Rwanda, Tunisia<sup>284</sup>). In these initiatives, CSOs support engagement by educating their members and the local population on participation processes, and mobilizing collective input on topics or decisions. The results are consistent with the findings of a macro-level evaluation of the United Kingdom Department for International Development Policy Frame in Empowerment and Accountability,<sup>285</sup> and academic research in Uganda in 2017, which note that this approach did not challenge broader power structures, “but [...] did help excluded communities to challenge categorical inequalities and encourage political and economic engagement”, proving the value of CSOs “in making democratic developmental advances.”<sup>286</sup>

A UNDP project in Palestine showed that such an approach offers people a connection to local decision-makers and practical experience in managing complex planning processes and mediating disputes. This contrasts with a project with similar objectives in Jordan, which worked with new youth organizations to develop a local governance application, but had limited technological benefit and was isolated from real-world local governance decisions.<sup>287</sup> In part, this was because the wider CSO sector was too immature to support youth in this role, as established CSOs had done in Palestine. The evaluation found that the approach in Palestine acted as a “gateway” for youth to tackle larger policy and political issues.<sup>288</sup>

The potential to empower excluded groups by opening local planning to CSO engagement can be undermined. Kenya's devolved governance system began in 2013, but the participation of local populations has been low because engagement processes are overly complex and public participation meetings have been viewed as legitimization exercises for budgets, rather than a chance to develop them. Despite UNDP partnering with democracy CSOs in Mozambique, the local level identification of priorities reverted to a focus on basic service provision and not on the intended steps toward economic transformation and poverty reduction. The engagement reduced after the project closed. Even successful engagement presents practical problems, as uncoordinated CSO efforts can overwhelm authorities with multiple and high-risk demands from different sources (Palestine, Montenegro), a concern noted in the 2017 World Development Report.<sup>289</sup>

Local engagement can reach a limit if community and district development planning are not allocated funding from higher authorities, and if policy or social discrimination weakens the decision-making power of people at risk of being left behind. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNDP support to partnerships between CSOs and local authorities had a positive local impact but faced "a serious lack of understanding among citizens and local government officials" about who is socially excluded and the drivers and effects of exclusion.<sup>290</sup> The project was "less successful in introducing systemic change [...] in particular [the] legislative and policy reform and the full integration of gender-sensitive and socially inclusive approaches at the local level." Even local services remained dependent on local government financial and operational support, which was susceptible to political influence and change. Similarly, in Eswatini, UNDP and its CSO project partners achieved localized success in familiarizing women, elderly and disabled persons with their human rights, which had recently been codified in a national constitution. Despite these communities expressing enthusiasm to participate further in democratic processes, the local initiatives encountered resistance from traditional authorities and received limited national commitment.<sup>291</sup> This suggests that, despite participation in public affairs being a human right, it can be contained and limited, requiring further forms of collective action to overcome the constraints in ostensibly open settings.

## 4

People at risk of being left behind often form their own community organizations, and international organizations have been encouraged to become familiar with the attributes of their informality.

Evaluations and wider research show that locally-organized self-help and solidarity groups are often the primary means of support for people at risk of being left behind. Although these informal groups do not provide specialist services, they can offer regular and emergency support from their pooled resources and organize to request and feed into services from government or larger CSOs. The value of these actors is recognized in UNDP projects (Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Kenya, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan<sup>292</sup>), and supported by wider research. Projects sampled in an evaluation of the European Union programme<sup>aq</sup> for CSOs and local authorities reached very poor populations in remote areas by “working directly both with individuals and through small associations”.<sup>293</sup> An evaluation of UNDP support to people with disabilities in Cambodia suggests that self-help groups can grow into significant advocates and technical providers over time.

Conventional project partnership arrangements offered by UNDP do not appear to be conducive to the effectiveness of national CSOs, and are even less so for third-party local and informal entities. Several UNDP evaluations (Albania, Maldives, Solomon Islands, South Sudan, Thailand<sup>294</sup>) emphasize that contractual, reporting and on-granting processes were time-consuming, and sometimes created a mismatch in how results are valued (Kenya, Palestine, Tunisia<sup>295</sup>). These challenges are also noted in non-UNDP CSO programmes, and are sometimes described as the product of asymmetrical relationships between donors and CSOs. An evaluation of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) CSO strategy noted that donor emphasis on official processes risked “crowding out intangible results”, suggesting that it was becoming difficult for NORAD to support transformational approaches, including civil society strengthening, because reporting requirements led partners to “opt for quantifiable, easy-to-measure results.”

<sup>aq</sup> The programme operated in 118 developing countries between 2014 and 2019, with an allocation of approximately Euro 1.9 billion.

UNDP projects have partially responded to this challenge by offering closer partnerships with national CSOs and providing capacity-building support linked to CSO ambitions to strengthen their fundraising, programme management and accountability capacity (Azerbaijan,<sup>296</sup> Kenya, Rwanda, Tunisia). In other projects, UNDP organizational support has been reactive to troubleshooting administrative problems, such as in the Solomon Islands where funds were delayed because local CSOs could not provide sufficient reporting, or this reporting was challenged by UNDP (Rwanda). Although the examples demonstrate that CSOs often have a demand for organizational improvement, some CSOs and academic research have noted that “professionalization” and fundraising and policy ambitions can undermine CSOs’ grass-roots linkages.<sup>297</sup> UNDP evaluations do not address this issue directly, but do highlight basic challenges that disproportionately affect local CSOs, such as the time and cost of travelling to capital cities for meetings (Kenya, Tanzania), or of communicating in the same language as UNDP staff (Myanmar).

Several studies recommend that international organizations should seek to understand informal support networks as a means to reduce potential engagement risks. In-depth research with marginalized groups in conflict areas of Mozambique, Pakistan and Myanmar suggests that donor-funded projects can expose or delegitimize initiatives that communities have set up in response to the risks and perceived futility of engaging with official public support. An evaluation of SIDA support to CSOs recommends that the organization increase its ability to fund informal actors, because CSOs can be deregistered when civic space shrinks, removing their ability to fundraise and work with international partners.<sup>298</sup> Similar to an issue raised in the evaluation of the NORAD CSO programme, the evaluation recommends clarity on who bears the financial risk if informal actors fail.

## 5

### Enhancing CSO networks allows local and national organizations to link excluded groups to high-level advocacy, and limit the negative effects of competition.

Supporting the cohesion of civil society stakeholders is generally considered a positive means of promoting the perspectives of excluded groups and increasing the coherence of civil society action, which can be fragmented and even conflicted. That civil society is both a site of partnership and contestation is recognized by UNDP evaluations in Honduras and Rwanda, and also illustrated by a SIDA project in Kenya (Honduras).<sup>299</sup> In the latter, larger human rights CSOs built the capacity of CBOs to mobilize and manage funding, enabling a local human rights network in Mombasa to operate independently. As partners to the network, CSOs were able to draw on CBO grassroots experience for their national advocacy work. In other regions, however, the relationship was not positive, and CBOs accused CSOs of using and dividing them and derailing their objectives for the purposes of meeting donor requirements.<sup>300</sup>

UNDP initiatives have been commended for their ability to enhance supportive CSO networks (Philippines, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Viet Nam,<sup>301</sup> Haiti). A United Nations joint programme on GEWE was considered innovative because, having created a “hand-holding” arrangement between national CSOs and local women’s collectives, it enabled their combined direct engagement in the development of Uganda’s second National Development Plan.<sup>302</sup> In Viet Nam the LGBT leadership programme, ViLEAD, was commended for an initiative that gave smaller, disparate LGBTQI+ groups the opportunity to design, manage and evaluate their own activities under the mentorship of experienced LGBTI campaigners, using modest financial support from the project. The evaluation described the approach as a welcome departure from the traditional capacity- building model, in which CSOs receive training but limited support for the application of new capacity.

This broader view of civil society is often combined with a better understanding of the time required to ensure the participation of harder- to-reach groups. In the Western Balkans, UNDP recognized that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic threatened their intention

to go beyond the “usual suspects” and work with CSOs representing rural youth. As part of its application process, UNDP formed a first pool of youth groups that showed willingness to work with other youth groups and built their capacity on the basis that they would train other groups within their regions at a later stage. A NORAD-funded international NGO applies an even longer-term approach, by partnering with the weakest organizations in districts with the highest levels of poverty and fewest donors, it intentionally supports the growth of smaller CSOs. These approaches contrast with a shorter-term focus on delivering project objectives, where CSO organizations are selected for their ability to deliver, often having met application and compliance requirements. In Jamaica, for example, a UNDP project on local safety and crime prevention succeeded in most of its project outputs because it selected well-established parish councils and other implementation partners. Although successful at the output level, the project had limited success in encouraging the CSOs to expand their focus on gender equality, despite providing courses and a manual on gender issues.<sup>303</sup>

## 6

Tailored grant mechanisms for CSOs can be an effective way to translate international goals to local contexts, if the application process is managed to ensure that smaller organizations can participate.

The European Union civil society and local authorities programme developed national roadmaps to tailor the global programme to the needs of national civil society in 118 developing countries. The roadmaps were created with umbrella or apex CSOs, with limited participation of groups beyond capital cities. However, the programme was commended for reaching remote, vulnerable and marginalized groups through separate calls for project proposals and on-granting to smaller CSOs. Over successive iterations, the programme improved the gender focus of the national programme, first by launching a call for gender-specific initiatives, and later by requiring gender to be mainstreamed in all applications. The same approach, however, did not improve a focus on climate vulnerabilities in grant applications.

The Climate Investment Fund Forest Investment Programme set up a dedicated grant mechanism to channel resources to initiatives designed by indigenous peoples and local communities. In each country, the mechanism comprises a national steering committee of indigenous and local representatives which is supported administratively by an international NGO. The national committees found that local groups can be excluded or co-opted by organizations that are more able to apply for project funds, and therefore modified their granting approach to include a capacity-building component for project design at the community level, a grievance redress mechanism, and, in some countries, partially restricting the application process.<sup>304</sup> Similar to the GEF SGP, the Forest Investment Programme mechanism was found to be a successful means of channelling resources to poorer groups, but required greater and extended emphasis to ensure that funded projects reflected gender needs and socially excluded groups.<sup>305</sup>



**7** Elite capture contradicts the Leave No One Behind principle, but not enough is understood about the ways to promote representative CSO governance models.

The United National Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) operational guidance on Leave No One Behind recognizes the value of working with women’s groups, minority communities, human rights defenders and other groups and associations that directly engage those at risk of being left behind, but notes that United Nations country teams should be mindful of elite capture “where only a small, privileged part of the group has a voice [which] is likely not representative of everyone.”<sup>306</sup>

None of the UNDP evaluations reviewed focus on whether CSOs have appropriate governance or consultation mechanisms to ensure that they represent and address the perspectives of the people at risk of being left behind. Certain reports note that individual CSOs can dominate associations, or that particular households or groups are more able to benefit from CSO activities than others (Kenya, Zimbabwe<sup>307</sup>). However, large-scale quantitative research in Indonesia suggests there can be marginal economic differences between the people that are

considered elite and non-elite at the local level, and demonstrates that the amounts diverted away from the poorest groups are minimal compared with the cost of administrative delays.<sup>308</sup> It also draws attention to the role of local leaders in arranging support for the poorest, an area highlighted by research in conflict areas of Mozambique, Pakistan and Myanmar.<sup>309</sup> The latter suggests that marginalized groups that are wary of engagement with official processes can maintain a level of service access and voice via “intermediaries”, often people with a strong connection to the locality and social standing conferred by current or past engagement in politics or civic activities. Both pieces of research note that these intermediaries have long been considered “gatekeepers” by development organizations, but call for a reassessment on a case-by-case basis. In this vein, an evaluation of a UNDP project in Cambodia notes the strong role played by an individual CSO leader in promoting disability rights and accessing provincial political forums. Rather than suggesting the limitations of personalized approaches, it recommends that lessons on leadership be transferred to other local organizations.

CSO funders have recognized weaknesses in CSO legitimacy and internal governance, and research has drawn attention to the long-term failure of CSOs with “internal structures and external relationships that encouraged elite capture, co-option and personalised leadership”.<sup>310</sup> However, what constitutes a representative CSO is not clearly defined. The evaluation of the SIDA programme found that the criterion that CSOs be membership-based was insufficient, noting that the donor relied on international CSO partners to assess accountability, transparency, representation, legitimacy and internal democracy.<sup>311</sup>

## 8

CSOs are often taken as a proxy when donors seek to identify those at risk of being left behind. This is a good way to reach people who face discrimination until data safeguards are advanced.

The UNSDG operational guide for Leave No One Behind notes that CSOs can offer “people-centred” data that highlight the challenges faced by people at risk of being left behind, and can be integrated with deeper socioeconomic analysis to improve national statistics and development planning, where these groups are often invisible. The

2017-2018 SDG VNR processes in Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Nepal and Viet Nam were seen as positive examples of integration between Leave No One Behind analysis and CSO perspectives, though with an acknowledged need to improve the inclusion of marginalized perspectives and for official recognition of the data contribution that communities and volunteers can make. In a few contexts, emerging CSO projects focus on understanding data value chains, from generation to use, and the role of CSOs as potential intermediaries, “infomediaries” or advocates to attract government interest in such data and influence SDG programming. In a few contexts, emerging CSO projects focus on understanding data value chains, from generation to use, and the role of CSOs as potential intermediaries, “infomediaries” or advocates to attract government interest in such data and influence SDG programming.

At the programming level, however, there remains a disconnect between the SDGs and CSO data, and without a standard protocol, practice varies by country and organizations. The evaluations reviewed provide few positive examples of integrating CSO data into SDG or other national planning. A midterm evaluation of a UNDP SDG accelerator project in Pakistan recognized this gap, and recommended the replication of good practice from one region, where provincial statistics departments identified the furthest-behind districts and local SDG committees worked with CSOs and communities to offer appropriate services and monitor discrimination.<sup>312</sup> In Somalia, UNDP was recommended to improve its targeting of vulnerable groups through consultations with CSOs, and to use a citizens’ scorecard as a means of tracking progress and identifying government capacity needs.<sup>313</sup>

The evaluations reviewed highlight several challenges with CSO data (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sri Lanka, Tanzania,<sup>314</sup> Fiji, Maldives). An evaluation of NORAD support to civil society notes that “data [from national CSO partners] are weak in terms of the numbers of people assisted by projects, because it has not been a priority for the organizations to gather such data.” In some UNDP evaluations the deprioritizing of data is attributed to the project management unit (PMU) rather than exclusively to the CSOs (Sri Lanka, Tanzania<sup>315</sup>). In Georgia, a rural development project intentionally did not ask CSOs for data on the participation of vulnerable groups because of sensitivities surrounding conflict-affected people and ethnic minorities.<sup>316</sup>

However, CSO processes for targeting and monitoring are underexplored in the evaluations reviewed, which often report that CSOs are reaching those at risk of being left behind when the organization operates in neglected geographic areas and has a focus on poverty or on disability, youth, ethnicity or gender rights (Kenya,<sup>317</sup> Montenegro,<sup>318</sup> Palestine,<sup>319</sup> Timor Leste<sup>320</sup>). Concerns are raised when whole and visible sections of society are excluded by a project (China<sup>321</sup>), and deeper consideration is occasionally given to how CSOs target and report on gender.

Whilst data limitations reduce the ability to understand whether CSOs (and local governments) reach the furthest behind first, the examples throughout this paper show that CSOs are playing visible roles on behalf of key groups. Furthermore, the potential to use CSO data to understand whether *all* people at risk of being left behind are being reached should be balanced against the administrative expense (See lesson 4 above) and safeguarding risks. Certain evaluations highlight that excluded groups may have reservations about using processes that capture their data (Rwanda,<sup>322</sup> Jordan<sup>323</sup>), which reinforces wider concerns raised by civil society actors.

# 3. HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD?

## Toward a sustainable future

The third section of this book looks toward a greener and more sustainable future, incorporating lessons learned on how to build environmental sensitivity into development programming, sustainably manage natural resources, and combat the impact of climate change. The papers focus on UNDP support to expand access to renewable energy and ensure access to safe and clean water, and on environmental initiatives funded through GEF.



# UNDP SUPPORT TO EXPANDING ACCESS TO ENERGY WITH RENEWABLE SOURCES

**Lead author:** Ben Murphy

**Research associate:** Lucia Sobeková

## Introduction

Economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection must go hand-in-hand to achieve the SDGs. While it is necessary to meet the growing demand for affordable energy, our reliance on fossil fuels aggravates the climate crisis. Thus, investing in solar, wind and hydro-power is a vital element of both encouraging growth and protecting the environment. As a central actor in the United Nations Development System, UNDP supports access to energy with renewable sources.

The paper considers contexts where access to electricity and/ or clean forms of cooking is low, either nationally or for specific groups. It does not consider UNDP initiatives to transition countries that have high levels of access to lower-polluting models via renewables, though the two objectives do converge in some examples from lower-MICs.

The lessons draw on 43 projects in 33 countries, as well as several multi-country programmes. Independent project terminal evaluations were used as the primary source of information, and mid-term and Independent Country Programme Evaluations where these did not exist and/ or to support verification. The review prioritized recent evaluations, mostly since 2017, to increase the relevance of the findings to the challenges faced in expanding access today. As the lessons are drawn from projects in which UNDP is a partner, they are relevant for various stakeholders involved in expanding energy access, unless specifically linked in the text to the organization's role.

## Context

Energy access is central to the challenges of sustainable development and limiting global warming. Although significant progress has been made, a projected 660 million people globally will remain without access to energy in 2030,<sup>324</sup> as populations grow and governments, private businesses and households face financial challenges, deepened by COVID-19. Economic development, however, is often associated with greater consumption of energy, placing more importance on increasing the proportion of renewable sources in national energy mixes as countries recover from the pandemic.

Although the private sector provides the greatest source of investment in renewable energy globally,<sup>325</sup> many developing countries do not yet offer the conditions to attract such investment or guide it to towards sustainable and equitable development. UNDP provides both upstream support, to improve the enabling environment for expanding energy access, and downstream initiatives that provide renewable sources for electrical, thermal and mechanical power. Its approach places an emphasis on affordability, reliability and the productive use of energy access for the poor.

## AT A GLANCE – Lessons Learned

1

Support to off-grid and remote populations is the quickest way for UNDP to establish the relevance of its offer to the national energy sector, but comes with challenges.

2

Barrier analysis can help to develop a feasible plan for increasing access in stages.

3

Expanding the adoption of renewable sources requires various forms of capacity, down to the local level.

4

Projects need to consider where demonstration is required, and what impact a failure to implement would have.

