

MOPAN ASSESSMENT REPORT

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# United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

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Published 2026

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# United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

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MOPAN (2026), *MOPAN Assessment Report: UNDP (Part I)*, MOPAN Publishing, Paris.

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## ABOUT MOPAN

The Multilateral Performance Network (MOPAN) comprises 20 members that promote an effective multilateral system, trusted to deliver solutions to evolving global goals and local challenges.

MOPAN is a network of members who assess multilateral organisations, shape performance standards, and champion learning and insights to strengthen development and humanitarian results and promote accountability. Capitalising on the Network’s unique cross-multilateral system perspective and expertise, MOPAN members work together to deliver relevant, impartial, high-quality and timely performance information as a public good through an inclusive and transparent approach.

MOPAN’s performance information mitigates risks, informs decision-making and supports change, helping to increase knowledge and trust amongst all stakeholders, and ultimately to achieve a stronger and better performing multilateral system.

FIGURE 1: MOPAN MEMBERS (AS OF 1 JUNE 2026)



## PREFACE

### INTRODUCING MOPAN

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The Multilateral Performance Network (MOPAN) comprises 20 members<sup>1</sup> that promote an effective multilateral system, trusted to deliver solutions to evolving global goals and local challenges.

A MOPAN assessment report seeks to provide a snapshot diagnostic of an organisation's performance, within its mandate. MOPAN's mission and vision are described in Box I. below.

#### BOX I. MOPAN's mission and vision

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MOPAN is a network of members who assess multilateral organisations, shape performance standards, and champion learning and insights to strengthen development and humanitarian results and promote accountability.

Capitalising on the Network's unique cross-multilateral system perspective and expertise, MOPAN members work together to deliver relevant, impartial, high-quality and timely performance information as a public good through an inclusive and transparent approach.

MOPAN's performance information mitigates risks, informs decision-making and supports change, helping to increase knowledge and trust amongst all stakeholders, and ultimately to achieve a stronger and better performing multilateral system.

MOPAN's shared vision is to promote an effective multilateral system, trusted to deliver solutions to evolving global goals and local challenges.

MOPAN's assessments provide a comprehensive overview of organisational effectiveness, including how an organisation is positioned to address its current and future challenges. These assessments support MOPAN members in their governance and decision-making for the multilateral organisations they fund. They also support the leadership of multilateral organisations in implementing reforms that reflect multilateral good practices.

MOPAN also produces a range of analytical insights into the multilateral system. MOPAN's full range of performance evidence and analysis can be found [on the MOPAN website](#).

### ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

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MOPAN assessments are conducted through a rigorous and collaborative process to ensure that the findings are based on a strong evidence base and resonate with an organisation and its stakeholders. It draws on multiple lines of evidence (documents, survey, and interviews) from sources within and outside an organisation. Evidence from these different sources is triangulated to identify findings and determine ratings against MOPAN's indicator framework using MOPAN's [methodology](#), which is based on international best practice. Additional information about the process is provided in Chapter 4 of this report and in MOPAN's methodology manual.

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<sup>1</sup> As at 1 June 2026: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Korea, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, USA

**Southern Lebanon**

Scene from the destroyed shops and houses in Qana, South Lebanon, where the livelihoods of people were significantly affected by the recent conflict.

Photo: © UNDP Lebanon/ Rana Sweidan



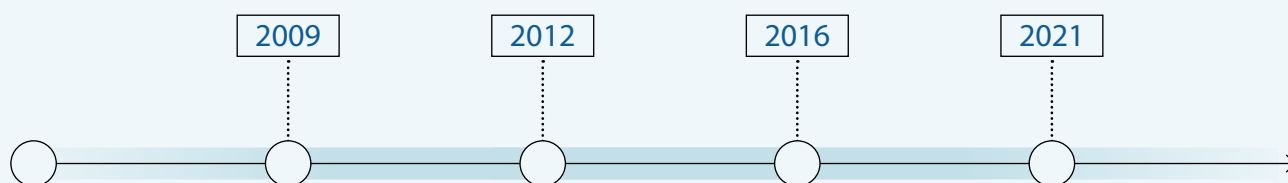
This assessment report includes five sections:

- *Executive summary*, which provides an overall summary of the assessment;
- *Chapter I: Introducing UNDP*, which provides key information about the organisation being assessed, including its mandate, governance structure, business model and operations;
- *Chapter II: Conclusions and considerations for the future*, which lays out the overall conclusions of the assessment and identifies forward-looking considerations for the organisation and its governing body; and
- *Chapter III: Assessment findings*, which describes the findings of the assessment against MOPAN's framework and Key Performance Indicators.
- *Chapter IV: About this assessment*, which provides additional information about the methodology and approach, including timelines for implementation and key activities.

The report is complemented by a set of Technical Annexes available online. Annex A describes the underlying analysis feeding into the assessment ratings. Annex B provides the overall list of documents used. Annex C provides the results of MOPAN's partner survey. Annex D provides a complementary analysis of UNDP's role in promoting UN system-wide efficiency.

## HISTORY OF MOPAN ASSESSMENTS OF UNDP

UNDP was assessed in 2009, 2012, the 2015-16 assessment cycle, and most recently in the 2020-21 assessment cycle.



The most recent assessment, published in 2021, coincided with the final phase of UNDP's Strategic Plan 2018-21. Links to previous MOPAN assessments of UNDP are available on the [MOPAN website](#).

**Farming in  
the Seychelles**

Francis Simeon,  
farmer from  
Val D'Andorre,  
using sustainable  
land management  
practices under the  
UNDP-funded Ridge  
to Reef Project.

Photo: © UNDP  
Mauritius /  
Jean-Yan Norbert



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The MOPAN assessment of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was conducted under the overall strategic guidance of Suzanne Steensen, Head of the MOPAN Secretariat. Erik Engberg managed the assessment and is the principal author of the report in collaboration with Marcus Cox from Agulhas Applied Knowledge. Gaia Castori authored Annex D and Carolina Testoni provided substantive contributions to finalising the report.

MOPAN is very grateful to Rianna Owusu, Kavoy Ashley, Roger Karlsson and Åsa Andersson from the United Kingdom and Sweden for championing this assessment on behalf of the MOPAN membership.

The assessment was conducted in cooperation with Agulhas Applied Knowledge and IOD Parc. Marcus Cox from Agulhas Applied Knowledge provided strategic advice and substantive contributions to Annex A and the final report. From IOD Parc, a team comprising Richard Burges, Matthew Crump, Enrique Young and Gabi Volak supported the assessment and contributed to Annex A and the report. The report also benefited from external peer review, conducted by Moira Reddick, Paul Balogun, John Hendra and Patrick Tiefenbacher.

The external partner survey was managed by Corentin Beudaert-Ugolini from the MOPAN Secretariat, together with Enrique Young from IOD Parc. Lina Fernandez and Jimmy Tang from UNDP also supported implementation and finalisation of the survey. The report was prepared for publication by Camille Hewitt and graphic designed by Baseline Arts Ltd.

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Finally, MOPAN is grateful to all Steering Committee representatives for supporting the UNDP assessment, and to its member countries for their financial contributions, which have made the report possible.

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### Education in Ndanu area, Kinshasa, Congo (DRC)

Ndanu, in the Limete administrative district, is settled alongside the Ndjili river. This school is in a former ricefield. This area is regularly flooded and the population struggles to maintain a decent life, dealing with lack of employment, floods, waste management and poverty. But in the end, life always wins.

Photo: © UNDP/ RDC/ Aude Rossignol

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**UNDP project on Consolidation of Peace, Security and Justice in Nouakchott, Mauritania**

Before this centre was established, children and youths in their neighbourhood had nothing to do in their free time after school and would easily get bored. This space gives them the opportunity to spend time with their friends and learn new and creative skills. The project is aimed at Mauritanian girls, boys and young people aged between 12 and early 20s, who can come to the centre and learn computer skills, acting and theatre through month-long workshops.

Photo: © UNDP Mauritania/Freya Morales

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>BERA</b>	Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy	<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>BMS</b>	Bureau of Management Services	<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>BPPS</b>	Bureau for Policy and Programme Support	<b>PBAS</b>	Performance-Based Allocation System
<b>CEB</b>	Chief Executives Board	<b>POPP</b>	Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures
<b>CIPD</b>	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	<b>PSA</b>	Personnel Services Agreement
<b>CPD</b>	Country Programme Document	<b>PSEAH</b>	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development (UK)	<b>QCPR</b>	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
<b>DIM</b>	Direct Implementation Modality	<b>RBA</b>	Regional Bureau for Africa
<b>ECOSOC</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Council	<b>RBAP</b>	Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific
<b>ERP</b>	Enterprise Resource Planning	<b>RBAS</b>	Regional Bureau for Arab States
<b>FCV</b>	Fragility, Conflict and Violence	<b>RBEC</b>	Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS
<b>FRR</b>	Financial Regulations and Rules	<b>RBLAC</b>	Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence	<b>RBM</b>	Results-Based Management
<b>GCF</b>	Green Climate Fund	<b>RC</b>	Resident Coordinator
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility	<b>SRM</b>	Stakeholder Response Mechanism
<b>GMS</b>	General Management Support	<b>TRAC</b>	Target for Resource Assignments from the Core
<b>GP</b>	Global Practice	<b>UN80</b>	UN Reform initiative (80th anniversary)
<b>GSSC</b>	Global Shared Services Centre	<b>UNCDF</b>	United Nations Capital Development Fund
<b>HDR</b>	Human Development Report	<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>HRBA</b>	Human Rights-Based Approach	<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>IATI</b>	International Aid Transparency Initiative	<b>UNDS</b>	United Nations Development System
<b>IEG</b>	Independent Evaluation Group (World Bank)	<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>IEO</b>	Independent Evaluation Office	<b>UNGA</b>	United Nations General Assembly
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development	<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>IFC</b>	International Finance Corporation	<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>IOE</b>	Independent Office of Evaluation (IFAD)	<b>UNOSSC</b>	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
<b>IPCC</b>	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change	<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>IRRF</b>	Integrated Resources and Results Framework	<b>UNSDG</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
<b>LNOB</b>	Leave No One Behind	<b>UNV</b>	United Nations Volunteers
<b>MAF</b>	Management Accountability Framework	<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review
<b>MAPS</b>	Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support		
<b>MOPAN</b>	Multilateral Performance Network		
<b>MTE</b>	Mid-Term Evaluation		
<b>NDC</b>	Nationally Determined Contribution		
<b>NIM</b>	National Implementation Modality		
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs		

**UNITED NATIONS  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





### **Dream big in Bangladesh**

Indigenous children in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh face many issues due to a lack of support and neglect. Children and mothers suffer from malnutrition, leading to stunted growth and susceptibility to different diseases in the village youth.

Photo: UNDP/OCHA/Jewel Chakma

## INTRODUCING UNDP

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UNDP was established in 1965 as the UN’s principal vehicle for multilateral development cooperation. Its mandate has evolved substantially over six decades — from a central funding mechanism and technical assistance provider, through the adoption of the human development paradigm in the 1990s, to its current role in supporting partner countries in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Reforms to the UN development system in 2018 moved the Resident Coordinator system out of UNDP’s management but gave it the role of ‘integrator’ for SDG implementation – a function that is still being defined and operationalised. With its wide field presence, UNDP also plays the role of support platform for other UN entities, providing a range of administrative support services – a role that is likely to grow in importance as the UN pursues efficiency measures under the UN80 process.

UNDP’s current Strategic Plan 2026–2029 is broad in scope. It offers tailored support to programme countries across four results areas — prosperity, governance, crisis resilience and a healthy planet — supported by three cross-cutting accelerators: digital and AI transformation, gender equality, and sustainable finance.

UNDP is governed by an Executive Board of 36 member states — shared with UNFPA and UNOPS — which approves its strategic plans, country programmes and budgets, and reports to ECOSOC. The Board’s formal authority extends only to core (unearmarked) resources, which represent approximately 10% of UNDP’s funding. The remaining 90% is mobilised through earmarked contributions from donor governments, programme-country governments, vertical funds (particularly climate funds), and pooled financing mechanisms.

UNDP operates a decentralised, demand-driven business model. Country offices function as locally embedded brokers, matching government needs with donor funding and technical solutions. For more specialised expertise, UNDP relies on its Global Policy Network, regional hubs, Global Policy Centres, and external consultants. The Global Shared Services Centre (GSSC), primarily based in Denmark and Malaysia, provides support services for human resources and finance to UNDP offices and 70 other UN entities.

## UNDP’S PERFORMANCE JOURNEY, 2021-25

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**The 2021 MOPAN assessment** identified UNDP as resilient and adaptable, demonstrating strong alignment with national priorities, robust management systems and a high degree of transparency. It also identified challenges: an organisational structure oriented toward project implementation, rather than strategic engagement, a lack of focus on global results, and a need for more systematic integration of evaluation lessons.

**Since 2021, UNDP has introduced meaningful reforms in a range of areas.** The Quantum enterprise resource planning (ERP) platform replaced the legacy ATLAS system, improving real-time financial tracking, payment processing and management oversight capabilities across the organisation. The People for 2030 strategy introduced new contract modalities, a competency framework, an internal talent marketplace and new leadership development programmes. A new competency framework and updated job descriptions were launched in 2024 to address technical capacity gaps at country level.

**Financial governance has been further strengthened.** UNDP has maintained an unqualified financial audit opinion for 19 consecutive years, and a new Accountability System Policy was adopted in 2025, supported by an updated Enterprise Risk Management framework and a Chief Risk Officer function.

**Progress on cross-cutting commitments has been notable:** gender financing tagging reached 73% of expenditures in 2024, ahead of target; the Climate Promise became the largest global support platform for Nationally Determined Contributions, backing 85% of developing-country submissions; and UNDP launched a Human Rights-Based Approach

(HRBA) Toolkit in 2025, integrating mandatory human rights and ‘leaving no-one behind’ (LNOB) markers into its reporting system. On safeguarding, completion rates on training in prevention of sexual exploitation and harassment reached 94%, and a full-time Victim Support Officer was appointed.

**Despite this progress, the assessment finds that several challenges identified in 2021 persist.** Results-based management is effective at tracking and reporting on project outputs, but lacks a focus on strategic results. The Business Model Review of 2024 led to greater role clarity between headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices, but did not address underlying tension between UNDP’s strategic ambitions and the incentives created by its funding model. UNDP’s strategic plan for 2026–29 set out an ambitious vision of integrated, systems-based approaches and portfolio programming, and steps are underway towards its implementation, including the development of new guidance for staff on contextual analysis. However, the organisation still lacks a clear articulation of the operational changes required to implement this vision in the face of declining core funding, capacity constraints in country offices and the competing incentives created by funding pressures.

## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2026 ASSESSMENT

**The overarching conclusion of the 2026 assessment is that UNDP has become a stronger and more capable organisation, but its ability to deliver integrated, strategic results remains constrained by its funding model and the incentives it creates.** UNDP’s strategies show a clear understanding of the challenge and a commitment to addressing it. However, they are yet to articulate clearly the organisational change processes required, given the structural constraints and incentives that shape how country offices actually operate.

The assessment identifies three broad findings. **First, UNDP’s operational and management systems are among its chief assets.** Its decentralised country presence, financial governance, workforce management and safeguarding frameworks all perform well. This gives funders confidence to entrust their resources to UNDP. Survey data confirms this confidence: 75% of respondents agree that UNDP’s organisational structure supports delivery of its mandate, and 86% affirm the value of its wide geographical presence. These are genuine strengths that matter for the UN development system as a whole.

**Second, UNDP’s performance as a programme implementer and service provider is solid at output level, but weaker at outcome level.** Between 2022 and 2024, average target achievement exceeded 90% across strategic performance areas. However, the corporate results framework does not enable systematic assessment of contributions to longer-term outcomes and impacts, leading to an ‘unsatisfactory’ rating for results-based management. Fragmented, project-based delivery is identified across evaluations as the primary constraint on the delivery of results at scale, leading to ‘unsatisfactory’ ratings for efficiency and sustainability. The portfolio approach, which was designed to address this fragmentation, has not yet been operationalised at scale.

**Third, UNDP’s role as SDG integrator and knowledge broker is the area of greatest strategic ambition, but also poses the greatest challenges.** Tools and capacities exist, including SDG Push, Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) and the Accelerator Labs, but a more comprehensive leadership role on SDG integration at country level would require greater conceptual clarity, stakeholder buy-in and dedicated resources than are currently available.

## BOX 2. Key strengths and areas of opportunity

### KEY STRENGTHS

#### Role 1: SDG integrator & knowledge broker

- Strong track record supporting countries with National Voluntary Reviews, INFFs, National Development Plans and statistics
- Support to UN Country Teams through the SDG Push initiative and identification of SDG accelerators
- Global thought leadership through the Human Development Report
- Accelerator Labs network building innovation capacity, integrated into regional offices

#### Role 2: Capacity developer & programme implementer

- Robust operational systems and tools; strong and consistent donor confidence
- Climate Promise – largest global platform for NDCs, backing 85% of developing-country submissions
- Increased focus on conflict prevention, anticipatory approaches and stabilisation in fragile contexts
- Strong output-level delivery – average target achievement  $\geq 90\%$  across most Signature Solutions

#### Role 3: Provider of common operational services

- Largest provider of common services in the UN system, serving 70 UN entities
- Expanded service palette across HR, finance, procurement and premises management. Quantum ERP platform provided for 11 UN entities with expected cost-effectiveness.
- GSSC clustering generating efficiency gains; new cost-recovery model introduced in 2025

### KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

#### Role 1: SDG Integrator & Knowledge Broker

- SDG integrator role inconsistently understood and applied across country offices
- LNOB agenda lacks clear institutional home, ownership and dedicated resourcing
- Limited evidence of systematic organisational learning despite strong infrastructure
- Insufficient dedicated resources allocated to this role

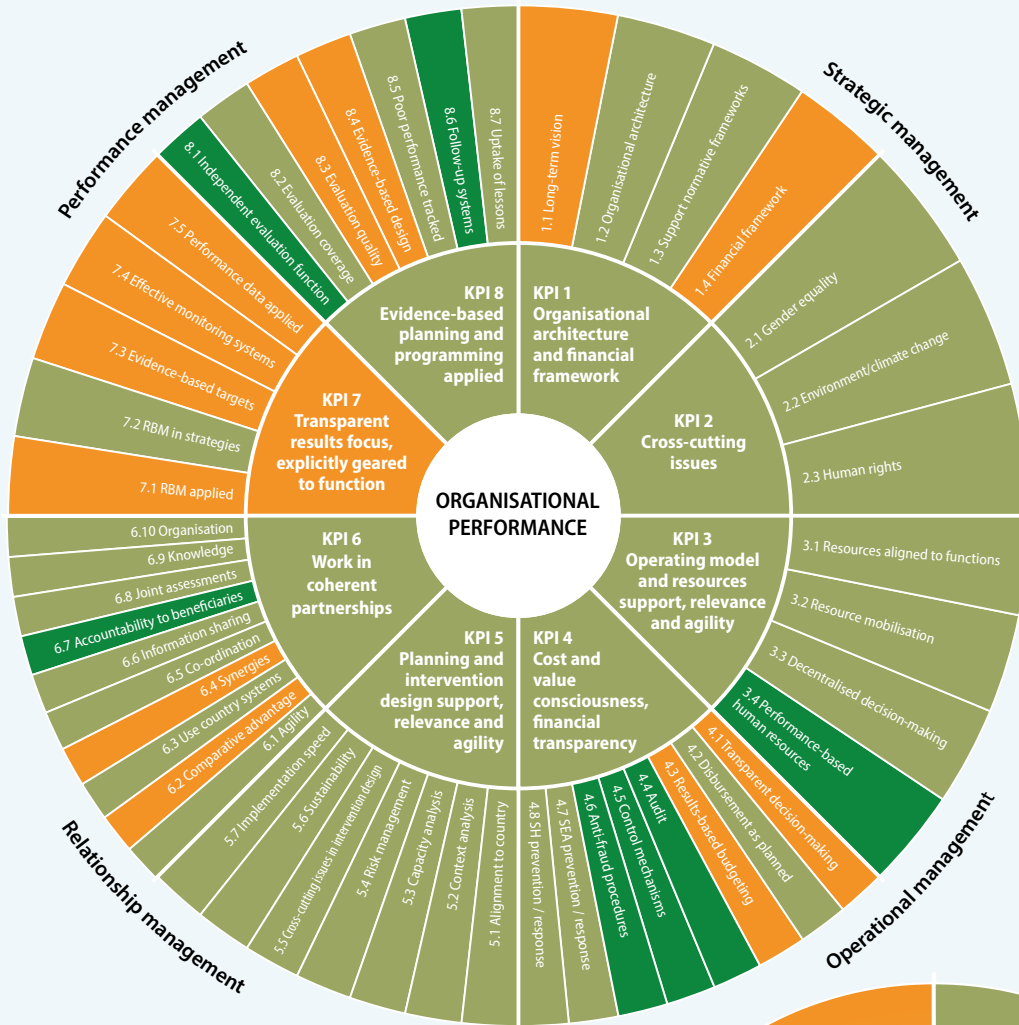
#### Role 2: Capacity developer & Programme implementer

- No robust corporate framework for monitoring contributions to outcomes and impacts
- Fragmented, project-based delivery limits scale, efficiency and sustainability of results
- Portfolio approach not yet operationalised at scale, with just USD 175m in total investment across 70 portfolios in 2025

#### Role 3: Provider of common operational services

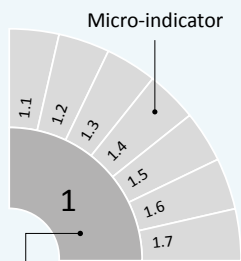
- No consolidated reporting on service volumes, costs or performance
- No overarching strategy for inter-agency service provision
- Lack of evaluative evidence across service lines
- Pricing transparency and cost-recovery effectiveness yet to be fully demonstrated

FIGURE 2. UNDP'S PERFORMANCE RATING SUMMARY

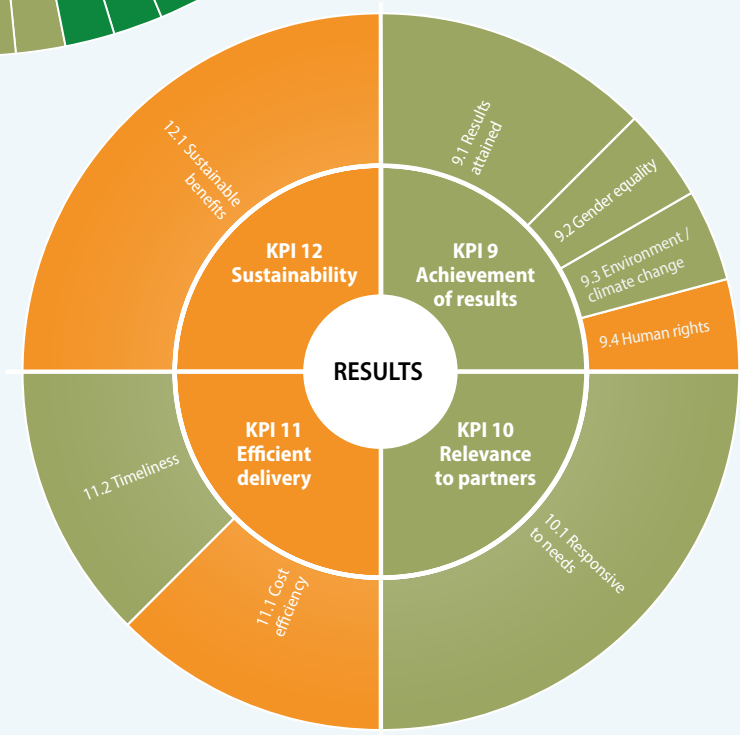


*Disclaimer: Each organisation MOPAN assesses has a unique mandate, business model and operating environment. The context of multilateral development and cooperation is dynamic, with expectations and good practices changing over time. The MOPAN framework reflects this unique context and evolution across different types of multilateral organisations. As such, comparison across assessments is strongly discouraged. More information on the rationale underlying MOPAN's assessment ratings can be found in Chapter 4 of this report or the online technical annexes.*

**How to read these charts**



- **Highly satisfactory** (3.51-4.00)
- **Satisfactory** (2.51-3.50)
- **Unsatisfactory** (1.51-2.50)
- **Highly unsatisfactory** (0-1.50)
- **No evidence / Not applicable**



## LOOKING AHEAD

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**UNDP enters the 2026–29 strategic plan period facing unprecedented resource pressures,** with global ODA declining by USD 50 billion in 2025 and core contributions to the UN system falling by 27%.<sup>1</sup> The UN80 reform process and the appointment of a new UN Secretary-General in 2027 create both urgency and opportunity for a renewed reform agenda.

**In the context of shrinking resources, shifting from a project-based to a more strategic approach to supporting the SDGs will be critical.** The UN development system is moving towards a more systematic approach to SDG implementation, identifying key investment areas that can have a catalytic effect in unlocking and accelerating the SDG agenda. Identifying the most strategic investment opportunities in each context is a key challenge facing UN Country Teams (UNCTs). These efforts would benefit from stronger engagement by UNDP, combining the Resident Coordinator’s leadership and convening power with UNDP’s substantive role as SDG integrator. With its expertise on specific development challenges (such as poverty reduction and inclusive growth), governance issues and SDG financing, UNDP has a great deal to contribute to those efforts but must increasingly orient itself towards building the effectiveness of the UN development system as a whole.

**The size and number of peace operations are on the decline<sup>2</sup> and the UN80 review of peace operations aims to provide proposals on how to delegate civilian tasks in ongoing peace operations to UN agencies.** With the withdrawal of peace operations, UNDP’s role as a capacity development and programme implementer will be increasingly important, to take forward peacebuilding efforts and avoid relapses into conflict. Building on lessons from developing portfolios in countries, such as Libya and Timor Leste, finding ways to scale up the use of complexity theory and systems-thinking in fragile contexts will be important to strengthen UNDP’s performance as a peacebuilding actor.

**Ongoing reductions in UN funding add momentum to the Secretary-General’s efficiency agenda.** The UN80 work package on UNCT configuration envisages a Common Back Office in each programme country. To enable this transition, UNDP would need to adopt a more strategic approach to the provision of common operational services with system-wide needs and requirements at the centre.

**UNDP’s operating model shapes its performance across its various roles.** The current system of rotating international staff in which most international posts are mobile with time-in-post limits, while roles such as RRs and DRRs are rotational by hardship classification, was intended to promote independence and distribute hardship postings more evenly. However, as UNDP’s expenditure is increasingly skewed toward country contexts that require deep contextual knowledge (including fragile settings and middle-income countries), the demand for generalist staff is decreasing. The 2024 Business Model Review identified opportunities to consolidate location-independent operational support services. A more comprehensive functional review might help UNDP find an optimal balance of generalist and specialist staff across its headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices, as well as with other UN entities.

**UNDP might also benefit from a review of its comparatively heavy leadership configuration.** From 2011 to 2025, UNDP’s core funding reduced by an estimated 71% in real (inflation-adjusted) terms. During the same period, the RC system was de-coupled from UNDP. Despite UNDP’s evolving funding mix and mandate, the organisation broadly maintained the same leadership structure with two Under-Secretaries-General and nine Assistant Secretaries-General since 2014. The integrated budget for 2026-2029 includes a reduction by 10% of D1 and higher-graded positions.

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1. OECD (2026) Preliminary Official Development Assistance Levels in 2025. Paris: OECD. [https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD\(2026\)8/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD(2026)8/en/pdf).

2. SIPRI (2025) Developments and Trends in Multilateral Peace Operations. <https://doi.org/10.55163/VVWF7280>.

Given that UNDP's core funding was reduced by 24% in 2025, a more comprehensive review, taking into consideration core and non-core funding availability and other relevant aspects, might be warranted during the 2026-29 Strategic Plan period.

**Improving alignment between strategic intent, on the one hand, and the balance of UNDP's activities, on the other,** will require more attention to the trade-offs within the business model between responding to national priorities, donor preferences and shared UN objectives and values. There may be a case for reviewing the criteria and process for approving donor-funded programmes, to improve alignment with UNDP's strategic objectives. Strengthening accountability for outcome-level results could also incentivise organisational learning and a stronger focus on integrated portfolios.

While the MOPAN 3.1 methodology is not designed to generate specific recommendations, the assessment report concludes each KPI analysis in Chapter 3 with a brief discussion of how peer institutions have responded to similar challenges, to help UNDP and its Executive Board identify options for moving forward over the 2026–29 period. A summary of these suggestions is included in Chapter 2.



#### Resilience in Syria

“Khaled” was born with a physical impairment. With a prosthetic limb, he now joyfully walks and wants to soon attend school and achieve his dreams in the future. Increasing the educational attainment of children with disabilities increases communities’ resilience to shocks as access to high-quality primary education and supporting child well-being is a globally-recognised solution to the cycle of poverty.

Photo: © UNDP/  
OCHA/Ali Adra

# INTRODUCING THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME





**The United Nations Headquarters building in New York**

Photo: © Chen Fangxiang / Shutterstock.com

## MISSION AND MANDATE

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**UNDP was established in November 1965 by UN General Assembly Resolution 2029 (XX) through the merger of two predecessor bodies: the UN Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (established in 1949) and the UN Special Fund (established in 1958).** Over the following decades, the General Assembly progressively expanded UNDP's mandate, including through the creation of the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) in 1966 and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme in 1970, both operating under UNDP's umbrella. UNDP functioned primarily as a central funding mechanism and system coordinator until the 1990s, including through its hosting of the Resident Coordinator system.

**The introduction of the human development concept in the early 1990s supported a repositioning of UNDP's mandate toward cross-sectoral and people-centred development outcomes,** including poverty reduction, democratic governance, crisis prevention and recovery, and environment. This entailed moving away from predominantly sectoral, technical assistance projects delivered by UN Specialised Agencies toward more integrated programming, policy advisory and capacity development support.

**The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, established a universal development framework for UN entities.** Subsequent QCPR guidance affirmed that poverty eradication is the overarching objective of the UN development system, providing the central anchor for UNDP's mandate.

**In 2018, as part of an ambitious package of reforms for the UN development system, the UN General Assembly decoupled the Resident Coordinator system from UNDP.** In its place, UNDP was nominated as a “support platform” for the United Nations development system and tasked with providing an “integrator” function to countries in implementing the SDGs.

**Beyond the SDG framework, UNDP has been entrusted with a number of other system-wide functions** and initiatives by the UN Secretary-General. These include advancing Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs), implementing the Climate Promise (supporting countries on their Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris climate agreement), and contributing to UN system-wide support for sustainable finance and climate action. UNDP also represents the Secretary-General in the G20 Finance Track, reflecting its role at the intersection of development finance and global economic governance.

**UNDP's Strategic Plan 2022–25** was organised around three “directions of change”: structural transformation, including green, inclusive and digital transitions; ‘leaving no one behind’ through a rights-based and human development approach; and building resilience to crises, shocks and uncertainty. These priorities were operationalised through six “signature solutions”: poverty and inequality; governance; resilience; environment; energy; and gender equality. The plan was further supported by three enabling areas — strategic innovation, digitalisation and development finance.

**UNDP's current strategic direction is set out in its Strategic Plan 2026–29.** This plan is structured around four strategic objectives: prosperity for all; effective governance; crisis resilience; and a healthy planet. These are supported by three cross-cutting “accelerators”: digital and AI transformation; gender equality; and sustainable finance, which are intended to enhance the organisation's ability to deliver integrated and scalable development solutions.

## UNDP'S EVOLVING ROLE WITHIN THE UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

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The 2021 MOPAN assessment noted that, alongside its roles as service provider and programme implementer, UNDP was seeking to reposition itself as an **innovator and integrator** within the UN development system. However, it was found that these roles had not yet been clearly conceptualised and operationalised across the organisation.

Against this backdrop, **the 2026 MOPAN assessment identified three broad roles** for UNDP, which provide a helpful framework for assessing UNDP's organisational performance. These roles are:

1. SDG integrator and knowledge broker for programme countries and the UN development system
2. Capacity development and programme implementer, and
3. Provider of operational services for the UN development system.

**The first role**, SDG integrator and knowledge broker, was formalised through UNGA resolution 72/279 (2018). It includes supporting programme countries in preparing national development plans and Integrated National Financing Frameworks. It also includes supporting UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) in “leveraging system-wide expertise and knowledge for more integrated policy advice and whole-of-government and whole of society approaches toward achieving the SDGs.”<sup>1</sup> **This role is closely linked to the UN80 priority of bolstering UN Country Teams' capacity to provide integrated policy advice**, including through joint knowledge hubs and expertise-on-demand mechanisms.

**The second role** focuses on the design and implementation of development programmes and projects, with a focus on technical assistance, capacity development and service delivery. These interventions are primarily funded through earmarked contributions from donors and vertical funds.

**The third role** involves providing operational services to the UN system through the Global Shared Service Centre, Common Premises or Common Back Offices at the country level. This role promotes economies of scale through operational integration across UN entities. The costs of providing these services are recovered through fees paid by UN entities and other clients. **This role is likely to grow in importance, given the UN80 goal of shifting towards shared operational support services at every level through a unified services roadmap.**

## MEMBERSHIP, DECISION-MAKING AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

UNDP operates under the authority of the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which provide overall policy guidance in accordance with the UN Charter. The Executive Board is the primary intergovernmental governing body for UNDP and is under the authority of ECOSOC. **UNDP is governed by an Executive Board that also covers UNFPA and UNOPS. It is made up of 36 member states that serve on a rotating basis**, with seats distributed across five regional groups.

Through its bureau, consisting of representatives from the five regional groups, the Executive Board oversees and supports UNDP's activities, ensuring that the organisation remains responsive to the evolving needs of programme countries. The Board monitors UNDP's performance, approves programmatic frameworks, including country programmes, and decides on administrative and financial plans and budgets.

The Executive Board is supported by a Secretariat. The Board holds two regular and one annual session each year; the reports of which are published online<sup>2</sup>. Key governance documents are the Rules of Procedure (2011)<sup>3</sup>, the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget estimates, 2022–25 (2021)<sup>4</sup> the UNDP accountability system (2025)<sup>5</sup>,

1. UN (2021) The Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System. New York: United Nations.

2. <https://www.undp.org/executive-board/reports-on-sessions> UNDP, Executive Board Reports on Sessions. <https://www.undp.org/executive-board/reports-on-sessions>.

3. [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/undp/library/corporate/Executive Board/Rules\\_of\\_Procedure\\_E.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/undp/library/corporate/Executive%20Board/Rules_of_Procedure_E.pdf) UNDP (2011) Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board. [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/undp/library/corporate/Executive%20Board/Rules\\_of\\_Procedure\\_E.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/undp/library/corporate/Executive%20Board/Rules_of_Procedure_E.pdf).

4. UNDP, integrated resources plan and integrated budget estimates, 2022–2025, <https://docs.un.org/en/dp/2021/29>

5. UNDP, Accountability System Policy. <https://popp.undp.org/policy-page/accountability-system-policy>.

the Strategic Plan 2022-25 (SP)<sup>6</sup>, the Strategic Plan 2026-29,<sup>7</sup> Integrated Results and Resources Framework 2022-25 (IRRF)<sup>8</sup> and Integrated Resources Plan and Integrated Budget Estimates 2026-29<sup>9</sup>.

## LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

UNDP's leadership structure reflects its global programme responsibilities and its legacy as manager of the Resident Coordinator system: it is headed by an Administrator (USG) and an Associate Administrator (USG), supported by nine Assistant Administrators (ASGs) who lead regional and policy bureaux and core corporate functions. This architecture is designed to manage a large and diverse portfolio with a global footprint.

In addition to leading UNDP, the Administrator serves as Vice-Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG). The UNDP Administrator also manages the activities of UNDP-administered programmes and funds: UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), UN Volunteers (UNV), the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), and the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office.

**UNDP's organisational structure encompasses nine bureaux currently located in New York (five regional and four central), five regional hubs, global shared service centres (GSSC) and global policy centres (GPCs), as well as 135 country offices covering 170 countries and territories.**

### Key tiers and functions

- Headquarters (HQ): Provides corporate governance, global strategy, policy, standards, partnership and resource mobilisation, and institutional oversight.
- Global Shared Services Centre (GSSC): Delivers centralised services for HR, finance, and other transactional functions, supporting efficiency and internal controls, and serving other UN agencies.
- Regional Hubs: Offer technical policy implementation support, programme quality assurance, and cross-country coordination.
- Global Policy Centres (GPCs): Serve as thematic hubs for thought leadership, research, and policy guidance in areas like governance, climate, gender, and sustainable finance.
- Country Offices (COs): Act as the core delivery platform for coherent and coordinated support to national counterparts by managing partnerships, results accountability, and programme implementation.

**The central bureaux provide thematic and functional leadership, establish standards, ensure compliance across the Organisation, and lead on external engagement.** They include the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) and the Crisis Bureau (CB) (jointly, the Global Policy Network), the Bureau for Management Services (BMS) and the Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy (BERA).

**The Regional Bureaux oversee programme delivery and performance across regions.** They include the Regional Bureaux for Africa, Arab States, Asia-Pacific, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States and Latin America and the Caribbean.

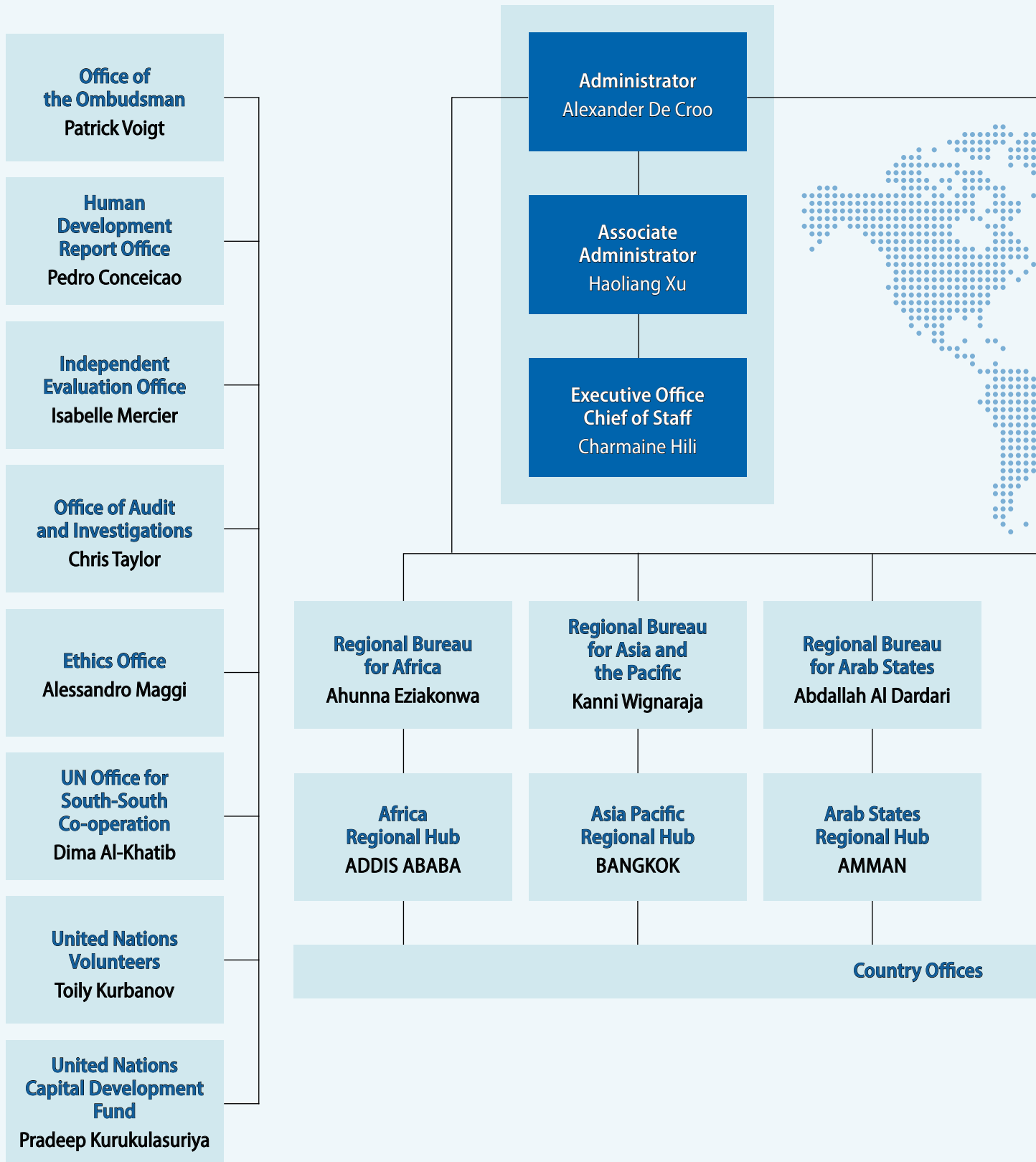
6. UNDP, Strategic Plan 2022–2025. <https://strategicplan.undp.org/2022-2025/>.

7. UNDP, Strategic Plan 2026–2029. <https://strategicplan.undp.org/>.

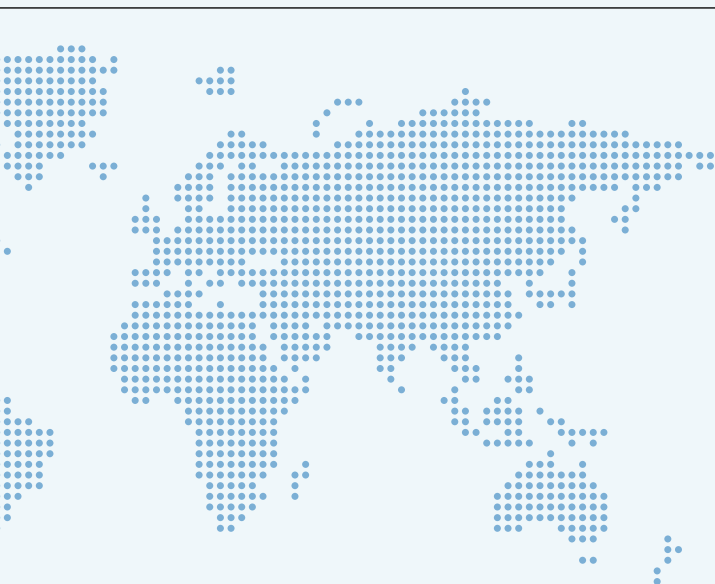
8. UNDP (2024) Annex: IRRF 2023 Final. [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-05/Annex\\_IRRF\\_2023\\_final.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-05/Annex_IRRF_2023_final.pdf).

9. UNDP, Integrated Resources Plan and Integrated Budget Estimates 2026–2029. <https://digitalibrary.un.org/record/4085694?v=pdf#files>.

FIGURE 3: UNDP ORGANISATION CHART



Source: UNDP Website, <https://www.undp.org/organizational-chart>



**Organisational oversight is provided by Independent Offices.** The Independent Evaluation Office reports directly to the Executive Board; the Office of Audit and Investigations reports to the Administrator, with an annual report submitted to the Executive Board at its annual session; and the Ethics Office reports to the Administrator with an annual report submitted to the Executive Board at its annual session.

## FINANCES

### Revenue trends, funding mix and sources

**The overall level of UNDP revenue has remained fairly stable over the past decade,** fluctuating between USD 4.9 and 5.5 billion. However, the composition of revenue has changed markedly. Core funding declined from USD 975 million in 2011 to USD 442 million in 2025, a decrease of roughly 55% in nominal terms and an estimated 71% decrease in real (inflation-adjusted) terms<sup>10</sup>. Over the same period, revenue from other activities increased from USD 441 million in 2011 to USD 645 million in 2024. This includes revenue earned from services provided to other UN entities, governments and other stakeholders.

In 2025, 40% of UNDP's total revenue came from donor countries, 25% from programme countries, 19% from vertical funds and 16% from other sources. Although **donor and programme countries together accounted for 65% of total revenue, they provided 97% of core resources.** Contributions from the private sector (0.8%) and foundations (0.6%) remained marginal.<sup>11</sup>

### Allocation of resources and expenditure patterns

**UNDP has reported on annual expenditure by SDG since 2020,** based on a common UN methodology and format introduced through the UN Data Cube initiative. According to this data, UNDP allocated funding to all 17 SDGs in 2024, with particular emphasis on SDGs 16, 1, 3, 13 and 17.

### Budgetary framework

**UNDP presented a single Integrated Resources Plan (IRP) outlining estimated financing for the 2022–25 Strategic Plan.** The IRP covers all funding available to UNDP – both core and other resources – and encompasses the full range of planned activities over the period. Financial projections are presented using harmonised cost classification categories adopted across several UN funds and programmes (UNFPA, UNICEF and UNWomen), as approved by the Executive Board.

**However, within the Integrated Resources Plan, the Integrated Budget only covers programmatic and institutional activities financed through core resources.** While the Executive Board takes note of the broader Integrated Resources Plan, including expenditures financed through donor agreements, only core resources are subject to the Board's formal oversight.

### Financial outlook

**In 2025, UNDP projected a resource reduction of 21–30% over the 2026–29 strategic plan period, compared with 2022–25.** However, according to preliminary data from the OECD, the financial outlook may be even more challenging, with official development assistance (ODA) declining by 23.1% in 2025, and core contributions to the UN system declining by 27% – the largest annual drop on record.<sup>12</sup>

10. Inflation-adjusted decline uses World CPI as the deflator, compounding annual global consumer-price inflation from 2012–2024 and applying the IMF WEO 2025 global inflation estimate. On this basis, USD 975m in 2011 ≈ USD 1.52bn in 2025 prices, implying a real decline of approx. 71% versus USD 442m in 2025. Estimate is approximate; no UNDP-specific cost index was applied.

11. UN CEB (2026) Financial Statistics.

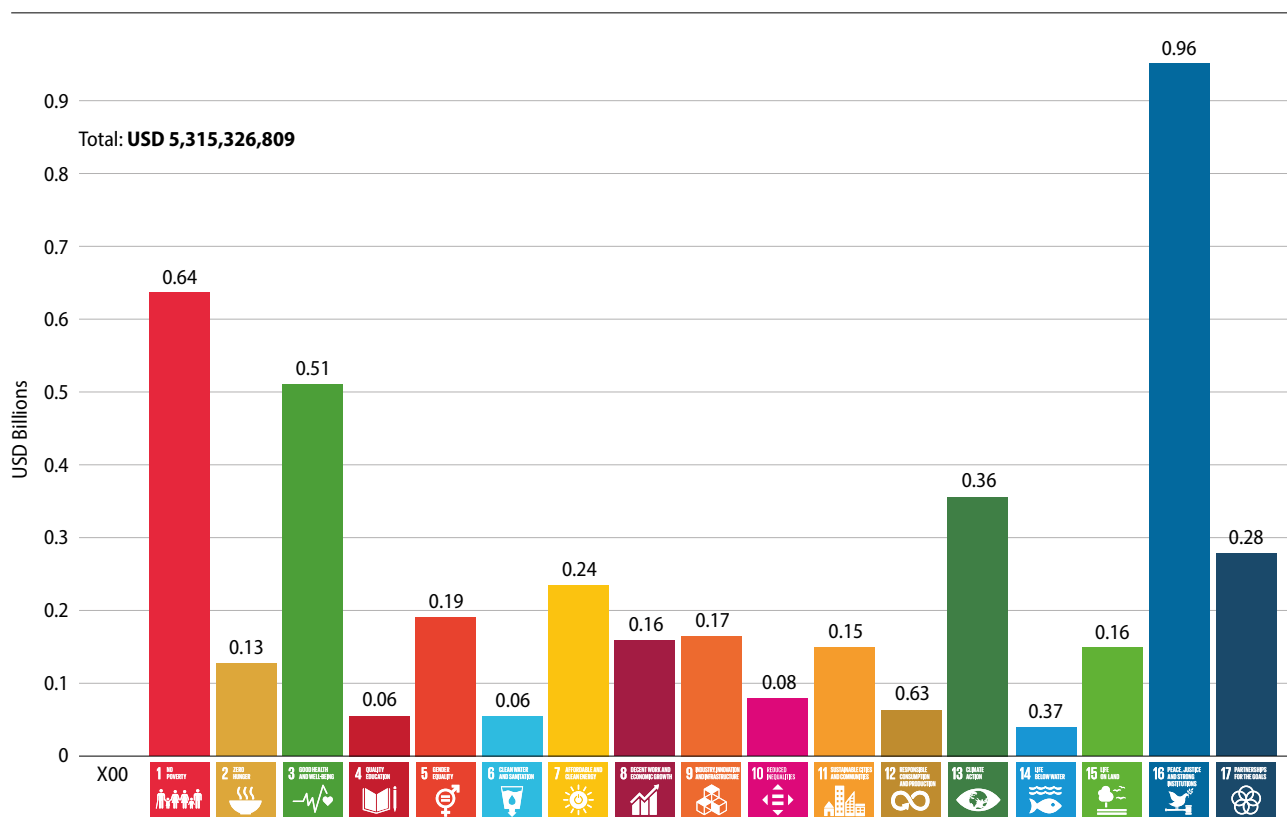
12. OECD (2026), Preliminary Official Development Assistance Levels in 2025.

TABLE 1. UNDP: TOP FUNDING PARTNERS IN 2025

Funding Partner	Core Resources	Other Resources	Total (USDm)
Global Environment Facility	0	372	372
Germany	104	223	327
European Union	0	313	313
The Global Fund	0	311	311
Argentina	0	306	306
Norway	38	225	263
Japan	45	209	254
Multi-Partner Trust Fund	0	234	234
Sweden	41	111	152
Republic of Korea	15	132	147
Gabon	0	123	123
Denmark	18	88	106
Guatemala	0	98	98
Saudi Arabia	2	93	95
Canada	29	59	88
Netherlands	38	49	87
Green Climate Fund	0	84	84
United Kingdom	15	61	76
Brazil	0	76	76
Columbia	0	74	74
World Bank Group	0	71	71
Switzerland	39	31	70
UN Agencies	0	70	70
Italy	0	58	58
Qatar	9	46	55
Panama	0	47	47
Honduras	0	43	43
Dominica	0	41	41
Haiti	0	41	41
Cuba	0	37	47

Source: UNDP Annual Report 2025

FIGURE 4. UNDP: TOTAL EXPENSES BY SDG FOR 2024



Source: UN CEB: Financial Statistics <https://unsceb.org/expenses-sdg>

The Integrated Resources Plan (IRP) 2026–29 acknowledges this tightening fiscal backdrop and includes provisions for an “adaptive shielding framework” to manage further resource reductions, with a mid-term review of the IRP planned at the 2028 Annual Session of the Executive Board. This will offer an opportunity to recalibrate assumptions and resource allocations in light of evolving funding trends. In response to MOPAN’s 2025 survey on the impact of funding cuts among multilateral organisations, UNDP indicated that austerity measures implemented in 2025 would allow UNDP to manage the financial shortfall. UNDP was already implementing a multi-phased workforce optimisation exercise to align staffing levels with the significantly reduced 2026–29 resource envelope, including a 10% reduction of D1 and higher-graded positions in the approved integrated budget 2026–29 and a relocation of functions and positions to lower-cost duty stations.

## KEY ORGANISATIONAL REFORMS AND CHANGES

During the assessment period, UNDP has undertaken a broad set of institutional reforms aimed at strengthening its operational effectiveness, organisational resilience and capacity to deliver integrated development solutions. These reforms span multiple dimensions of the organisation and reflect a deliberate effort to modernise UNDP’s operating model in response to an increasingly complex operating context.

Key reform areas include digital transformation; more systematic approaches to cross-cutting commitments; the modernisation of human resources management; a maturing enterprise risk management framework; updated guidance for results-based management; and new methodologies for future- and systems-thinking. In parallel, UNDP conducted a Business Model Review in 2024, the findings of which are still being implemented.

### UNDP's decentralised business model

UNDP operates a decentralised, demand-driven business model in which country offices act as locally embedded brokers, advisors, capacity developers and implementers, matching government needs with donor funding and technical solutions across UNDP's priority areas, in line with global norms and standards.

These offices are typically led by international staff who rotate across countries and thematic areas, supported by national staff who play key roles in programme delivery, including operational and logistical support. For more specialised expertise, UNDP often relies on external consultants or support from central units such as the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) and Global Policy Centres (GPCs).

Each year, headquarters allocates core resources to country offices. Building on this, country offices mobilise additional resources, primarily from donor governments, host governments and vertical funds. UNDP charges fees on these contributions, which helps finance country office operations as well as corporate (headquarters-based), regional, system-wide functions, including the RC system.