5

Moving away from project funding requires bringing investors along in the demonstration process.

6

Projects should consider how energy users assess the financial costs of supply, and the contribution that communities make to energy projects.

7

Development benefits need to be planned for rather than assumed, and projects should consider how a new form of energy would fit with existing social, economic, technological and behavioural practices.

8

Although increased access to energy may bring benefits to women, more transformational approaches are required to shift the social and sectoral obstacles.

9

Overambitious project designs are often undermined by available resources and can set energy initiatives up to miss targets.

## Lessons Learned

**1**

Support to off-grid and remote populations is the quickest way for UNDP to establish the relevance of its offer to the national energy sector, but comes with significant challenges.

In several countries, UNDP projects are credited with demonstrating that it is possible to use renewables to reach remote areas beyond the grid (Turkey,<sup>326</sup> Barbados,<sup>327</sup> Bangladesh,<sup>328</sup> Mauritius,<sup>329</sup> Nepal,<sup>330</sup> Cuba<sup>331</sup>). These are contexts in which the energy sector is advanced or advancing, and where there is limited need for UNDP to support a centralized roll-out of the grid to improve access. In Bangladesh, a redesign to support off-grid communities saved the relevance of a UNDP project when grid expansion and other donor activities reduced the need for the activities that UNDP had initially planned. However, when the national energy sector is under-developed, 'reaching the last first' comes with significant sustainability challenges. Some small-scale projects have struggled to provide a source of sustainable electricity supply by themselves, and could not convince or build the capacity the government or private sector to sustain their model (Burkina Faso,<sup>332</sup> Guinea Bissau,<sup>333</sup> Somalia,<sup>334</sup> Ghana<sup>335</sup>). In Guinea Bissau, for example, projects were geographically beyond the Government's ability to maintain them, and there was no private-sector interest. A key lesson from Malawi, where fewer than 4 percent of the rural population have access, is that "off-grid generally, and mini-grids specifically, require active and constant championing to reduce uncertainty and facilitate progress and investment".<sup>336</sup>

**2**

Barrier analysis can help to develop a feasible plan for increasing access in stages.

Several evaluations recognize that achieving the conditions for sustained access to energy has been a cumulative process, spanning many years and often decades. Downstream renewable technologies may offer connection sooner than grid expansion, but project examples show that creating a pro-poor enabling environment requires time,

to establish the model and build confidence for the public and private sector to join. (See lessons 6, 7 and 8 below). Projects in Mauritius and the Philippines show how assessing the hurdles for greater adoption of renewable energy allows a project to focus on a manageable number of foundational changes, and, crucially, also provide investors with a clear map for future progress.<sup>337</sup> One of the outcomes of the 'Removal of Barriers' project in Mauritius was its ability to attract new donors to a subsequent, much larger project with combined expenditure of \$85 million (\$40 million of which came from the private sector, over double the target). When the enabling environment for pro-poor access is underdeveloped, an in-depth barrier analysis may unearth many aspects that need to be considered (from awareness levels, basic operating capacity, incentives and disincentives, and ways to regulate new energy initiatives), and projects have been encouraged to be judicious in their selection and sequencing of elements to target (Uganda<sup>338</sup>).

Several other projects are critiqued for their lack of barrier analysis, which is associated with activities that are too advanced for the context (Tuvalu,<sup>339</sup> Botswana<sup>340</sup>), missed opportunities to create synergies between activities (Tuvalu, Lebanon<sup>341</sup>), and incomplete project logic (Barbados<sup>342</sup>). In a similar vein, projects have also been critiqued for overlooking enablers in the context, such as partnerships with other national energy initiatives (Egypt,<sup>343</sup> Barbados,<sup>344</sup> Zambia<sup>345</sup>), though Nepal demonstrates the successful role UNDP can play in facilitating partnerships to secure future funding to a programme.<sup>346</sup>

### 3

#### Expanding the adoption of renewable sources requires various forms of capacity, down to the local level.

Public and private entities from national to local levels may be involved in plans to expand access to renewable energy, and the capacities required include project, pipeline and financial management, technical expertise and community liaison. Where national training institutions can absorb the programme, some projects have worked with them to develop a cadre of students and a programme for renewing local capacity (Egypt,<sup>347</sup> Mauritius,<sup>348</sup> Nigeria<sup>349</sup>). In Nigeria, for example, the project worked with the Lagos Energy Academy on a course that gave an "end-to-end overview of the process of developing, financing,

administering, installing, operating and decommissioning utility-scale solar PV plants”, and plans to provide specific skills once the solar market becomes more mature. These approaches seem a sensible complement to direct capacity-building of government staff, which is more common but can suffer from high turnover rates (Egypt,<sup>350</sup> Lebanon,<sup>351</sup> Somalia<sup>352</sup>). Given the complexity of the topic, other evaluations highlight the need to match national institutions with expertise from other countries (Papua New Guinea<sup>353</sup>), or national private entities in the Grenadines (Barbados and Eastern Caribbean<sup>354</sup>), to offer guidance and quality assurance.

One of the clearest results in the countries reviewed is that UNDP is directly contributing to national capacity and knowledge on renewable energy by developing a suite of frameworks, guidelines, feasibility studies, market assessments, policies and regulations and, in some cases, through exchange visits (Bangladesh,<sup>355</sup> Benin,<sup>356</sup> Ethiopia,<sup>357</sup> Nepal,<sup>358</sup> Sierra Leone,<sup>359</sup> Barbados, Cuba<sup>360</sup>). Evaluations have recognized the practical and catalytic value of these outputs, especially when embedded with practical demonstration and focused on pro-poor access (Malawi,<sup>361</sup> Uganda<sup>362</sup>). In Mauritania, the targeting of such outputs to weaknesses in the enabling environment allowed UNDP to provide tangible policy achievements, despite the downstream components of the project being critically delayed.<sup>363</sup> Only in one reviewed country does the relevance of this knowledge contribution seem ambiguous, though, as the Malawi evaluation points out, the value of such resources depends on the extent to which they are reliably applied.



#### 4

Projects need to consider where demonstration is required, and what impact a failure to implement would have.

Many UNDP downstream energy projects are intended to demonstrate the viability of adopting renewable forms of energy. The falling price of solar photovoltaic equipment raises questions about when and where demonstration is needed, and certain projects have been encouraged to consider a shift to household benefits rather than a demonstration model (Nigeria,<sup>364</sup> Tajikistan<sup>365</sup>). However, the cost of biomass and hydro equipment remains high, and these projects have

been encouraged to pursue further demonstration before assuming the market is ready (Botswana,<sup>366</sup> India<sup>367</sup>). Beyond the technology, UNDP often tries to prove that access via renewables can also lead to equitable and lasting development benefits, which are not guaranteed solely by the introduction of low-cost equipment (See lesson 8 below). Where a project wants to prove a viable model of greenhouse gas (GHG) avoidance, the need to replicate appears even more urgent. UNDP demonstration sites are rarely large enough to make a meaningful contribution to GHG avoidance or to the share of renewables in the national system on their own (Philippines,<sup>368</sup> Bangladesh,<sup>369</sup> Tuvalu<sup>370</sup>), especially where demand for energy is outstripping the pace of renewable uptake (Mauritius,<sup>371</sup> Tuvalu, Serbia,<sup>372</sup> Zambia<sup>373</sup>).

Successful examples indicate that project sites played an important role in encouraging replication, because they offered a solution to an existing objective and strategy to which the government was committed (Ethiopia, Cuba, Barbados, Benin,<sup>374</sup> Mauritius).<sup>ar</sup> These examples also mobilized alternative funding over time. Other initial scale-ups were however cut short because of insufficient funding (Egypt<sup>375</sup>). Aside from the aforementioned cases where demonstration has been too remote, there remains a set of countries where the link to a national imperative appears to have been weaker. The project there had increased access to energy but, at the time of the latest evaluation, had not catalysed the intended demonstration effect (Bangladesh,<sup>376</sup> Haiti<sup>377</sup>). While this was also the case of projects in Lebanon, the national challenges in supplying energy are said to have greatly increased government demand for replication of the interventions since the last evaluation.

Demonstration sites also come with risks. In several countries, the inability to deliver a downstream example is directly linked to the delay and even failure of other project components, such as upstream work on policy and regulatory frameworks (India, Nigeria, Mauritania<sup>378</sup>). In India, the Accelerating Clean Energy project started with much enthusiasm for its targets to use renewable energy to enhance rural livelihoods of marginal landholders (with less than one hectare of land).

<sup>ar</sup> The most common objectives relate to national energy security and renewable uptake targets, though the commitment that governments give to these interlinked objectives differs between contexts.

However, the inability to provide demonstration sites meant that the project could not influence other government energy programmes to consider their connections to rural livelihoods, and financial investors could not be encouraged to scale or sustain the model. The project also had a model of extension support for helping villages to use renewable energy in their livelihoods. In Tuvalu, the eventual implementation of the demonstration sites is considered critical for avoiding a negative socioeconomic impact, noting that, if the sites fail, local CSOs and private sector actors would have justifiable complaints about the project effects. Common reasons for a lack of or slow implementation are: procurement delays (Nepal,<sup>379</sup> Barbados and Eastern Caribbean); unclear financial arrangements (Nigeria, Papua New Guinea<sup>380</sup>); unsatisfactory project management (Tanzania<sup>381</sup>); dependency on policy approval (Botswana,<sup>382</sup> Nigeria); inappropriate site selection (Benin,<sup>383</sup> Nigeria, Papua New Guinea); and implementing partner issues (Burkina Faso, India, Mauritania<sup>384</sup>).

Providing renewable supply to government and public buildings appears to be an area where UNDP has a relatively unique form of demonstration. As a recommendation from the Botswana midterm review recognizes, installations on school sites are “a great opportunity for government to demonstrate their commitment to biogas, to facilitate the development and gain traction in the medium-scale market, and to showcase the technology in a high-traffic and important community asset.” This form of demonstration is very common in the UNDP portfolio, and appears to be a benefit of its relationship with government, which may span many departments. A project in Uganda is trialling the use of solar on courthouses, the national early warning system and government hospitals (Uganda<sup>385</sup>). In Lebanon and Iraq, solar panels were provided to administrative buildings, whereas Barbados takes a more comprehensive approach, providing access to public schools, airports, correctional facilities, sports pavilions, schools, polyclinics, community centres and farms.<sup>386</sup> Although these forms of uptake may be more immediately useful for transitioning to renewables, rather than increasing access and livelihood benefits, they offer a leverage point to increase awareness and confidence, which could encourage their replication in remote or poorer areas. As examples from Somalia and elsewhere highlight, however, demonstration equipment requires a plan for maintenance and sourcing replacement parts (Somalia<sup>387</sup>).

## 5

### Moving away from project funding requires bringing investors along in the demonstration process.

It is generally expected that, over the long term, renewable sources will result in lower energy costs than coal and oil. The projects reviewed demonstrate various considerations for overcoming the initial cost hurdle for adoption, and finding a sustainable source of funding beyond project contributions. The successful examples listed above involved public and private investors in the demonstration planning, and less successful examples are advised to do so (Botswana<sup>388</sup>). In some cases, projects developed new investment services in development financial institutions (Barbados and Eastern Caribbean,<sup>389</sup> Ethiopia<sup>390</sup>), or brought in further donor funding (Malawi,<sup>391</sup> Mauritius<sup>392</sup>).

However, further investment, especially from commercial lenders, has challenged projects in other countries (Viet Nam,<sup>393</sup> Egypt,<sup>394</sup> Sierra Leone,<sup>395</sup> Botswana,<sup>396</sup> Malawi, Zambia<sup>397</sup>). In these countries investors could not be convinced of a viable business opportunity, either because of the nascent nature of the technology market (Botswana, Malawi), or because of the risk of lending to local stakeholders, who may be remote or considered informal enterprises (Egypt, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Bangladesh,<sup>398</sup> Malawi).

Projects in Malawi, Nepal and Uganda are trialling the use of public-private-partnerships, in which ownership of an energy scheme is held jointly by the government, businesses and local organizations, in an agreement which reduces the risks to each stakeholder. These were early-stage initiatives at the time of their last evaluations, but their future progress and results should be considered in project designs as a way of avoiding a drop in investment once UNDP project funding ceases.

## 6

Projects should consider how energy users assess the financial costs of supply, and the contribution that communities often make to energy projects.

At some point in the uptake model, community and household energy users may be expected to pay for renewable energy, maintenance of the system, and any loans taken for installation. The evaluations provide several considerations for this payment model.<sup>as</sup> Firstly, energy users compare alternative sources, and may continue with unclean sources until the prices are advantageous (Tajikistan<sup>399</sup>), or abandon micro schemes when the grid reaches them (Nepal<sup>400</sup>). In Malawi, people were initially reluctant to use the additional power capacity installed by a project, because their existing mini-grids provided electricity for free. Examples in Nigeria, however, suggest that consumers of mini-grid energy may be willing to pay more for a reliable system, which offers the possibility, in some countries, of marketing renewables as an improved service to the grid.

Uptake of renewable sources has been successful when it displaced the cost of locally-used diesel, which can occur shortly after installation. This is highlighted in the difference between three demonstration sites in Papua New Guinea, one of which has managed to displace the cost of diesel with solar and secure ownership and commitment to the mini-grid, and two mini-hydro demonstrations which faced feasibility issues because of, amongst other factors, the co-financing arrangements. In Yemen, providing a cheaper option to diesel was achieved at the institutional level for hospitals, while in the case of Tuvalu, the switch is said to be dependent on finding a suitable battery replacement scheme to avoid a reversion to diesel.

An under-considered area in project designs is the non-financial contributions communities make, and several evaluations highlight this as a key element of success for both uptake and sustainability (Benin,<sup>401</sup> Egypt,<sup>402</sup> Sierra Leone,<sup>403</sup> Tuvalu,<sup>404</sup> Bangladesh<sup>405</sup>). In Egypt, community contributions of materials and labour to a biogas unit enabled the project to reduce its grant to 60 percent of the cost and expand to new

<sup>as</sup> For examples of financial considerations related to solar, solar home systems and cookstoves see: UNCDF (2017)

areas in line with a government request. In Sierra Leone, the community management of woodlots is projected to deliver a significant GHG avoidance over time, and is considered a best practice to be shared to other countries. Communities may also provide land for solar (Nigeria) or biofuels (Benin), and these contributions require sensitive handling, especially where the area is used for food production or livelihoods, or has ancestral linkages.<sup>406</sup>

## 7

Development benefits need to be planned for rather than assumed, and projects should consider how a new form of energy would fit with existing social, economic, technological and behavioural practices.

Providing or improving access to energy is considered inherently good. However, terminal evaluations indicate that it can be a challenge to ensure that energy contributes to sustainable development (Barbados,<sup>407</sup> Burkina Faso,<sup>408</sup> Malawi,<sup>409</sup> India,<sup>410</sup> Haiti,<sup>411</sup> Lebanon,<sup>412</sup> Somalia<sup>413</sup>). Where challenges occur, projects appear to be consumed by the technical difficulties of establishing viable energy connections, or are simultaneously trying to establish access and novel economic activities.

An example of the latter is the introduction of new equipment for drinking water and ice-making in the coastal areas of Mauritania, where it is signalled that the “installation of technical infrastructure in an environment which does not know them is not sufficient to induce the local development dynamics intended by the project”.<sup>414</sup> Burkina Faso points to the challenge of creating new socioeconomic infrastructure whilst maintaining sufficient focus on developing the sources of renewable energy. Projects in MICs have linked renewable forms of energy to the established livelihood infrastructure, such as municipal beans and milk production chains in Cuba. However, projects in other MICs have not factored in critical considerations such as the level of consumption, type of functionality and/or cost model (India,<sup>415</sup> Barbados,<sup>416</sup> Egypt<sup>417</sup>). More surprising are the missed opportunities to link access with initiatives where UNDP has a strong offer, such as climate and disaster risk reduction programmes (Barbados, Haiti).

With limited time and resources, projects also found it challenging to balance support for household access, which may serve poorer groups but has lower productive use, with support for community access, which is generally more expensive but can add value to local production (Malawi,<sup>418</sup> Tajikistan<sup>419</sup>). In this regard, cookstove initiatives appear to have a quicker link to economic benefits, because they can often be produced by household or local enterprises. Projects in Ethiopia and Sierra Leone show that it is possible to support local enterprises through training and incubation, which can be contrasted with Somalia, where women were provided cookstoves to sell but did not have the required accounting and business skills. Some evaluations signal the need to develop lending arrangements for the MSMEs involved in cookstove production, and national regulation to ensure the availability and use of quality cookstove designs, as these can hold back business expansion and replication (Ethiopia,<sup>420</sup> Sierra Leone,<sup>421</sup> Uganda<sup>422</sup>).

There is insufficient evidence on whether cookstoves are leading to other intended benefits of reducing indoor air pollution, discouraging deforestation, and lightening the domestic burden faced by women (See Lesson 9). It is clear, however, that achieving these results is subject to complex social, economic, policy and behavioural drivers. In Zambia, for example, “while local communities produce the charcoal, most [...] households sell the majority to urban centres, such as Lusaka, rather than using it sustainably for cooking and heating” (Zambia<sup>423</sup>). Projects in Ethiopia and Somalia have coupled large-scale public awareness campaigns with national regulation to overcome these challenges (Ethiopia, Somalia<sup>424</sup>).



**8** Although increased access to energy may bring benefits to women, more transformational approaches are required to shift the social and sectoral obstacles.

Powered mechanization and technologies that reduce wood consumption are often considered to have automatic gender benefits because of the time and effort women expend, and the risks they take, when these are absent. Some projects have included activities that target these assumptions (Sierra Leone,<sup>425</sup> Malawi,<sup>426</sup> Egypt,<sup>427</sup> Uganda,<sup>428</sup> Ethiopia<sup>429</sup>), and others go beyond to support women-led enterprises

(Burkina Faso,<sup>430</sup> Bangladesh,<sup>431</sup> Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Somalia<sup>432</sup>). Results have been achieved in line with these expectations, such as income-generation (Yemen<sup>433</sup>), improved food security through solar irrigation schemes (Malawi, Yemen), and increased safety and security of women by solar lightening options (Ethiopia, Bangladesh), which in Egypt is said to have reduced the number of women standing in long queues to purchase gas cylinders during the Arab Spring.

These are more advanced approaches to gender than the many projects that only focus on disaggregating targeting data by sex/gender (Lebanon,<sup>434</sup> Haiti,<sup>435</sup> Barbados and Eastern Caribbean<sup>436</sup>). However, neither approach sheds light on the experience of women in the project (Bangladesh), or challenges the conditions that keep women in roles of hardship (Tanzania<sup>437</sup>). As noted in Egypt, and experience from gender targeting initiatives in other sectors, time saved for women can be filled with more domestic work or unpaid care, and profits from female enterprises can be captured by males or absorbed into the household budget. Generally, UNDP projects have not sought to understand and alter these dynamics, and improved strategies are required to address the economic and public participation of women (Bangladesh, Somalia, Zambia or Ethiopia). Yemen appears to be a partially positive example, where a female-operated solar grid contributed to the increased participation of women in local governance structures.

Some projects have deployed initiatives to promote women's equality through policy and institutional changes, which have the potential to achieve outcomes on a wider scale. In Malawi, the project integrates a gender framework within future mini-grid programmes run by the Government. There, as in Mauritius, the projects are part of a gender-energy collaboration, pushing for systemic change with other ministries, rights groups and representatives of women enterprises. However, it is clear that most projects operate in male-dominated energy sectors, and this has undermined gender approaches that rely purely on sex-disaggregated participant numbers for capacity-building and similar activities. Demands for proactive approaches to including women at managerial and decision-making tables have been expressed in several programmes (Uganda, Tanzania,<sup>438</sup> Cuba,<sup>439</sup> Haiti, Barbados).

## 9

**Overambitious project designs set unrealistic targets and are often undermined by available resources.**

Although energy access, climate mitigation and gender equality all require significant and concerted efforts, UNDP project designs are routinely described in terminal evaluations as trying to do too much, in time periods that are too short (Bangladesh,<sup>440</sup> Barbados,<sup>441</sup> Botswana,<sup>442</sup> Burkina Faso,<sup>443</sup> Guinea Bissau,<sup>444</sup> Papua New Guinea,<sup>445</sup> Somalia,<sup>446</sup> Sierra Leone,<sup>447</sup> Zambia<sup>448</sup>), and with too few personnel (India,<sup>449</sup> Burkina Faso, Ghana,<sup>450</sup> Iraq,<sup>451</sup> Eswatini,<sup>452</sup> Ethiopia,<sup>453</sup> Zambia, Tuvalu<sup>454</sup>). Projects have been critiqued for setting national-level targets – either in the numbers of people who will receive energy access, the percentage of renewable production in national energy mixes, or the projected avoidance of GHG emissions – that could only be achieved with much larger programmes. Evaluations are mostly complimentary about the commitment of UNDP staff to project management, and the hiring of technical consultants is often considered a strength. An exception to the trend of under-capacity projects is in the Grenadines, where staffing arrangements were considered a key success factor and contrasted to other projects in the region.<sup>455</sup>

# ENSURING ACCESS TO SAFE AND CLEAN WATER RESOURCES

**Lead author:** Harvey John Garcia

**Research associate:** Anna Kunová

## Introduction

Economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection must go hand in hand to achieve the SDGs. Access to safe water is a recognized human right and subject to dedicated targets within the SDGs. However, most, especially for vulnerable groups, is rooted in power, poverty and inequality, which is aggravated by climate change and poor water governance.<sup>456</sup> As a central actor in the United Nations Development System, UNDP supports both the delivery of water supply as well as the governance and policy reforms for equitable water access.

The lessons in this paper draw broadly on eight independent country programme evaluations, 29 decentralized evaluations, three assessments of development results, and eight other evaluations.

## Context

Water should be sufficient, safe, acceptable and physically accessible, and affordable for personal and domestic uses.<sup>at</sup> Water is a basic human need for survival, a human right, and a core commodity for developing societies. In a 2018 synthesis report,<sup>457</sup> the United Nations noted that water is central to achieving the SDGs.<sup>au</sup> It is a precursor to most, if not all, SDG targets and a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights. Water threads together the interaction of society, the environment, economy and peace.

<sup>at</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 15, 2002.

<sup>au</sup> Sustainable Development Goal 6 (“Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”) and its predecessor, the Millennium Development Goal Target 7C (“Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation”) set out ambitious goals with clear indicators to track progress towards equitable access to water and sanitation.

However, the world is off-track to meet SDG 6, “to ensure availability and sustainable management of water (and sanitation) for all”. In fact, about 2 billion (or 26 percent) of the world’s population still lack safely managed drinking water services. Only 14 of 109 countries have reported high levels of community participation in WASH decision-making.<sup>458</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted some compounding impacts of the lack of access to water, such as a high transmission of the virus leading to an increase in mortality.

In 2020, the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework was launched, with the aim of closing gaps in pursuing SDG6. The framework identified five key accelerators for the SDGs:

- Optimizing financing
- Improving data and information
- Bolstering capacity and development
- Boosting innovation
- Strengthening governance

UNDP contributes to these accelerators through the implementation of water-related programmes and activities such as Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) and WASH. In this paper, UNDP IEO has identified six key lessons from a decade of implementing programmes to support access to, and the delivery and governance of, water resources.

## AT A GLANCE – Lessons Learned

1

Strengthening citizen participation in water governance increases revenue, accountability and integrity in the water sector, and is a mechanism to enhance access for vulnerable groups.

2

Improving the cost recovery of water delivery services benefits the end users, strengthens system sustainability, and frees it from reliance on external subsidies.

3

Water management benefits from decentralized implementation modalities, with facilitators on the ground to help contextualize and tailor programme design and implementation to local needs and practices.

4

Large and complex joint water programmes benefit from the aggregation of the comparative strengths of United Nations agencies, bringing different methodologies and diverse counterparts to engage on a multidimensional issue.

5

Water governance that is agile and flexible for national and subnational implementation accelerates the achievement of SDG 6 targets.

6

Programme coherence between IWRM and WASH programmes creates positive synergies to improve the water sector.

## Lessons Learned

1

Strengthening citizen participation in water governance increases revenue, accountability and integrity in the water sector, and is a mechanism to enhance access for vulnerable groups.

Good water governance plays a crucial role in the equitable access and delivery of water. Inclusive water governance enables the active participation of diverse stakeholders in identifying and solving challenges, and is more transformative. Successful WASH programmes tend to have voluntary water governance committees composed of consumers, civil society, water utility companies, business owners and the government (Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mongolia, Pacific Islands<sup>459</sup>).

The role of water governance is to ensure that there is a collaborative effort to improve the performance of the water sector. This collaboration includes public, private, international, national and voluntary organizations working under conducive legal regulations.<sup>460</sup> In Palestine<sup>461</sup> and Tajikistan, by increasing participation, access to information and involvement in the implementation of various stakeholders, the demand for accountability and integrity also increased (Tajikistan).

There needs to be a balance between economic and business sides for affordability and access to water, especially with vulnerable groups that have fewer resources. By having a seat at the decision-making table in water governance committees, citizens are able to voice their concerns directly with other actors in the water supply chain. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mongolia and Sierra Leone, water utility companies, as members of the water committees, were able to hear the issues and suggestions of customers, especially the poor and vulnerable, and tailor their responses. Furthermore, the interaction between citizens, water utility companies and the government may help to identify vulnerable groups. In some settings, citizen committees developed nuanced vulnerability criteria aimed at identifying those that could not afford water services. This facilitated direct social assistance to those in need.<sup>462</sup>

Building capacity on water governance, supplemented by technical and business skills at institutional and individual levels, improves the economic sustainability of programmes. In Mongolia, Sierra Leone and Uzbekistan, individuals with skills related to maintenance of the newly developed water systems created a pool of technicians that were able to work across the water supply chain.<sup>463</sup> In Yemen, the local productive capacity of MSMEs was improved to assist in the rehabilitation of the water sector (Yemen). In Uzbekistan, support to the agribusiness sector drove customer demand for the improvement of water-related services. In the Pacific, building the capacity of local communities created a set of new programme managers that added to the limited talent pool in the region, and helped to scale and replicate good practices.

## 2

## Improving the cost recovery of water delivery services benefits the end users, strengthens system sustainability, and frees it from reliance on external subsidies.

Water is both a human right and a commodity that needs to be managed. Evaluative evidence shows that the most effective and sustainable water access and delivery programmes are also profitable and financially stable (Mongolia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Palestine,<sup>464</sup> Tajikistan). Diversifying financial resources is a critical element to improve and sustain water-related services, especially those at an early stage of development. In successful programmes, the primary source of funding is water tariffs. UNDP programme funds and other financial resources, including government subsidies, were important complementary sources. For example, in Uzbekistan and Mongolia, the governments complemented the budget of water utility companies, while in some countries, large private companies provided funds to access to water projects through corporate social responsibility schemes (Armenia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Russia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan).<sup>465</sup>

Successful programmes showed that improving water-related services encourages customers to pay the water tariffs (or additional water tariffs), as water taxes are used to improve the water supply and delivery chain. Also, at the onset of programmes, the actual cost of distributing water to individuals was calculated to guide levies applied to water distribution services and use. Knowing the actual cost of water production and delivery prevents undervaluing water-related service costs. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, action plans for a tariff structure were developed based on a valuation of water-related services up to municipality level. In addition, the capacity of utility providers for maintenance work and customer relations was increased. This led to increased funds and technical skills to operate, maintain and improve the water service system. This, in turn, raised consumer satisfaction and their motivation to pay. This chain of results led to reduced financial losses by the water utility providers, and lessened the need to raise future tariffs, which benefited consumers.

Going below the cost-recovery margin negatively affects the sustainability of water-delivery systems by building reliance on subsidies or external programme funding. It also encourages inefficient water use by the end users and reduces ownership (Angola<sup>466</sup>). Effective programmes include the cost of repairs, replacements and upgrading for operation and maintenance at the design phase. Otherwise, infrastructure was only operational during the programme life span (Angola, Mongolia, Uzbekistan<sup>467</sup>).

**3**

**Water management benefits from decentralized implementation modalities, with facilitators on the ground that help to contextualize and tailor programme design and implementation to local needs and practices.**

Water-related issues are very context-specific. Hence, the operational approach in implementing such programmes should be tailored to local conditions. The most common variable across successful programmes was a strong facilitator or Programme Implementation Unit on the ground (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Angola, Maldives, Mongolia, Pacific Islands, Sierra Leone,<sup>468</sup> Philippines, Bangladesh, Tajikistan). A local Programme Implementation Unit facilitated the integration of traditional knowledge into programmes and exchanges across different programmes sites. In Mongolia, indigenous techniques of constructing dry wells and harvesting snow water to address prolonged dry seasons were introduced, linked to the culture of revolving pasture. In Sierra Leone, community buy-in to the water programme was anchored in integrating traditional water governance beliefs and traditions into the management of newly-built water infrastructure.

Local facilitators were able to transform water projects into platforms to discuss community-level development issues. This helped communities to connect water with other essential topics such as livelihoods, peace and security, and appreciate a systems perspective in moving towards their development agenda.<sup>469</sup> In Mongolia, the lack of livelihood alternatives forced communities into unsustainable practices such as coal and wood burning, overgrazing and insufficient water and soil management, which hastened environmental degradation.

Unearthing the core problem and targeting activities to address the underlying issue (livelihood) showed that locals were more than willing to adopt ecologically friendlier practices to improve their water supply.

**4**

Large and complex joint water programmes benefit from aggregation of the comparative strengths of United Nations agencies, bringing different methodologies and diverse counterparts to engage on a multidimensional issue.

Joint programming on water brings out the comparative strengths of United Nations agencies in implementing water-related programmes, such as medium to highly complex WASH programmes (Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Maldives, Mongolia, Pacific Islands,<sup>470</sup> Iraq, Philippines, Tajikistan). In Angola, strong UNDP engagement at the ministerial level complemented robust UNICEF work with civil society. This led to synergistic work at downstream and upstream policy junctures, strengthening the national water and sanitation policy framework. Bringing in different ministries as partners in joint programming also promotes a multidimensional approach. In Mongolia, the UNDP entry point was its partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Green Development and the Ministry of Construction and Urban Development, while for UNICEF it was with the Ministry of Education.<sup>471</sup> The joint programme helped create new synergies between the various ministries around water issues. In addition, having diverse actors led to improved stakeholder cohesion, increased oversight, and enhanced programme accountability and oversight. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, joint programming on WASH involving UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO attracted additional co-funding.

In operationalizing a joint programme, it is more effective for United Nations agencies to implement programme components through coordinated yet individualized action, than through pooled funding. Using the preferred programme implementation modality to benefit each agency's operational strength was vital to the successful implementation of joint programme components. Parallel implementation also

decreases the transaction costs of installing common pooled resources and management (Iraq and Mongolia). In a joint WASH programme in Angola, UNDP, the International Organization for Migration and ILO took advantage of their strong working relationship with the Government to use a national implementation modality. In the same joint programme, UNICEF used civil society implementing partners. Individual United Nations agencies used their own operational and financial systems, which allowed the programme to be delivered efficiently. A dedicated coordinator managing synergies in a joint programme was also seen as a critical element for success. It is important to note that a prerequisite to this lesson is that the government being assisted has a larger project absorptive capacity and considerable manpower, which is not the case in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).<sup>472</sup> In the Pacific, rather than joint programming, Joint Presence Offices with UNICEF and UNFPA (dismantled since 2018) were used as vehicles for delivering water-related programmes in more isolated and smaller countries or territories including Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu (Pacific Islands).

By engaging in joint programming on water, methodologies honed by various United Nations agencies achieve broader adoption (mainstreamed, replicated, scaled and sustained). Examples include the Governance, Advocacy and Leadership in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (GoAL WASH), which highlights UNDP comparative advantage in governance work and the approaches developed in Every Drop Matters – a partnership with UNDP and the Coca Cola Company which promoted responsible water management (Armenia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Russia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan).<sup>473</sup>

## 5

An agile approach to water governance, flexible for national and subnational implementation, accelerates the achievement of SDG 6 targets.

Established in 2008, the UNDP GoAL WASH programme<sup>474</sup> aimed to accelerate achievement of the water and sanitation targets of the Millennium Development Goals, and ultimately of the SDGs, through reforms to water governance.<sup>av</sup> The general approach of GoAL WASH allows it to tailor itself to the country's needs. These include, "1) Identifying the gaps, needs, constraints, and opportunities in national water and sanitation plans, strategies and capacities, 2) supporting development and reform of action plans, policies, laws, coordinating mechanisms and regulatory functions and, 3) supporting the implementation with accountability and transparency". GoAL WASH has developed numerous guidelines and case studies, such as Vulnerability Criteria, which can be applied in various contexts.

To respond to specific country needs, the GoAL WASH *modus operandi* was applied both at the national and community levels. In Liberia, it supported the establishment of a regulatory agency for the water supply and sanitation sector. In Paraguay, GoAL WASH strengthened service delivery capacity at municipality level, including urban, rural and indigenous communities. In El Salvador, the national and local levels of interventions were combined. Initially, GoAL WASH supported government capacity to develop and implement a new regulatory and institutional framework for water supply and sanitation and supported dialogues toward enacting a national water law. Despite these efforts, the process of water sector reform became highly politicized, and the reform has not been adopted. In the subsequent stage, GoAL WASH was refocused on the subnational level. For example, it supported local actors in the Torola River basin to establish mechanisms for improved transparency, accountability and efficiency in local water management. It successfully increased the participation and involvement of local

<sup>av</sup> GoAL WASH was implemented in 14 countries and one subregion (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, El Salvador, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Liberia, Madagascar, Mongolia, Niger, Paraguay, Philippines, Tajikistan, Togo and Mekong) and ceased activities in 2019. It served to fill the gap and build synergies among ongoing activities by national governments, UNDP country offices and other relevant actors. It is seen as a flexible approach to water governance.

actors in the issue. This resulted in increased economic contributions from municipalities in the region to improve local water conditions, which eventually surpassed the support given by the project, approximately tripling the original investment.



### Programme coherence between IWRM and WASH programmes creates positive synergies to improve the water sector.

To provide access to sufficient quantities of quality water (WASH approach), management of water sources such as aquifers, rivers and watersheds is essential (IWRM approach). Likewise, waste and pollution could severely affect water quality and sources if sanitation and hygiene are not factored into WASH programming. A 2021 SDG 6 synthesis of 90 evaluation reports across several United Nations agencies noted that UNDP IWRM programmes were usually aimed at government and coherent with agriculture and climate change results.<sup>475</sup> Though overlaps exist between IWRM and WASH programmes, most WASH programmes were directed at community-level beneficiaries and were coherent with health outcomes.

Working simultaneously at policy level and with beneficiaries allows for a holistic approach to water issues. In the Pacific Islands, an integrated WASH and IWRM programme benefited from the upstream (IWRM) and downstream (WASH) experience of UNDP to deliver water-related outcomes. WASH targets and implementation plans were mainstreamed at the national level and were given equal importance alongside IWRM strategies (watershed management, National IWRM Strategy) (Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu<sup>476</sup>). By integrating WASH programme components with comparably well-funded IWRM programmes, access to quality water was improved (Pacific Islands, Slovakia, Uzbekistan).<sup>477</sup>

Because the scope of an IWRM programme is wide and often trans-boundary, it produces vast amounts of data that could serve as a baseline or add value to WASH programmes (Cambodia, Jordan, Israel and Palestine, Niger, Pacific Islands, Slovakia, Saudi Arabia,

Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan).<sup>478</sup> Successful WASH programmes dove-tailed on the data generated by IWRM programmes, such as the identification of vulnerable communities and gender issues.

In Cambodia, strategic studies were conducted under IWRM programmes, such as a Vulnerability Reduction Assessment, Rapid Gender Assessment and Village Situation Analysis. The Rapid Gender Assessment contributed to the design of water-related activities with differentiated approaches for men and women. In Israel, Jordan and Palestine, Climate Vulnerability Assessments were conducted focusing on agriculture, human consumption, extreme floods and drought and wetland ecosystems. Similarly, some IWRM programmes developed voluntary water groups which have implemented WASH activities (Cambodia, Niger, Palestine).

Water collection relates to women's household work and is intrinsically linked to GEWE. UNDP has paid limited attention to document outcomes related to gender and water. Most documented gender-related results were in IWRM, with fewer in WASH programmes. There has been a general lack of explicit lessons about GEWE related to water evaluation.<sup>aw</sup> Instead, it has been mainly folded into social inclusion programming (i.e., youth and other vulnerable groups) directed toward their participation in water governance.

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<sup>aw</sup> It should be noted that there were more significant gender-related lessons on water before 2010. This synthesis covers 2010-2020.