### Programme and operations cycle

At the corporate level, four-year strategic plans set UNDP's corporate direction, thematic priorities, and expected results. An organisation-wide Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) is used to measure and report on organisational and development results.

Figure 5 overleaf provides a visual overview of UNDP's programming architecture at the country level.

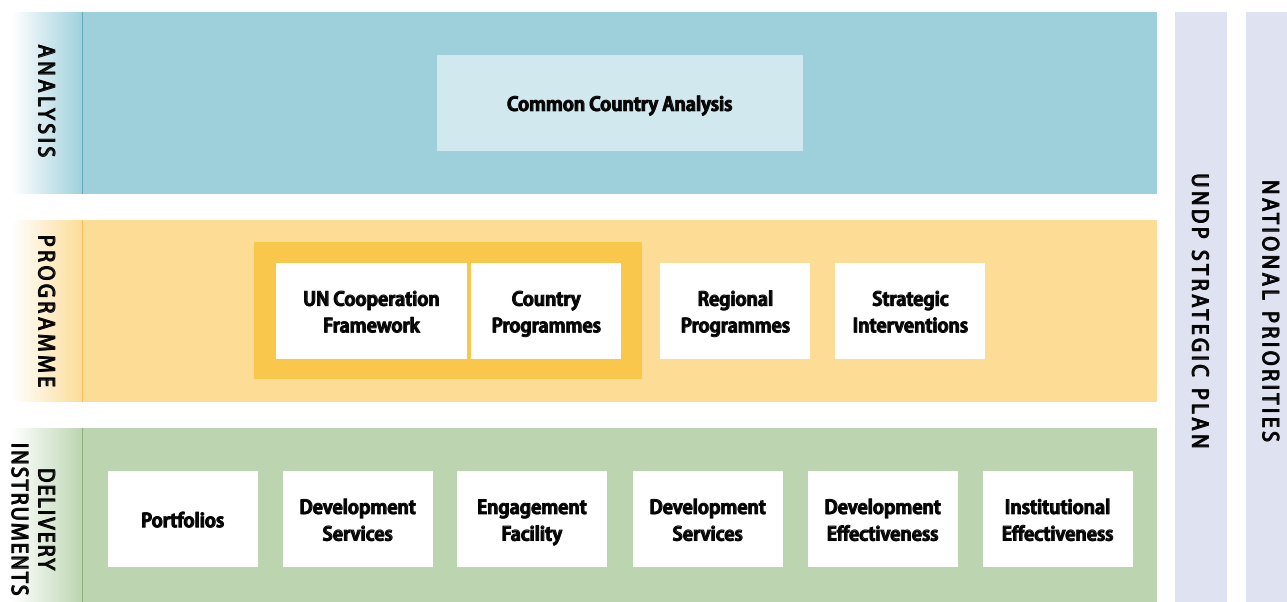


#### Haiti disaster training

UNDP trained volunteer brigadiers in first aid, rescue, and rubble clearance in Jacmel, and Les Cayes, to prepare them for future natural disasters such as earthquakes.

Photo: © UNDP Haiti/  
Molier Solon

FIGURE 5. UNDP PROGRAMMING ARCHITECTURE



Source: UNDP 2024 Policy on formulating programmes, portfolios and projects

This programming architecture is integrated with the UN system's wider approach to programming, which aims to involve all relevant stakeholders. It involves the following components:

- **Analysis:** UNDP contributes to UN common analyses, including the Common Country Analysis and other analytical inputs. UN guidance requires entities to adopt an inclusive and participatory approach to analysis, ensuring participation of relevant stakeholder groups.
- **Programme development:** UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks are the primary UN system-wide instrument for country programming, and UNDP participates actively in the preparation of these. UNDP also prepares Country Programme Documents (CPDs), which should align with national development priorities and the Cooperation Framework. Integrated Results and Resources Frameworks (IRRF) set out the results that UNDP will contribute towards the Cooperation Framework outcomes, and the resources required to achieve these. All UNDP programmes must be based on a theory of change that defines the change pathway required to achieve the desired development results, and programme results frameworks must include at least one results indicator to measure and track progress. All programmes are required to align with UNDP's strategic plan and should report against IRRF indicators where possible.
- **Programme implementation:** UNDP has four main implementation modalities:
  - **National Implementation (NIM):** whereby the national government acts as the main implementing partner, with UNDP providing support as needed.
  - **Direct Implementation (DIM):** whereby UNDP acts as the main implementing partner and holds direct responsibility for project management, financial accountability and results.
  - **Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Implementation:** whereby NGOs act as the main implementing partners.

- **Agency:** A UN agency may be either Implementing Partner and accountable for the overall results or Responsible Party and accountable for delivery of elements.
- **Programme closure and transition:** this is governed by the UNDP’s closure and transition policy, which requires the completion of an Independent Country Programme Evaluation prior to the design of a new CPD. Lessons from closed country programmes feed into the next programme cycle.

### *Monitoring and reporting*

UNDP’s Strategic Plan is accompanied by an Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF), which aims to support the monitoring of progress towards UNDP’s strategic objectives using a set of impact, outcome and output statements and indicators, organised into three tiers.

- Tier 1 focuses on the impact level, representing long-term development effects. These are measured through SDG and other global indicators and indices.
- Tier 2a focuses on outcome statements, aligned with UNDP’s three directions of change, representing medium-term changes in development conditions to which UNDP contributes.
- Tier 2b focuses on direct outputs from UNDP programmes, which are expected to contribute to outcome-level results.
- Tier 3 focuses on organisational effectiveness and efficiency, using a set of indicators to measure performance in six areas: people, knowledge, risk management, funding, operational excellence, and impact measurement.

In addition, all of UNDP’s programmes are required to have results and resources frameworks in place for approval, and the quality of these is monitored under Tier 3 of the IRRF.

UNDP’s Results-Oriented Analysis Report, which describes performance and results against its strategic plan, is discussed with the Executive Board at annual sessions. It includes an update to all indicators in the IRRF, drawing on reporting from across UNDP’s business units.

## **STAFFING**

UNDP has one of the largest and most field-based workforces in the UN system. As of 31 October 2025, UNDP (including UNCDF and UNV) employed 23,797 individuals, with 89% based at country level. This represents a slight reduction from the 93% reported in the 2021 MOPAN assessment but remains indicative of UNDP’s highly decentralised operating model.

### **Workforce composition and contractual modalities**

UNDP uses a mix of contracting modalities. Staff positions account for 7,521 individuals (31.6% of the workforce), Personnel Services Agreement (PSA) holders for 12,763 (53.6%), and UN Volunteers for 3,014 (12.7%). Interns, Fellows and other categories represent 2.1% of the total workforce.

Among staff members, UNDP employs 2,518 International Professionals, 1,718 National Officers and 3,285 General Service personnel. Among International Professionals, 810 (32%) were at the P5 level or higher.

The extensive use of PSAs provides UNDP with the flexibility to respond to specialised and project-based needs and scale capacity in line with fluctuating demand and funding. UNDP also provides Partner PSA services to eight other UN agencies.

The PSA modality replaced mainly Service Contracts while individual contractors (ICs) remained in UNDP in 2021,<sup>13</sup> forming part of broader efforts to streamline contractual arrangements and harmonise workforce management practices. While this mixed workforce model enhances adaptability and field responsiveness, it also contributes to workforce complexity, with implications for institutional continuity, oversight and long-term capacity development.

**TABLE 2. UNDP WORKFORCE ACROSS LOCATION TYPE AND CONTRACT MODALITY IN 2025**

Location type	Staff	PSA	Volunteer	Intern	Fellows	Other	Total
HQ	1,324	915	31	127	13		2,410
RSC/RH	660	362	105	55	2		1,184
GSSC	407	68					475
CO	5,130	11,418	2,878	246	20	36	19,728
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,521</b>	<b>12,763</b>	<b>3,014</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>23,797</b>

Source: UNDP (2026) UN80 data summary – UNDP as-Is analysis

### Geographic distribution of staff

UNDP's staffing footprint aligns closely with its global mandate and operational focus. Table 5 below presents the regional distribution of UNDP staff in 2024. In contrast to table 2, table 3 does not include consultants, interns, volunteers or fellows, since these categories are not included in CEB's human resources statistics. The grouping of countries by regions and subregions is based on M49 standard of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).

**TABLE 3. UNDP WORKFORCE BY REGION IN 2024**

Region	Countries with UNDP presence	Total staff (CEB)	% of total staff	Int'l Professional	National Professional	General Service	Average staff per country
Sub-Saharan Africa	47	2,488	33.4%	619	690	1,179	52.9
Arab States	17	973	13.1%	278	250	445	57.2
Asia-Pacific	29	1,293	17.4%	324	372	597	44.6
Europe & CIS	20	503	6.8%	76	195	232	25.1
Latin America & Caribbean	27	693	9.3%	118	221	354	25.7
HQ / Hubs / High-income	21	1,494	20.1%	1,021	37	436	71.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>7,444</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,436</b>	<b>1,765</b>	<b>3,243</b>	<b>–</b>

Source: UN CEB website: <https://unsceb.org/>

### Shifts in country office staffing profiles

Analysis of UN personnel statistics indicates a sustained decline in the share of International Professional staff across UNDP country offices between 2011 and 2024, from 31% to 22% of total office staff. This shift is evident across all office size categories. The sharpest absolute decline occurred in large offices, where average International Professional headcount fell from 59 to 37, a reduction of 22 staff per office, despite average total office size remaining broadly

13. UNDP (2026) UN80 Data Summary – UNDP As-Is Analysis.



### Solar power in Africa

UNDP, with Norwegian emergency preparedness funding (NOREPS), have set up solar photo-voltaic power systems in primary health care clinics throughout Zambia. Thanks to having a reliable power source, the clinics are capable of more and better services.

Photo: © UNDP/  
Karin Schermbrucker  
for Slingshot

stable. Medium-sized offices similarly experienced a sharp reduction, with average International Professional staff falling almost by half, from 24.5 to 13.5, despite an increase in the number of such offices. Smaller and very small offices recorded more modest absolute declines but also a consistent downward trend in the proportion of International Professional staff.

Table 4 below compares UNDP country offices by size and staffing composition between 2011 and 2024.

**TABLE 4. UNDP OFFICE SIZE DISTRIBUTION: 2011 VS 2024**

Office size	Number of offices	Average number of total staff	Average number of international professional staff	International professional staff as % of total
Each cell shows: 2011 value / 2024 value / change				
<b>Large</b> >100 total staff	7 <b>9</b> +2	141 <b>126</b> -15	49.4 <b>37.0</b> -12.4	35% <b>29%</b> -6 pp
<b>Medium</b> 50-99 total staff	32 <b>27</b> -5	67 <b>62</b> -5	15.4 <b>13.5</b> -1.9	23% <b>22%</b> -1 pp
<b>Small</b> 20-49 staff	65 <b>62</b> -3	33 <b>31</b> -2	6.3 <b>5.4</b> -0.9	19% <b>17%</b> -2 pp
<b>Very small</b> <20 total staff	23 <b>37</b> +14	13 <b>9</b> -4	2.2 <b>1.8</b> -0.4	17% <b>20%</b> +3 pp
<b>All programme offices</b>	127 <b>135</b> +8	- - -	10.2 <b>8.2</b> -2.0	23% <b>22%</b> -1 pp

Note: HQ, regional hubs, and high-income country offices excluded.

Source: CEB/2012/HLCM/HR/16 and CEB/2025/HLCM/HR/11/Rev.1.

### Staffing patterns and government cost-sharing

**Staffing intensity varies markedly across country offices, depending on the dominant financing model.** On average, expenditure per staff member is 4.1 times higher in the 27 countries where governments provide substantial cost-sharing contributions, as compared to the 103 countries where programmes are financed primarily from ODA funds.

In countries with significant government co-financing – concentrated largely in stable middle-income contexts, particularly in Latin America – UNDP manages large government-financed portfolios with relatively lean international staff footprints. By contrast, in donor-financed contexts, including the majority of fragile and crisis-affected settings, UNDP functions as a delivery platform for bilateral and multilateral donors, requiring larger staff footprints relative to programme volume.

Although 101 programme countries contributed government resources to UNDP in 2024, the distinction drawn here reflects cases where government financing constitutes a dominant share of total programme resources, highlighting the structural relationship between funding modality, programme type and staffing configuration.

TABLE 5. STAFFING AND GOVERNMENT COST SHARING

Metric	Group A Government cost sharing (27 countries)	Group B1 Little to no Government cost sharing – fragile (40 countries)	Group B2 Little to no Government cost sharing – stable (63 countries)
Number of countries	27	40	63
Average total expenditure	USD 53.2m	USD 41.8m	USD 22.0m
Average staff	35	57	31
Average exp per staff <sup>14</sup>	USD 3.77m	USD 0.88m	USD 0.96m
Median exp per staff	USD 1.39m	USD 0.54m	USD 0.62m
Average gov financing share	69%	0% to <5%	0% to <5%
Total group expenditure	USD 1,436m	USD 1,673m	USD 1,387m
Fragile contexts in group	4 of 27	40 of 40	0 to 63

*Note:* Total staff includes International Professional, National Professional Officer (NPO), and General Service categories in both years. The 2011 CEB main report excludes NPOs, which were reported separately; 2011 totals shown here have been adjusted by adding NPO figures at duty-station level from the addendum (CEB/2012/HLCM/HR/16/Add.1) to ensure comparability with 2024, in which National Officers are included throughout. Office size categories are based on these NPO-adjusted totals. International professional staff figures exclude NPOs in both years. HQ, regional hubs, and high-income country offices are excluded. South Sudan's 2011 presence is not separately identifiable in the main report and is therefore not reflected. "pp" = percentage points.

*Source:* CEB/2012/HLCM/HR/16; CEB/2012/HLCM/HR/16/Add.1; CEB/2025/HLCM/HR/11/Rev.1.

# CONCLUSIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE





**Yaoundé Centre Region, Cameroon – Harvesting of fresh spices**

A young entrepreneur (Z-Epice) and her team are processing & producing agricultural crops for real-time use. Supported by UNDP & the Ministry of Youth Affairs.

Photo: © UNDP Cameroon/Loric Goumene.

## CONTEXT ANALYSIS

**Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has fallen well behind.** While access to infrastructure and basic services has expanded, the latest assessment shows that only 18% of the 169 SDG targets are on track for achievement, and 35% have made no progress or have regressed, compared to the 2015 baseline. At the same time, climate change is accelerating and the number of state-based conflicts nearly doubled between 2010 and 2024. The UN Secretary-General has called this “a global development emergency”.<sup>1</sup>

**The nature of the development challenge is evolving.** Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, developing countries have been beset by shocks and crises, including conflict, climate disruption and almost continuous global economic turmoil, creating adverse conditions for national development. After decades of rapid decline, the global extreme poverty rate has levelled off at around 10%. Increasingly, the extreme poor are concentrated in conflict-affected and climate-vulnerable locations.<sup>2</sup>

**Global development finance has been declining. Investment flows to developing countries – and especially low-income countries – have stagnated,** as investors have sought out safer markets in times of global economic uncertainty. The debt burden on developing countries is approaching historic highs, and net resource flows have been negative since 2022, with developing countries paying back more in external debt service than they receive in new loans. Debt service costs are displacing development expenditure: it is estimated that, in 2024, 92 countries spent more on external debt service than on implementing the SDGs.<sup>3</sup> Given inadequate investment and increasing needs, the annual SDG financing gap has risen by 60%, from USD 2.5 trillion in 2015 to over USD 4 trillion.

**2025 also saw unprecedented simultaneous cuts from 11 major donors.** Global ODA fell by USD 50 billion in 2025 to USD 174.3 billion – just two-thirds of its 2023 peak.<sup>4</sup> Donors are increasingly looking to use their declining aid budgets to leverage private investment in developing countries. However, leverage rates have been consistently disappointing and have mainly benefited middle-income countries.<sup>5</sup>

**In this context, the challenges facing the UN development system are significant.** It needs to identify ways of using declining development finance more strategically, in order to rebuild momentum towards the SDGs. And it needs to do so in the context of declining finance for UN development agencies. In this context, the UN80 process – the Secretary-General’s reform initiative to make the UN more efficient, coherent and fit for purpose as it approaches its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary – has become the principal forum for responding to these challenges.

## CONCLUSIONS OF THE ASSESSMENT

### Overall strengths and remaining challenges

**According to the previous MOPAN assessment in 2021, UNDP demonstrated resilience and adaptability** in responding to both the 2018 UN development system reforms and the COVID-19 pandemic. The assessment identified improvements in the mainstreaming of cross-cutting priorities. It also documented UNDP’s strong alignment with national priorities, commitment to aid effectiveness, robust management systems, independent oversight functions and high degree of transparency.

1. UN (2025) The Sustainable Development Goals Report. New York: United Nations.
2. OECD (2025) States of Fragility 2025. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/81982370-en>.
3. OECD (2025) Global Outlook on Financing for Sustainable Development 2025: Towards a More Resilient and Inclusive Architecture. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/753d5368-en>.
4. OECD (2026), Preliminary Official Development Assistance Levels in 2025.
5. OECD (2025) Tracking Private Finance Mobilisation: Latest Trends and Ways Forward. Policy Brief, June 2025. Paris: OECD.

**However, the 2021 assessment also concluded that UNDP’s organisational structure and processes were oriented towards programme implementation and were not yet fully aligned with its broader strategic ambitions.** This was linked to its increasing reliance on earmarked funding. Results-based management systems were focused on meeting programme-management requirements, rather than capturing broader development outcomes and UNDP’s global contribution to the SDGs. Furthermore, its portfolio was fragmented across multiple sectors and thematic areas, with insufficient focus on upstream policy engagement and capacity development. Finally, there was a need for more systematic integration of lessons learned from past evaluations into future programming.

**Since 2021, UNDP has undertaken a set of institutional reforms** aimed at strengthening its operational effectiveness, resilience and capacity to deliver integrated development solutions. The current assessment identifies meaningful progress across several dimensions.

**In digital transformation and operational systems, the transition to Quantum, a cloud-based ERP system replacing the previous ATLAS platform, has improved real-time visibility of costs, disbursements and performance.** It has expanded the scope for location-independent services, potentially paving the way for efficiencies in the field structure. The Quantum Financial Management and Budget modules, Power BI dashboards and cash-flow forecasting tools have strengthened financial tracking and management oversight across the organisation. A new Performance App aggregates compliance and operational data from multiple sources, and has significantly improved management’s ability to identify and respond to performance issues at regional and country level.

**In workforce management, the People for 2030 strategy has driven meaningful progress** across three phases of implementation, including the introduction of new contract modalities, competency and career frameworks, an internal talent marketplace, and new leadership development programmes. The Leaders for 2030 programme was awarded the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development prize for best learning and development initiative in the public sector in 2022. A new competency framework was launched in 2024 alongside a large-scale capacity mapping to confirm the current supply of talent in the organisation, reflecting a deliberate effort to align staffing profiles with the requirements of UNDP’s evolving strategic roles.

**Regarding financial governance and accountability, UNDP demonstrates strong compliance with international financial reporting standards, having maintained an unqualified audit opinion for 19 consecutive years.** Its zero-tolerance policy on fraud and corruption is systematically implemented and supported by public reporting. The introduction of a new Accountability System Policy in 2025, alongside an updated Enterprise Risk Management framework and the introduction of a Chief Risk Officer role and clearer risk appetite statement, reflects a maturing approach to risk governance.

**On cross-cutting priorities, UNDP has made notable progress on gender equality and climate action.** For example, the Climate Promise, launched in 2019, has become the largest global support platform for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris climate agreement, backing 85% of developing-country submissions. UNDP launched a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) Toolkit in 2025 and integrated mandatory Human Rights and leaving no-one behind (LNOB) markers into its Quantum reporting system.

**On safeguarding, UNDP has strengthened its prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH) framework significantly since 2021,** with mandatory training achieving 94% completion rates in 2024, the appointment of a full-time Victim Support Officer in 2025, expanded vetting through the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, and integration of PSEAH risk analysis into project design through the Social and Environmental Standards.

**In terms of organisational structure, the 2024 Business Model Review led to greater role clarity** between headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices, while restructuring of the Global Policy Centres has centralised

expertise and reduced duplication. Survey data confirms broad stakeholder confidence in these reforms, with 75% of respondents agreeing that UNDP’s organisational structure supports delivery of its mandate and 86% affirming the value of its universal country presence.

**Overall, these reforms have substantially strengthened UNDP’s operational performance and capacity. However, several of the challenges identified in 2021 remain.** These include a fragmented portfolio of interventions, weaknesses in organisational learning and results-based management at the global level, and continued uncertainty around the operationalisation of UNDP’s emerging roles within the UN development system, including as SDG integrator and knowledge broker. These challenges are linked to a continued discrepancy between the organisation’s strategic ambition to provide and facilitate integrated development solutions with a focus on upstream policy advice, on the one hand, and the incentives shaped by UNDP’s business model and funding landscape, which orient the organisation towards attracting and delivering individual programmes and projects.

**UNDP continues to define its strategic objectives and its comparative advantage as a development actor very broadly.** It positions itself to offer flexible support to programme countries across the full breadth of their national development priorities, extending well beyond its traditional strengths in governance and development finance. Some of the thematic objectives in its strategy are areas of specialisation for other UN agencies, including three of the six ‘signature solutions’ in the Strategic Plan 2022-2025: the environment, energy and gender. This wide strategic focus positions UNDP to pursue its larger strategic objectives, such as supporting integrated solutions to the SDGs. However, it also creates risks of a widely dispersed portfolio of activities and overlap with other parts of the UN system.

**To mitigate the risk of fragmentation, UNDP introduced the portfolio approach** as a new implementation modality. This reflects an ambition to align its interventions within broader, systems-based approaches to tackling complex development challenges. However, during the assessment period, the **scale and distribution of the portfolio approach remain limited.** In 2025, UNDP reported USD 175 million mobilised for portfolios.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the portfolio approach, further institutional changes would be needed to **better align UNDP’s operational model with its strategic ambition.** However, neither Strategic Plan provides a clear roadmap for how the organisation would go about implementing such reforms.

The following section examines how these tensions have played out over the assessment period across UNDP’s three principal roles within the UN development system.

## UNDP’s performance across its roles

### *Role 1: SDG integrator and knowledge broker*

In 2017, the Secretary-General’s report of the repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda stated that: “The implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires a level of integration and collaboration across various actors and sources, expertise, knowledge and support that most institutions have not previously attempted to achieve” and recommended that the **UN’s support in countries should be based on the integration and prioritisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.**<sup>7</sup> According to UN guidance documents, SDG integration “builds from a systems approach” – that is, an understanding of complexity in the causal links and trade-offs across SDGs, sectors and development challenges.<sup>8</sup>

**In support of this vision, the 2018 UN development system reform aimed to strengthen the capacity of UN Country Teams to provide integrated policy support.** However, the proportion of UN expenditure allocated to policy

6. UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (2025) Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2022–2025. New York: UNDP IEO.

7. United Nations Secretary-General (2017) Repositioning the United Nations Development System to Deliver on the 2030 Agenda: Our Promise for Dignity, Prosperity and Peace on a Healthy Planet (A/72/684-E/2018/7). New York: United Nations.

8. UNSDG (2019) United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework: Internal Guidance. New York: United Nations.

support remained at around 5% between 2017 and 2024.<sup>9</sup> Rather than reallocating resources, the UN80 initiative seeks to strengthen policy support through more effective use of existing capacities. As an SDG integrator, UNDP has a central role to play in this.

**Even though the proportion of system-wide resources allocated to integrated policy support remained constant at around 5%, the evaluation of the Strategic Plan 2022-25 found a growing commitment to SDG integration and systems thinking within UNDP.** UNDP has supported SDG integration through National Voluntary Reviews, Integrated National Financing Frameworks and capacity development for national development planning and statistical systems. UNDP also supported the UN system through the SDG Push initiative, which provided tools and methods for identifying SDG accelerators.

**However, a more comprehensive leadership role on SDG integration at country level would require stronger conceptual frameworks, dedicated resources and buy-in from partner governments and other UN agencies.** At the global level, UNDP's thought leadership is bolstered through the annual Human Development Report. At the country level, the 2016-17 MAPS (Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support) missions supported integration and drew on interdisciplinary teams from a wide range of UN entities. However, **this initiative was discontinued, due in part to a lack of clarity on the division of labour between UNDP and the Resident Coordinator system.**<sup>10</sup>

**While systems thinking is central to UNDP's strategy, it is a complex idea that has proved difficult to operationalise.** In UNDP documents, the term is used in two distinct ways. In some contexts, it refers to the objective of targeting interlocking development challenges (e.g., food systems) with potential multiplier effects across the SDG agenda. In this sense, it aligns with UN system-wide guidance. In other contexts, it refers to approaches aimed at addressing underlying structural drivers of development outcomes, such as feedback loops, power dynamics and political economy factors.

**The portfolio approach was initially aligned with the former interpretation, but subsequent guidance has moved closer to the latter.** According to the UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-25, "a portfolio approach means understanding issues from a systems perspective, leveraging linkages across interventions to achieve broader goals." In subsequent guidance, this approach is described as seeking to "develop, test, learn and scale a suite of interventions that are complementary and can shift complex systems by focusing on multiple intervention points at a given time." This second version of the portfolio approach is aligned with soft systems thinking and includes methods for unravelling mental models and mapping how people think about a certain issue or problem. While both interpretations of systems thinking can add value to UNDP's work, these are complex ideas, and MOPAN interviews found a lack of shared understanding across the organisation of how to apply them to UNDP's work. Furthermore, they have not been mapped onto changes in business processes and partnerships, in order to put them into practice. This leaves a key element of UNDP's strategic ambition disconnected from its organisational reality.

**This gap was also observable in other areas.** For example, **while UNDP has made some useful contributions to the Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) agenda, its uptake has been limited by a lack of guidance, resources and organisational incentives.** This has limited UNDP's ability to address structural drivers of inequality and discrimination systematically across its portfolio.

**UNDP has strengthened its role as knowledge broker by leveraging its network of Accelerator Labs** to support knowledge generation and innovation. However, these labs have been constrained in achieving scale by their positioning outside of established programmes. There was also a tendency to design them from scratch in each

9. Dalberg (2024) Updated Study of Capacities and Functions of the UN Development System to Accelerate Progress on the SDGs.