# UNDP-SUPPORTED ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVES FINANCED THROUGH THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

**Lead authors:** Eduardo Gomez, Richard Jones

**Co-authors:** Claudia Marcondes, David Vousden

**Research associates:** Elizabeth Wojnar, Anna Kunová

## Introduction

Economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection must go hand-in-hand to achieve the SDGs. As a central actor in the United Nations development system, UNDP supports sustainable development practices that help countries grow in ways that adapt to the challenges posed by climate change and that preserve life on land and below water. UNDP has been a major implementing partner of GEF since its establishment in 1991, addressing our planet's most pressing environmental problems. Over time, 74 million people in 137 countries worldwide directly benefited from this shared portfolio.

This paper focuses on lessons in the areas of climate change mitigation and adaptation, land degradation, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and international waters. It draws mainly on high-quality terminal and mid-term evaluations linked to recent GEF replenishment phases (GEF-5 and GEF- 6),<sup>ax</sup> but also considers evaluative evidence related to other vertical funds (Adaptation Fund, Special Climate Fund and Least Developed Countries Fund), where relevant.<sup>ay</sup>

<sup>ax</sup> The UNDP ERC contained 465 terminal evaluations and mid-term reviews for GEF 5 and 6 at the time the rapid evidence assessment was conducted.

<sup>ay</sup> Currently, there are almost 1,500 evaluations and midterm reviews of GEF and other vertical funds publicly available through the UNDP ERC, published over the last 20 years. A balanced distribution of selected evaluations across UNDP regions was part of the screening process criteria. After the screening process, a total number of 123 evaluations were reviewed for this rapid evidence assessment.

## AT A GLANCE – Lessons Learned

### CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

1

Climate change mitigation initiatives in the energy sector need to understand the capacity of governments to adopt the necessary regulatory practices and the readiness of countries to take changes on board.

2

Climate change adaptation initiatives should respond to well-identified local needs and consider local knowledge in providing technical guidance to beneficiary communities.

3

Climate change mitigation and adaptation interventions can benefit from engaging with the private sector, but there must be a clear action-oriented strategy and commitment maintained throughout.

### LAND DEGRADATION

4

Land management interventions were most successful when they addressed local needs and livelihood strategies, and fostered cooperation between stakeholders.

5

Dissemination of land management guidance and project results through a broad range of media channels can enhance and strengthen awareness and sustainability.

6

Land management serves as a catalyst for integration with other focal areas/ sectors to deliver environmental and development benefits.

### CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF BIODIVERSITY

7

Strategic links with poverty alleviation, the promotion of alternative livelihoods and involvement of private donors can help to ensure sufficient financing and the sustainability of biodiversity conservation interventions.

8

Local interests and biodiversity conservation efforts can reinforce each other, with interventions benefiting from close cooperation with CBOs.

9

Participatory approaches to biodiversity conservation initiatives enable more effective adaptive management of interventions and enhanced sustainability and gender inclusion.

### INTERNATIONAL WATERS

10

The promotion of regional and cross-sectoral collaboration through GEF interventions is a key incremental contribution to transboundary water management.

11

International waters interventions benefit from ecosystem valuation and demonstration activities that foster policy-level support and sufficient funding for long-term, complex monitoring.

12

Cross-sectoral stakeholder engagement and knowledge sharing are essential to the long-term sustainability of multinational international waters interventions.

## CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

### Context

Climate change is increasing the magnitude and frequency of extreme weather events and has exacerbated slower-onset changes to natural systems, leading to food and water scarcity, threatening people's lives and livelihoods, and causing hundreds of billions of dollars in economic losses annually. Through the Paris Agreement in 2015, the international community agreed to limit the rise of global temperature well below 2.0°C above pre-industrial levels, and pursue efforts to cap it at 1.5°C if possible.<sup>479</sup> However, on current trends, the world is heading for a 3.2°C rise, which is going to lead to irrevocable disaster unless action is taken urgently.

UNDP support to climate change mitigation includes programmes to reduce levels of GHGs in the atmosphere through the introduction of renewable energy sources to move away from fossil fuels, and through the adoption of energy-efficient technologies or systems, including support to retrofit buildings or investments in sustainable urban transportation. Climate change adaptation is facilitated by UNDP through climate information and early warning systems and support to enhancing community resilience.

### Lessons Learned

**1**

Climate change mitigation initiatives in the energy sector need to understand the capacity of governments to adopt the necessary regulatory practices, and the readiness of countries to take changes on board.

Successful initiatives ensured a careful assessment of the maturity of the renewable energy sector among countries and governments, and of the level of regulatory and technical capacity in country to independently develop and implement technical regulations. These projects factored capacity-development and adequate time for implementation into their formulation.

The share of renewable sources (mainly hydropower, wind and solar) in the energy mix of individual countries varies, as does the readiness of individual governments for change, as well as business and public support to move away from fossil fuels. In the Caribbean, the Ten Islands Challenge project worked across ten countries, obtaining different results in each depending on the degree of maturity of renewable energy discussions and the level of buy-in, among other factors.<sup>480</sup> Cooperation was most successful in cases where governments were ready to implement renewable energy interventions, and when internal country discussions and agreements on the shift away from fossil fuels had been reached. In Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the project successfully supported solar farms and facilitated the drafting of national energy transition strategies.

In other cases, the results of climate change mitigation project have been impacted by market or political conditions which were not favourable for implementation, or where the capacity of governments or energy companies were not yet in place to adopt complex regulatory practices. In the Seychelles, despite a comprehensive education and communication strategy on energy efficiency, the adoption and roll-out of minimum energy performance standards for appliances was dependent on regulatory government structures, whose capacity was overestimated.<sup>481</sup> In Moldova, the Energy Service Company project promoted new investments in energy-efficiency retrofits of municipal buildings. The terminal evaluation noted that the project came too early for the country, with market and political conditions unfavourable, limited local knowledge about the project concepts, and limited technical capacity and financial constraints of energy providers.

2

Climate change adaptation initiatives should respond to well-identified local needs and consider local knowledge in providing technical guidance to beneficiary communities.

UNDP continues to use participatory vulnerability reduction assessments (VRAs) to identify the local needs to be addressed through interventions. In Lao PDR, a localized VRA proved to be effective in mainstreaming climate resilience into local planning processes,

identifying investments and in taking into account site-specific adaptation concerns which also ultimately contributed to improving livelihoods. However, diagnostic tools need to be well aligned with required priorities.<sup>az482</sup> In São Tomé and Príncipe, VRAs focused on livelihood vulnerabilities rather than a diagnosis of climate vulnerability, resulting in the loss of a climate-change adaptation emphasis.<sup>483</sup> As the project moved away from a climate focus, it quickly had to manage the livelihood expectations of 30 communities, with limited budget and capacity.

Local perspectives also need to be applied in further stages of an intervention implementation, notably in awareness-raising activities and providing technical guidance. In Guinea, good results were achieved through the production and dissemination of locally appropriate materials to foster climate-change-resilient agro-forest practices.<sup>484</sup> Selection of these materials took into consideration the existing knowledge and experience of beneficiaries, and their presentation used appropriate language and pictures to convey information. Similarly, in Liberia, Farmer Field School guidelines were tailored specifically to farmers to enable them to transform conservation agriculture through measures to address climate change adaptation needs best-suited to the local circumstances.<sup>485</sup>

Climate information should be packaged in formats that smallholder farmer communities can easily understand. This is not always the case, such as in Zimbabwe, where the Scaling Up Climate Change Adaptation project evaluation recommended better presentation of information to ensure accessibility for everyone.<sup>486</sup> It found that there was a lack of information at the level of beneficiaries, hindering efforts to push for the policy changes necessary to enable replication of the pilot experiences, or to ensure that their benefits reached a wider spectrum of stakeholders. In the Philippines, the Weather index-based insurance (WIBI) project had the potential to enable farmers to stabilize risk through a weather index-based insurance system.<sup>487</sup> Unfortunately, the

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<sup>az</sup> These included irrigation system upgrades up to climate proofing standard, climate resilient water supply, flood gate improvements, community bridges, etc. that contributed to securing safe and uninterrupted supply of irrigation and freshwater, improving flood protection and connectivity and providing for mobility of residing population in the face of intensified hydro-meteorological hazards.

understanding of the risk-transfer mechanism and climate resiliency was low among farmers, despite the work of the project. This highlights the importance of disseminating information about the tool and its application to farmers in an accessible manner.

## 3

Climate change mitigation and adaptation interventions can benefit from engaging with the private sector, but there must be a clear action-oriented strategy and commitment maintained throughout.

The private sector is an important partner in supporting government agencies, developing innovations, mobilizing capital and ensuring the success of climate change interventions. Opportunities for private investment exist in fields such as GHG emissions reduction, climate information, early warning systems and energy efficiency. In Serbia, innovation awards and performance-based payments were some of the successful programming strategies used to raise the interest and involve the private sector, leading to the mobilization of private capital to achieve climate change goals.<sup>ba 488</sup>

In the Strengthening Climate Information/Early Warning Systems in Africa programme, the national hydrological and meteorological services of the 11 participating countries included cell-phone service providers and private weather companies as key partners.<sup>489</sup> These private sector partners provided the collection of weather observations and other data and the delivery of services, which were key to enhancing the national coverage of the weather, climate and hydrological monitoring infrastructure. In Mongolia, the private sector was engaged from inception and played an important role in developing technical solutions to address the limited availability of insulating materials, which was key for the adoption of energy-efficient practices.<sup>490</sup>

In other cases, interventions missed key elements of cooperation with the private sector, such as the early identification of potential stakeholders, and engagement between government and private sector.

<sup>ba</sup> According to the evaluation, the project successfully managed to secure additional cash co-financing from four companies implementing selected innovation projects, totalling US\$545,000. In-kind co-financing from GIZ supported one company. Cash co-financing from the Slovak Ministry of Finance totals US\$203,000.

Sometimes, even a strategy for the inclusion of the private sector was lacking. In Malawi, potential private sector stakeholders and investors in the climate information and early warning system were not identified in initial project consultations and attempts to engage with the private sector throughout the implementation phase had little success, resulting in limited post-project funding for operations and management.<sup>491</sup> In Moldova, there was initial support from energy service companies interested in investing in the energy savings building retrofit activities, but the project was unable to fully demonstrate the advantages of moving to the energy performance contracting modality, which required companies to incur more risk and use their own investments to finance retrofits.<sup>bb 492</sup> In the Maldives, a tourism project produced solid baseline studies and reports, which could have influenced climate change adaptation policy, but lacked a strategy to use these to influence policy and was unable to engage with the private tourism sector.<sup>493</sup>

In certain cases, engagement with the private sector posed a reputational risk for UNDP, such as in the global project Assisting non-LDC developing countries with country-driven processes to advance National Adaptation Plans in 96 countries.<sup>494</sup> The project proposed pilot public-private platforms on adaptation finance, but had to be discontinued because of the potential for misperception that the United Nations was promoting private sector entities, which constrained UNDP from further engaging with the private sector in additional national adaptation initiatives.

## LAND DEGRADATION

### Context

Land degradation, desertification and drought present global challenges to sustainable development, with implications for poverty, health, food insecurity, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, resilience and

<sup>bb</sup> According to the European Union Joint Research Centre, Energy Performance Contracting (EPC) is a form of 'creative financing' for capital improvement, which allows funding energy upgrades from cost reductions. Under an EPC arrangement an external organization (ESCO) implements a project to deliver energy efficiency, or a renewable energy project, and uses the stream of income from the cost savings, or the renewable energy produced, to repay the costs of the project, including the costs of the investment. Essentially the ESCO will not receive its payment unless the project delivers energy savings as expected. <https://e3p.jrc.ec.europa.eu/articles/energy-performance-contracting>.

forced migration. Land degradation and land management are highly interrelated across the environmental areas in this rapid evidence assessment, with lessons often cutting across all areas. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Strategic Framework 2018-2030 seeks to help countries halt and reverse land degradation by 2030.<sup>bc</sup> Changes in land use, driven by commercial agriculture expansion, forestry and consumption patterns, contribute to increases in GHG emissions, loss of natural ecosystems, and declining biodiversity. Land degradation also threatens food security. Agriculture, forest and other land use represent 23 percent of anthropogenic emissions;<sup>bd</sup> trends which are expected to rise with population growth.

UNDP combats land degradation through: a) the provision of capacity-building and policy solutions to land degradation challenges; and b) supporting countries to design practical interventions in degraded landscapes to pilot and upscale technologies and approaches to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation.<sup>495</sup>

## Lessons Learned

### 4

**Land management interventions were most successful when they addressed local needs and livelihood strategies, and fostered cooperation between stakeholders.**

Land degradation has been recognized as a major driver of poverty among rural populations in most LDCs and SIDS. Local and community-level land management interventions are most effective when they address community needs, such as poverty alleviation and improving food security, and are culturally-sensitive and appropriate. Success has often come through the promotion of sustainable land management practices, by demonstrating agricultural productivity

<sup>bc</sup> This addresses SDG 15 and target 15.3: “by 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, included land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve land degradation-neutral world.”

<sup>bd</sup> The IPCC identifies agriculture, forestry and other land use as a significant net source of GHG emissions, contributing to about 23 percent of anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane and nitrous oxide combined as CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents in 2007–2016. IPCC (2019).

improvements to community members. Furthermore, experience shows that linking sustainable land management to critical concerns of poverty and food security increases the willingness of governments and NGO representatives to address land degradation.<sup>496</sup> The Uganda Cattle Corridor project highlighted poverty as one of the root causes of poor land management practices and subsequent land degradation, illustrating that it is not possible to address land management practices without addressing livelihoods.<sup>497</sup> The project trained farmers in conservation agriculture practices, which provided the dual benefit of improving household incomes and preventing soil erosion. The Eritrean Sustainable Land Management project also highlighted that lifelong access to land is a key factor contributing to poverty alleviation through enhanced food production, as well as for the environmental restoration of degraded (agro-) ecosystems.<sup>498</sup>

Likewise, projects need to avoid activities that result in decreased agricultural productivity, decreased food security and consequent poverty, as this can lead farming communities to abandon good agricultural practices that would support natural resource conservation.<sup>499</sup>

Concerns of appropriateness, feasibility, community priorities and local ownership of sustainable land management projects are also relevant to livelihood capacity-building and training. The Senegal Groundnut Basin project trained artisans to make new fuel-efficient cookstoves, which reduced the need for wood collection and logging and also decreased cooking time, smoke emissions and the risk of health issues and burns.<sup>500</sup> The new stoves provided an additional source of income through local manufacturing and sale.

However, a cautionary lesson was found in a Mongolian project to offset and mitigate land degradation, focused on reducing soil erosion and improving soil fertility through farming measures.<sup>501</sup> Livelihoods in Mongolia are based on extensive livestock husbandry, and the climate and soils in the project landscapes were not conducive to crop farming.

The project evaluation noted that improved pastureland (and livestock management) would have received more community buy-in and uptake than the crop farming approach taken. Similarly, the Brazil SGP focused primarily on water issues and plant production, though it is intensive cattle production that causes most land degradation,

through overgrazing and resulting soil erosion.<sup>502</sup> A more appropriate and effective land management approach would have been to address livestock issues through pilot grant projects, to support a move from extensive ranching to stable systems, with land released for natural regeneration.

Appropriate land management practices can be based on local ancestral knowledge, illustrated by the Uganda Cattle Corridor project, where communities adopted a practice of selective night *kraaling* (penning) on bare soil so that the cattle deposit seeds and manure to improve soil fertility.<sup>503</sup> Other cases introduced new techniques and promoted novel capacities. The Botswana Rangeland Areas project successfully raised awareness on the need for fire management, most notably through promoting changes in farmer behaviour, along with the donation of fire equipment, resulting in a dramatic reduction in the frequency and extent of bush fires and a major positive effect on vegetation regeneration.<sup>504</sup>

Another important element for local ownership of land management projects was continued support and oversight, either from UNDP directly, empowered local government, or experienced CSOs. Some projects with prevalent implementation components struggled to translate policy into tangible results on the ground, due to weak UNDP project presence and limited field-based staff (Pakistan,<sup>505</sup> Brazil, Azerbaijan). Meaningful engagement with all appropriate stakeholders during design and implementation allows projects to align with national development priorities and private sector aspirations, as well as community needs. Early engagement with other land degradation actors can help to inform project baselines and set realistic targets. The Uganda Cattle Corridor project demonstrated the importance of piloting 'grassroots' improvements in land management, and fostered community participation in project design and the operational modality, implementation and monitoring.<sup>506</sup> In South Africa, UNDP partnered with the National Wool Growers Association and large commercial farmers to strengthen community practices, with training for sustainable herding practices in rangelands.<sup>507</sup>

Land-use planning can become a means for conflict resolution through bringing together stakeholder groups to discuss issues, find solutions and establish 'ownership'. An Eritrean sustainable land management

initiative organized farmers to participate in land classification, provided advice to land surveyors and guided them in land-use mapping.<sup>508</sup> This approach was very beneficial to avoid contentious local community issues such as inadequate or unfair land distribution (e.g. adjusting land redistribution after farmers received infertile plots).



**5 Dissemination of land management guidance and project results through a broad range of media channels can enhance and strengthen awareness and sustainability.**

Engaging with media, such as newspapers, community radio and national television networks, provides valuable channels to build awareness for the dissemination of information on sustainable land management. In Mali, insecurity limited accessibility on the ground, leading to a partnership with independent radio stations to broadcast sustainable land management practices, which resulted in translation into the five languages dominant in each region.<sup>509</sup>

Social media and crowdfunding initiatives can also strengthen links between communities, civil society and the private sector. Social media can amplify messages to broader audiences at a low cost. The Ecuador SGP used social media to build awareness and provide a digital sales platform for innovative quality products produced by indigenous communities.<sup>510</sup> *GreenCrowds*, a unique social-environmental crowdfunding platform, strengthened the visibility and sustainability of sustainable community land management initiatives.<sup>be</sup>

Despite such growing evidence, communication strategies have been overlooked across sustainable land management projects. Evaluations indicate the importance of documenting project achievements and lessons to expand and replicate successes, and tailoring communications products for different stakeholders (e.g. policymakers, community leaders, programme managers, students), considering the most effective medium, relevant and clear messaging, as well as appropriate format and language.

<sup>be</sup> [www.greencrowds.org](http://www.greencrowds.org)

## 6

Land management serves as a catalyst for integration with other focal areas or sectors, to deliver environmental and development benefits.

Land degradation and climate change strategies often address the same core issues and implement similar measures, especially in arid and semi-arid lands. Equally, water management and associated land management should integrate climate change considerations into all aspects. Groundwater, and its potential to adapt to increasingly challenging climatic circumstances, is of particular concern. Restoring and maintaining ecological infrastructure can contribute to mitigating community environmental and financial risks, reducing vulnerability to natural disasters such as floods and droughts, and strengthening resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Sustainable land management projects should include a focus on promoting climate change mainstreaming. In the Namibia Sustainable Management of Forested Lands project, farming systems were integrated with livestock pastures, crop cultivation and forest management.<sup>511</sup> However, the project did not provide adequate guidance or support for implementing climate-resilient agriculture methods such as crop diversification, crop rotation, short-duration varieties, as well as multi- and inter-cropping. Such isolated forest management needs to make greater consideration and inclusion of climate-smart approaches, and projects need to consider climate change impacts as likely, not only a 'potential risk'. In South Africa, sustainable land management practices proved unviable under conditions of prolonged dry spells, which would require a complete change of land use, with alternative livelihoods not showing long-term viability, as they were reliant on certain rainfall levels.<sup>512</sup>

In a similar vein, it is important that land management projects interact with other resource management sectors, such as land/range resource management, animal husbandry, rural economy and forest resources management. This is essential to simultaneously advance environmental protection, economic growth and development objectives. A multi-sector approach, incorporating sustainable land management, natural resource management and integrated river basin management,

can build synergies and limit the risk of conflicting objectives, while mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and natural resource management into development and production practices. In Samoa, such a multisectoral management approach addressed multiple causes of land degradation and engaged several government and non-government sectors to work together on land degradation prevention and restoration.<sup>513</sup> This further promoted understanding and trust between the public sector and communities, and created opportunities for dialogue. In Belarus, UNDP and NGO partners helped to form a network of local protected area wardens/caretakers who were responsible for reporting problems to local authorities and territorial control agencies of the Ministry of Environment, and also acted as ‘go-betweens’ with local communities and authorities on protected areas management.<sup>514</sup>

## CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF BIODIVERSITY

### Context

Biodiversity is the diverse assemblage of the Earth’s terrestrial, freshwater and marine organisms and the different ecosystems of which they are part. It is crucial for life on the planet, it is a source of food, water and materials, and it plays a key role in processes such as climate regulation, disaster protection and pollination. The Convention on Biological Diversity sets out a vision that “By 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people”.<sup>bf</sup>

UNDP is proactively addressing biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation through its work around six key thematic areas: mainstreaming biodiversity; unlocking the potential of protected areas; managing and rehabilitating ecosystems; land management; transforming the food and agricultural commodities systems; and sustaining resilient forest ecosystems.

<sup>bf</sup> Since 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is the global policy framework for action to maintain biodiversity. Its current strategic plan is the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the Aichi Targets “Living in Harmony with Nature”.

## 7

**Strategic links with poverty alleviation, the promotion of alternative livelihoods and involvement of private donors can help to ensure the sufficient financing and sustainability of biodiversity conservation interventions.**

The maintenance of national protected areas requires a series of financial commitments to multiple services and associated activities, such as extensive patrolling, nursery development or reforestation. However, ensuring financial sustainability is a challenge, as is maintaining and scaling up interventions (Lao PDR, Philippines).<sup>515</sup>

GEF projects have illustrated a number of ways to ensure project financial sustainability, including successful pilot project demonstration and the mainstreaming of projects into government budgets (China<sup>516</sup>). In some cases, catalytic sources of funding can be reached through the involvement of the private sector. The Coca-Cola Partnership on Water Governance provided funding for the China wetlands project after core funding was discontinued.<sup>517</sup> In Namibia, sustainability was enhanced in the Namibia Protected Area project, through small but influential funding from Yahoo! Japan.<sup>518</sup>

Financial resources and the sustainability of biodiversity conservation initiatives can also be enhanced by including poverty alleviation efforts for people living in biodiversity-vulnerable ecosystems. In Jordan, a project mainstreaming Rio Convention provisions benefited from an influx of financial resources when it shifted focus to 'mainstream social concerns', resulting in poverty alleviation no longer being seen in isolation but as part of a larger picture of environmental stresses driving urban drift and loss of rural livelihoods.<sup>519</sup> However, this approach provides no guarantee of replicability, and scale-up opportunities are often missed due to a lack of funding and co-funding, despite having a robust socioeconomic framework in place. In the Philippines, work with indigenous communities contributed to poverty reduction by promoting sustainable land use and conservation practices, income opportunities through sustainable livelihood projects, and enhanced organizational, leadership and managerial skills and capacity at community level.<sup>520</sup> However, despite its complex nature

and consideration of traditional community needs, the project faced sustainability risks due to a lack of co-funding, and leadership from a narrow set of traditional partners.

Promoting alternative livelihood strategies linked to ecotourism and forest conservation also has the potential to strengthen the sustainability of protected areas initiatives, although this also comes with risks. In Lao PDR, funding challenges threatened sustainable forest and land management initiatives, where sustainability was heavily dependent on ecotourism as the solution to post-project protected area funding and livelihood needs, but did not support this with a comprehensive risk analysis and a solid strategic approach.<sup>521</sup> The project did not successfully develop sustainable incentives at a required scale nor identify new financing mechanisms. Risks can easily materialize if the international ecotourism market is not understood, if approaches lack ecotourism revenue projections, or if there is no financial framework in place to fund the costs of patrolling, reforestation or the creation of alternative livelihoods.<sup>bg</sup>

**8**

**Local interests and biodiversity conservation efforts can reinforce each other, with interventions benefiting from close cooperation with CBOs.**

The articulation of local interests through CBOs, and the involvement of these groups in planning and co-management arrangements on protected area management boards, has advanced biodiversity conservation. It has expanded ecological connectivity for key species, improved livelihoods in areas buffering protected areas, and promoted non-timber forest products, livestock grazing, improved agriculture/horticulture, beekeeping and community-based ecotourism.<sup>bh</sup>

<sup>bg</sup> Despite having signed Conservation Agreements with 16 villages, going beyond facilitating direct payment to individuals for patrolling and reforestation work, and supporting selected villagers for alternative livelihoods.

<sup>bh</sup> Ecological connectivity is the unimpeded movement of species and the flow of natural processes that sustain life on Earth: <https://www.cms.int/en/topics/ecological-connectivity>.

In Mongolia, protected area networks have demonstrated that engaging with local CBOs can be an effective solution to articulate the Local Protected Areas governance model.<sup>522</sup> The approach helped to establish special protected area (SPA) buffer zones, and helped to solve staffing problems in remote and poorly-funded SPAs. Cooperation with SPAs in wildlife monitoring resulted in local protected area volunteer rangers learning-by-doing and the strengthening of the protected areas network.

In the Philippines, the promotion and institutionalization of Indigenous and Local Community Conservation Areas and Territories (ICCAs) proved that they are a sustainable addition to the national protected areas system.<sup>523</sup> Establishing ICCAs is challenging, due to the ethnic diversity of local populations, and requires a balance of ambition with associated risks through the careful assessment of capacity gaps of national government agencies, NGOs and implementing partners. Strengthening partner capacity and overcoming technological and accessibility constraints also require appropriate funding.

If appropriate adaptive management mechanisms are applied, addressing community needs such as access to farmland, biodiversity conservation efforts can reinforce each other and produce synergistic, even unplanned, positive results. In Georgia, when Machakhela became a National Park, the project secured the support of local communities by promoting the long-term potential benefits of the Machakhela area and potential ecosystem services (non-timber forest products, clean water, ecotourism, production of organic foods, etc.).<sup>524</sup> The outcome of this adaptive management was a proposal to designate the Support Zone as a protected landscape.

**9**

**Participatory approaches to biodiversity conservation initiatives enable more effective adaptive management of interventions and enhanced sustainability and gender inclusion.**

As GEF project design and implementation has evolved, so has the importance of a solid stakeholder engagement plan requiring an understanding and recognition of why consultation is relevant, and the need to allocate resources for its design and implementation. The participation of key stakeholders beyond the implementing agency, executing

agency and governmental institutions can be a valuable addition to consultations. Fostering the input and cooperation of all relevant agencies can also pay dividends.

Multi-stakeholder participation is key, among many other things, to ensure the successful implementation of project activities and the sustainability of key project outcomes. In Ethiopia, the ability to mobilize partnerships between communities, local and regional/zonal authorities, universities and private firms was crucial to address the flooding, watershed and biodiversity issues associated with degraded lands in areas of high biodiversity.<sup>525</sup> Incentives were needed to generate a shift toward sustainable land and ecosystems management, namely extensive coordination, cooperation and cost-sharing between stakeholders for specific protected area and related sustainable livelihood outcomes.

Benefits go beyond project implementation, and can lead to stronger national ownership, more conducive policy frameworks, new sources of funding and, in general, greater potential for future sustainability. Stakeholder involvement during the inception phase can fundamentally change a project for the better. In the case of Jordan, a revision of the stakeholder matrix provided a more comprehensive overview and fundamentally changed the project approach from 'top down' to 'bottom up', linking the three Rio Conventions with the role of rural people within a socio-ecosystem.<sup>526</sup> The improvement to the environmental status was considered significant, with a watershed management approach to support the natural vegetation with harvested water from the flash floods contributing to the conservation of the biodiversity values of the rangeland. In Cambodia, hosting the PMU within government premises was a highly effective means of fully engaging with government and local stakeholders on the three Rio Conventions, allowing understanding of the political, technical, financial and logistical support needs, and enhancing the ability of the PMU to coordinate and collaborate with other initiatives in the fields of climate change, land degradation and biodiversity conservation.<sup>527</sup>

To fine-tune the project workplan timelines and budgets in Georgia, it was key to ensure that the donor community knew about each other's investments, activities and work plans, allowing for more efficient deployment of consultants for training and capacity-building

activities.<sup>67</sup> Stakeholder involvement must match project objectives, with the necessary competencies. If, in addition, the project is accompanied by substantial associated funding, the likelihood of sustainability increases. This was evidenced in a project for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the headwaters of the Huaihe River Basin in China.<sup>528</sup>

Gender mainstreaming has been widely encouraged over the years, but many projects still face difficulties in integrating gender into interventions. Gender strategies need to be considered and implemented as early as possible, and with a long-term view, recognizing the time and continuous effort required to promote the social and cultural changes to mainstream gender approaches into natural resource management.<sup>529</sup> Common gender issues arise at the design phase, which could be identified through a participatory process, including the lack of gender-specific objectives (the Philippines)<sup>530</sup> or the lack of integrated gender mainstreaming targets in results frameworks (Mongolia,<sup>531</sup> China).<sup>532</sup> The global project to provide technical support to produce the 6NR illustrated that multi-country biodiversity projects should be mindful of including a differentiated approach to gender (reflecting the country's situation) from the design stage.<sup>533</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL WATERS

### Context

Sustainable, integrated management of multi-country freshwater and marine systems requires complex regional and national governance reforms. Since 1991, the UNDP-GEF International Waters Programme has supported over 100 countries that share some of the largest and most important aquatic ecosystems, working cooperatively to address agreed priority environmental and water resource concerns facing such waterbodies. These are comprised of 'signature' programmes related to waterbody types (large marine ecosystems, lakes, rivers and aquifers), themes (IWRM and integrated coastal area management) and global programmes. The portfolio sustains the world's most significant shared water systems for the billions of people who depend on these ecosystems for their livelihoods and security.

## Lessons Learned

**10**

The promotion of regional and cross-sectoral collaboration through GEF interventions is a key incremental contribution to transboundary water management.

Evaluative evidence shows that international waters interventions can promote water as an element of cooperation and peacebuilding. This is illustrated by UNDP-GEF-supported binational cooperation between Ecuador and Peru, which is considered to be one of the most promising collaborative efforts in Latin America, jointly managing transboundary water resources, promoting trust, and building understanding and empathy, collaboration, integration and harmony.<sup>bi</sup> However, interventions can be undermined by the absence of cross-sectoral cooperation and experience sharing, especially when this is exacerbated by the frequent rotation of officials and unrealistic workloads that limit the opportunity for effective interaction and participation in decision-making, and combine to undermine the smooth implementation of interventions (Peru).<sup>534</sup>

To optimize the impact, waterbody management should use innovative approaches that promote stronger multidisciplinary cooperation across various sectors and stakeholders. The evaluation of Transforming the Global Maritime Transport Industry, a global intervention, noted the need for greater collaboration, especially in technology transfer related to maritime energy efficiency and GHG reduction strategies in shipping, ports and terminals.<sup>535</sup> A Global Industry Alliance (GIA), primarily driven by the private sector, focused on identifying and developing such technologies and making them available for consideration and use. This technology transfer requirement has been captured in a number of United Nations international agreements and treaties supported by the international waters portfolio.

<sup>bi</sup> Ecuador and Peru had been in conflict about border limits definitions for a couple of centuries, with a Peace Agreement signed in 1998. Since then, the integration and development of the border area has been a top priority for both countries, and water had become an element that prompted joint and collaborative work for the management of the shared resources (UNDP Ecuador 2020).

Agreeing to common regional monitoring and data-sharing protocols is an important aspect of regional cooperation, and essential for ensuring effective delivery and long-term sustainability. The terminal evaluation of the Yellow Sea Internationals Waters Project in China noted that the structure of data- and information-sharing on sources and sinks of contaminants among different sectors had not been formally established, restricting both adequate evaluation and long-term monitoring procedures.<sup>536</sup> In this case, the absence of the data meant that any evaluation of the effectiveness of coastal area restoration was constrained due to the lack of a long-term integrated monitoring framework for water exchange capacity and tidal influx, ecological function of wetlands, and habitats for globally significant biodiversity, including migratory bird species.



**International waters interventions benefit from ecosystem valuation and demonstration activities that foster policy-level support and sufficient funding for long-term, complex monitoring.**

Policy-level support to international waters cooperation projects can be encouraged by accurately defining the value of water ecosystem goods and services, which helps to place these into the core economic and developmental interest areas of governments. The evaluation of a water resources management project on the Peru-Ecuador borders concluded that the economic value of the ecosystems, and the services they provide, had not been properly identified, measured and recognized by society.<sup>537</sup> This highlights the fact that ecosystem services are often given little weight in decision-making process. Decision-makers in the region may have been favouring outcomes with immediate commercial value at the expense of degrading the ecosystems and their services, generating short-term economic returns at the expense of long-term economic costs, which is unsustainable. In view of the value of the ecosystem services provided by water, the project could have benefited from a more integrated approach, adopting a long-term perspective on issues derived from the interrelation among water-environment-economy-livelihoods identified as the root causes of the environmental problems. The Yellow Sea shellfish-seaweed aquaculture demonstration project in China yielded a popular approach

for generating broad, comprehensive benefits, with measurable and noticeable improvements in kelp, coupled with decreased labour costs and greater economic benefits to the fisher community.<sup>538</sup>

Any effective management of water resources also requires detailed studies of the oceans, coasts, river systems or major aquifers. In order to achieve this, resources need to be made available in the early stages of a project to undertake a comprehensive study of the oceanography or hydrogeology of the waterbody. The Kura River Basin project in Georgia-Azerbaijan illustrates this, and also provides clear guidance for long-term monitoring according to specific regional river ecological status criteria.<sup>539</sup> The project developed an alternative and simplified methodology for hydrological monitoring in the river basin and set the stage for flood-risk mapping and the development of instruments and mechanisms for the reduction of risk of losses due to floods, and for water flow allocation and regulation between sectors. Clearly, such monitoring systems are an essential part of the monitoring and evaluation process, critical for confirming indicators and targets for projects and for updating both the transboundary diagnostic analysis and strategic action programme. The achievement of targets for reduction in the bycatch of endangered, threatened or protected species comes into question when no monitoring systems are in place to accurately confirm and quantify achievement (Indonesia, Philippines, Viet Nam).<sup>540</sup> Climate change is one of a number of prominent emerging issues that transboundary diagnostic analyses and their associated national action plans have identified in the fisheries sector, and which require special mitigation measures and careful monitoring.<sup>541</sup>

12

Cross-sectoral stakeholder engagement and knowledge sharing are essential to the long-term sustainability of multinational international waters interventions.

The management of waterbodies has been described as transversal, as it depends on and affects various sectors and actors.<sup>542</sup> Therefore, close coordination is necessary with stakeholders beyond the usual WASH sector, as water management is closely linked to natural resources, health, agriculture, fisheries, ecosystems, infrastructure, urban development, science, energy, planning, finance, social development,

tourism and disaster preparedness. In multinational and regional initiatives, setting up different thematic regional working groups has been seen to strengthen overall regional stakeholder engagement and interaction (China<sup>543</sup>). This can be further enhanced through links to and interaction with national working groups. For instance, workshops held by regional working groups on fisheries, habitats, pollution, sustainability, assessment and other relevant issues provided good opportunities to exchange information at the technical level.

Inclusion of the private sector as a major stakeholder is a critical step to support their long-term ownership of project objectives and outputs, but this needs to be negotiated carefully. During the GloMEEP project in Singapore, it was agreed that only individual companies would be considered for membership of the GIA, not associations or representative bodies.<sup>544</sup> The direct involvement of individual companies created personal 'ownership' and understanding of the broader issues. The Project Coordination Unit also proposed to invite observers to join GIA meetings (e.g. scientific experts, academia, etc.) where appropriate. The GIA has proved to be an exceptionally effective example of private sector engagement, allowing the sector to keep its independence while encouraging its input and partnership. As a result of this experience and lesson, this model is being replicated in other similar maritime projects where UNDP is acting as the implementing agency, such as the GloFouling partnership.<sup>bj</sup>

Further collaboration opportunities can be found in regional initiatives related to the aims and objectives of the UNDP-GEF international waters portfolio. A more interactive relationship between relevant United Nations bodies and/or intergovernmental organizations can help to build sustainability and avoid duplication and confusion over roles and expected deliverables. Attendance at each other's meetings, workshops or steering committees is a valuable means of ensuring such interaction. Collaboration with regional initiatives such as the Northwest Pacific Action Plan and the North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network has been a valuable practice that helped to enhance the likelihood of results and sustainability after project closure (China<sup>545</sup>).

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<sup>bj</sup> <https://www.glofouling.imo.org/>

Cooperation between actors is also useful for sharing knowledge through training and the dissemination of guidance materials to other projects, countries and regions. In the 'GloMEEP' Project in Singapore, tools and materials were successfully developed for the 10 lead partner countries, complying with Annex VI of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships.<sup>546</sup> Highly innovative products were developed, such as the Investment Landscape Mapping Report and the concept for an Ocean Investment Facility and Fund that highlighted investment opportunities in the blue economy.<sup>547</sup> However, even where a broad range of subregional-level activities has largely been responsible for driving increased revenue and employment in a region, this may not lead to a common agreement on subregional management arrangements.<sup>548</sup>

It is important for projects to engage directly with the International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN) and to methodically capture and share lessons learned and best practices and convert them into 'Experience Notes' or more detailed guidance documents or toolkits.<sup>bk</sup> Twinning exchanges among regional projects have enhanced the exchange of experience and knowledge, lessons and best practices.<sup>bl</sup> Various evaluations of international waters projects concluded that IW:LEARN could usefully leverage its comparative advantage beyond the GEF portfolio, and further strengthen its collaboration with external organizations such as the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, regional fisheries management organizations, river basin organizations and marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, to avoid duplication of efforts and exploit synergies.