10. UNDP (2018) Mid-Term Evaluation of the UNDP Project "Enabling Responsive, Coherent and Inclusive Support to the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda".

context, rather than scale up proven solutions. The labs are currently being integrated into regional offices following a reduction in the available funding.

**During the assessment period, UNDP updated its knowledge management strategy and strengthened its knowledge management infrastructure, but impact on organisational learning is yet to be demonstrated.** It re-established Communities of Practice for major thematic areas, to promote learning, and developed digital and AI-driven tools to facilitate access to data and evaluation evidence. However, UNDP has not yet been able to demonstrate consistently how these lessons are being applied. Moreover, knowledge-sharing through South-South and triangular collaboration was hampered by limited integration across country offices, including with regard to publications, knowledge networks, data collection and analytical tools. **Delivering on UNDP’s roles as SDG integrator and knowledge broker requires access to flexible funding, to support both knowledge generation and policy-competent staff at country level.** However, core funding is projected to fall below 10% of UNDP’s budget in the coming years. Faced with threats to their financial sustainability, **country offices are incentivised to invest in programme management capacity**, rather than upstream policy engagement.

The matrix below shows that, while UNDP has developed relevant tools and capacities to support SDG integration and knowledge brokering, its performance in this role is constrained by limited conceptual clarity, incentives and resources.

TABLE 6. STRENGTHS AND REMAINING CHALLENGES AS SDG INTEGRATOR AND KNOWLEDGE BROKER

Key Issues	Strengths	Remaining challenges
<b>SDG integration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strong track record in supporting programme countries with National Voluntary Reviews, Integrated National Financing Frameworks, National Development Plans and statistics.</li> <li>● Support provided to UNCTs through the SDG Push initiative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of clarity among stakeholders regarding SDG integration and UNDP’s role.</li> <li>● Lack of dedicated resources for sustained policy engagement at the country level.</li> </ul>
<b>Leaving No One Behind (LNOB)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strong contributions through inclusive justice programming and support to inclusive health systems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of clear ownership, guidance, resources and reporting for the LNOB agenda within UNDP.</li> </ul>
<b>Innovation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Capacity developed through Global Accelerator Labs network and integrated into regional offices.</li> <li>● Bottom-up experimentation and learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focus on identifying new solutions rather than scale proven solutions hampered impact.</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Thought leadership, including the Human Development Report.</li> <li>● Strong infrastructure for learning, including Communities of Practice and digital/AI tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Limited evidence of systematic organisational learning.</li> </ul>

### *Role 2: Capacity development and programme delivery*

**Capacity development and programme delivery are an essential component of UN support to SDG implementation, and represent core strengths for UNDP.** UNDP’s internal systems and tools are robust and enable strong programme delivery. This is appreciated by donors, who rely on UNDP’s strong delivery capacity, especially in fragile contexts.

**UNDP has established itself as a key delivery agency for international climate finance.** To create a unifying framework for its climate initiatives, UNDP launched the Climate Promise, which has become the largest global support platform for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). This work is largely funded through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The downside of this funding structure is that it limits UNDP’s ability to offer support beyond funded projects, limiting strategic engagement and flexibility.

**UNDP has established itself as a key development actor in fragile and crisis-affected settings.** It has demonstrated an ability to deliver effectively in often highly challenging contexts, and to use its strong country presence to convene other actors around peacebuilding and development goals. This operational strength is likely to become more important in the future. UN80 work package 1 foresees changes in the role of UN peace operations, including the delegation of civilian programming in areas such as the rule of law, governance and child protection to the UN entities best equipped to deliver them. Given UNDP’s mandate, delivery capacity, governance expertise and role as co-chair of the Global Focal Point for Rule of Law, it is well positioned to play a significant role in this evolving division of labour.

During the assessment period, **UNDP shifted towards addressing complex structural risks, crises and socioeconomic shocks in all development settings, regardless of the level of fragility.** Anticipatory approaches were strengthened through strategic dialogues between the UNDP Crisis Bureau and the five regional bureaux, positioning UNDP as a leading actor in the humanitarian-peace-development nexus. In the context of declining humanitarian aid, this shift towards preventive action and resilience-building is a strategic one. There is scope for UNDP to strengthen coordination with humanitarian partners through the promotion of a shared understanding of “early recovery”.

**Over the assessment period, performance monitoring was improved through the introduction of new digital tools. However, UNDP’s corporate results architecture does not directly capture the organisation’s contribution to outcome-level results.** Evaluations show that UNDP’s interventions do contribute to strategic outcomes, but often at a relatively limited scale, due in part to its fragmented, project-based delivery. **UNDP has recognised this challenge and sought to promote a portfolio approach,** which aims to link projects into portfolios of strategic interventions that target multiple leverage points across linked SDG areas. While this approach is promising, it has not yet been convincingly operationalised.

The matrix below illustrates that UNDP’s performance in this role benefits from strong delivery capacity, but is constrained by structural challenges related to fragmentation, scale and funding.

**TABLE 7. STRENGTHS AND REMAINING CHALLENGES IN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRAMME DELIVERY**

Key Issues	Strengths	Remaining challenges
<b>Delivery capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Robust operational systems and tools</li> <li>● Strong donor confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Corporate results architecture captures outputs better than outcomes</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interventions contribute to outcomes</li> <li>● Introduction of the portfolio approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fragmented project-based delivery limits scale</li> <li>● Portfolio approach not yet fully operationalised</li> </ul>
<b>Climate action partner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Major delivery partner for climate finance</li> <li>● Climate Promise as unifying framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reliance on GEF and GCF project funding limits flexibility for strategic engagement</li> </ul>
<b>Expanded role in crisis contexts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increased focus on conflict prevention and anticipatory approaches</li> <li>● Stronger role in stabilisation efforts and in addressing forced displacement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Coordination with humanitarian actors on early recovery could be strengthened</li> </ul>

*Role 3: Provider of Common Operational Services for the UN development system*

**Another UN80 priority, building on the 2018 UN development system reform, is to generate efficiency gains through inter-agency integration of operational services.** Across the UN system, progress has so far been limited. Only four Common Back Offices have so far been established – well below the 2024 target of 50.<sup>11</sup> In the context of declining UN funding, achieving efficiency gains through shared services has now become a matter of urgency. It will require greater clarity on both the demand side (currently, UN entities can opt out of common services arrangements at any point, which creates uncertainty) and from the providers of common operational services, including UNDP.

**This role is acknowledged in the 2026-29 Strategic Plan and UNDP is one of the principal providers of operational services within the UN system,** supporting 70 UN entities across areas such as human resources, finance, procurement, ICT and premises management. Its extensive field presence and established infrastructure enable it to deliver services in over 120 countries and manage a large share of common premises, positioning it as a central actor in supporting the operational functioning of UN activities worldwide. **UNDP has strengthened its service provider role over the assessment period,** in terms of volume, client base and service mix. Efficiency has improved through the clustering of services within the Global Shared Service Centre (GSSC), while cost-recovery mechanisms have contributed to financial sustainability.

Beyond efficiency gains, **UNDP's service provision function provides an operational backbone for the UN development system,** particularly at country level. Its capacity to provide administrative and logistical support enables other UN entities to deliver programmes across a wide range of contexts, including in fragile and crisis-affected settings.

**UNDP has also contributed to system-wide efficiency gains, notably under the Business Operations Strategy (BOS),** where it has generated a significant share of the cost savings realised by other UN entities. UNDP plays an **important role in common premises, and contributes to efficiencies through Global Shared Services,** particularly in standardised, high-volume service lines such as payroll and payment processing. However, available evidence suggests that most efficiency gains across the UN system continue to be generated through consolidation within individual agencies, rather than through fully integrated, system-wide service models.

Despite these contributions, **UNDP's service provision role has been developed incrementally,** and there is no dedicated strategy for this role so far. There is no consolidated report providing an overview of service volumes, costs or performance, which limits transparency and the ability to track value for money. Evidence on efficiency and effectiveness remains partial and largely self-reported, with uneven coverage across service lines. Country offices face limited incentives to provide operational services, given competing priorities, capacity constraints and risks related to client satisfaction.

The matrix on page 42 shows that UNDP has strengthened its provision of common operational services, but that its performance is constrained by the absence of a strategic, system-wide approach and remaining challenges in efficiency, quality and transparency.

11. UN (2025) QCPR Framework 2021–2024.

TABLE 8. STRENGTHS AND REMAINING CHALLENGES AS PROVIDER OF COMMON OPERATIONAL SERVICES

Key Issues	Strengths	Remaining challenges
<b>Expansion of services mix and client base</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Largest provider of common services.</li> <li>● Expansion of service palette and large client base.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No consolidated report on service offer and volume.</li> <li>● No formal overarching strategy for interagency service provision.</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency gains</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vertical consolidation (clustering).</li> <li>● Efficiency gains generated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Room for improved process efficiency beyond consolidation.</li> </ul>
<b>Quality and client orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Good performance of longstanding services.</li> <li>● Improvements in client orientation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Quality of services varies across service lines.</li> <li>● Client orientation still needs improvement.</li> <li>● Limited and uneven evaluative evidence on service quality and client satisfaction.</li> </ul>
<b>Transparency and financial sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New GSSC cost-recovery model in 2025.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pricing transparency</li> <li>● Cost-recovery improvement yet to be measured</li> </ul>

## FUTURE TRAJECTORY AND CONSIDERATIONS

In his 2025 report on UN80 Workstream 3, the Secretary-General states that “**sustainable development requires multidimensional, at-scale, cross-sectoral support to global goals**, which a fragmented system of projectised support simply cannot deliver.”<sup>12</sup> Yet at the same time, the proportion of earmarked funding to the UN development system has increased steadily since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, with around 70% of earmarked contributions tied to specific programmes or projects. Furthermore, the UN’s capacity to deliver at-scale support is undermined by sharp reductions in ODA, and even larger reductions in UN core funding. **As a consequence, the UN development system risks becoming smaller and more projectised, with reduced capacity to provide the integrated, outcome-level support that the 2030 Agenda requires.**

**In the context of shrinking resources, the UN development system is looking for more strategic approaches to supporting SDG implementation in each country context.** This means greater investment in analytical work, to identify opportunities for SDG acceleration, and the reconfiguration of UN Country Teams (with other development partners) around the shared priorities.

**UNDP has an indispensable role to play in this process.** Uniquely among UN entities, it combines breadth of mandate, deep expertise in governance and development finance, strong partnerships and universal presence across diverse country contexts. In principle, this makes UNDP well positioned to complement the Resident Coordinator (RC) system in developing new approaches to SDG acceleration in a rapidly evolving global context.

**UNDP’s strategies clearly express its ambition to fulfil this role.** Its conceptual work on systems thinking and portfolio development are important steps in the right direction. However, it still has some way to go to operationalise its vision. To succeed, it will need to overcome the current strong incentives for country offices to prioritise securing and managing donor-funded projects, at the expense of upstream policy engagement and supporting the effectiveness of the UN development system. This is a challenging shift to achieve in the context of declining resources and is likely to call for more strategic dialogue with UNDP’s funders and Executive Board.

12. UN (2025) Shifting Paradigms: United to Deliver. UN80 Workstream 3: Changing Structures and Realigning Programmes.

**UNDP also has other strategic opportunities in the current context.** It has successfully built a comparative advantage in delivery in fragile contexts, and in convening partners across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The ongoing review of peace operations presents an opportunity for UNDP to play a more central role in peacebuilding and rule-of-law programming. In the context of declining humanitarian funding, it can also help to promote a shift of resources towards crisis prevention and resilience building in climate-vulnerable and conflict-affected contexts.

**The reductions in UN funding are lending increased momentum to the Secretary-General’s efficiency agenda.** The UN80 work package on UN Country Team configuration envisages a Common Back Office in each programme country. Given the lack of progress since 2018, this would most likely require mandatory participation from UN entities. In this context, it is important that UNDP adopt a more strategic approach to the provision of common operational services.

**UNDP’s operational model shapes its performance across these roles.** The current system of international staff rotation is designed to enable staff to acquire experience in different operating environments and to have diverse and fulfilling career journeys. However, the bulk of UNDP’s budget is now directed towards fragile contexts and middle-income countries – both of which call for deep knowledge of the country context. As a consequence, the demand for generalist profiles is decreasing. The 2024 Business Model Review explored the distribution of resources and functions across the organisation, identifying opportunities to consolidate various location-independent services into regional or central bureaux. A more comprehensive functional review might enable UNDP to leverage digital working methods to further integrate analytical capacities across global policy centres and central and regional bureaux and country offices, as well as with other UN entities. UNDP might also benefit from a review of its comparatively heavy leadership configuration. From 2011 to 2025, UNDP’s core funding reduced by an estimated 71% in real (inflation-adjusted) terms. During the same period, the RC system was de-coupled from UNDP. Despite UNDP’s evolving funding mix and mandate, the organisation broadly maintained the same leadership structure with two Under-Secretaries-General and nine Assistant Secretaries-General since 2014. The integrated budget for 2026-29 includes a reduction by 10% of D1 and higher-graded positions. Given that UNDP’s core funding declined by 24% in 2025, a more comprehensive review, taking into consideration core and non-core funding availability and other relevant aspects, might be warranted during the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan period.

### Future considerations drawing on system-wide best practices

The rest of this section draws on the experience of other multilateral organisations with comparable challenges, to illustrate options available to UNDP and its Executive Board for the 2026–29 period. It looks at how other organisations have aligned resources and organisational incentives, and at considerations linked to UNDP’s three roles within the UN development system. Fuller analysis of each consideration, including the relevant institutional comparators, is provided in Chapter 3.

#### *Cross-cutting considerations: Reforming Resource Allocation and Results Incentives*

**Lessons learned from institutional reforms across the multilateral system point to the importance of addressing organisational incentives to drive behavioural change.** Based on best practices from IFAD and UNICEF, the considerations below describe how changes to UNDP’s resource allocation system could create incentives that would improve strategic coherence, encourage core contributions and an increased focus on development outcomes.

Options for consideration include:

- **Updating the resource allocation formula for sharing core funding with country offices to reflect performance, allocation of non-core funding, strategic relevance and fragility criteria, alongside the current demographic and income proxies.** Including performance in the allocation formula would strengthen the connection between resource flows and results and could create stronger incentives for the use of evaluative

evidence and outcome monitoring. It could also make core funding more attractive to donors by improving the visibility on how core contributions translate into results.

- **As core contributions decline, it is likely that an increasing proportion of these resources will be absorbed by the institutional budget before reaching programme activities**, given the current Financial Regulations and Rules. There is a risk that this dynamic undermines the case for core funding among those donors, who expect unearmarked contributions to translate more directly into development results. One important mitigation measure could, therefore, be to ensure that planned cuts to the institutional budget are implemented in proportion to the overall reductions in core funding.
- **Extend Executive Board approval to an integrated budget covering estimates of core and non-core resources and improve budgeting practices in terms of granularity and resource-to-result traceability** in accordance with the core principles for transparent budgeting identified by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), with a view to ensuring that stakeholders can not only access budget information but also understand and use it effectively.<sup>13</sup>

### BOX 3. Relevant good practices – Resource Allocation and Result-Based Budgeting

**IFAD’s Performance-Based Allocation System demonstrates that connecting resource allocation to outcome performance is politically viable in a universal membership organisation**, and that doing so could change organisational behaviour in ways that results framework redesign alone cannot achieve.

**UNICEF’s Executive Board approves an integrated budget that covers the organisation’s full resource envelope, including both regular (core) and other (earmarked) resources.** In its decision on the 2022–2025 Integrated Budget, the Executive Board approved the Integrated Resource Plan, including projected regular and other resources, and separately appropriated funding for global and regional programmes, the institutional budget, cost recovery income, and other receipts. Although these figures are based on estimates, this approach provides a consolidated view of the organisation’s anticipated resources and planned expenditures, creating a clear baseline against which actual allocations and expenditures can subsequently be monitored.

**UNICEF’s Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) provide a clear link between resources and strategic priorities.** While UNICEF follows the harmonised cost-classification framework adopted across several UN entities, it goes beyond the minimum requirements by presenting detailed information on the allocation of programme resources by strategic goal area. The budget documentation further disaggregates resources dedicated to organisational effectiveness and efficiency initiatives into specific workstreams and subcategories. This is complemented by narrative reporting that explains progress against organisational effectiveness and efficiency results, including updates by functional cluster. Together, these elements strengthen the traceability of resources to intended results.

**UNICEF’s budget documentation is supported by annexes that provide additional granularity on resource allocation.** For example, the annexes to the integrated budget include information on changes in institutional budget posts by duty station and location. This level of detail enhances transparency and enables governing bodies to better understand how organisational resources are distributed across headquarters, regional offices and country offices.

<sup>13</sup> The JIU’s core principles underpinning transparent budgeting are: (i) clear and sufficiently detailed budget documentation; (ii) disclosure of funding sources and financing arrangements; (iii) a clear linkage between resources and expected results; (iv) regular reporting on budget implementation and performance; (v) consistent and understandable presentation of budget information; and (vi) the ability of governing bodies and oversight mechanisms to scrutinise financial decisions and hold management accountable. Joint Inspection Unit (2024) Report on Budgeting in Organizations of the UN System (JIU/REP/2024/3, Parts I and II). Geneva: JIU.

**A particularly noteworthy feature of UNICEF’s resource allocation approach is its deliberate use of regular resources to mitigate imbalances created by earmarked funding.** UNICEF’s allocation methodology directs a larger share of regular resources toward low-income, least developed and humanitarian contexts that may attract insufficient earmarked funding. Independent evaluations have found that regular resources play an important corrective role by helping to address distortions created by donor-driven funding patterns. While this does not fully offset the effects of earmarking, it represents a structured attempt to ensure that resource allocation remains aligned with organisational priorities and country needs.

#### *Cross-cutting considerations: Resource mobilisation*

The assessment finds that there has been limited progress in diversifying funding sources, despite clear recognition of the need in UNDP’s 2023 Resource Mobilisation Strategy. A recent study from the UN University found that the most promising new funding opportunities come from identifying concrete functions, services, or platforms that Member States and other actors need and are willing to finance.<sup>14</sup>

Options for consideration include:

- **Deepening government cost-sharing in middle-income countries**, with dedicated relationship management equivalent to that offered to major bilateral donors. The staffing analysis in Chapter 1 shows this model already generates average expenditure per staff member more than four times higher than donor-financed contexts, indicating significant untapped potential.
- **Transitioning data, analytics and policy advisory tools toward fee-for-service or hybrid subscription models**, building on the precedent of UNCTAD’s debt management platform, which evolved from a donor-funded tool into a subscription service used by dozens of countries. UNDP’s SDG Push, INFF advisory services and policy simulation platforms have comparable potential.

14. Franczak, M. and Abrar, M. (2026) Moving from Crisis Management to Resource Mobilization in the UN80 Process. GGI Platform Discussion Paper. New York: United Nations University.



#### **Climate change**

A family working together to water seedlings in the fight against desertification. In the past 50 years, the Lake Chad basin shrank from 25,000 km<sup>2</sup> to 2,000 km<sup>2</sup>. With its partners, UNDP carries out development projects focusing on natural resource management and the rehabilitation of Lake Chad ecosystems.

Photo: © UNDP Chad / Jean Damascene

#### BOX 4. Relevant good practices – Resource mobilisation

**UNCTAD’s debt management platform demonstrates that a development-oriented analytical service can develop partial cost-recovery** through a hybrid donor-and-user-fee model, generating more stable revenue while deepening institutional relationships with programme country governments.

#### *Considerations for Role 1: SDG Integrator and Knowledge Broker*

**UNDP faces challenges in connecting its knowledge production and operational roles.** Despite recent investments in improving its knowledge management systems, evidence of increased organisational learning remains limited, with evaluations finding little evidence of “a cohesive learning ecosystem.”<sup>15</sup> Based on best practices from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), here are some options for how UNDP could strengthen alignment between its knowledge management and the delivery of its operations.

Options for consideration include:

- **Assessing the performance of policy centres based on demand for their support from country offices, rather than on knowledge output alone.** This would mean introducing a visible cost signal that makes drawing on internal expertise an explicit operational choice rather than a free resource, and one that favours internal sources over external consultants. Under the current model, country offices face no incentive to utilise internal expertise because the cost of doing so is hidden in overhead, while external consultants are procured against explicit project budgets. Restructuring this cost signal would create a demand-driven dynamic in which policy centres are incentivised to develop offerings that country offices genuinely find useful, and country offices have a financial reason to use them.

15. UNDP IEO (2025), Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

#### **Water issues in rural Kyrgyzstan**

Across Kyrgyzstan, lack of access to clean drinking water presents a serious health problem in hundreds of villages. A girl gathers water for drinking and household uses from a river in Beshkent. The water is vulnerable to contamination from trash and bacteria that cause hepatitis and other water-borne illnesses.

Photo: © UNDP Kyrgyzstan/Jodi Hilton



- **Developing protocols that connect policy centre expertise to country-level decision cycles**, including for country programme documents and UNSDCFs, to encourage the uptake of analytical work. This would build on the model UNDP already applies through the Human Development Report at the global level, where analysis is timed to coincide with major policy moments, and extend its logic downward to country programming decisions.
- **Embedding UNDP’s knowledge work more systematically into the work of UN Country Teams.** This could be supported by providing technical assistance vouchers that enable RCs to commission knowledge inputs from UNDP, such as political economy analysis, SDG acceleration diagnostics and joint programme design. This would make UNDP’s comparative advantage available to the whole UN Country Team and promote a clearer division of labour.

#### BOX 5. Relevant good practices – SDG integrator and knowledge broker

**ADB’s 2022–2023 New Operating Model demonstrates that structural reorganisation alone does not resolve knowledge-operations silos.** In the ADB case, 86% of staff reported that the reform had not overcome silos overall, with the failure to redesign the budget and incentive architecture before structural changes were rolled out identified as the central weakness.

**The IPCC, IPBES and the Independent Group of Scientists** convened for the Global Sustainable Development Report demonstrate that structured science-policy interfaces, timed to decision cycles and designed to translate global knowledge into context-specific guidance, can connect analytical capacity to decision-making in complex multilateral environments.

#### *Considerations for Role 2: Capacity Developer and Programme Implementer*

**UNDP faces a long-running challenge in orienting its country offices towards upstream policy engagement and a more strategic approach to supporting SDG implementation, given prevailing incentives to prioritise attracting and delivering projects.** UNDP also operates in an evolving development context and funding system that are leading to a stronger focus on middle-income countries and fragile settings. This has exposed a need to build up deeper technical and geographic knowledge within UNDP country offices. Based on best practices from the World Bank and IFAD, the considerations below provide options for how UNDP could respond to this need.

Options for consideration include:

- **Reviewing the current personnel footprint, system of staff rotation and differentiated staffing** models by context/capacities to enable staff members to develop deeper thematic and geographic expertise in response to needs in middle-income countries and fragile settings.
- **Scaling up the portfolio approach in fragile settings, combining adaptive programming methodologies with the science-policy interface mechanisms** described above. Conflict and fragile settings are complex systems in which traditional linear programming logic tends to fail.<sup>16</sup> A portfolio approach in these settings would require mandatory political economy analysis at project design, outcome harvesting in place of fixed logframes, and iterative learning cycles that allow programmes to adapt to non-linear results, supported by accountability frameworks that reward adaptation.

16. Day, A. and Hunt, C.T. (2023) “A Perturbed Peace: Applying Complexity Theory to UN Peacekeeping”. *International Peacekeeping*, 30(1), pp. 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2022.2158457>.

### BOX 6. Relevant good practices – Capacity Developer and Programme Implementer

The World Bank's FCV Strategy and IFAD's IOE evaluation of its decentralisation experience both find that **portfolio quality in complex contexts correlates with staff continuity**, recommending sustained engagement over rotation as a universal norm.

#### *Considerations for Role 3: Provider of Common Operational Services*

**The goal of moving towards common operational services (part of the 2018 UN development system reforms) has made little progress in recent years, with the number of Common Back Offices remaining well below target.**

The UN80 initiative provides an opportunity to address misaligned organisational incentives and governance across UN entities, which has hampered operational integration in the past. Based on best practices from the UN Secretariat, the considerations below provide options for how the UN development system and UNDP can address barriers for change.

Options for consideration include:

- **Shifting participation in core inter-agency services from opt-in with easy exit to opt-out with structured justification and transition costs, preserving agency autonomy as a last resort rather than a costless default.** The current model allows agencies to exit at any point without bearing the costs their departure imposes on the service provider and remaining participants, removing the volume predictability that shared services require to function effectively. An opt-out model with structured transition costs would break this cycle by creating the demand-side stability needed to justify investment in service quality and capacity.
- **Governing shared service centres through multi-agency boards that put inter-agency requirements at the centre.** While UNDP has made progress in improving client orientation, a more structural shift toward inter-agency governance would enable broader participation across the UN development system. This would likely require adjustments to the GSSC's governance architecture, including stronger client representation in oversight and decision-making. These changes would improve the alignment between supply and demand and strengthen the accountability needed to sustain participation from a wider range of UN entities.

### BOX 7. Relevant good practices – Provider of Common Operational Services

UN Secretariat entities, including **UNEP and UN-Habitat, rely on centrally provided administrative, financial and HR services with no meaningful opt-out**, creating the demand-side predictability and volume stability that the current inter-agency opt-in model consistently fails to generate.

**The Client Board established by the United Nations Office at Geneva, which provides structured inter-agency oversight of its administrative services to 60 client entities;** OIOS has noted, however, the need to formalise its mandate and decision-making role more clearly before it can serve as a fully replicable model.

# ASSESSMENT FINDINGS





**Roadside micro business offers pure, unprocessed foods straight from the earth to promote health and life energy**

A Rastafarian man prepares and serves traditional Italo food and herbal drinks, at a roadside stop in Old Road Village, Antigua.  
Photo: © UNDP/Zoe Cox

This chapter provides a more detailed assessment of UNDP’s performance across the five performance areas – strategic management, operational management, relationship management, performance management and results – and the KPIs that relate to each area, accompanied by their score and rating.