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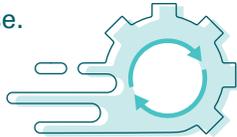
<sup>bk</sup> IW:LEARN was established to strengthen transboundary water management around the globe by collecting and sharing best practices, lessons learned, and innovative solutions to common problems across the GEF International Waters portfolio. (2020) Terminal evaluation: Strengthening Global Governance of Large Marine Ecosystems and International Waters Learning Exchange And Resource Network Projects.

<sup>bl</sup> Twinning is a scheme by which two projects contribute resources to mobilize personnel, expertise and mutually share their experiences and has been demonstrated to be a successful capacity development strategy.

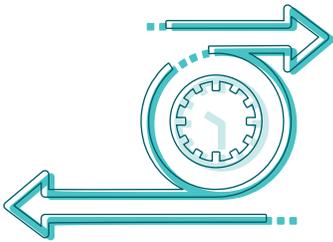
# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## Reflections 2021 – 2022

1 Data-driven programme design is key to success. “Best in class” UNDP programmes learn incrementally over time, integrating new forms of knowledge and leveraging existing expertise.



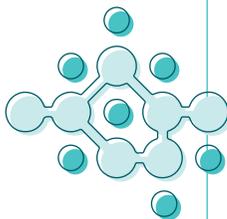
2 The success of UNDP interventions at the community level hinges on careful attention to immediate needs, localized presence and customized attention to communication.



3 UNDP accelerates results or achieves more sustainable outcomes for women and populations at risk of being left behind when it pays attention to intersecting vulnerabilities and the cultural and social aspects of marginalization.



4 Integrated approaches can lead to stronger and more durable results, but convincing partners to move away from sectorial approaches is still challenging.



5 Sustainable development financing is best achieved through the diversification of funding channels, including private sector engagement.



## 1

**Data-driven programme design is key to success. “Best in class” UNDP programmes learn incrementally over time, integrating new forms of knowledge and leveraging existing expertise.**

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A thorough understanding of the thematic and country context through various analytical exercises, needs assessments and evaluations, and utilizing and sharing existing expertise, were essential elements of successful UNDP programming. The development of detailed SEIAs proved critical for UNDP support to responses to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Financially sustainable programmes built on analytical insights into the political dynamics of aid, and regional and national development trajectories. Neglecting to analyse donor foreign policy interests and governance or human rights considerations led to the selection of dysfunctional financial models. Effective interventions also carried out initial analyses of barriers and potential hurdles for implementation, along with identifying risk mitigation strategies and enabling factors. Furthermore, experience from many programmes highlighted the key role of detailed technical expertise (such as oceanography, hydrogeology, ecotourism market trends, etc.) during the programme design phase, as well as the need for sound and methodologically rigorous exercises like vulnerability reduction assessments, rapid gender assessments or village situation analyses.

Successful and sustainable programmes also took advantage of existing knowledge, and supported the dissemination of that knowledge through stakeholder platforms, training and dissemination of guidance materials to other projects, countries and regions. Many solutions built on traditional expertise, indigenous knowledge and skills. Examples include the reintroduction of indigenous techniques to construct dry wells and harvest snow water, the practice of selective night kraaling (penning) on bare soil, and leveraging local women’s understanding of risk and recovery processes in crisis settings.



## 2

### **The success of UNDP interventions at the community level hinges on careful attention to immediate needs, localized presence and customized attention to communication.**

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Local and community-level interventions were most effective when they combined measures to address long-term community priorities and immediate needs. For example, biodiversity conservation and natural resource management projects were more successful when they also improved food security and addressed livelihoods and poverty alleviation. Effective local-level interventions also recognized that the needs of beneficiaries change over time, or as a result of unforeseen changes in circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Responding effectively to changing needs was possible when there were flexible and adaptive management structures and decision-making processes that allowed for agile adjustment to needs. Successful local-level initiatives also fostered community participatory processes in project design, operational modality, implementation and monitoring. These interventions also created and mobilized effective partnerships between communities, local authorities and other key stakeholders.

The involvement of CBOs has proven particularly useful in articulating local interests. Together with other local CSOs, CBOs proved crucial for geographical outreach, reaching remote areas, operating in local languages and navigating local contexts. They provided physical, flexible and localized presence in rural and remote areas, and to populations that did not yet benefit from digitalization and e-services. Understanding and reflecting the local context was also key in communication, awareness-raising, information dissemination and the provision of technical guidance. Many effective interventions customized the format and language in which information was spread, using local languages, contextual pictures, braille and voice-assisted technologies. To maximize reach in target communities, interventions used the media sources most widely consumed in those communities, such as community radio, social media or local television stations.



### 3

#### **UNDP accelerates results or achieves more sustainable outcomes for women and populations at risk of being left behind when it pays attention to intersecting vulnerabilities and the cultural and social aspects of marginalization.**

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UNDP programmes used a range of methods to identify those left behind, such as utilizing national identification systems or data provided by CSOs, obtaining mutual assistance information from traditional social structures, or applying specific assessment exercises. However, when identification was done on an *ad hoc* basis, or based on donor preference, some populations at risk of being left behind were excluded or missed. Addressing overlapping and intersecting factors of disadvantage through programming generally remained challenging, but there were also some notable examples of youth economic empowerment interventions that also addressed disadvantage due to aspects of geography, gender, ethnicity and education.

UNDP work was often hindered by entrenched social and cultural norms and power structures that prevented those left behind from fully benefitting from the interventions in which they participated. Many initiatives did not fully recognize that some groups or individuals may be denied the agency to make certain decisions by their communities or families, such as over money or livelihoods, and were not able to access the attendant benefits. These groups are also limited by structural marginalization that cannot be addressed by single interventions as it impacts multiple aspects of their lives. Evidence shows that understanding and altering these structural issues requires specific considerations in the design and implementation phases of interventions, long-term substantive support and funding, and consideration for context-specific opportunities for structural transformation.



## 4

### **Integrated approaches can lead to stronger and more durable results, but convincing partners to move away from sectorial approaches is still challenging.**

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UNDP strives for integration in its programming in a variety of ways: by strengthening cross-thematic linkages within or across Signature Solutions; by connecting global, regional and country level programmes; and by aligning with other United Nations agencies and partnering with multiple sectors or actors. Many successful UNDP programmes achieved results through strengthening linkages and creating synergies, by simultaneously working at the policy level (upstream) and with people on the ground (downstream). In some cases, new policy in one area was needed to accelerate results in a related area, for example, coordinating WASH interventions at national and regional levels boosted the implementation of IWRM programmes in communities. In other cases, the adoption of new legislation or policies, such as strengthening gender equality in national planning, was key to achieving systemic results for populations that simultaneously received economic empowerment interventions. Other successful approaches included supporting the capacity to collect, analyse and report on data, linking local and national level authorities.

Promoting integration in cooperation with governments was hindered when key stakeholders had incentive to retain areas of control, or during major political shifts. UNDP was more successful in achieving integrated results when it entered into partnership with multiple government ministries or included municipal-level authorities, which proved conducive to overcoming fragmentation and promoting integration and inclusion. In certain contexts involving a broad human rights and equality agenda, UNDP also partnered with civil society actors who were able to link the voices of marginalized people with whom they worked with national-level normative processes. Involvement in such processes needs to be informed by an understanding that civil society is a site of partnership and contestation, but may also be fragmented or even conflicted.



## 5

### **Sustainable development financing is best achieved through the diversification of funding channels, including private sector engagement.**

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By leveraging multi-donor funding, UNDP fostered the diversification of funding streams, which helped to strengthen national capacity to access multiple development finance streams and mobilize other investments. This required consistent efforts to address institutional constraints, in coordination with national and sector-level agencies. There are some successful cases of leveraging private sector funds, for example in the areas of renewable energy and livelihoods. There was also evidence of the potential risks stemming from misperceptions of the role of UNDP in relation to organizational neutrality on the market, and the potential for human rights advocacy to appear compromised by the application of market approaches. Fund diversification also included the option of adding fees, tariffs or types of non-financial contributions to sustain established facilities such as government one-stop-shops, localized energy sources or water distribution services. Such approaches were successful when they kept services broadly accessible, for example by opting for non-financial contributions, and when they understood the incentives they were creating. Evidence from e-governance, access to renewable energy and water interventions shows that when these concerns were addressed, reasonable and transparent fees or contributions can also bring other benefits, such as increased uptake or improved relationships between recipients (citizens or consumers) and providers (State authorities or private sector entities).

# NEXT STEPS



## An evolving approach to generate foresight

IEO is ramping up its role in providing evidence syntheses for organizational learning through its multi-year workplan (2022-25) and leadership of the Global Coalition on Evaluative Evidence for SDG Syntheses, which will summarize what works in relation to the five Pillars of the SDGs (people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships). In this context, the *Reflections* series will build on its niche of providing evidence quickly, in a digestible format and based on stakeholder demand, and strengthen audience engagement.

In 2023, the *Reflections* series aims to continue contributing to organizational learning by producing relevant and useful lessons based on an understanding of the current stakeholder demand for evidence. Following positive feedback on the content and form of the products, the lessons will synthesize UNDP internal and external evaluative data and be applicable especially (but not exclusively) at country level. The 2023 series will feature four papers on key topics responding to the organization's needs, one each quarter. Additionally, there is flexibility to cover two additional papers based on requests from the Executive Board and UNDP senior management as necessary. The lessons will be disseminated as short papers, and in new communication formats as well as interactive webinars.

The *Reflections* series will evolve its approach and review its methodology with the use of the IEO AIDA and other synthesis software that allow the integration of additional databases to the analysis.<sup>bm</sup> To facilitate opportunities for collaboration with other United Nations agencies and development partners, IEO will continue to extract lessons from other open evaluation data sources. The *Reflections* series will continue to respond to future UNDP needs, with implementable lessons aimed at improving the organization's development effectiveness.

<sup>bm</sup> <https://aida.undp.org/landing>

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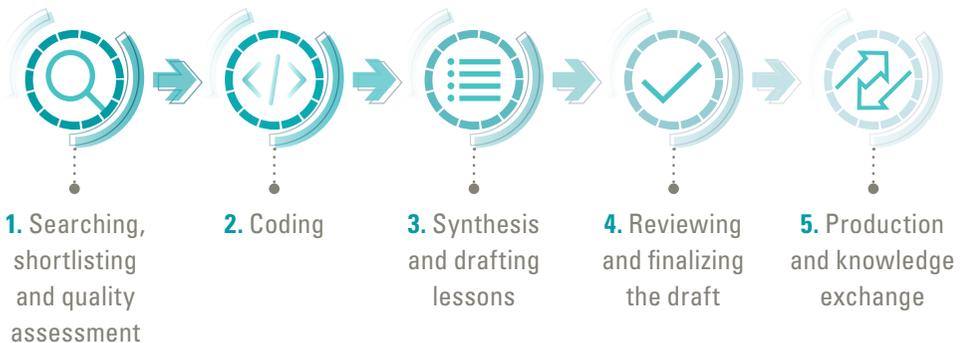
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## ANNEX 2. METHODOLOGY

The papers in the *Reflections* series follow a standard protocol. Topics are proposed based on consultation with intended users and IEO thematic and regional focal points, environmental scanning and demand voiced at management level. Themes are selected when it is agreed that they address the main challenges and risks faced by the organization in the short to medium term.

The methodology for creating *Reflections* papers can be summarized as follows:



### 2.1 Searching, shortlisting and quality assessment

Evaluations and evaluative studies published by UNDP on the given theme over the past ten years were the main data sources. In 2022, externally published evaluation evidence was also considered, with particular prominence given to systematic reviews, joint and system-wide evaluations, evaluations from other United Nations agencies, or partner entity evaluations (government and donor).

As a first step in constructing the sample, authors conducted searches in the UNDP Artificial Intelligence for Development Analytics platform, AIDA.<sup>bn</sup> To complement this, evaluators also used NVivo to mine evidence published from 2012 onward in the UNDP Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC), or searched the ERC directly. In constructing

<sup>bn</sup> <https://aida.undp.org/landing>

their longlist, *Reflections* authors prioritized higher-quality evaluation designs and peer-reviewed systematic reviews, evidence gap maps, and implementation research, or evaluative studies that IEO could verify or quality assess.

## 2.2 Coding

Coding was done using NVivo, to supplement AIDA results. Coding for *Reflections* was typically both deductive and inductive, i.e. using a pre-identified set of core codes and supplementing these with new, emerging ones as coding moved along. By analysing and sorting codes into categories, authors were able to detect consistent and overarching themes within the data.

## 2.3 Synthesis and drafting lessons

Themes identified in the body of evidence were synthesized narratively in the form of lessons.

For the purposes of *Reflections*, lessons:

1. Comprise both established “best/good practices” that are reported in more than one evaluation and “promising practices” identified in case studies or single project/programme evaluations.
2. Include both positive and negative results, i.e. lessons on what worked (for whom, why, under which circumstances) as well as what didn’t work (credibility is at risk if *Reflections* papers only accentuate the positive).
3. Pay attention to HOW the result came about: What implementation factors made UNDP interventions effective or hampered effectiveness? Which mechanisms did UNDP use to achieve good (or bad) performance?
4. Avoid stating the obvious.

## 2.4 Finalizing the draft

Once a *Reflections* paper was developed, a small in-house review team provided written feedback on the drafts. In the case of joint papers, this included the management team from the partner agency. IEO management provided the final approval.

## 2.5 Production and knowledge exchange

Knowledge exchange around the lessons learned is a key element of the *Reflections* series concept. Three moments of interaction are central:

1. First, a webinar for each paper was held over Zoom and anchored in the SparkBlue platform.<sup>bo</sup>
2. Second, for select topics, an online asynchronous discussion was held on SparkBlue.
3. Third is the launch of this *Reflections* book which consolidates the papers produced during 2021-2022 and reflects on the key lessons.

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<sup>bo</sup> <https://www.sparkblue.org/group/ieo-reflections-series-2021>

## ANNEX 3. CONTRIBUTORS

**Cheayoon Cho** is a research analyst at the UNDP IEO. She provides research, data collection and analysis for country programme evaluations, corporate thematic evaluations, knowledge management, and synthesis and lessons initiatives. Prior to joining UNDP, Cheayoon worked at UNICEF Bangladesh as a research and evaluation consultant, where she managed multiple mixed-method evaluations, provided technical support to research activities, and supported monitoring activities in the country office. She also has research and programme management experience in Uganda and Indonesia. She holds a master's degree in Developmental Psychology from Columbia University and a diploma in Psychology from the University of Toronto.

**Gédéon Djissa, PhD** is a senior evaluation analyst at the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Previously he worked as an evaluation officer for the International Development Research Centre of Canada. Between 2018 and 2022, he was a research consultant at the UNDP IEO. He also held a lecturer position at the University of Ottawa. Gédéon holds a PhD in International Development from the University of Ottawa in Canada, and master's degrees in Development Economics and Project Management from the University of Auvergne in France.

**Landry Fanou** is a planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning advisor at the Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation. His current areas of focus are on planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning processes and leadership in guiding food system transformation in low and middle-income countries. Between 2018 and 2021, Landry was a research associate at the UNDP IEO. He worked as a postgraduate researcher at the Development Economics Group of Wageningen University and as an in-country representative of Partners for Development in Benin. Landry holds two master's degrees in Environmental Sciences from Wageningen University and Research and Rural Economics from the University of Abomey-Calavi.

**Andrew Fyfe** is Regional Evaluation Officer in the Cairo office of the World Food Programme. He was formerly Head of Evaluation at the UNCDF and an elected United Nations Evaluation Group Vice Chair between 2020 and 2022, with responsibility for coordinating work on

norm and standard development across the United Nations evaluation system. He is a committed evaluator and strongly believes in the potential of evaluators to support more effective and transformative decision-making and resource allocation – including in the multilateral system – to the benefit of all groups subject to public policymaking.

**Rakesh Ganguli** is a senior gender and social inclusion practitioner based in India. His work spans grassroots movements, state and national government initiatives, public policy and advocacy and international development focusing on gender and social inclusion. Rakesh has first-hand experience in emergency response, peacebuilding and conflict transformation, and community organisation. He has also worked with several agencies, undertaking monitoring, evaluation and learning assignments, and managed multi-stakeholder partnerships, research and capacity-building. His work is centred on gender equality, diversity and economic justice. Rakesh has held senior positions in large, multilaterally-funded development programmes in India and has engaged with UN Women and UNDP IEO as an international and national consultant for gender-based evaluation and learning. He was associated with the UNDP IEO as national consultant for a global formative evaluation of the integration by UNDP of the principles of Leaving No One Behind.

**Harvey John Garcia** has been a senior evaluation specialist in the UNDP IEO since January 2020. He is responsible for leading ICPEs and conducting thematic evaluations. Previously, he was an evaluation officer in the FAO Office of Evaluation in Italy from 2015 to 2020. Before that, he spent 12 years in various technical posts, including as the lead M&E officer of the FAO Level 3 response to typhoon Haiyan, as an environmental specialist with UNIDO in Kenya, as a scientist for the International Rice Research Institute and Conservation International, and as a project manager with Earthcorps (USA) and Haribon Foundation (Philippines). He holds a BSc in Wildlife Biology and an MSc in Natural Resource Management. He is currently a Doctoral candidate with a particular interest in the nexus of communication and evaluation.

**Eduardo Gomez Rivero** is an evaluation analyst at the UNDP IEO. As part of IEO, he has led ICPEs of UNDP work in Ecuador, Bolivia and Equatorial Guinea, and has contributed to other ICPEs, global thematic

evaluations, and the development of new knowledge products. Prior to joining the IEO in 2020, Eduardo spent most of his professional career in Central America and the Caribbean, implementing policy development and institutional strengthening projects in the health and social sector. He also participated in decentralized country programme evaluations for various United Nations agencies (e.g., UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA). Eduardo holds two master's degrees, in Public Policy Evaluation (Seville University) and Political Science and Public Administration (Complutense University).

**Anna Guerraggio** is a senior evaluation advisor at the UNDP IEO, with over 15 years of experience in evaluation in the United Nations system. She has conducted more than thirty programme, project and country evaluations across thematic areas, including: food security; climate change and natural resource management; gender equality and women's empowerment; inclusive economic development; and peacekeeping. Anna has supported several training exercises for United Nations staff on the development of performance indicators, and facilitated the design of impact pathways for enhanced programme effectiveness. Before joining the United Nations, Anna worked in academia managing training programs on international development and humanitarian affairs. Anna holds three master's degrees in Behavioral Science (London School of Economics and Political Science), Development Management (London School of Economics and Political Science), and Public Administration and International Institutions Management (Bocconi University).

**Richard Jones** is the Chief of Section for Capacity Development at the UNDP IEO. He leads IEO support to decentralised evaluation, including leading the updating of the UNDP evaluation guidelines in 2019 and 2021, providing extensive training and support for staff in implementing decentralised evaluations, and designing and launching an online training course on evaluation for all UNDP staff in 2020. Richard has also led IEO evaluations of UNDP work in Eswatini, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zimbabwe and the Philippines, as well as leading a recent evaluation "Financing the Recovery: A Formative Evaluation of UNDP's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and SDG financing", in 2021/22. Prior to joining UNDP, Richard carried out programme, project and country office evaluations for a number of organisations, and most recently worked as a technical advisor in local governance for the

Danish International Development Agency in Vietnam and The United Kingdom Department for International Development in Tanzania, developing planning, budgeting and M&E systems for local governments.

**Anna Kunová** is a senior research analyst at the UNDP IEO. She supports coordination of the *Reflections* series and provides research and data management for corporate and thematic evaluations, ICPEs and other initiatives. Prior to joining UNDP, Anna worked as a consultant evaluating public policy interventions of the European Commission, and as an independent evaluator for various governmental donors and NGOs in the international development sector in the European Union. Anna has also led several ethnographic research initiatives to support evidence-based social inclusion policies in the Czech Republic. She holds a master's degree in Anthropology and Development from the London School of Economics and a bachelor's degree from International Area Studies from Charles University.

**Claudia de Barros Marcondes** is an independent evaluator with over 20 years of professional evaluation experience and accreditation from the Canadian Evaluation Society. A former local government and environmental practitioner in the developing world, she also worked for than 10 years managing international development projects in the sector and lecturing at the universities of Toronto and Ottawa. She has led or participated in numerous evaluations for the UNDP IEO, the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, GEF, and the former Canadian International Development Agency, among others. A Quality Assessment Reviewer since 2012, she assessed the quality of more than 400 evaluations by UNDP, UN Women and UNESCO.

**Ben Murphy** joined the UNDP IEO as an evaluation specialist in 2021. As a member of the Corporate and Thematic Section he has worked on global evaluations of UNDP support to energy access and transition and social protection, as well as country programme evaluations, *Reflections* Papers and synthesis initiatives. Prior to joining IEO, Ben was a senior climate change consultant at ITAD in the United Kingdom, where he evaluated multi-country adaptation, resilience and mitigation initiatives for several United Nations entities, bilateral agencies and philanthropic foundations. Between 2011-2016, Ben worked in Africa, building large-scale quantitative evidence in support of food

security, agriculture, WASH and health programming, and developing monitoring frameworks and training. Ben started his career at Practical Action, working with civil society networks under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change processes, and contributing to the adaptation and technology transfer streams. He holds a master's degree in Politics from the University of Sheffield.

**Sonjuhi Singh** is an evaluation specialist at the UNDP IEO, where she also previously worked as a research analyst. She coordinates the *Reflections* series and leads ICPEs and corporate and thematic evaluations. Prior to joining IEO, Sonjuhi worked for the Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services at the United Nations Secretariat on multiple programme evaluations. She has also worked for Pratham, one of India's largest non-profit organizations, where she was responsible for designing and implementing M&E frameworks, analysing results, and strengthening capacity. Sonjuhi holds a master's degree in Public Policy from the National University of Singapore.

**Ana Rosa Monteiro Soares** is Chief of Section for Syntheses and Lessons in IEO, overseeing, quality assuring and conducting syntheses to generate lessons that support decision-making and policy recommendations, especially connected to the SDGs and regional programming. Prior to that, she was the Chief of Corporate and Thematic Evaluations, leading and conducting country, regional, corporate and global thematic and programmatic evaluations. She has 25 years of experience in international development, 18 of which mostly dedicated to evaluation and national evaluation capacity-development. Prior to working for IEO, she was a strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation officer and expert on Millennium Development Goals for UNDP in Brazil. Before joining the United Nations, she was an international development advisor at the Center for International Development of the State University of New York, managing USAID projects with bilateral and multilateral cooperation partners in Africa, Europe and Latin America.

**Lucia Sobeková** is a public policy professional with expertise in environmental issues, gender and post-conflict. She currently works as senior monitoring, evaluation and learning officer at ClientEarth. She supported the IEO Evaluation of UNDP support to energy access and transition in 2021. Previously, Lucia worked as a research and policy

analyst at the University of Manchester, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the International Crisis Group. Lucia holds a master's degree in Public Policy from the Central European University and a bachelor's degree in European Studies, European Integration and International Relations from the Comenius University.

**Florencia Tateossian** is a gender-responsive evaluation specialist with the Independent Evaluation Service, part of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Service of UN Women. Her focus includes conducting gender-responsive corporate evaluations and managing the national evaluation capacity-development portfolio. She co-chairs EvalGender+, the global partnership to promote the demand, supply and use of gender-transformative evaluations. She previously worked at the UNDP IEO, the World Bank and the European Commission, as well as in government agencies in Argentina and Armenia. As a Fulbright Scholar, Tateossian holds a master's degree in Public and International Affairs from the University of Pittsburgh and a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Buenos Aires.

**Tina Tordjman-Nebe, PhD.** is a senior evaluation specialist at the UNDP IEO. She has over 15 years of experience in programming, research and evaluation in the United Nations system, with a focus on organizational learning. At IEO she coordinated the *Reflections* series in 2020/2021, and in 2022 led the formative evaluation of the integration by UNDP of the principles of leaving no one behind. She also leads ICPEs and evaluation syntheses as part of the SDG synthesis coalition. Tina holds a PhD. in Social and Political Sciences from the European University Institute, a joint master's degree from Universidad Carlos III de Madrid/Sciences Po Paris/University of Bath, and a bachelor's degree from the London School of Economics. She co-coordinates the UNEG working group on methods and is a past coordinator of the UNEG working group on ethics.

**Vijayalakshmi Vadivelu** is the Chief of Corporate and Thematic Evaluations at the UNDP IEO. She has over 25 years of experience in international development policy, evaluation and applied research. She has lead evaluations of development and crisis-related programmes at global and country levels. Prior to joining UNDP, she was a researcher working on governance issues and gender equality in development

at the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, India. She was a Visiting Professor at the Division of Global Affairs, Rutgers University. She holds a PhD in Sociology.

**David Hugh Vousden** is Honorary Professor of Ocean Governance at Rhodes University in South Africa and also currently the Chairperson for the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection, the independent global body of experts that advises the United Nations system on ongoing and newly arising marine environmental scientific issues. He has a career spanning 40 years, during which he has worked in various governmental and United Nations positions, all related to environmental management. During this period, his career has evolved through the development and ‘field-proving’ of state-of-the-art monitoring and analysis, into broader yet still cutting-edge management techniques and thence to innovative adaptive management and governance mechanisms. He has provided expert advice and professional evaluation services to marine ecosystem management and ocean governance initiatives throughout the global ocean and in many of the world’s seas. Dr. Vousden has been working with the UNDP IEO for the last seven years assisting with quality assessments of GEF project evaluations and with inputs to *Reflections* papers.

**Elizabeth Wojnar** is a monitoring and evaluation specialist and researcher with the United States Office of Refugee Resettlement. She worked with the UNDO Independent Evaluation Office from 2018 to 2021, where she supported UNDP country office evaluations, an evaluation of the Syrian refugee response, and evaluation syntheses. Previously, she supported programme management and learning with the International Rescue Committee in Uganda and HIAS. Elizabeth has a master’s degree in Law and Diplomacy from Tufts University, focusing on development economics and monitoring, evaluation and learning, and a bachelor’s degree in History and French from Wesleyan University.

**Jin Zhang** is an evaluation specialist at UNDP IEO. Before joining the IEO, Jin served as the Secretariat of UNEG from 2012 to 2018. She has worked with various other international organizations in the United Nations System, including the Executive Office of the United Nations Secretary-General, UNICEF, United Nations University, and

UNDESA. Jin has also worked with Amnesty International, in London, and with local non-profit organizations in both Michigan and Beijing. She has conducted field research on Chinese women's organizations. Jin holds a bachelor's degree in History and Economics from Peking University and a master's degree in Public Policy from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She has also co-authored scholarly articles on global policy issues.

**Xiaoling Zhang** is a monitoring, evaluation and learning specialist at UNDP. She joined the UNDP Crisis Bureau's rule of law, security and human rights team in 2023. Xiaoling has previously served as an evaluation specialist in the UNDP IEO, where she conducted country programme and thematic evaluations. Previously, Xiaoling worked at the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute. Xiaoling holds a master's degree in sociology from the London School of Economics.

## Endnotes

### **UNDP COVID ADAPTATION AND RESPONSE: WHAT WORKED AND HOW?**

- 1 UNDP RBAP (2020)
- 2 UNDP Ethiopia (2021)
- 3 UNDP Nepal (2020d)
- 4 UNDP Montenegro (2020)
- 5 UNDP Nepal (2020d)
- 6 UNDP RBAP (2020)
- 7 UNDP RBAP (2020), UNDP (2018)
- 8 UNDP Jordan (2021), UNDP Lao PDR (2021a), UNDP Nepal (2020)
- 9 UNDP Gambia (2021)
- 10 UNDP Moldova (2021a)
- 11 UNDP Lao PDR (2021a)
- 12 UNDP Gambia (2021)
- 13 UNDP Pakistan (2021), UNDP RBA (2021)
- 14 UNDP Moldova (2021), UNDP Pakistan (2021), UNDP RBA (2021)
- 15 UNDP Nepal (2020), UNDP Madagascar (2020)
- 16 UNDP Lao PDR (2021a), UNDP Pakistan (2021)
- 17 UNDP Kenya (2020), UNDP Bhutan (2020), UNDP Montenegro (2020)
- 18 UNDP Armenia (2020)
- 19 UNDP Bangladesh (2020)
- 20 UNDP Tanzania (2020)
- 21 UNDP Nepal (2020d)
- 22 UNDP Nepal (2020a)
- 23 UNDP Nepal (2020e), UNDP Nepal (2020d)
- 24 UNDP Cambodia (2020b), UNDP Cambodia (2021)
- 25 UNDP Bhutan (2020)
- 26 UNDP Ethiopia (2020b), UNDP Ethiopia (2021)
- 27 UNDP Malawi (2020), UNDP Mongolia (2021)
- 28 UNDP Ethiopia (2020b)
- 29 Ibid.

- 30 UNDP Malawi (2020)
- 31 UNDP RBAP (2020), UNDP Ethiopia (2020b)
- 32 UNSDG (2020)
- 33 UNDP Jordan (2020)
- 34 UNDP Zambia (2020)
- 35 UNDP Ethiopia (2020)
- 36 UNDP Kenya (2020a)
- 37 UNDP BPPS (2021)
- 38 UNDP Ethiopia (2020a), UNDP Zambia (2020)
- 39 UNDP Samoa (2020), UNDP Madagascar (2020)
- 40 UNDP Armenia (2020), UNDP Montenegro (2020), UNDP Kazakhstan (2020), UNDP Nepal (2020), UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2021), UNDP Cambodia (2021)
- 41 UNDP Kosovo (2020)
- 42 UNDP Cape Verde (2020), UNDP Samoa (2020), UNDP Sierra Leone (2020)
- 43 UNDP Armenia (2020a), UNDP Cambodia (2020), UNDP China (2020), UNDP Papua new Guinea (2020), UNDP Malawi (2020)
- 44 UNDP Armenia (2020a), UNDP Cambodia (2020), UNDP Pakistan (2020), UNDP Papua New Guinea (2020)
- 45 UNDP Samoa (2020), UNDP Kyrgyzstan (2020)
- 46 UNDP Cambodia (2020), UNDP Pakistan (2020), UNDP Sierra Leone (2020), UNDP Cuba (2020)
- 47 UNDP Sierra Leone (2020)
- 48 UNDP Papua New Guinea (2020)
- 49 UNDP Tunisia (2020)
- 50 UNDP Armenia (2020), UNDP Pakistan (2020), UNOSSC (2020), UNDP Kenya (2020a)
- 51 UNDP Bhutan (2020), UNDP China (2020), UNDP Kosovo (2020)
- 52 UNDP Nepal (2020b), UNDP Nepal (2020d), UNDP Cambodia (2020a)
- 53 UNDP Nepal (2020c)
- 54 UNDP Montenegro (2020a), UNDP Nepal (2020d)
- 55 UNDP Armenia (2020), UNDP Kosovo (2020)

**DEVELOPMENT FINANCING**

- 56 UNDP IEO (2018a)
- 57 UNDP Sudan (2011)
- 58 UNDP Burundi (2017)
- 59 UNDP (2010)
- 60 UNDP Sudan (2011), UNDP Sierra Leone (2014)
- 61 UNDP IEO (2021a)
- 62 UNDP IEO (2021b)
- 63 UNDP Burundi (2017)
- 64 UNCDF (2017), UNCDF (2018)
- 65 UNDP IEO (2021b)
- 66 UNDP IEO (2018b)
- 67 UNDP RBEC (2016)
- 68 UNDP IEO (2018b)

**UNDP SUPPORT TO E-GOVERNANCE**

- 69 UNDP Uzbekistan (2017)
- 70 UNDP Moldova (2015)
- 71 UNDP Uzbekistan (2017a)
- 72 UNDP Malawi (2021)
- 73 UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2018)
- 74 UNDP IEO (2020b)
- 75 UNDP Bulgaria (2013), UNDP Bhutan (2013)
- 76 UNCDF (2020)
- 77 UNDP Serbia (2021)
- 78 UNCDF (2018a)
- 79 UNDP Uzbekistan (2017), UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2022),  
UNDP Bulgaria (2013)
- 80 UNDP Georgia (2021), UNDP Serbia (2021)
- 81 UNDP Georgia (2021)
- 82 UNDP Serbia (2021)
- 83 UNDP Bhutan (2013)
- 84 UNDP Moldova (2015)
- 85 UNDP Bhutan (2013)

- 86 UNDP Bangladesh (2019)
- 87 UNDP Lao PDR (2021)
- 88 UNDP (2022a)
- 89 UNDP Eritrea (2021)
- 90 UNDP Trinidad and Tobago (2018)
- 91 UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (2021)
- 92 UNDP Georgia (2021)
- 93 UNDP Serbia (2021)
- 94 UNDP Malawi (2021)
- 95 UNDP Moldova (2015)
- 96 UNDP Bangladesh (2019)
- 97 UNDP Ukraine (2017)
- 98 UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2022)
- 99 UNDP Ukraine (2017), UNDP Serbia (2021), UNDP Armenia (2022)
- 100 UNDP Haiti (2018)
- 101 UNDP Moldova (2015), UNDP Georgia (2021)
- 102 UNDP Uzbekistan (2017)

### **UNDP SUPPORT TO EMPOWERING MARGINALISED GROUPS**

- 103 UNDESA (2012)
- 104 Ibid.
- 105 Oxfam (2013)
- 106 Ibid.
- 107 UNDP (2016a)
- 108 GEF (2016)
- 109 UNDP (2018b)
- 110 UNDP IEO (2018b)
- 111 UNDP IEO (2017a)
- 112 UNDP Nepal (2013)
- 113 UNDP IEO (2018b)
- 114 UNDP IEO (2020a)
- 115 UNDP (2021a)
- 116 UNDP Kosovo (2012)

- 117 UNDP IEO (2013a)  
118 Ibid.  
119 UNDP IEO (2016)  
120 Ibid.  
121 UNDP IEO (2013a)  
122 Ibid.  
123 UNDP IEO (2021a)  
124 UNDP Malawi (2012)  
125 UNDP Lao PDR (2018), UNDP Lao PDR (2016)  
126 UNDP Liberia (2019), UNDP Guinea (2018), UNDP IEO (2016)  
127 UNDP IEO (2016)  
128 UNDP IEO (2015), UNDP IEO (2013a)  
129 WHO Europe (2006)  
130 UNDP IEO (2016)  
131 UNDP Lebanon (2019)  
132 UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013), UNDP Sierra Leone (2020)  
133 UNDP IEO (2016)  
134 UNDP IEO (2013)  
135 Ibid.  
136 UNDP IEO (2010a), GEF (2016)  
137 UNDP IEO (2016)  
138 UNDP Albania (2019)  
139 UNDP IEO (2017a)

#### **UNDP SUPPORT TO GENDER EQUALITY AS AN SDG ACCELERATOR**

- 140 UNDP (2018a), UNDP (2022),  
141 UNDP IEO (2021c)  
142 UNDP (2019a)  
143 UNDP IEO (2017a)  
144 Ibid.  
145 UNDESA (2020)  
146 United Nations Evaluation Office (2019)  
147 UNDP (2019a)

- 148 Ibid.
- 149 Spotlight Initiative (2021)
- 150 UNDP IEO (2022b)
- 151 UNDP (2020e)
- 152 Ibid.
- 153 UNDP (2020f)
- 154 UNDP Guatemala (2018)
- 155 UNDP (2020f)
- 156 Ibid.
- 157 UNDP (2019a)
- 158 UNDP (2020f)
- 159 United Nations (2020)
- 160 UNDP and UNFPA (2020)
- 161 UNDP (2020d)
- 162 UNDP Afghanistan (2019)
- 163 United Nations (2020)
- 164 UNDP Afghanistan (2020)
- 165 United Nations (2020)
- 166 UNDP (2020a)
- 167 United Nations (2020), UNDP IEO (2021a)
- 168 United Nations (2020)
- 169 UNDP (2018c)
- 170 UNDP IEO (2017a)
- 171 UNDP (2020e)
- 172 Ibid.
- 173 Ibid.
- 174 UNFPA (2019)
- 175 UNDP (2020e)
- 176 Ibid.
- 177 UNDP IEO (2017a)
- 178 UNDP (2020e)
- 179 UNDP (2020e), UNDP IEO (2017a)