#### MOPAN PERFORMANCE SCORING AND RATING SCALE

<span style="color: green;">■</span> Highly satisfactory (3.51-4.00)	<span style="color: olive;">■</span> Satisfactory (2.51-3.50)	<span style="color: grey;">■</span> No evidence / Not applicable
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Unsatisfactory (1.51-2.50)	<span style="color: red;">■</span> Highly unsatisfactory (0.00-1.50)	

**The assessment draws on information from three evidence sources** (document reviews, interviews and a partner survey – see Chapter 4 for more information). Further analysis per micro-indicator and detailed scoring can be found in Annex A, while the full survey results are included in Annex C. For the full list and citation details of the documents referred to, please see Annex B.

**For each KPI where the assessment findings point to areas requiring attention, a forward-looking section – “Future considerations based on system-wide best practices” – is included at the close of the KPI analysis.** These considerations are grounded in the findings of this assessment and informed by comparative analysis of how peer institutions across the multilateral system have addressed structurally similar challenges. They are intended to contextualise findings and illustrate the range of options available to UNDP and its Executive Board as they develop the 2026–29 reform agenda, rather than to constitute formal recommendations.

#### Entrepreneurship in Moldova

Marina Tabuncic is the founder of the clothing company Accent Textile, which specialises in the production of uniforms, protective and children’s clothing. Thanks to the support of Sweden, the UK and the UNDP “Advanced Cross-River Capacities for Trade” Project, Marina managed to purchase essential modern equipment. This allowed her to keep the jobs of all 15 female employees, create three more jobs, increase productivity, and increase the company’s sales.

Photo: © FAO / Andrea Spinelli Barrile

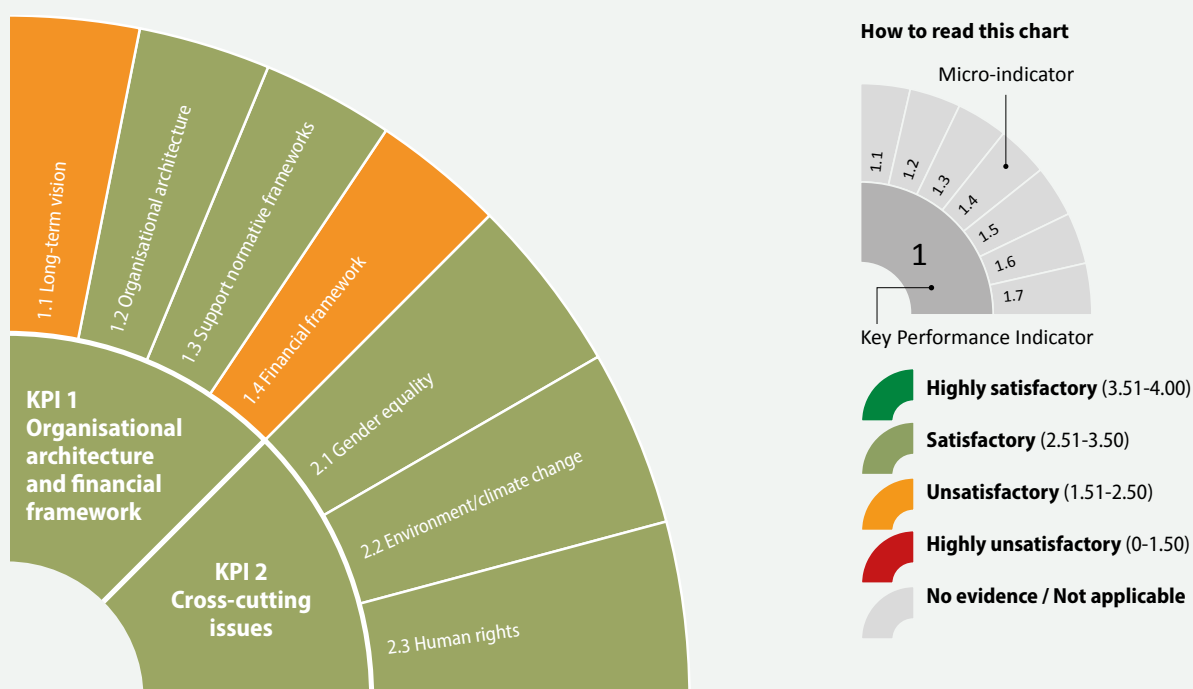


**The comparator institutions were selected on the basis of three criteria: mandate comparability, structural similarity, and evidence quality.** The World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank both operate across a similarly mixed portfolio of policy advisory, capacity development and programme delivery functions. Independent evaluations of their recent organisational reforms provide a well-documented evidence base on what worked and what did not when addressing challenges analogous to UNDP's. IFAD is the closest UN system comparator for the resource allocation and results architecture discussion. As a voluntarily funded UN organisation combining grants, policy dialogue and capacity development across fragile and low-income country settings, it faces governance and incentive challenges comparable to UNDP and its Performance-Based Allocation System and Independent Office of Evaluation offer relevant precedents for connecting resource flows to performance. UNICEF is included specifically in relation to Board visibility over the full resource envelope and results-based budgeting.

## STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

*Clear strategic direction geared to key functions, intended results and the integration of relevant cross-cutting priorities*

FIGURE 6. KEY FINDINGS ON UNDP'S STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT



UNDP's strategic direction is well aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the QCPR, and reflects a clear ambition to reposition the organisation as an integrator within the UN development system. Its strategic plans emphasise systems-based approaches and portfolio modalities, supported by strengthened results frameworks and alignment with SDG indicators.

However, the breadth of its strategies (reflect the broad mandate) does not offer a clear framework for prioritisation, and has been perceived as preserving maximum flexibility rather than providing clear strategic focus. Emerging approaches such as systems thinking and portfolio programming remain nascent and difficult to implement, in the face of capacity constraints in country offices and competing incentives created by the imperative of securing project finance in order to sustain the field structure. Consequently, UNDP faces persistent tensions between its ambition to provide integrated policy support and a funding model that incentivises project-based delivery.

UNDP's organisational architecture supports strong programme implementation but is less well aligned with its upstream policy and integrator roles. Its extensive field presence remains a key strength, although it reinforces a delivery-oriented model. While reforms have improved internal role clarity, underlying misalignments between strategy, incentives and operations remain.

The financial framework supports transparency, but links between resources and results are not clearly articulated, and the continued reliance on earmarked funding constrains strategic prioritisation.

**UNDP has made strong progress in integrating cross-cutting priorities**, particularly on gender equality and climate action. However, challenges remain in ensuring consistent implementation and sustained resourcing across all areas, including the Leaving No One Behind agenda.

Overall, UNDP has a coherent strategic framework, but its ability to translate strategic ambitions into focused and integrated results remains constrained by structural and financial factors.

#### **KPI 1: Organisational architecture and financial framework enable mandate implementation and achievement of expected results**

Satisfactory

2.66

**UNDP's organisational architecture and financial framework are assessed as satisfactory. Its strategic plans are coherent and well-aligned with the 2030 Agenda**, and its extensive field presence remains a genuine comparative advantage. Its four-yearly strategic plans are broad in scope, allowing UNDP the flexibility to offer wide-ranging support to programme countries on SDG implementation, in accordance with UNDP's mandate. At the same time, the breadth of the mandate can make it more challenging to articulate a clearly defined role and function within the UN development system, and may leave UNDP more vulnerable to having its strategic priorities set by donors through earmarked funding. While 80% of survey respondents agreed that the strategic plans offer a clear vision for UNDP, some external stakeholders also noted concerns about lack of focus.

Over the assessment period, UNDP has sought to reposition itself around a 'systems-based' approach to development partnership and a 'portfolio' way of working, which seeks to bring together its own programmes and those of partners around a more strategic approach to supporting SDG implementation. Stakeholders welcomed this emphasis on transformative change, noting its link to the 'integrator' role given to UNDP under the UN development system reforms, but noted that it remains loosely defined and risks being 'everything to everyone', rather than a means of driving increased strategic focus. The assessment confirms that the required shift in approach is not yet widely understood or implemented across the organisation. The current strategic plan identifies nine elements as constituting UNDP's comparative advantage, but there are questions as to whether this matches UNDP's organisational focus, particularly at the field office level, and the incentives created by its funding model. The emphasis on project implementation competes with goals such as policy advice for SDG integration, thought leadership on systemic change, and partnership building around portfolio approaches. The strategy defines global results areas, but tools for measuring systemic change arising from portfolios of linked activities are still under development. The breadth of the strategic plan supports the tailoring of UNDP's activities to each country's priorities but, given prevailing funding patterns, also gives strong weight to the preferences of funders. The assessment finds that UNDP has found it difficult to advance elements of its strategy in the face of countervailing incentives.

### Community mangrove planting in Cambodia

The local activity took place as part of a larger mangrove planting and marine exhibition under ActionAid Cambodia's 100,000 Mangroves campaign, supported by UNDP. Photo: © UNDP Cambodia/Manuth Buth



**One of UNDP's areas of comparative advantage is its wide field presence**, which enables it to provide support services across the UN system. **However, maintaining this field structure is costly**, and requires a constant focus on attracting and implementing donor-funded projects. This creates a tension with UNDP's objective of providing more strategic support for SDG implementation. The field presence is built around programme delivery, rather than the detailed contextual analysis, intellectual leadership and policy engagement required for the SDG integrator role and an approach centred on systems thinking. While these new strategic directions have been set by policy makers at HQ in order to overcome the projectised nature of UNDP's work in the field, they are working against incentives and capacity constraints at the country level, making them difficult to operationalise. The strategy does not clearly articulate how the new strategic directions will be implemented in the face of counter-incentives caused by dependence on project financing. UNDP's support to other UN agencies through its Global Shared Services Centre is likely to become more important under the UN80 reforms and may need to become a higher strategic priority. UNDP undertook a Business Model Review in 2024 that led to greater role clarity between HQ, regions and country offices, but did not address these tensions between UNDP's strategic vision and the funding pressures it faces.

**UNDP's strategic plan is closely aligned to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and to the QCPR. UNDP has enhanced the measurement of SDG-related results through its integrated results and resources framework (IRRF)**, and also reports its contributions to UN development system reforms through its QCPR reporting. The use of common and complementary results indicators supports alignment of results reporting with other UN entities. However, UNDP has faced some challenges in reporting against SDG 13 and SDG 15, owing to difficulties with tagging of activities and data quality.

**UNDP's strategic plan is supported by an integrated resource plan and budget.** Spending on strategic priority areas is tracked through an annual report card, and there is flexible funding available for agile responses to country needs. However, there are some unresolved challenges around how resource allocation formula are applied for core resources. The integrated budgetary framework covers all categories of income and expenditure but does not provide a clear link between resources and programmatic results. The budget is reviewed by the Executive Board and the accounts audited by the UN Board of Auditors. The Executive Board has regularly expressed concern about the declining share of core resources (below 12%) in UNDP's budget. UNDP has funding windows to encourage flexible funding from donors, and has taken measures to diversify its funding streams and strengthen resource mobilisation, but this has not stopped an overall trend towards earmarking. While UNDP encourages donors to provide flexible funding for its core and operational budgets, external stakeholders express concerns that earmarked funding is pushing UNDP beyond its corporate priorities. UNDP supports UN reforms through financial contributions to the Resident Coordinator system and by hosting multi-partner trust funds and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund office.

**BOX 8. KPI 1 – Future considerations based on system-wide best practices**

**The TRAC formula for allocating core resources to country offices is** based primarily on income and population metrics. These do not create any incentive for outcome-oriented programming at the country level.<sup>a</sup> Updating the formula to include performance would connect resource flows to results in ways that could change organisational behaviour while maintaining equity commitments. **IFAD’s Performance-Based Allocation System (PBAS) demonstrates that performance-driven allocation of this kind is politically viable even in a universal membership organisation**, provided the formula is designed through a collaborative process.

Importantly, however, the proposed application to UNDP differs in one critical respect from IFAD’s model: **whereas IFAD’s PBAS allocates resources partly on the basis of host country policy and institutional performance, the proposed UNDP adaptation would link allocations to country office performance.** This distinction strengthens rather than weakens the case: an independent evaluation of IFAD’s PBAS found that the host country performance incentive link was relatively weak in practice, with performance score improvements not statistically significant in several regions.<sup>b</sup> Linking allocations directly to country office behaviour would create a more direct incentive.

**As core contributions decline, it is likely that an increasing proportion of these resources will be absorbed by the institutional budget before reaching programme activities, given the current Financial Regulations and Rules.**<sup>c</sup> There is a risk that this dynamic undermines the case for core funding among those donors, who expect unearmarked contributions to translate more directly into development results. One important mitigation measure could, therefore, be to ensure that cuts to the institutional budget are implemented in proportion to the overall reductions in core funding. Moreover, an allocation formula that connects core contributions to performance could strengthen the case for unearmarked funding among donors.

a. The TRAC allocation methodology has been in place in broadly its current form since the early 2000s. See UNDP (2024) Review of Core Resource Allocation Methodology. Executive Board document.

b. Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (2016) Corporate-Level Evaluation: IFAD’s Performance-Based Allocation System (Report No. 4039). Rome: IFAD.

c. UNDP (2011) UNDP Financial Regulations and Rules.

**KPI 2: Structures and mechanisms support the implementation of global frameworks for cross-cutting issues at all levels, in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda principles**

Satisfactory

3.00

**UNDP’s structures and mechanisms for integrating cross-cutting priorities are assessed as satisfactory.** UNDP has made meaningful progress in embedding gender equality, climate action and human rights across its strategic frameworks, programming tools and results systems. The Climate Promise and the Gender Equality Strategy represent notable achievements in operationalising cross-cutting commitments at scale. However, challenges remain in ensuring consistent implementation across all areas, particularly the Leaving No One Behind agenda, which lacks a clear institutional home and dedicated resourcing.

UNDP’s Gender Equality Strategy 2022–2025 puts gender equality at the centre of the organisation’s mission and treats it as both a programme goal and an agenda for institution-wide transformation. **The Social and Environmental Standards (SES) reinforce commitments** by requiring mainstreaming of gender equality and women’s empowerment across projects and programmes.

Gender is named one of three accelerators for future impact, although interviews noted uncertainty about whether this accelerator will bring additional resourcing. The Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) supports

delivery with seven gender-related outputs and roughly 35% of indicators being gender-responsive or gender-sensitive, backed by rigorous use of sex-disaggregated data.

**New interventions must be grounded in gender analysis and screened through the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure**, which categorises projects by the significance of gender-related risks and opportunities; guidance such as the updated Gender and Recovery Toolkit and the Nature for Gender Equality activation kit helps teams integrate a gender lens through the project cycle and tackle structural barriers.

**Resourcing and capacity have expanded to match ambition.** Budgets include dedicated allocations for gender equality, complemented by the GBV Booster, and financial tagging rose to 73% of expenditures in 2024, meeting the 2025 target early and eliminating gender-blind spending in about 65 offices.

**UNDP's approach to environmental sustainability and climate action is anchored in the mandatory SES**, which require every project and programme to maximise environmental benefits and manage risks, ensuring sustainability is mainstreamed organisation-wide. This policy framework is operationalised through the Environment Signature Solution within the Strategic Plan 2022–25 and strengthened by the flagship Climate Promise. Since its 2019 launch, the Climate Promise has become the largest global support platform for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), backing 85% of developing-country submissions, with most supported countries increasing mitigation and adaptation ambition and improving data quality.

Internally, **UNDP is cutting its own operational carbon emissions through the Greening Moonshot Initiative**, aiming to halve the corporate carbon footprint by 2030 via energy efficiency, renewables, and low-carbon mobility. Accountability for environmental performance is reinforced through Greening the Blue: UNDP continuously monitors carbon across 170+ offices. UNDP also uses the GEF-backed Adaptation Policy Framework for adaptation design and results-based monitoring, alongside a mandatory Climate Output Marker in Quantum to score project contributions to Paris goals, though retroactive application is unclear.

**Human and financial resources are substantial, enabled especially by long-standing partnerships with GEF and GCF and the Global Fund**, yielding a USD 2B+ grant portfolio in 140+ countries and major adaptation finance for fragile settings, but this funding model can limit strategic flexibility. Rising UN-wide demand, uncertain resourcing for the 2026–29 “Healthy Planet” agenda, and restructuring risks may stretch specialised teams.

**Human rights principles are integrated across all six Signature Solutions and operationalised through the Social and Environmental Standards (SES)**, which connect HRBA with Leave No One Behind (LNOB) and gender equality as mutually reinforcing programming principles. In 2025, UNDP launched an HRBA Toolkit with screening checklists to guide rights-based design in synergy with SES and QA, supported by a cross-bureau task force. While stakeholders broadly agree UNDP promotes HRBA, survey confidence is slightly lower than for other cross-cutting areas.

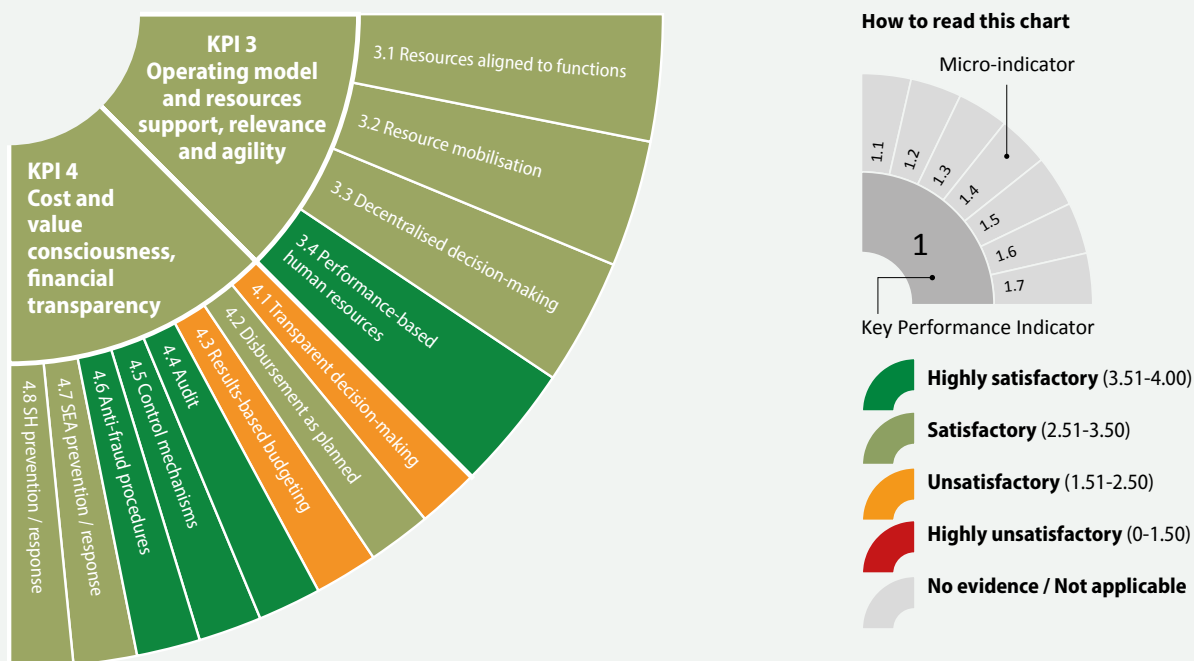
**UNDP has strengthened tracking and visibility of rights-focused programming through mandatory Human Rights and LNOB markers in Quantum**, alongside expanded data disaggregation requirements. LNOB remains central but lacks a clear institutional home, limiting accountability and internal drive in some areas.

**Accountability for human rights is reinforced by SES safeguards and a distinctive Accountability Mechanism:** the Stakeholder Response Mechanism for grievances and the Social and Environmental Compliance Unit as a formal redress and compliance body. Human rights considerations are further embedded through Project and Portfolio Quality Assurance processes that assess principled approaches, SDG alignment, and LNOB risk mitigation, and through growing use of UPR indicators in Country Programme Documents.

## OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Assets and capacities organised behind strategic direction and intended results, to ensure relevance, agility and accountability.

FIGURE 7. KEY FINDINGS ON UNDP’S OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT



UNDP’s operating model is broadly relevant and supports its mandate, with a strong decentralised field presence that remains a key comparative advantage. Its country-level footprint enables proximity to national partners, responsiveness to context, and effective programme delivery, including in fragile settings. Ongoing reforms, including the People for 2030 strategy and recent business model adjustments, have strengthened workforce management, adaptability and internal role clarity. However, technical capacity gaps persist in areas such as systems thinking, futures and foresight, collective intelligence design and entrepreneurial thinking, limiting the organisation’s ability to deliver more scalable, integrated and systemic results.

UNDP’s operating model is shaped by structural trade-offs. Maintaining a universal presence is resource-intensive and reinforces a delivery-oriented model, while limiting flexibility for upstream policy engagement. Financial constraints further affect agility, with declining revenues, high donor concentration and limited progress in diversifying funding sources. The continued reliance on earmarked and short-term project funding reduces scope for adaptive, multi-year programming and weakens strategic autonomy.

Organisational systems for financial management, oversight and accountability are robust and support transparency and cost-consciousness. The introduction of the Quantum platform has improved financial tracking, reporting and efficiency, though its full impact is still emerging. UNDP demonstrates strong internal control mechanisms, including audit, risk management and anti-fraud systems, and has made notable efforts to strengthen safeguarding frameworks, including on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

At the same time, resource allocation and budgeting practices are not fully aligned with strategic priorities and results. The absence of a fully results-based budgeting approach, combined with donor-driven funding

patterns, limits UNDP's ability to direct resources towards strategic objectives and may encourage fragmented or opportunistic programming. While accountability systems are comprehensive, implementation of safeguarding measures and specialised functions remains uneven across country offices.

### KPI 3: Operating model and human and financial resources support relevance and agility

Satisfactory

3.19

**UNDP's operating model and human and financial resources are assessed as satisfactory, representing one of the stronger scores across the MOPAN framework.** UNDP's decentralised country presence is consistently recognised as a core comparative advantage, and the People for 2030 Strategy has driven meaningful progress in workforce transformation. However, structural tensions persist: the high cost of universal presence incentivises project-based delivery over upstream policy engagement, technical capacity gaps remain at country level, and the funding model is increasingly constrained by declining core resources and limited diversification.

**UNDP's operating model is broadly relevant to its mandate, with its decentralised country presence remaining a core comparative advantage.** With 89% of its workforce deployed at country level across 170 countries and territories, UNDP is consistently cited in evaluations and stakeholder consultations as uniquely positioned to support national partners, provide an entry point for other UN agencies, particularly in crisis settings, and deliver its programming activity. The 2024 Business Model Review and the subsequent approval of the Strategic Plan 2026–2029 have driven further refinements to organisational structures, including greater role clarity between headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices, relocation of location-independent functions, and the restructuring of Global Policy Centres to centralise expertise and reduce duplication. The People for 2030 Strategy has driven meaningful progress in workforce transformation across three phases, including the introduction of new contract modalities, competency and career frameworks, talent management systems and leadership development programmes. Survey data confirms broad stakeholder confidence in these arrangements, with 75% of respondents agreeing that UNDP's organisational structure supports delivery of its strategic plan and mandate, and 86% affirming the importance of its universal presence.

**However, the operating model faces structural tensions that constrain its ability to fully deliver on UNDP's strategic ambitions.** The high cost of maintaining a universal country presence compels a constant focus on attracting and delivering project funding, which works against strategic objectives such as upstream policy engagement, systems thinking and portfolio approaches. UNDP's staff profile in the field favours project management over policy engagement, and evaluations — including the recent Strategic Plan evaluation — consistently note limited availability of technical expertise at country level, particularly in political economy analysis, policy advocacy and the substantive thematic areas required for the SDG integrator role. While UNDP launched a new competency framework and amended job descriptions and learning programmes in 2024 to address these gaps, building the required capacities remains a work in progress.

**The funding model further constrains operational agility and strategic autonomy.** UNDP's 2026–29 budget projects a 33% fall in total expenditure from regular resources, with core funding expected to fall below 10% of total resources for the first time. During the assessment period, total annual contributions fluctuated between USD 4.9 and 5.5 billion, with the share of core resources declining from 12.65% in 2020 to 11.85% in 2024. Growing dependence on earmarked project funding raises the risk that resource allocation at country level is increasingly guided by donor preferences rather than strategic priorities, and evaluations note that country offices at times pursued funding opportunities beyond UNDP's areas of comparative advantage. The corporate Resource Mobilisation Strategy, finalised in October 2023, recognises the need to diversify the funding base, including through the private sector, foundations and international financial institutions, but the recent Strategic Plan evaluation concludes that limited progress in diversification has occurred to date.

## BOX 9. KPI 3 – Future considerations based on system-wide best practices

### Adapting the staffing model to evolving operational realities

**UNDP’s staffing model requires further attention, building on but going beyond the progress made under the People for 2030 strategy.** While People for 2030 has strengthened competency frameworks, contract modalities and internal talent mobility, some underlying structural tensions remain that the competency framework alone cannot resolve.

**The current model is partly based on a shrinking cadre of international staff rotating frequently across country postings** (international professional staff declined from 31% to 22% of total country office staff between 2011 and 2024, as demonstrated in Chapter 1). The rotation system was designed to enable staff to build professional experience in different operating environments and to have diverse and fulfilling career journeys. For Rotational Posts, such as Resident Representatives and Deputy Resident Representatives the standard tour of duty in hardship locations is capped at two years, with a maximum of two consecutive assignments in the same location.<sup>a</sup>

**However, as UNDP’s portfolio has shifted toward fragile contexts and middle-income countries, the importance of in-depth country knowledge is increasing.** Programming effectiveness in these settings depends on deep political economy understanding and sectoral expertise, precisely the capacities that short rotation cycles work against. Evaluations consistently note limited availability of technical expertise at country level and conclude that demand for generalist profiles is declining while the demand for contextual expertise is growing.

**This tension is well documented across the UN system.** A 2020 synthesis of OIOS inspections and evaluations across multiple UN entities found that staff turnover was consistently identified as limiting organisational effectiveness, with the loss of accumulated expertise and contextual knowledge recurring as a systemic vulnerability across the entities reviewed.<sup>b</sup> In fragile and conflict-affected settings specifically, the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations found that rapid staff rotation and the resulting loss of institutional memory were undermining mission effectiveness, and recommended extending assignment lengths in complex political environments where accumulated contextual knowledge is most operationally critical.<sup>c</sup> IFAD’s IOE evaluation of its own decentralisation experience drew the same conclusion in a development context, recommending that IFAD ensure its country offices had staff with the necessary experience and skill sets, to minimise the disruption to operational cycles caused by reassignment, and that it treat sustained contextual engagement as an explicit objective.<sup>d</sup>

**The implication for UNDP is to look at the full personnel footprint, staff rotation and differentiated staffing models by context/capacities,** including a focus on national staff members, who hold significant institutional memory, technical expertise and partner relationships in many country offices.

### Integrating common operational services across the UN development system

**Across the UN development system, progress on inter-agency service integration has stalled in recent years, with the number of Common Back Offices remaining well below target.** The assessment notes that UNDP has

a. UNDP (2021) *Mobility Policy*.

b. OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division (2020) *Evaluation Synthesis of Organisational Culture*. New York: United Nations, June 2020, pp. 4–5.

c. High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (2015) *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People (A/70/95-S/2015/446)*. New York: United Nations, June 2015.

d. Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (2023) *Corporate-Level Evaluation on IFAD’s Decentralisation Experience (EB 2023/138/R.5)*. Rome: IFAD, paras. 25–26 and Recommendation 4.

strengthened its role as service provider, expanding its common operational services in terms of volume, client base and service mix, but that system-wide integration has not kept pace. This reflects a system-wide governance problem rather than a capacity problem on UNDP's part.

**The current opt-in model, under which agencies can exit inter-agency service arrangements at any point,** undermines the volume predictability needed to justify investment and continuous improvement.<sup>e</sup> Addressing this requires stronger incentives on both the demand and supply sides. On the demand side, participation in arrangements such as Common Back Offices could shift from opt-in with easy exit to opt-out with structured justification and transition costs, preserving withdrawal as a last resort rather than a costless default.

The UN Secretariat's model of centralised operational support offers the most directly comparable within-system precedent. Secretariat entities including UNEP and UN-Habitat receive administrative, financial and HR services from designated Secretariat service providers under mandatory governance arrangements established by the Secretary-General, rather than through voluntary inter-agency opt-in mechanisms.<sup>f</sup> This structural difference addresses precisely the demand-side predictability problem that the JIU has identified: providers operating under mandatory Secretariat arrangements can plan capacity and invest in systems when demand is assured, while voluntary inter-agency arrangements have consistently failed to generate the stable service volumes that justify such investment.<sup>g</sup>

**On the supply side, shared service centres could be governed through multi-agency boards** that place inter-agency requirements at the centre. A precedent exists in the Client Board established by the United Nations Office at Geneva to provide structured inter-agency oversight of its administrative services to 60 client entities, though OIOS has noted the need to formalise its mandate and decision-making role more clearly.<sup>h</sup>

### Diversifying resource mobilisation

**The assessment finds that there has been limited progress in diversification of funding sources, despite recognition of the need under the 2023 Resource Mobilisation Strategy.** UNDP remains heavily dependent on earmarked bilateral funds at a moment when ODA is contracting sharply. A recent analysis by UNU-CPR identifies a principle that is directly relevant to UNDP's situation: successful diversification has consistently emerged from identifying functions that member states and other actors are willing to pay for, and developing structured financing around their use, aligning financing mechanisms with institutional functions, political incentives and sources of value.<sup>i</sup>

**Two routes to diversification are most directly applicable to UNDP's mandate and comparative advantage,** and each connects to findings elsewhere in this assessment. The first is deepening government cost-sharing in middle-income countries as a deliberately managed portfolio strategy, rather than an organic by-product of in-country relationships. The staffing analysis in Chapter 1 shows that the 27 countries with significant government cost-sharing already generate average expenditure per staff member more than four times higher than donor-financed contexts, demonstrating that this model is highly productive when conditions for it are present.

e. Joint Inspection Unit (2018) Review of Common Business Operations (JIU/REP/2018/5). Geneva: JIU, findings IV and V.

f. Organization of the Secretariat: Administrative Support Arrangements (ST/SGB/2019/2); and UNON Division of Administrative Services mandate (unon.org).

g. JIU (2018), Review of Common Business Operations (JIU/REP/2018/5), findings IV and V.

h. OIOS Internal Audit Division (2025) Audit of the Arrangements for Provision of Administrative Services by the United Nations Office at Geneva (Report 2025/042). New York: United Nations.

i. Franczak, M. and Abrar, M. (2026), Moving from Crisis Management to Resource Mobilization in the UN80 Process.

Managing government cost-sharing relationships with the same strategic approach applied to major donors, including dedicated account management and proactive offer development, could partially offset the decline in bilateral donor contributions.<sup>j</sup>

**The second is a fee-for-service transition for UNDP’s data, analytics and policy advisory tools.** UNCTAD’s debt management platform demonstrates that a development-oriented analytical service can develop partial cost-recovery through a hybrid donor-and-user-fee model, generating more stable revenue while deepening institutional relationships with programme country governments.<sup>k</sup> UNDP’s SDG Push, INFF advisory services and policy simulation platforms have the same structural potential: they provide functions that programme country governments and international financial institutions could pay for if packaged as structured services.

j. UNDP IEO (2025), Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2022–2025, p. 38, noting that most country-level resources, including government cost-sharing, continued to be negotiated locally rather than managed through corporate frameworks. This reflects the structural design of the cost-sharing modality, under which agreements carry decentralised signatory authority and are signed at country-office level. See also UN Board of Auditors, Financial Report and Audited Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2022 (A/78/5/Add.1), note 5.3.

k. UNCTAD, Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS) Programme. <https://unctad.org/dmfas>.

#### KPI 4: Organisational systems are cost- and value-conscious and enable transparency and accountability

Satisfactory

3.16

**UNDP’s organisational systems for cost-consciousness, transparency and accountability are assessed as satisfactory.** Financial governance, audit mechanisms and internal control frameworks are robust, and UNDP has maintained an unqualified audit opinion for nineteen consecutive years. The Quantum platform is improving real-time financial tracking and efficiency. However, resource allocation practices are not fully aligned with strategic priorities, the TRAC methodology requires updating, and PSEAH implementation, while reflecting serious institutional commitment, remains uneven across country offices due to structural resourcing constraints.

**UNDP’s financial governance, oversight and accountability systems are comprehensive and well-established.** Its internal control environment is robust, underpinned by clear Financial Regulations and Rules, a strong audit architecture, and a zero-tolerance policy on fraud and corruption that applies to all personnel, implementing partners and vendors. External audits by the UN Board of Auditors are conducted annually to the highest international standards, and UNDP has maintained an unqualified audit opinion for nineteen consecutive years. Management responses to audit findings are publicly available, and the Executive Board routinely scrutinises compliance. The introduction of the Quantum platform — a cloud-based ERP system replacing the previous ATLAS system — has meaningfully improved real-time visibility of costs, disbursements and performance through integrated budget modules, Power BI dashboards and cash-flow forecasting tools. An ongoing external audit by the UN Board of Auditors of the Quantum system will provide a fuller picture of its effectiveness. Annual disbursement targets are consistently met within the institutionally agreed 10% variance margin, with variances attributable primarily to external contextual factors rather than internal procedural blockages. UNDP efficiently leverages its core resources: one dollar of core funding mobilised USD 7.4 in other resources in 2024, up from USD 6.8 in 2017.

**However, UNDP’s resource allocation across the full funding envelope is not yet fully aligned with strategic priorities and budgeting practices present limitations in terms of granularity and resource-to-result traceability.** On the one hand, UNDP has a formally approved methodology (TRAC) for allocating core resources to programme countries, based primarily on income status and population, which has remained essentially unchanged for two decades and is widely recognised as requiring revision. Furthermore, while the methodology is systematically applied to core resources, the majority of UNDP’s overall programme expenditure (approximately 88%) is driven by earmarked and non-core funding streams. For non-core resources no corporate allocation mechanism exists, leaving

prioritisation decisions at country level effectively determined by donor funding preferences rather than strategic considerations and limiting the extent to which formal allocation criteria determine actual resource distribution across partner countries. While this is an inherent limitation of voluntary funding, UNDP could make further effort to improve mechanisms that can increase alignment between voluntary resources and organisational allocation criteria. On the other hand, UNDP has established a results-based management framework that conceptually links resources and expected outcomes through the Strategic Plan, Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF), the Integrated Resources Plan (IRP) and the Institutional Budget (IB). However, budget documents do not clearly show how the full resource envelope is allocated to specific strategic priorities or results. Financial information is organised by funding and cost categories rather than outcomes, and the IRRF focuses on measuring results rather than linking planned resources to them. As a result, while stakeholders can assess results and expenditures retrospectively, they have limited visibility into how resources are allocated to expected results during planning and decision-making. UNDP is currently working with the Executive Board to refine core resource allocation methodology, and the 2026–29 budget includes improvements in results focus and linkage to the strategic plan, though time is needed to assess their effectiveness.

UNDP's PSEAH framework reflects serious institutional commitment, with dedicated policies, a corporate Strategy and Action Plan, mandatory training achieving 94% completion rates in 2024, multiple confidential reporting channels, and trauma-informed investigators. The PSEAH Taskforce, established in 2018 and expanded in 2019 to cover both sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, provides cross-organisational coordination and reports directly to the Administrator. Recent strengthening measures include the appointment of a full-time Victim Support Officer in 2025, expanded vetting through the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, and the integration of PSEAH risk analysis into project design through the Social and Environmental Standards. However, implementation remains uneven across country offices. PSEAH focal points are typically double- or triple-hatted, only 52% had access to a dedicated budget in 2024, and the two full-time positions underpinning the global architecture are on temporary appointments. These resourcing constraints pose risks to the sustainability and consistency of PSEAH implementation at country level.

#### BOX 10. KPI 4 – Future considerations based on system-wide best practices

In its review of budgeting across the United Nations system, the JIU argues budget information should allow governing bodies and stakeholders to understand where resources come from, how resources are allocated, what results they are intended to achieve, and how actual expenditures compare with approved plans and expected outcomes. Transparency therefore encompasses both the availability of information and its usefulness for oversight, accountability and strategic decision-making.

The JIU identifies several core principles that underpin transparent budgeting. These include: (i) clear and sufficiently detailed budget documentation; (ii) disclosure of funding sources and financing arrangements; (iii) a clear linkage between resources and expected results; (iv) regular reporting on budget implementation and performance; (v) consistent and understandable presentation of budget information; and (vi) the ability of governing bodies and oversight mechanisms to scrutinise financial decisions and hold management accountable. Collectively, these principles seek to ensure that stakeholders can not only access budget information but also understand and use it effectively.<sup>a</sup>

MOPAN assessments have identified several organisations that perform strongly in the areas of resource-to-results traceability, budget transparency, and oversight of resource allocation. UNICEF is among the strongest performers in this regard and offers several practices that could serve as useful points of reference for other organisations seeking to strengthen their budgeting and resource allocation frameworks.

a. Joint Inspection Unit (2024), Report on Budgeting in Organizations of the UN System (JIU/REP/2024/3, Parts I and II).



### Earthquake in 2023

A 6.3 magnitude earthquake caused widespread damage and loss of life in western Afghanistan. UNDP stands ready to support affected people as they recover from this tragedy.

Photo: © UNDP Afghanistan

### Comprehensive Executive Board oversight of resources

UNICEF's Executive Board approves an integrated budget that covers the organisation's full resource envelope, including both regular (core) and other (earmarked) resources. In its decision on the 2022–2025 Integrated Budget, the Executive Board approved the Integrated Resource Plan, including projected regular and other resources, and separately appropriated funding for global and regional programmes, the institutional budget, cost recovery income, and other receipts. Although these figures are based on estimates, this approach provides a consolidated view of the organisation's anticipated resources and planned expenditures, creating a clear baseline against which actual allocations and expenditures can subsequently be monitored.

### Strong integration of resources and results frameworks

UNICEF's Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) provide a clear link between resources and strategic priorities. While UNICEF follows the harmonised cost-classification framework adopted across several UN entities, it goes beyond the minimum requirements by presenting detailed information on the allocation of programme resources by strategic goal area. The budget documentation further disaggregates resources dedicated to organisational effectiveness and efficiency initiatives into specific workstreams and subcategories. This is complemented by narrative reporting that explains progress against organisational effectiveness and efficiency results, including updates by functional cluster. Together, these elements strengthen the traceability of resources to intended results.

### Detailed budget annexes supporting transparency

UNICEF's budget documentation is supported by comprehensive annexes that provide additional granularity on resource allocation. For example, the annexes to the integrated budget include information on changes in institutional budget posts by duty station and location. This level of detail enhances transparency and enables governing bodies to better understand how organisational resources are distributed across headquarters, regional offices and country offices.

### Use of core resources to counterbalance earmarking

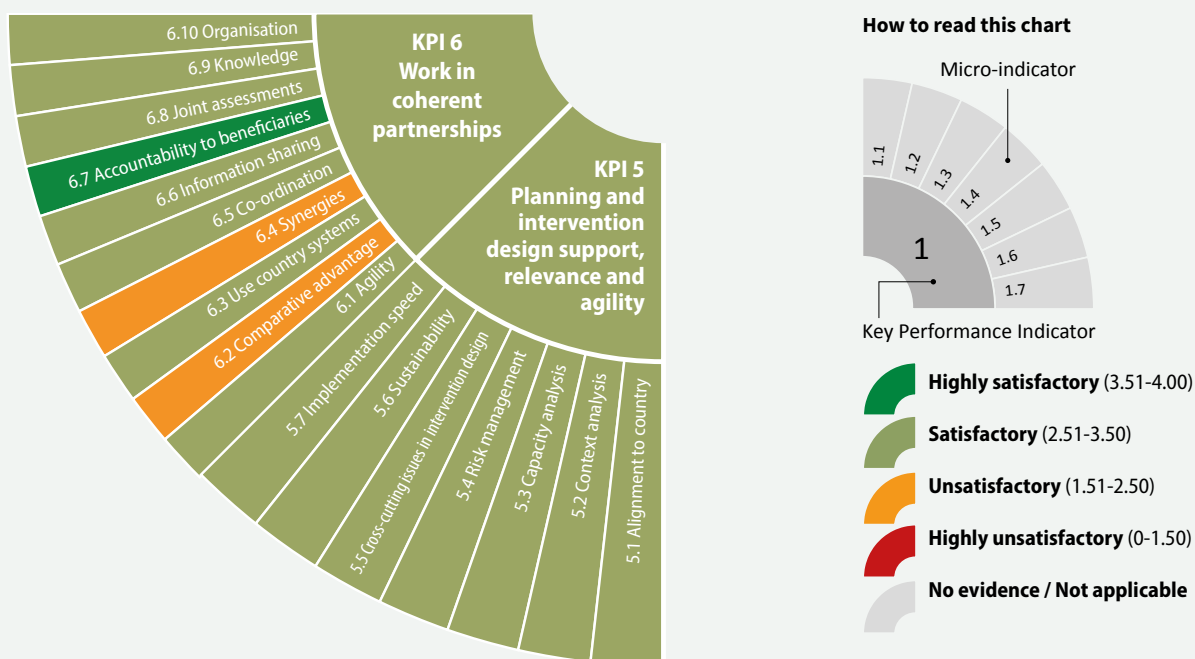
A particularly noteworthy feature of UNICEF's resource allocation approach is its deliberate use of regular resources to mitigate imbalances created by earmarked funding. UNICEF's allocation methodology directs a larger share of regular resources toward low-income, least developed and humanitarian contexts that may attract insufficient earmarked funding. Independent evaluations have found that regular resources play an important corrective role by helping to address distortions created by donor-driven funding patterns. While this does not fully offset the effects of earmarking, it represents a structured attempt to ensure that resource allocation remains aligned with organisational priorities and country needs.

a. Joint Inspection Unit (2024), Report on Budgeting in Organizations of the UN System (JIU/REP/2024/3, Parts I and II).

## RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

*Engaging in inclusive partnerships to support relevance, leverage effective solutions and maximise results.*

FIGURE 8. KEY FINDINGS ON UNDP'S RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT



UNDP ensures relevance through **strong alignment of strategies and programmes with national priorities and the SDGs**. Country Programme Documents are typically **co-designed with governments and informed by stakeholder engagement**, contributing to UNDP's reputation as a **trusted partner of choice**. Relationship management is reinforced by **solid tools for capacity assessment, risk management, and contextual analysis**, enabling informed and adaptive engagement. However, partnerships tend to be **government-centric**, with more limited and inconsistent engagement of other stakeholders. There are also **variations in how capacity assessments and sustainability considerations are shared with partners**, and some tensions where partner values diverge.

UNDP shows **strong adaptability and responsiveness**, effectively adjusting programmes and partnerships in changing contexts. Its **comparative advantages, convening power, operational capacity, and access to governments, support effective engagement**, particularly in crisis and complex settings. UNDP also performs well on **transparency, accountability frameworks, and use of country systems**, which strengthen trust.

However, **joint planning, programming, and monitoring are uneven**, often resulting in parallel rather than integrated approaches. UNDP's **integrator role remains unclear and inconsistently applied**, limiting its ability to fully leverage partnerships and foster system-wide coherence. There is also **limited operationalisation of collaborative advantage**, with insufficient recognition and use of partners' contributions.

### KPI 5: Operational planning and intervention design tools support relevance and agility in partnerships

Satisfactory	3.19
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**UNDP's operational planning and intervention design tools are assessed as satisfactory.** UNDP has well-established frameworks, standards and procedures that support alignment with national priorities, contextual relevance,

capacity analysis, risk management and the integration of cross-cutting issues. Country Programme Documents and regional strategies are generally well aligned with national and regional priorities, and UNDP is widely recognised as a trusted partner of choice. However, implementation quality varies across contexts, and newer strategic approaches, particularly systems thinking, portfolio programming and the integrator role, are not yet consistently embedded in programme design and delivery.

**UNDP’s strategic plan acts as an overarching guide for regional and country programme strategies.** Regional strategies clearly reflect the directions of change, signature solutions and enablers set out in the Strategic Plan 2022–25, and the emerging regional strategies for 2026–29 show stronger alignment with the new strategic plan, including its focus on systems thinking, portfolio approaches and accelerators. At country level, the strategic plan frames the parameters of UNDP’s offer, but CPDs are more directly shaped by national priorities, UNSDCF processes and country-specific needs. This supports national ownership and relevance, but also means that the strategic plan functions more as a broad vision statement than as a strong prioritisation tool.

**UNDP’s regional strategies and CPDs are strongly aligned with national and regional priorities.** CPDs are generally co-designed with governments and reflect national development plans, while regional strategies refer to relevant regional frameworks where these exist. Survey and interview evidence confirm strong partner confidence in UNDP’s responsiveness to national priorities and in the comparative advantage it brings to partnerships. However, the design and implementation of country programmes can also be influenced by donor preferences, particularly where earmarked funding shapes what country offices are able to deliver.

**UNDP applies contextual and situational analysis to shape intervention design and implementation.** Regional strategies and CPDs are informed by analysis of operating contexts, and UNDP has strengthened the use of foresight, scenario planning, conflict sensitivity and crisis-related guidance, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Reflection points with partners support adaptation when contexts change, and evaluations show examples of effective responsiveness. However, the application of the integrator role remains uneven. While it is increasingly referenced in regional and country strategies, it is not yet consistently understood or operationalised in intervention design.

**Capacity analysis is supported by established tools,** including the Partner Capacity Assessment Tool and the Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers. These tools assess partner capacities and help determine implementation modalities, including the use of national, direct or hybrid implementation arrangements. Capacity analysis is also increasingly linked to systems thinking and portfolio design, including assessments of institutional capacities and enabling environments. However, the extent to which capacity assessments are jointly developed with country partners, shared with other development partners and used to inform sustainability strategies varies across contexts. Technical capacity constraints within UNDP country offices also affect the organisation’s ability to implement more integrated and systemic approaches.

**Risk management is embedded in UNDP’s programming processes through its Enterprise Risk Management framework,** risk appetite guidance, project risk registers and digital tools in Quantum. Operational, strategic, political and reputational risks are identified during programme and project design, and country offices use risk registers and escalation mechanisms to monitor risks during implementation. UNDP has also integrated social, environmental, safeguarding and SEA-related risks into its standards and screening processes. However, recent reviews indicate that risk management has remained partly compliance-driven, and mitigation strategies in programme documents are often relatively brief. Ongoing capacity building efforts and reforms aim to move risk management towards more risk-informed decision-making.

**Cross-cutting issues are systematically integrated into intervention design** through UNDP’s Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures, Social and Environmental Standards and project quality assurance processes.

Approval procedures require projects to consider gender equality, climate and environmental sustainability, human rights, disability inclusion and Leaving No One Behind. Gender and climate markers are mandatory, and SES screening provides an important entry point for identifying risks and opportunities. However, the integration of cross-cutting issues in monitoring and evaluation is less consistent, and some guidance on monitoring does not clearly specify how these issues should be tracked during implementation.

**Sustainability is addressed in intervention design through corporate programming guidance**, the SES framework and CPD results frameworks. Reviewed CPDs include sustainability considerations relating to institutional frameworks, resources, human capacity and enabling policy environments. Evaluation evidence indicates that sustainability prospects are stronger where interventions are embedded in national systems and supported by national ownership. However, sustainability planning varies across interventions, and project-based approaches, short-term funding and uncertain resourcing for some initiatives continue to constrain the durability of results.

**UNDP's institutional procedures broadly support implementation and adaptability.** The introduction of Quantum has strengthened financial management, implementation tracking and operational efficiency, and UNDP has established standards for programme and project management. At the same time, procedural delays and administrative bottlenecks have affected implementation speed in some contexts, particularly during periods of system transition. Partner survey data is broadly positive, but interviews and evaluations point to a more mixed experience among country offices.

Overall, UNDP's operational planning and intervention design tools provide a strong basis for relevant and adaptive programming, but their effectiveness is limited by uneven implementation, variable country-office capacity, and the incomplete operationalisation of newer strategic approaches.

### BOX 11. KPI 5 – Future considerations based on system-wide best practices

#### Connecting knowledge production to decision points

**To strengthen the connection between knowledge production and decision points, UNDP could consider developing structured science-policy interface mechanisms.** These are institutional arrangements that connect knowledge production to specific decision cycles rather than leaving it to chance whether analytical capacity reaches decision-makers at the right moment. Their defining features are: 1) timing – analysis commissioned and delivered to coincide with decision moments rather than publication schedules; 2) explicit treatment of uncertainty – decision-makers receive honest assessments of what is known and what is contested rather than false confidence; and 3) translation – global or technical knowledge rendered actionable for the specific country context in which a decision is being made.<sup>a</sup>

**The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the most developed example.** It synthesises existing scientific evidence on a cycle deliberately timed to inform major political decision moments in the UN climate process. Critically, it communicates uncertainty as a feature rather than a weakness, using calibrated confidence language that enables decisions under uncertainty rather than deferring them until certainty arrives. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services extended this model into a more complex domain by explicitly integrating indigenous and local knowledge alongside peer-reviewed science, directly analogous to UNDP's challenge of connecting global policy expertise held in its policy centres with tacit country-level knowledge held in its country offices. The Independent Group of Scientists convened

a. Velasco, L., Fournier-Tombs, E., Dunton, C. and Siddiqui, M. (2025) Foundations of Scientific Consensus for International Cooperation. UNU-CPR Policy Brief. New York: United Nations University, December 2025.

for the Global Sustainable Development Report extended the model further into the sustainable development domain itself, synthesising evidence across SDG interlinkages and transformation pathways on a quadrennial cycle timed to inform intergovernmental decision moments, including, most recently, the 2023 SDG Summit.<sup>b</sup> This demonstrates that structured science-policy interfaces are viable and institutionally valued in precisely the multilateral environment in which UNDP operates, and points to the translation of global scientific synthesis into country-level policy contexts as a persistent structural challenge that UNDP's own institutional design has not yet fully addressed.

**UNDP's Human Development Report offers a partial institutional precedent within the organisation itself.** The HDR synthesises existing research, is timed to coincide with major global policy moments, and has increasingly engaged with decision-making under uncertainty. In this sense, UNDP is already implementing the timing and uncertainty communication dimensions of the science-policy interface model at the global level. The remaining challenge is translation, extending this logic downward so that structured protocols connect policy centre expertise to country-level programming decisions at the specific moments, including CPD design, UNSDCF prioritisation and country programme reviews, when they can most influence results. This would directly address the finding that the integrator role is increasingly referenced in country strategies but not yet consistently operationalised in intervention design.

b. Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General (2023) Global Sustainable Development Report 2023: Times of Crisis, Times of Change — Science for Accelerating Transformations to Sustainable Development. New York: United Nations, Chapter 5, pp. 89–94.

#### KPI 6: Working in coherent partnerships directed at leveraging and catalysing the use of resources

Satisfactory

2.79

**UNDP's performance in working in coherent partnerships is assessed as satisfactory.** UNDP has well-established partnership instruments, strong corporate transparency and a recognised comparative advantage as a trusted, adaptable partner. However, a persistent gap exists between UNDP's partnership ambitions and their realisation in practice. Joint planning, programming and monitoring remain uneven, and UNDP has not yet fully operationalised its integrator function. The role is inconsistently understood and applied, limiting UNDP's ability to leverage collaborative advantage and foster system-wide coherence.

**UNDP has well-established tools and procedures to support partnerships, including updated partnership instruments, programming guidance, and mechanisms for programme revision.** Its comparative advantages are clearly articulated in strategic plans and country programme documents, and are consistently recognised by partners. Evidence from countries such as Somalia and Paraguay demonstrates that UNDP can adapt effectively when conditions change. Its strong commitment to country-led development, use of country systems, and alignment with national priorities and the SDGs contribute to its reputation as a trusted partner. Corporate-level transparency is strong, with extensive public reporting through open.undp.org and solid alignment with IATI standards.

**However, the assessment finds a persistent gap between UNDP's partnership ambitions and their realisation in practice.** Joint planning, programming and monitoring remain uneven across country contexts, and guidance on joint monitoring and reporting is insufficient. While UNDP identifies potential synergies with partners and opportunities for catalytic use of resources, implementation is inconsistent. South-South and triangular cooperation are formally supported but cross-country knowledge-sharing remains fragmented. Partnerships with IFIs, MDBs and private-sector actors show promise but results vary considerably by country and leadership. At the same time, country-level responsiveness to partner information requests is more variable than corporate-level transparency would suggest, and joint performance reviews with national partners remain limited.