**BOOSTING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

- 180 UNDP (2020c)
- 181 UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2021a), UN Women Arab States (2016), UNDP Nicaragua (2012)
- 182 UN Women South Sudan (2016)
- 183 UNDP Tanzania (2022)
- 184 UNDP Somalia (2018), UNDP Georgia (2015), UNDP Madagascar (2013)
- 185 Chattopadhyay & Duflo (2004), Pande et al (2010)
- 186 UN Women Latin America and the Caribbean (2015)
- 187 UN Women Ethiopia (2020), UNDP Moldova (2017b)
- 188 UNDP Pakistan (2012), UNDP Nicaragua (2012)
- 189 UNDP Moldova (2017)
- 190 UN Women Tanzania (2017)
- 191 UN Women (2018)
- 192 Eagly & Karau (2002)
- 193 Banerjee et al. (2013)
- 194 UNDP Armenia (2021), UN Women Albania (2018)
- 195 UN Women Asia and Pacific (2017)
- 196 UN Women India (2018), UNDP Georgia (2015)
- 197 UN Women Arab States (2016), UN Women Albania (2018)
- 198 UN Women (2018); UNDP IEO (2012)
- 199 UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2020), UNDP Moldova (2017b)
- 200 UNDP Malawi (2016)
- 201 UNDP Tanzania (2022), UNDP Samoa (2016)
- 202 UN Women Ethiopia (2020), UNDP Nepal (2020)
- 203 UNDP Zambia (2020a)
- 204 UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2021a), UN Women Albania (2018), UN Women South Sudan (2016), Bertrand & Duflo (2017)
- 205 UNDP Tanzania (2018), UNDP Montenegro (2014)
- 206 UN Women Ethiopia (2020), UNDP Uganda/ UNDEF (2013)
- 207 UNDP Zambia (2020a)
- 208 UN Women Egypt (2017)
- 209 UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2021a)
- 210 UN Women (2018)

- 211 UNDP Fiji (2019)
- 212 UNDP (2014)
- 213 UN Women Asia and Pacific (2017)
- 214 UNDP Zimbabwe (2017), UN Women Latin America and the Caribbean (2015)
- 215 UN Women Albania (2018)
- 216 UNDP Kyrgyzstan (2021)
- 217 UN Women Nigeria (2020), UN Women Liberia (2018), UNDP Malawi (2016)
- 218 UNDP Moldova (2017b) (2017b), UNDP Malawi (2016)
- 219 UN Women (2018); UN Women (2018a)
- 220 UN Women (2018a), UNDP Moldova (2017b)
- 221 UN Women Nigeria (2020), UN Women Albania (2018)
- 222 UNDP Indonesia (2012)
- 223 UN Women Asia and Pacific (2017)
- 224 UNDP Fiji (2017)
- 225 UNDP Kyrgyzstan (2021)
- 226 UNDP Georgia (2021a), UN Women (2018), UN Women Palestine (2017)
- 227 UN Women Colombia (2020), UN Women Latin America and the Caribbean (2015)
- 228 UN Women Nigeria (2020)
- 229 UN Women Egypt (2017), UN Women Latin America and the Caribbean (2015)
- 230 UN Women (2018)

## **UNDP SUPPORT TO YOUTH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT**

- 231 UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013a)
- 232 UNDP Kosovo (2012)
- 233 UNDP Albania (2012), UNDP Kosovo (2012)
- 234 UNDP Sierra Leone (2015)
- 235 UNDP Kosovo (2012)
- 236 UNDP Somalia (2018a), UNDP Kosovo (2012), UNDP Syria (2019)
- 237 UNDP Kosovo (2012), UNDP Somalia (2018a)
- 238 UNDP Kosovo (2012)

- 239 UNDP Serbia (2012)
- 240 UNDP Jordan (2014), UNDP Tajikistan (2017)
- 241 UNDP Albania (2014), UNDP Nepal (2020a), UNDP Kenya (2011), UNDP Tajikistan (2017)
- 242 UNDP Tajikistan (2017)
- 243 UNDP Algeria (2017)
- 244 UNDP Azerbaijan (2017)
- 245 UNDP Somalia (2018), UNDP Algeria (2017)
- 246 UNDP Nepal (2020a), UNDP Kosovo (2012)
- 247 UNDP Nepal (2020a)
- 248 UNDP Albania (2012)
- 249 UNDP IEO (2018b), UNDP IEO (2020b) UNDP IEO (2021b)
- 250 UNDP Nepal (2020a), UNDP Albania (2017), UNDP Togo (2018)
- 251 UNDP Albania (2015)
- 252 Ibid.
- 253 UNDP Sierra Leone (2015), UNDP Kenya (2011), UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013), UNDP Kosovo (2012)
- 254 UNDP Jordan (2014)
- 255 UNDP Somalia (2019), UNDP Somalia (2018a)
- 256 UNDP Sierra Leone (2018)
- 257 UNV (2020), UNDP Tunisia (2018)
- 258 UNDP Sierra Leone (2018)
- 259 UNDP Kenya (2011)
- 260 UNDP Ethiopia (2020a)
- 261 UNDP Togo (2018)
- 262 UNDP Rwanda (2013)
- 263 UNDP Sierra Leone (2018)

#### **CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND PROGRAMMING**

- 264 UNDP (2018b)
- 265 OECD (2018)
- 266 UNDP (2018b)
- 267 CIVICUS (2022)
- 268 Iffat, I. (2021)

- 269 Anderson et al. (2022)
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- 271 UNDP and International Civil Society Action Network (2019)
- 272 UNDP Albania (2013), UNDP Eswatini (2012), UNDP Myanmar (2020)
- 273 UNDP Uganda (2015), UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019)
- 274 UNDP Montenegro (2020a)
- 275 UNDP Timor Leste (2020)
- 276 UNDP Albania (2013), UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019), UNDP Iraq (2013), UNDP Sri Lanka (2020), UNDP South Sudan (2021), UNDP Uganda (2015)
- 277 UNDP Iraq (2013)
- 278 UNDP Nepal (2015), UNDP Kazakhstan (2015), UNDP Rwanda (2017), UNDP Sierra Leone (2019), UNDP Pakistan (2011)
- 279 UNDP Uganda (2015)
- 280 UNDP Nepal (2015)
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- 285 ITAD (2016)
- 286 King & Hickey (2017)
- 287 UNDP Jordan (2014a)
- 288 UNDP PAPP (2015)
- 289 World Bank (2018)
- 290 UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019a)
- 291 UNDP Eswatini (2012)
- 292 UNDP Azerbaijan (2018), UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019a), UNDP Cambodia (2020b), UNDP Kenya (2021), UNDP Philippines (2020), UNDP Sri Lanka (2020), UNDP Tajikistan (2016)
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- 294 UNDP Albania (2013), UNDP Maldives (2012), UNDP Fiji (2021b),  
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- 295 UNDP Kenya (2021a), UNDP PAPP (2015), UNDP Tunisia (2019)
- 296 UNDP Azerbaijan (2018)
- 297 Banks et al. (2015), Bano, M. (2008)
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UNDP Uganda (2015), UNDP Viet Nam (2016)
- 302 UNDP Uganda (2015)
- 303 UNDP Jamaica (2014)
- 304 ITAD 2019
- 305 UNDP & GEF (2021)
- 306 UNSDG (2019)
- 307 UNDP Kenya (2021a), UNDP Zimbabwe (2019)
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- 313 UNDP Somalia (2018b)
- 314 UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019a), UNDP Sri Lanka (2021),  
UNDP Tanzania (2020a)
- 315 UNDP Sri Lanka (2021), UNDP Tanzania (2020a)
- 316 UNDP Georgia (2018)
- 317 UNDP Kenya (2021)
- 318 UNDP Montenegro (2020a)
- 319 UNDP PAPP (2020)
- 320 UNDP Kenya (2021), UNDP Montenegro (2020a), UNDP PAPP (2020),  
UNDP Timor Leste (2020)
- 321 UNDP China (2019)
- 322 UNDP Rwanda (2013a)
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**UNDP SUPPORT TO EXPANDING ACCESS  
TO ENERGY WITH RENEWABLE SOURCES**

- 324 IEA (2020)
- 325 World Bank et al. (2021)
- 326 UNDP Turkey (2019)
- 327 UNDP Barbados (2019)
- 328 UNDP Bangladesh (2021)
- 329 UNDP Mauritius (2017)
- 330 UNDP Nepal (2019)
- 331 UNCDF (2017a)
- 332 UNDP Burkina Faso (2020)
- 333 UNDP IEO (2019)
- 334 UNDP Somalia (2018)
- 335 UNDP IEO (2011)
- 336 UNDP Malawi (2020)
- 337 UNDP Mauritius (2017), UNDP Philippines (2020a)
- 338 UNCDF (2017a)
- 339 UNDP Fiji (2021a)
- 340 UNDP Botswana (2019), UNDP Botswana (2014)
- 341 UNDP IEO (2020)
- 342 UNDP Barbados (2020)
- 343 UNDP Egypt (2020)
- 344 UNDP Barbados (2019)
- 345 UNDP IEO (2020)
- 346 UNDP Nepal (2019)
- 347 UNDP Egypt (2020)
- 348 UNDP Mauritius (2017)
- 349 UNDP Nigeria (2018)
- 350 UNDP Sierra Leone (2020a)
- 351 UNDP IEO (2020)
- 352 UNDP Somalia (2018)
- 353 UNDP Papua New Guinea (2020a)
- 354 UNDP Barbados (2019)

- 355 UNDP Bangladesh (2021)
- 356 UNDP Benin (2019)
- 357 UNDP Ethiopia (2021a)
- 358 UNDP Nepal (2019)
- 359 UNDP Sierra Leone (2020a)
- 360 UNDP IEO (2019)
- 361 UNDP Malawi (2020)
- 362 UNCDF (2017a)
- 363 UNDP Mauritania (2020)
- 364 UNDP Nigeria (2018)
- 365 UNDP Nigeria (2018), UNDP Tajikistan (2021)
- 366 UNDP Botswana (2019)
- 367 UNDP India (2013)
- 368 UNDP Philippines (2020a)
- 369 UNDP Bangladesh (2021)
- 370 UNDP Fiji (2021a)
- 371 UNDP Mauritius (2017)
- 372 UNDP Serbia (2020)
- 373 UNDP IEO (2020)
- 374 UNDP Ethiopia (2021), UNDP IEO (2019), UNDP Barbados (2019),  
UNDP Benin (2019)
- 375 UNDP Egypt (2020)
- 376 UNDP Bangladesh (2021)
- 377 UNDP IEO (2020)
- 378 UNDP India (2020), UNDP Nigeria (2018), UNDP Mauritania (2020)
- 379 UNDP Nepal (2019)
- 380 UNDP Nigeria (2018), UNDP Papua New Guinea (2020)
- 381 UNDP IEO (2020)
- 382 UNDP Botswana (2019)
- 383 UNDP Benin (2019)
- 384 UNDP Burkina Faso (2020), UNDP India (2020), UNDP Mauritania (2020)
- 385 UNCDF (2017a)
- 386 UNDP Iraq (2020), UNDP Lebanon (2018)

- 387 UNDP Somalia (2018)
- 388 UNDP Botswana (2019)
- 389 UNDP Barbados (2019)
- 390 UNDP Ethiopia (2021)
- 391 UNDP Malawi (2020)
- 392 UNDP Mauritius (2017)
- 393 UNDP Viet Nam (2019)
- 394 UNDP Egypt (2020)
- 395 UNDP Sierra Leone (2020a)
- 396 UNDP Botswana (2019), UNDP Botswana (2014)
- 397 UNDP IEO (2020)
- 398 UNDP Bangladesh (2021)
- 399 UNDP Tajikistan (2021)
- 400 UNDP Nepal (2019)
- 401 UNDP Benin (2019)
- 402 UNDP Egypt (2020)
- 403 UNDP Sierra Leone (2020a)
- 404 UNDP Fiji (2021a)
- 405 UNDP Bangladesh (2021)
- 406 UNDP Benin (2019), UNDP Nigeria (2018)
- 407 UNDP Barbados (2020)
- 408 UNDP Burkina Faso (2020)
- 409 UNDP Malawi (2020)
- 410 UNDP India (2020)
- 411 UNDP IEO (2020)
- 412 UNDP IEO (2020)
- 413 UNDP IEO (2019)
- 414 UNDP Mauritania (2020)
- 415 UNDP India (2013), UNDP India (2020)
- 416 UNDP Barbados (2020)
- 417 UNDP Egypt (2020)
- 418 UNDP Malawi (2020), UNDP Malawi (2020a)
- 419 UNDP Tajikistan (2021)

- 420 UNDP Ethiopia (2021)
- 421 UNDP Sierra Leone (2020a)
- 422 UNCDF (2017a)
- 423 UNDP IEO (2020)
- 424 UNDP IEO (2019)
- 425 UNDP Sierra Leone (2020)
- 426 UNDP Malawi (2020)
- 427 UNDP Egypt (2020)
- 428 UNCDF (2017a)
- 429 UNDP Ethiopia (2021)
- 430 UNDP Burkina Faso (2020)
- 431 UNDP Bangladesh (2021)
- 432 UNDP IEO (2019)
- 433 UNDP Yemen (2019)
- 434 UNDP IEO (2020)
- 435 UNDP IEO (2020)
- 436 UNDP Barbados (2019)
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- 438 UNDP IEO (2020)
- 439 UNDP IEO (2019)
- 440 UNDP Bangladesh (2021)
- 441 UNDP Barbados (2019)
- 442 UNDP Botswana (2019)
- 443 UNDP Burkina Faso (2020)
- 444 UNDP IEO (2019)
- 445 UNDP Papua New Guinea (2020)
- 446 UNDP IEO (2019)
- 447 UNDP Sierra Leone (2020a)
- 448 UNDP IEO (2020)
- 449 UNDP India (2020)
- 450 UNDP IEO (2011)
- 451 UNDP Iraq (2020)
- 452 UNDP IEO (2019)

- 453 UNDP IEO (2021a)
- 454 UNDP Fiji (2021a)
- 455 UNDP Barbados (2019a)

## **ENSURING ACCESS TO SAFE AND CLEAN WATER RESOURCES**

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- 458 UN-Water (2021)
- 459 UNDP Angola (2013), UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013), UNDP Mongolia (2018), UNDP Mongolia (2015), UNDP RBAP (2012)
- 460 UNDP Mongolia (2018)
- 461 UNDP BPPS (2013)
- 462 UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013), UNDP Sierra Leone (2020)
- 463 UNDP Sierra Leone (2020)
- 464 UNDP Mongolia (2015) UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013), UNDP PAPP (2020a)
- 465 UNDP IEO (2013), UNDP (2016b)
- 466 UNDP Angola (2013)
- 467 UNDP Angola (2013), UNDP Mongolia (2013), UNDP Uzbekistan (2018)
- 468 UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013), UNDP Angola (2013), UNDP Maldives (2018), UNDP Mongolia (2018), UNDP Mongolia (2013), UNDP RBAP (2012), UNDP Sierra Leone (2020)
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- 470 UNDP Angola (2013), UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013), UNDP Maldives (2018), UNDP Mongolia (2013), UNDP Mongolia (2015), UNDP Fiji (2014)
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- 472 UNDP IEO (2022a)
- 473 UNDP (2016b)
- 474 UNDP BPPS (2013), SIWI and UNDP (2022b), UNDP (2012a)
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- 476 UNDP Fiji (2014)
- 477 UNDP Fiji (2014), UNDP RBEC (2013), UNDP Uzbekistan (2018)
- 478 UNDP Cambodia (2015)

**UNDP-SUPPORTED ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVES FINANCED THROUGH THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY**

479 United Nations (2015)

480 UNDP Barbados (2019)

481 UNDP Seychelles (2019)

482 UNDP Lao PDR (2018), UNDP Lao PDR (2016)

483 UNDP São Tomé and Príncipe (2020)

484 UNDP Guinea (2018)

485 UNDP Liberia (2019)

486 UNDP Zimbabwe (2019)

487 UNDP Philippines (2018)

488 UNDP Serbia (2020a)

489 UNDP Zambia (2019)

490 UNDP Cape Verde (2020)

491 UNDP Malawi (2018)

492 UNDP Moldova (2017a)

493 UNDP Maldives (2016)

494 UNDP BPPS (2020)

495 UNDP (2019b)

496 UNDP BPPS (2014)

497 UNDP Uganda (2016)

498 UNDP Eritrea (2017)

499 UNDP Namibia (2016)

500 UNDP Senegal (2013)

501 UNDP Mongolia (2019)

502 UNDP Brazil (2018)

503 UNDP Uganda (2016)

504 UNDP Botswana (2019a)

505 UNDP Pakistan (2018)

506 UNDP Uganda (2016)

507 UNDP South Africa (2020)

508 UNDP Eritrea (2017)

509 UNDP Mali (2020)

- 510 UNDP Ecuador (2019)
- 511 UNDP Namibia (2016)
- 512 UNDP South Africa (2020)
- 513 UNDP Samoa (2020a)
- 514 UNDP Belarus (2017)
- 515 Lao PDR (2022), UNDP RBLAC (2019), GEF (2019)
- 516 UNDP BPPS (2018), UNDP China (2014)
- 517 UNDP China (2019a)
- 518 UNDP Namibia (2018)
- 519 UNDP Timor Leste (2019)
- 520 GEF (2019)
- 521 UNDP Lao PDR (2022)
- 522 UNDP Mongolia (2018)
- 523 GEF (2019)
- 524 UNDP Georgia (2019)
- 525 UNDP Ethiopia (2019)
- 526 UNDP IEO (2016)
- 527 UNDP Cambodia (2018)
- 528 UNDP China (2019a)
- 529 UNDP Ecuador (2020)
- 530 GEF (2019)
- 531 UNDP Mongolia (2018)
- 532 UNDP China (2014)
- 533 UNDP RBEC (2020)
- 534 UNDP Peru (2019)
- 535 UNDP BPPS (2018a)
- 536 UNDP China (2020a)
- 537 UNDP Ecuador (2020)
- 538 UNDP China (2020a)
- 539 UNDP RBEC (2019)
- 540 UNDP Philippines (2019)
- 541 UNDP Fiji (2018)
- 542 UNDP Ecuador (2020)

543 UNDP China (2020a)

544 UNDP BPPS (2018a)

545 UNDP China (2020a)

546 UNDP BPPS (2018a)

547 UNDP Philippines (2018a)

548 UNDP Fiji (2018)





Independent  
Evaluation  
Office

United Nations Development Programme

Independent Evaluation Office  
United Nations Development Programme  
One UN Plaza, DC1-20<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10017, USA  
Tel. +1(646) 781 4200



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