**The central challenge is that UNDP has not yet fully operationalised its integrator function.** While the role is seen as potentially valuable by partners, it is not consistently understood or applied, and some UN partners perceive UNDP as insufficiently recognising the contributions of other agencies. Resources and competencies are not always aligned with integrator ambitions — particularly in systems thinking, portfolio approaches and deep technical expertise at country level — and expectations under the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) remain unclear. Accountability standards are formally in place through the Accountability Systems Policy, SES, SRM and SECU, but implementation varies, with some country evaluations noting gaps in citizen consultation and accountability practice. UNDP’s knowledge products, including the Human Development Report, are widely valued by partners, but evidence of their uptake into policy decisions is uneven.

## BOX 12. KPI 6 – Future considerations based on system-wide best practices

### Aligning knowledge and operational delivery

**Connecting knowledge production and operational delivery constitutes a remaining challenge directly relevant to UNDP’s partnership performance.** Despite updating its Knowledge Management Strategy and improving KM infrastructure, evidence of increased organisational learning remains limited. As the evaluation of the 2022–25 Strategic Plan found, UNDP did not “fully integrate its global offer and existing capacities, limiting the potential to foster a cohesive learning ecosystem.”<sup>a</sup> This gap is visible in the KPI 6 findings: UNDP’s knowledge products, including the Human Development Report, are widely valued by partners, but evidence of their uptake into policy decisions is uneven, suggesting that the problem is not the quality of UNDP’s knowledge offer but the mechanisms through which it reaches partners and shapes programming.

**This challenge is not unique to UNDP. Recent reforms within ADB provide a useful comparison.** Prior to its 2022–23 reorganisation, ADB’s six operations departments operated as silos with minimal cross-departmental collaboration and no practical mechanism for sharing expertise. ADB’s New Operating Model consolidated sector specialists into ADB-wide sector offices and introduced matrix management to break down regional silos.

**A 2025 independent evaluation found that the reform had dismantled old silos but simultaneously reconstructed new ones.** Sector offices became more cohesive internally while cross-sectoral collaboration became harder to sustain, with 86 percent of staff disagreeing that the reform had overcome silos overall. Volume targets remained the dominant incentive. Where knowledge-operations integration did occur, it depended on individual initiative rather than formal organisational support. **The failure to redesign the budget and incentive architecture before structural changes were rolled out was identified as a central weakness.**<sup>b</sup> Creating incentives for knowledge sharing depends to a large extent on whether the units holding expertise are evaluated on whether that expertise reaches and shapes operations, and whether operations teams have a direct cost signal favouring internal knowledge over external substitutes.

**Strengthening incentives for knowledge sharing within UNDP might require creating an internal technical market mechanism.** In practical terms, this would mean establishing a system under which country offices are allocated a budget for technical support that they can direct toward either internal sources – BPPS, Global Policy Centres, regional hubs – or external consultants, but where drawing on internal expertise carries a visible cost signal rather than appearing free at the point of use. Policy centres and thematic units would receive income based on actual demand for their services from operations, creating an incentive to develop offerings that country offices find useful.

a. UNDP IEO (2025), Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

b. Asian Development Bank (2022) Organizational Review: A New Operating Model to Accelerate ADB’s Transformation Toward Strategy 2030 and Beyond. Manila: ADB; and Independent Evaluation Department, ADB (2025) Renewing, Revitalizing, and Reforming the Asian Development Bank: An Evaluation of the New Operating Model. Manila: ADB

**The mechanism does not require central planning** of what knowledge gets produced or used, it allows operational demand to shape the knowledge offer, which is precisely the dynamic that ADB failed to generate through structural reorganisation.

**This architecture could also be extended to strengthen South-South cooperation**, directly addressing the KPI 6 finding that South-South and triangular cooperation are formally supported but cross-country knowledge-sharing remains fragmented. Under a demand-driven model, a country office managing a complex governance transition could commission support from a colleague office that has navigated a comparable transition, with that exchange recorded and compensated rather than depending on informal networks and personal relationships. Tacit knowledge about implementation – what worked, under what conditions, and why – tends not to be fully codified and is therefore precisely the kind of knowledge that demand-driven mechanisms, rather than knowledge management systems, are best placed to mobilise.<sup>c</sup> This type of mechanism could also be used to advance UN80 priorities, such as joint knowledge hubs and expertise-on-demand.

#### Promoting an integrated UN offer at country level

**UNDP’s comparative advantage across poverty reduction, governance and climate tends to be deployed through its own interventions rather than as a system-wide asset.** The current Management Accountability Framework assigns UNDP a supporting role in promoting an integrated UN Country Team approach but leaves the modalities of that support undefined<sup>d</sup> and the potential for UNDP’s substantive expertise to shape the collective diagnostic and programmatic response of UN country teams is partly unrealised.

**Fully realising this potential might require stronger collaboration with Resident Coordinator’s Offices with a focus on providing and facilitating substantive support for SDG integration.** The MAPS mission model pointed in this direction, but it was discontinued partly due to uncertainty regarding the division of labour between UNDP and the RC system.<sup>e</sup>

**Building on the internal technical market outlined above, this could be supported by allocating the RC a dedicated pool of technical assistance vouchers to commission UNDP expertise for system-wide needs.** Unlike the RC levy, which covers coordination overhead, TA vouchers would function as an investment instrument establishing a clearer client relationship and increasing the availability of UNDP’s comparative advantages to the whole UN country team.

#### Scaling up systems thinking and the portfolio approach in fragile settings

**With the UN80 review and withdrawal of peace operations from an increasing number of contexts, UNDP is likely to inherit civilian tasks in governance, rule of law and stabilisation.** The assessment notes that UNDP has increased its focus on conflict prevention, anticipatory approaches and stabilisation in fragile contexts – a genuine strength identified under KPI 6 – and that there is scope to build on this through a more systematic application of the portfolio approach. The KPI 6 finding that partnerships with IFIs, MDBs and private-sector actors vary considerably by country and leadership also points to this challenge: effective peacebuilding programming in fragile settings requires the kind of sustained, integrated partnerships that the portfolio approach is designed to support.

c. Karp, P. (2024) “Transforming the Knowledge Ecosystem”, Chapter 4 in Ijjasz-Vasquez, E., Karp, P. and Weber-Fahr, M. (eds.) *Communities of Practice at the World Bank*. Abingdon: Routledge.

d. UN (2021), *The Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System*.

e. UNDP (2018), *Mid-Term Evaluation of the UNDP Project “Enabling Responsive, Coherent and Inclusive Support to the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda”*.

### Displaced woman in Pissila, Burkina Faso

Violence in Burkina Faso has displaced nearly 780,000 internally. UNDP supports the number 2 IDP site in Pissila by providing solar street lights and solar lamp kits to charge mobile phones to IDPs on the site.

Photo: © UNDP / Aurélie Rusek



**Conflict and fragile settings are complex adaptive systems in which linear programming logic tends to fail,** not because of poor implementation but because local feedback loops, behavioural attractors and non-linear causality shape outcomes more than programme design does.<sup>f</sup> The implication is not that programming rigour should be reduced but that a different form of rigour is required, one better matched to the complexity of the operating environment and capable of responding to non-linear results rather than penalising deviation from original designs.

Translating this insight into practice would require combining the science-policy interface mechanisms discussed under KPI 5 with adaptive programming methodologies, including mandatory political economy analysis at project design stage, outcome harvesting in place of fixed logframes, and iterative learning cycles. The science-policy interface connection matters specifically here: the challenge in fragile settings is not only designing adaptive programmes but ensuring that contextual knowledge – political economy analysis, conflict dynamics, local feedback mechanisms – reaches programming decisions at the right moment. Relevant experience exists in the World Bank’s FCV Strategy<sup>g</sup> and the Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation approach, both of which demonstrate that adaptive methodologies can be applied with institutional rigour rather than as a substitute for it.<sup>h</sup>

**The portfolio approach offers a promising vehicle for this transition,** but only if it is operationalised at scale across fragile settings. Moreover, this would require dedicated resources, adapted guidance and accountability frameworks that reward iterative learning rather than penalising deviation from original programme designs. In scaling up the use of systems and portfolio methods across fragile settings, UNDP can draw on experiences in developing portfolios in São Tomé and Príncipe, Libya, Venezuela and Timor-Leste. Moreover, in developing the adaptive infrastructure, UNDP can draw on existing methods, such as the development intelligence and dynamic management functions, which have already provided rapid feedback to inform iterative loops, including in Nepal during the Gen Z-led protests and in Libya. Finally, scaling up this approach would require strong coordination across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. In this regard, UNDP’s work in Venezuela can serve as a positive example, where a portfolio is being delivered in coordination with five UN agencies, embedding the humanitarian-development-peace nexus into joint planning and monitoring.

f. Day, A. and Hunt, C.T. (2023), “A Perturbed Peace: Applying Complexity Theory to UN Peacekeeping”, *International Peacekeeping*, 30(1), pp. 1–23.

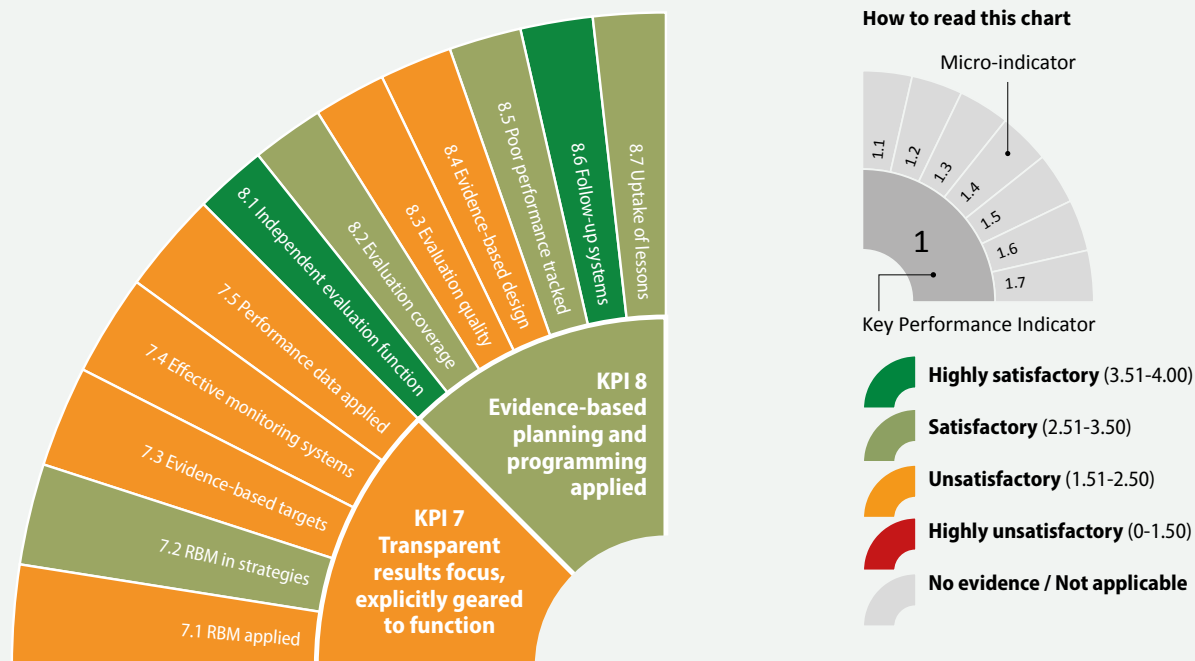
g. World Bank Group (2020) *World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020–2025*. Washington DC: World Bank; and IEG World Bank (2025) *An Evaluation of the World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020–25*. Washington DC: World Bank, pp. 113–116 (on gradual, adaptive approaches to institution building in FCS).

h. Andrews, M., Pritchett, L. and Woolcock, M. (2017) *Building State Capability: Evidence, Analysis, Action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

*Systems geared to managing and accounting for development and humanitarian results and the use of performance information, including evaluation and lesson-learning.*

**FIGURE 9. KEY FINDINGS ON UNDP’S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**



UNDP has established a comprehensive framework for results management and evaluation, reflecting a strong institutional commitment to transparency, accountability and learning. Its Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) provides a structured approach to tracking outputs, outcomes and impacts, and is supported by clear policies, guidance and tools at programme and project level. The organisation has also invested in strengthening results-based management (RBM), including new strategies, guidance and digital tools, which are beginning to improve performance monitoring and management oversight.

However, significant gaps remain in linking operational performance to higher-level outcomes and impacts. At the corporate level, outcome and impact data rely largely on external sources rather than on UNDP’s own results systems, and the contribution of UNDP’s interventions to these results is not systematically demonstrated. This limits the organisation’s ability to clearly evidence its effectiveness, support learning and inform strategic decision-making. At programme and project level, while RBM requirements are well established, the quality and consistency of results frameworks and outcome monitoring vary across the organisation.

UNDP’s evaluation function is strong and independent, with centralised evaluations widely regarded as credible and of high quality. At the same time, decentralised evaluations show uneven quality and use, and the extent to which evaluation findings inform programme design and strategic decisions remains inconsistent. Efforts to strengthen evaluation systems and promote the use of evidence, including through new tools and platforms, are ongoing but not yet fully embedded.

Mechanisms to support the use of performance data in decision-making are in place and improving, particularly through enhanced data systems and performance dashboards. However, capacity constraints and limitations in results measurement frameworks continue to affect the organisation's ability to fully realise a results-driven and learning-oriented culture.

### KPI 7: Strong and transparent results focus, explicitly geared towards function

Unsatisfactory

2.47

**UNDP's results focus is assessed as unsatisfactory, reflecting a significant and acknowledged gap in its corporate results architecture.** While UNDP demonstrates strong output-level performance and has invested in new RBM guidance, tools and strategies, it lacks a robust framework for monitoring the contribution of its operations to longer-term outcomes and impacts. Outcome and impact data at the corporate level rely on external sources rather than UNDP's own systems, limiting the organisation's ability to demonstrate and communicate its effectiveness. Concerns have also been raised about whether existing capacity is sufficient to deliver the major shift in RBM approach required by the new strategic plan and portfolio policy.

While corporate documentation reflects a commitment to a results culture, there are gaps between intent and implementation. The most important shortcoming relates to the acknowledged absence of a robust corporate framework for reliably monitoring the contribution of UNDP's operations to longer term outcomes and impacts. The corporate Integrated Results and Resources Framework, UNDP's primary tool for measuring and managing results at the corporate level, aggregates data relating to targeted impacts, outcomes, outputs. However, only the data on outputs draws directly from results reported by country offices. Data for outcome and impact indicators comes not from UNDP's RBM systems, but instead from secondary sources, with results said to reflect the combined efforts of governments and their development partners. Although the IRRF indicates which outcomes the outputs are expected to contribute to, these contributions are not directly tested. The absence of a robust framework for monitoring outcomes and impact at the corporate level limits UNDP's ability to clearly and convincingly demonstrate and communicate the changes to which it contributes, and is a barrier to learning, improvement, and evidence-based decision making.

These shortcomings are clearly acknowledged by UNDP's management, and there are a number of initiatives underway to address them. A new RBM strategy has been developed with an overarching aim of supporting UNDP's evolution from a fragmented, output delivery organisation to a holistic, results-driven approach that fosters transformational change and measurable long-term impact. New guidance has been developed, including guidance on the development of impact indicators, and new training programmes and certification schemes have been established.

However, concerns have been raised by the recent evaluation of the Strategic Plan, as well as internal stakeholders consulted for this assessment, about the extent to which existing human and financial capacity in the area of RBM is sufficient to enable the major changes in approach envisaged by the new policy. At the same time, the need for changed approach to RBM is made more urgent by the recent approval of the portfolio policy which is central to the new strategic plan, and which is acknowledged to require an evolution away from traditional, linear results-based management.

At the programme and project level, there are clear requirements, incentives, and guidance in place for the adoption of an RBM approach. The IRRF tracks the average quality of results frameworks, theories of change, and lessons learned from evidence. Average performance against all three metrics has trended at slightly above satisfactory for the 2022-25 period. The quality of RBM approaches at the project level is not tracked by the IRRF. However, a recent audit of project-

level monitoring highlighted inconsistencies in the quality of frameworks and regional oversight. Several evaluations also highlight the absence of quality outcome-level monitoring at the programme and project level.

There are clear requirements and mechanisms in place to support the use of performance data to inform decision making, and the evidence does indicate that this does occur to some extent. The recently introduced Performance App, which aggregates performance and compliance data from numerous sources across the organisation, is understood to have greatly improved management’s ability to identify and respond to issues and concerns at the regional and country level.

#### KPI 8: Evidence-based planning and programming applied

Satisfactory

2.97

**UNDP’s application of evidence-based planning and programming is assessed as satisfactory, though with important caveats.** The Independent Evaluation Office is structurally and operationally independent, and centralised evaluations are widely regarded as credible and of high quality. Transparent systems for tracking management responses to evaluation recommendations are in place and well-used. However, the 1% budget allocation target for the IEO has not been met, decentralised evaluations show uneven quality and use, and evidence of systematic organisational learning, the translation of evaluation findings into improved programming practice, remains limited.

UNDP’s evaluation function, the Independent Evaluation Office, is both structurally and operationally independent. This has been confirmed by a recent (2024) independent review of the UNDP’s evaluation policy. The IEO has full discretion in deciding its evaluation programme, although it consults closely with management to ensure that strategic and thematic evaluations focus on areas of strategic relevance.

Centralised evaluations managed directly by the IEO include strategic/thematic evaluations and independent country programme evaluations. The evaluation policy clearly describes principles for coverage for both centralised and decentralised evaluations. Centralised evaluations are widely perceived to be of high quality and impartiality. Decentralised evaluations are commissioned directly by UNDP’s business units. Multiple sources point to concerns relating to the quality, use, and impartiality of decentralised evaluations. The IEO assesses and tracks, but does not assure, the quality of decentralised evaluations. UNDP Regional Evaluation Focal Points are responsible for quality assurance of evaluations submitted by country offices, while this responsibility is assigned to the BPPS Evaluation Specialist for evaluations conducted by regional bureaux, headquarters units and hosted agencies. That said, the IEO is undertaking efforts to support improvements to the quality of decentralised evaluations, including the development of a QA app, and the share of decentralised evaluations rated satisfactory increased from 34 percent in 2020 to 57 percent in 2025. Programming policies and procedures clearly require new interventions to be informed by past lessons and performance data. UNDP’s Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) tracks the quality of lesson-integration in programme documents. Data from the IRRF indicates that on average, programme documents refer to lessons, but that the extent to which these explicitly inform design choices is inconsistent. Responses to the IEO’s stakeholder survey indicate that the extent to which evaluations are perceived as useful for shaping country programme documents or informing project design is relatively limited.

The IEO maintains a highly transparent system for tracking management responses and actions relating to evaluation recommendations. Data from this system indicates that the vast majority of key actions relating to evaluation recommendations are implemented.

Substantial efforts have been undertaken to develop mechanisms for supporting the distillation and dissemination of evidence and lessons from evaluations across UNDP and to external partners. These have included the development

of dedicated synthesis products and reflections papers. The online Evaluation Resource Centre contains all published UNDP evaluations, as well as guidance and tools on evaluation. Among the flagship initiatives of the IEO is the development of the Artificial Intelligence for Development Analytics platform. This publicly accessible platform allows users to interrogate evaluation evidence using naturally phrased questions through a chatbot interface. Interview evidence suggests that AIDA is widely used, at least within UNDP.

However, the extent to which UNDP has succeeded in fostering a learning culture remains unclear. The recent evaluation of the Strategic Plan indicated that efforts to do so remain nascent. The recent internal audit of the IEO also noted that there have been limited efforts to track the wider effect of evaluations on improvements in the quality of UNDP's programming.

### BOX 13. KPI 8 – Future considerations based on system-wide best practices

**The findings above indicate that the quality of de-centralised evaluations is improving. However, further improvements are still needed, including both in terms of the quality and use of these evaluations.** One consideration under KPI 1 was to introduce an allocation formula for core funding, which would include performance of country offices among other elements. This could provide an opportunity to create incentives for country offices to improve the quality and use of evaluations. More proactive real-time quality assurance processes could also have a positive impact on evaluation quality, as has been shown in the case of ILO.<sup>a</sup>

a. UNEG Decentralized Evaluation Working Group (2025) *Mapping Decentralized Evaluation Functions Across UN Agencies*. Geneva: UNEG, June 2025; see also UNEG Interest Group on Decentralized Evaluations (2020) *Lessons Learned Paper No. 1: Quality Assurance of Decentralized Evaluations*. Geneva: UNEG, June 2020, paras. 12–13.

#### Sustainable palm oil production in Jambi Province, Indonesia

UNDP-supported sustainable commodity programmes that help smallholder farmers and local stakeholders, improve sustainability practices, strengthen livelihoods, and support Indonesia's transition toward responsible palm oil production.

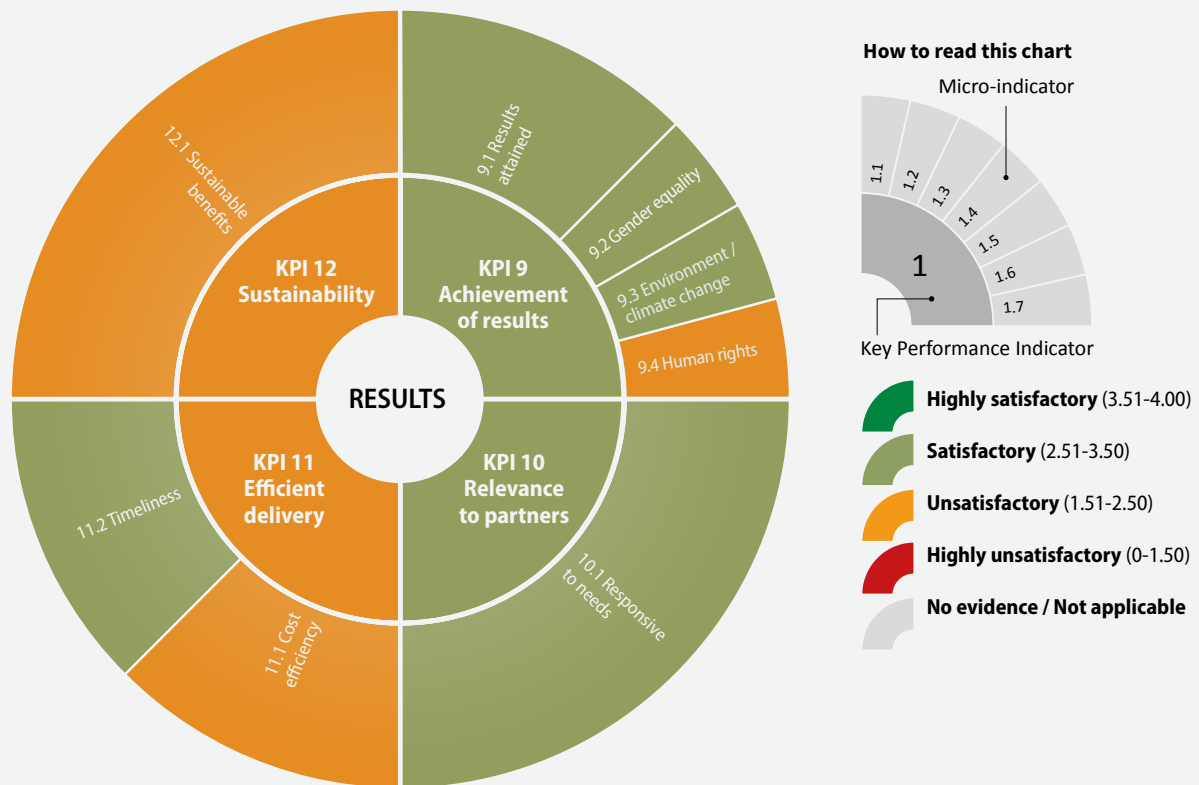
Photo: © UNDP Indonesia/Andi Pratiwi



**RESULTS**

*Achievement of relevant, inclusive and sustainable contributions to humanitarian and development results in an efficient manner.*

**FIGURE 10. KEY FINDINGS ON UNDP'S RESULTS AREAS**



UNDP demonstrates strong performance in delivering outputs across its programme areas, with consistently high achievement rates against corporate targets. Its interventions contribute to a wide range of development and humanitarian objectives, including institutional strengthening, capacity development, gender equality and climate action. Evaluation evidence confirms that UNDP makes relevant and meaningful contributions across its mandate, particularly in supporting national systems and policies.

However, there are persistent limitations in translating strong output delivery into broader, scalable and sustainable outcomes. The organisation’s results framework does not enable systematic attribution of outcomes and impacts to its interventions, and evaluation evidence points to contributions that are often limited in scale. Fragmented, project-based delivery and insufficient integration across programmes reduce the potential for transformational change, including in cross-cutting areas such as gender equality, climate action and human rights.

UNDP’s programming is generally well aligned with national priorities and widely perceived as relevant by government partners. Nonetheless, engagement with end beneficiaries is uneven, and in some cases insufficient consultation during design has limited the reach of interventions to the most vulnerable populations.

In terms of efficiency, UNDP benefits from strong operational capacity and adaptability, supporting timely delivery in a range of contexts, including crisis settings. At the same time, fragmented programming and occasional procedural bottlenecks increase transaction costs and affect overall efficiency.

Sustainability of results remains mixed. While interventions embedded in national systems show stronger prospects for lasting impact, the prevalence of short-term, project-based approaches limits sustainability, particularly where long-term financing and institutional capacity are not secured.

### KPI 9: Development and humanitarian objectives are achieved and results contribute to normative and cross-cutting goals

Satisfactory	2.75
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**UNDP's achievement of development and humanitarian objectives is assessed as satisfactory.** UNDP demonstrates very strong output-level performance, with average target achievement of 90% or greater across most Signature Solutions between 2022 and 2024. Evaluation evidence confirms meaningful contributions across governance, climate, gender and human rights programming. However, the satisfactory rating reflects persistent limitations in translating strong output delivery into broader, scalable and sustainable outcomes, with fragmented, project-based delivery identified as a consistent constraint on transformational impact across all major programming areas.

As discussed in the analysis for KPI 7, UNDP's IRRF provides a strong framework for tracking the results of its operations at the output level, but it does not enable a systematic assessment of the extent to which outputs have contributed to wider outcomes.

When measured at the output level, data from the IRRF suggests very strong performance in terms of delivery against milestones. Between 2022 and 2024, the average percentage achievement of targets for almost all outputs across the Signature Solutions was 90% or greater, with average achievement exceeding targets consistently for several outputs. The only exceptions to this general trend of very strong performance against targets at the output level was in relation to outputs on strengthened social protection systems, strengthened health and pandemic response systems, and the implementation of country-led measures to advance the economic empowerment of women. At no point, however, was the average percentage achievement of targets below 60%.

Evaluation evidence provides a mixed view of the extent to which UNDP's strong delivery at the output level has contributed to wider outcomes and impacts. Overall, the eight centralised thematic evaluations reviewed for this assessment point to clear contributions across several different programming areas. However, they each indicate that the scale of these was limited, in part due to a lack of integrated approaches to programming, and largely fragmented, project-based delivery. The ICPEs reviewed showed similar results, characterised by important contributions, particularly in terms of institutional strengthening and capacity building, but limitations to scale as a result of fragmented delivery. That said, an aggregation of rating data for ICPEs, which provides a more systematic view of performance across several dimensions of results, indicates that the majority were mostly achieving their intended outputs and outcomes.

In the area of gender equality and the economic empowerment of women, output level data highlights both increasing expenditure and strong performance against targets. Corporate and country level evaluations point to a mixed picture however. Most thematic evaluations point to proactive measures to supporting gender equality and women's economic empowerment across different programming areas, highlighting a strong organisational commitment to this issue. However, despite important results at the output level, evaluation evidence indicates that there was frequently insufficient attention to the structural drivers of gender inequality, limiting the transformational impact of interventions.

Similarly, IRRF data highlights exceptionally strong performance at the output level with respect to targets relating to climate change and environmental sustainability. Evidence from corporate evaluations also suggests important contributions to climate change mitigation and adaptation across different programming areas. In line with the overall trend, however, most evaluations pointed to limits in terms of the scalability of results in this area, highlighting persistent challenge relating to short-term, project based, and fragmented delivery.

Each of UNDP's signature solutions are associated with interventions that involve support to different dimensions of human rights. During the assessment period, thematic evaluations were conducted of support to access to justice and social protection, both programming areas with direct relevance to human rights. Both pointed to significant contributions to strengthening national policies and systems, but also highlighted the familiar challenges associated with fragmented delivery and limited scale. Another key pillar of UNDP's support to human rights is its strategic commitment to leaving no one behind. A formative evaluation of this commitment, as well as the more recent evaluation of the Strategic Plan, highlight several factors that have challenged UNDP's ability to ensure that those furthest behind are consistently reached by its programming.

**KPI 10: Interventions are relevant to the needs and priorities of partner countries and beneficiaries, as the organisation works towards results in areas within its mandate**

Satisfactory	3
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**UNDP's programming relevance to partner countries and beneficiaries is assessed as satisfactory.** The majority of the evaluation evidence reviewed indicates that UNDP's programming is highly relevant to needs, particularly as defined at the national level. In some cases, however, evaluations highlighted a need for improved consultation with end-beneficiaries during intervention design, which in some cases had led to misalignment with the more specific needs of different groups. Evidence indicates that in some cases, UNDP's interventions had struggled to reach the most vulnerable populations.

**KPI 11: Results are delivered efficiently**

Unsatisfactory	2.5
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**UNDP's efficiency in delivering results is assessed as unsatisfactory.** Evaluations contain relatively little evidence relating to cost efficiency. One common theme across evaluations was the fragmented and project-based approach to programming across different areas, which implied higher transaction costs. Evaluations also pointed to internal procedural bottlenecks which had occasionally impacted the timeliness of delivery. Country level evaluations, however, highlighted positive factors relating to efficiency, including high levels of adaptiveness and agility, and strong operational capacity. Aggregated ratings from ICPEs also indicate mostly satisfactory performance in relation to both management and operational efficiency, and timeliness of delivery.

**KPI 12: Results are sustainable**

Unsatisfactory	2
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**UNDP's sustainability of results is assessed as unsatisfactory. Thematic evaluations found that the potential for sustainability was highest when long-term, integrated programming was embedded within national policies and institutions.** The access to justice evaluation found, for example, that support to legal aid had, in most context, promoted an ecosystem of laws and policies, with dedicated national institutions established within the government apparatus for enhanced sustainability. Similarly, the evaluation of support to protection found that the most tangible

and transformative results had occurred when consistent support had helped shape country specific institutional arrangements and legal frameworks, and the strengthening of national capacities through long-term partnerships to enable ownership of interventions.

**However, UNDP's often fragmented and project-based programming was identified as a key factor negatively impacting the sustainability of programming.** For example, evaluations described UNDP's overall approach to private sector development as fragmented, with limited coordination between projects ostensibly under different portfolios. Despite UNDP's broad mandate providing numerous potential entry points to promote change, the evaluation found that different offers were rarely brought together at country level in more coherent programmes that addressed the most important needs of the private sector. The evaluation of ecosystem and biodiversity characterised programming in this area as dominated by single projects with uncertain sustainability. Similarly, the evaluation of energy access and transition found that programme time frames were too short to support the intended level of progress and sustainability in the energy sector. The access to justice evaluation also highlighted the limited scale and fragmentation of programmes, which reduced the contribution to sustainable, people-centred outcomes.

**Some evaluations highlighted the limited financial sustainability of interventions.** For example, the evaluation of social protection found that at the country level, there is little evidence on how the donor-funded social assistance and labour/livelihoods projects would be taken up and budgeted by governments, how fiscal space would be created, or what additional domestic sources of funding could be harnessed.

**Country level evaluations also found several challenges to sustainability.** These included a lack of measures to ensure sustainability in intervention design (highlighted in Liberia and Nepal), a high level of reliance on the continued political will of national authorities and external financial support for sustaining interventions (highlighted in Yemen and Viet Nam), as well as external factors such as government instability and limited absorptive capacity.



#### **Sustainable soybean production in Paraguay**

Workers on a soybean plantation on the land of Mrs Blanca Esquivel Saiki, a soybean producer from Pirapó, Itapúa. She is an example of the effort of women in agriculture work and shows us the female side of the production, the work in the field, and leadership in the business.

Photo: © UNDP / Santi Carneri

# ABOUT THIS ASSESSMENT





**Zimbabwe – UNDP Solar For Health Project, Budiro Polyclinic, Harare**

Merjory Mayoyo stores vaccines in the vaccine refrigerator at the clinic. Thanks to solar panels, vaccines are able to remain at a constant cool temperature and do not spoil, even when there are power cuts. Africa is a continent with abundant sunlight but has poor electricity grid coverage. Yet access to electricity is essential to run medical facilities and secure access to health care, especially in remote areas.

Photo: © UNDP / Karin Scherbrucker

## THE MOPAN APPROACH

The approach to MOPAN assessments has evolved over time to adjust to the needs of the multilateral system. The MOPAN 3.1 Approach, applied in this assessment, is the latest iteration. Additional information can be found on our website.

Table 9 lists the performance areas and indicators used in MOPAN 3.1.

**TABLE 9. PERFORMANCE AREAS AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Performance area	Key performance indicator (KPI)
Strategic management	<b>KPI 1:</b> Organisational architecture and financial framework enable mandate implementation and achievement of expected results
	<b>KPI 2:</b> Structures and mechanisms support the implementation of global frameworks for cross-cutting issues at all levels in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda principles
Operational management	<b>KPI 3:</b> Operating model and human and financial resources support relevance and agility
	<b>KPI 4:</b> Organisational systems are cost- and value-conscious and enable financial transparency and accountability
Relationship management	<b>KPI 5:</b> Operational planning and intervention design tools support relevance and agility in partnerships
	<b>KPI 6:</b> Working in coherent partnerships directed at leveraging and catalysing the use of resources
Performance management	<b>KPI 7:</b> Strong and transparent results focus, explicitly geared towards function
	<b>KPI 8:</b> Evidence-based planning and programming applied
Results	<b>KPI 9:</b> Development and humanitarian objectives are achieved, and results contribute to normative and cross-cutting goals
	<b>KPI 10:</b> Interventions are relevant to the needs and priorities of partner countries and beneficiaries, as the organisation works towards results in areas within its mandate
	<b>KPI 11:</b> Results are delivered efficiently
	<b>KPI 12:</b> Results are sustainable

Source: MOPAN 3.1 Methodology Manual, 2020 Assessment Cycle,  
<https://www.mopan.org/en/our-work/mopan-methodology.html#FAQ>

## APPLYING MOPAN 3.1 TO UNDP

### Interpretations and adaptations to the methodology

Indicators at different levels in the MOPAN 3.1 assessment framework are interpreted flexibly to reflect the context of different organisations. Table 11 highlights high-level issues relating to UNDP's mandate, strategy, and operating model that the assessment team found relevant to the interpretation of indicators at different levels of the framework. Annex B provides a comprehensive view of adaptations to the MOPAN indicator framework for this UNDP assessment.

TABLE 10. INTERPRETATION/ADAPTATION OF MICRO-INDICATORS AND RELATED ELEMENTS

Key performance indicator	Key issues pertinent to UNDP in assessment
<b>Performance area: strategic management</b>	
<b>KPI 1:</b> Organisational architecture and financial framework enable mandate implementation and achievement of expected results	<p><b>Overall considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assessing how UNDP’s <b>strategic plan</b> has enabled it to implement its development mandate and be <b>strategically positioned</b> as a key multilateral development agency within the UN system and the wider ecosystem during the 2022-25 period</li> <li>● UNDP’s added value in focusing on and contributing to the achievement of the <b>SDGs</b> at both the country level (i.e. supporting national governments) and partnership level (i.e. working with others to achieve the SDGs).</li> <li>● The assessment period 2022-25 focuses on the period of the current <b>strategic plan</b>. The new 2026-29 strategic plan was also considered to provide a forward-look and examine how the strategic plan has evolved.</li> <li>● Exploring how UNDP has responded to ongoing <b>UNDS Reforms</b>. This includes UNDP’s initial response to <b>UN80</b>, and any internal reforms initiated by UNDP’s leadership. Following the transition from its RC role, the assessment examines the distinction between UNDP’s <b>integrator role</b> and the coordination mandate of UNDCO (see KPI 6).</li> <li>● Issues relating to UNDP’s <b>governance structure</b> and engagement with Member States are considered and reflected where relevant, although governance is not assessed and scored in the assessment framework.</li> </ul>
<b>KPI 2:</b> Structures and mechanisms support the implementation of global frameworks for cross-cutting issues at all levels in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cross cutting issues considered by the assessment include gender equality and women’s empowerment, environmental sustainability and climate change, and human rights.</li> </ul>
<b>Performance area: operational management</b>	
<b>KPI 3:</b> The operating model and human and financial resources support relevance and agility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>UNDP’s funding model</b> – its financing from partners and how it resources its core costs– is a priority focus.</li> <li>● As with the previous MOPAN assessment, the assessment gives due attention to UNDP’s <b>decentralised structure</b>, including the relationship between the UNDP’s HQ and its country offices, regional bureaux, and global structures and networks (Global Policy Network). It considers how UNDP’s operating model and resourcing has supported this decentralised structure and how the People for 2030 Strategy has been consolidated and embedded, the rollout of the Quantum ERP system, centralisation of operational services, the introduction of PSA accounts, and UNDP’s Business Model Review in 2024-25.</li> </ul>
<b>KPI 4:</b> Organisational systems are cost- and value-conscious and enable transparency and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Where appropriate, the assessment integrates the findings of recent <b>internal and external audits</b>. As with the previous MOPAN assessment, this assessment considers continued roll out of <b>safeguarding organisational policies and practices</b> relating to the response to and prevention of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse.</li> </ul>
<b>Performance area: relationship management</b>	

Key performance indicator	Key issues pertinent to UNDP in assessment
<p><b>KPI 5:</b> Operational planning and intervention design tools support relevance and agility within partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The assessment considers the extent to which the SP 2022-25 has been designed as a document/ framework to provide direction (+ resources) of country programmes. This will include an assessment of country programme documents and ICPEs from a sample of countries.</li> <li>● The MOPAN partner survey incorporates a focus specifically on issues of alignment and responsive to UNDP’s comparative advantage and development needs and priorities of the country.</li> <li>● KIIs/FGDs were held with a sample of regional/ country level leads as well as individuals from Resident Coordinator’s offices</li> </ul>
<p><b>KPI 6:</b> Working in coherent partnerships directed at leveraging and catalysing the use of resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exploring UNDP’s comparative advantage – and how UNDP leverages its comparative advantage – is a priority focus.</li> <li>● Exploring how UNDP partners with country governments, partnerships across the UN System, and partnerships with private and public sector organisations is a priority focus. This includes UNDP’s development financing initiatives.</li> <li>● Assessing UNDP’s strategic positioning and value proposition in its ‘<b>integrator</b>’ role – after the delinking from the RC role – is a priority focus.</li> <li>● Other issues explored in under this KPI include UNDP’s joint planning, resource mobilisation and implementation (with other agencies); cost-sharing; use of country programme evaluations (evidence and learning).</li> <li>● The Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) is a foundational piece in the reinvigoration of the Resident Coordinator (RC) system. The assessment considers how UNDP translates this at a country level (ensuring it does what it is supposed to do), noting that the MAF also includes PSEA.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Performance area: performance management</b></p>	
<p><b>KPI 7:</b> The focus on results is strong, transparent and explicitly geared towards function</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The assessment will consider UNDP’s approach to performance assessment and the ongoing revision to the RBM strategy and data systems improvements.</li> </ul>
<p><b>KPI 8:</b> The organisation applies evidence-based planning and programming</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The assessments consider UNDP’s efforts to improve organisational learning, including its use of evidence from evaluations to inform planning and programming.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Performance area: results</b></p>	
<p><b>KPI 9:</b> Development and humanitarian objectives are achieved, and results contribute to normative and cross-cutting goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Analysis of results achieved through UNDP’s programming at the global, regional and country levels. The thematic focus of this analysis is not determined in advance but is instead shaped by the content of available evaluation evidence.</li> </ul>
<p><b>KPI 10:</b> Interventions are relevant to the needs and priorities of partner countries and beneficiaries</p>	
<p><b>KPI 11:</b> Results are delivered efficiently</p>	
<p><b>KPI12:</b> Results are sustainable</p>	

### Lines of Evidence

The MOPAN assessment of UNDP relied on three evidence streams: a document review, a partner survey, and individual and group interviews. The objective for each line of evidence is to generate the most relevant evidence, to generate a clear and holistic view of UNDP's structure, operations, partnerships and performance for the period 2022-25.

#### Country and Regional sample:

Given UNDP's decentralised structure, and interventions in 170 countries – and across different regions – it was important to seek findings from global and regional levels and a sample of countries. While not fully representative of the diversity of UNDP's work, a purposive country sample was developed to fulfil the following purposes:

- To test, validate, and verify information gathered at a corporate level.
- To assess the extent that policies and practices are implemented at a country and regional level.
- To see how UNDP's work, role, and comparative advantage differ across country and regional contexts.
- To survey partners about UNDP's role and contribution within the country and regional context.

For the assessment, country specific evidence was limited to 10 countries with an accredited country representative and followed a country typology approach. Hence, the primary aim of sampling was to ensure a representation across spectrum of diverse development contexts in which UNDP operates.

Country selection also considered regional diversity (based on UNDP's regions), the balance and diversity of partnerships (drawn from the way in which UNDP has defined its partnership ecosystem in the new Strategic Plan), the availability of recent independent evaluations of UNDP's country programmes, and the approval of recent and new country programme documents at the end stage of the strategic plan 2022-25.

The countries included in the sampling for country and regional evidence were:

1. Somalia
2. Liberia
3. Nepal
4. Viet Nam
5. Kazakhstan
6. Paraguay
7. Cuba
8. Bosnia & Herzegovina
9. Yemen
10. Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)



#### Document review

The document review involved extracting and analysing data from 391 internal and external documents relevant to the MOPAN KPIs and MIs. Documents reviewed were those published or which were in force during the assessment period (January 2021 – September 2025), and were limited to documents in final form, recognised by management, and available in English. The cut-off date for additional documentation for inclusion in the technical annex and scoring was the end of November 2025.

The review of documents aimed to establish the extent to which UNDP has the systems, practices, and organisational behaviours in place that MOPAN considers to be important drivers of organisational performance, and whether

these are being implemented as intended and having the desired effect. In addition, the assessment of KPIs 9–12 was informed exclusively by a synthesis of evidence drawn from a sample of evaluations as well as organisational reporting documentation.

The document review covered:

- Management documentation, including strategies, policies, results frameworks, budgeting and financial information, management reform initiatives, audits, and standard operating procedures.
- Country level documentation: this includes country strategies, reviews and evaluations relating to the sampled countries identified above.
- Programme-level documentation relating to the sampled subprogrammes.
- Independent evaluations which include evaluations at different levels, including corporate or strategic evaluations (both internally and externally oriented); country programme evaluations. As indicated, evaluation evidence is the exclusive source of evidence for KPIs 9-12. However, evaluative evidence is often crucial for informing the analysis of other KPIs. This is particularly the case for corporate or strategic evaluations, which can provide vital insights into multiple dimensions of organisational effectiveness.
- External assessments, including reports from the Joint Inspection Unit, UN Board of Auditors, and previous MOPAN reports.

#### *Stakeholder interviews:*

A comprehensive stakeholder mapping of the organisational structure, based on UNDP's organigram, against the assessment framework (at KPI level) was undertaken to identify key stakeholders to interview during the inception and main data collection visits.

A total of 23 inception interviews with senior UNDP staff were conducted face-to-face by the IOD PARC assessment team together with the MOPAN Secretariat's Assessment Manager for the UNDP assessment. In addition, four remote meetings were conducted prior to the inception mission to focus on strategy development, implementation and monitoring, human and financial resource planning; and a meeting with the outgoing Administrator to provide high-level strategic insights and issues of interest for the MOPAN assessment. The purpose of inception interviews was to deepen the assessment team's understanding of UNDP's operating context; agree the scope of the assessment, noting UNDP's administrative responsibility for different entities; understand the transition from the current SP to the new SP, shifts with respect to UNDP's role and position with regards to the global development context and the 2030 Development Agenda and within the UN Reform, how UNDP defines and addresses cross-cutting issues, how to interpret programming and performance at the HQ and country level, and how UNDP interprets and tracks results and performance. The inception interviews offered an opportunity to ensure that the assessment team is reflecting the most recent, relevant themes and issues in the MOPAN assessment. The interviews provided a basis to define how the MOPAN framework applies to its specific mandate, structures, and available evidence.

A further 64 interviews were conducted during the main data collection phase of the assessment, comprising 39 interviews with UNDP staff, and 25 interviews with external stakeholders.

The purpose of the interviews during the main data collection phase was to:

- Deepen and interrogate the evidence from the document review.
- Confirm or clarify trends/findings emerging from the document review.

- Update on UNDP's on-going reform agenda and UN80 and any key changes since documentation was analysed.
- Provide contextual insight to clarify, refute and/or validate observations emerging from other lines of evidence/ data sources (e.g. document review, survey data).
- Generate new evidence in areas where documentary and survey evidence is lacking.
- Seek out explanations and factors (asking why and how).

Interviews were undertaken at three levels:

1. Headquarters-level interviews were undertaken with senior and operational staff either in person where possible, or remotely via Teams/Zoom/Webex or telephone. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes; consultations and focus group discussions took up to 90 minutes.
2. Country/regional level interviews (undertaken remotely by Teams in the weeks following the main data collection/ HQ interview period) with mid- to senior level staff. Interviews at this level focused in particular on confirming whether organisational commitments or reform processes are being implemented and whether these do, in fact, respond to country-level needs in practice.
3. Interviews were conducted with a sample of key external stakeholders with a focus on UNDP's approach to partnerships, and its strategic positioning within the wider development context. These included interviews with peer organisations, host-country governments, resident coordinators offices, among others.

#### *Partner survey*

A partner survey was conducted to seek the perspectives of representatives from partner organisations on various dimensions of UNDP's organisational performance. A total of 124 individuals responded to the survey, representing a 24% response rate. The survey was conducted between 03/11/2025 and 26/11/2025.

The survey results provided a key point for triangulating evidence gathered through the document review and interviews with staff and other stakeholders. In addition, the partner survey helped fill evidence gaps for issues that are not well covered by organisational documentation or interview data.

MOPAN has a generic survey questionnaire that assessment teams may customise to respond to a specific MOs operating model and operational context, or issues of strategic importance identified during the inception period and early data collection. For this assessment of UNDP, questions were adapted so that they included:

- a) Strategic issues that emerge from inception interviews. In particular, the survey presented an important opportunity for exploring external perspectives on UNDP's partnerships with governments, other UN entities, and other private and public sector organisations, as well as its 'integrator' role following its delinking from the RC role.
- b) Key themes and gaps that emerge from the early document review.

MOPAN's generic survey contains approximately 60 individual questions. The considerable length of the survey represents a significant time burden for targeted respondents and may reduce the response rate. Therefore, in addition customising the focus of the questions to capture these issues, the questionnaire was streamlined to include a total of 31 Likert-style questions.

As with all MOPAN assessments, the partner survey was not statistically representative. Instead, it aimed to gather the best quality input by targeting a sample of partners that included representatives from the main groups of partners that UNDP works with. For this survey, five groups of partners at both the global/regional and country levels were targeted.. These are summarised in Table 11 below.

**TABLE 11. UNDP PARTNERS TARGETED BY THE MOPAN SURVEY**

Partner Group	Global / Regional	Country Level
Governance bodies and Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Executive Board Members</li> <li>● MOPAN members (HQ based)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bilateral donor representatives based in sampled countries</li> </ul>
Host government/national partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Representatives from regional intergovernmental bodies that partner with UNDP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Representatives from central government bodies that interact with UNDP on programme design, implementation etc. in sampled countries</li> </ul>
Peer MOs and coordination structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Representatives from peer UN entities and global partnerships that work with UNDP on global or regional partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Resident Coordinator Offices in sampled countries</li> <li>● UNCT members in sampled countries</li> <li>● Representatives from peer UN entities and other MOs that work with UNDP on country-level partnerships in sampled countries</li> </ul>
Implementing partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Representatives from international NGOs and service providers that have collaborated with UNDP on policy, innovation and programming at a global scale. Implementing partners are governed by UNDP's programme and operations policies and procedures, while service providers fall under UNDP procurement rules.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Representatives from international/local NGOs and service providers who have participated in project implementation and delivery under UNDP programmes in sampled countries. They are governed by UNDP policies on partnership and UNDP procurement rules.</li> </ul>
Knowledge partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Representatives from international civil society organisations, academic institutions and think tanks that engage with UNDP at a global level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Representatives from international civil society organisations, academic institutions and think tanks that engage with UNDP's work at the country level in sampled countries</li> </ul>

## ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The Assessment consisted of four phases: Inception, Evidence Collection, Analysis, and Reporting.

FIGURE 11. UNDP'S ASSESSMENT PROCESS

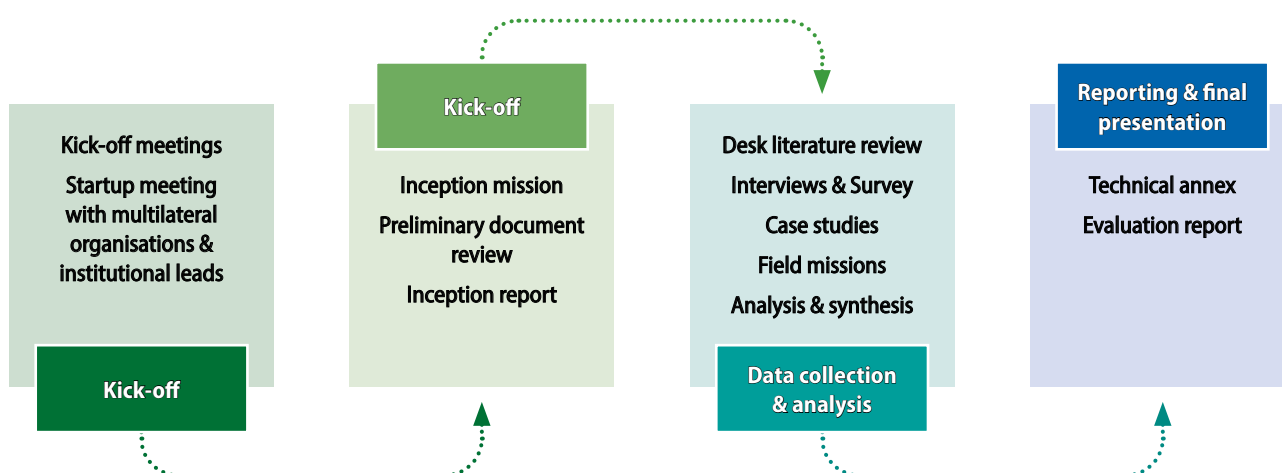


Table 12 describes the overall timeline for the assessment and the key activities undertaken during each phase, summarised by the table below.

TABLE 12. UNDP OVERALL ASSESSMENT TIMELINE

Assessment Phase	Inception (09 June – 19 August 2025)	Evidence Collection (02 June – 28 November 2025)	Analysis (03 October – 16 March 2026)	Reporting (17 March – 9 July 2026)
<b>Timeline</b>	Draft Inception Report: <b>09/06/2025-27/06/2025</b>  Final Inception Report: <b>15/08/2025-19/08/2025</b>	Key informant interviews: <b>29/09/2025-28/11/2025</b>  Document Review: <b>02/06/2025-17/10/2025</b>  Partner survey launch & closure: <b>06/10/2025 – 26/11/2025</b>	Draft summary analysis table (Annex A): <b>28/02/2026</b>  Preliminary findings: <b>16/03/2026</b>	Draft assessment report: <b>12/05/2026</b>  Final assessment report: <b>09/07/2026</b>

## METHODOLOGY FOR SCORING AND RATING

The approach to scoring and rating under MOPAN 3.1 is described in the 2020 Methodology Manual<sup>1</sup>, which can be found on MOPAN's website. The MOPAN website also presents additional information about how the MOPAN framework was adapted for private sector operations.

Each of the 12 KPIs contain several micro-indicators (MIs), which vary in number. The KPI rating is calculated by taking the average of the ratings of its constituent MIs.

1 MOPAN 3.1 Methodology Manual, 2020 Assessment Cycle, [http://www.mopanonline.org/ourwork/themopanapproach/MOPAN\\_3.1\\_Methodology.pdf](http://www.mopanonline.org/ourwork/themopanapproach/MOPAN_3.1_Methodology.pdf)

### Scoring of KPIs 1-8









The scoring of KPIs 1-8 is an aggregated scoring of the MIs. Each MI contains several elements, which vary in number, that represent international good practice. Taking the average of the constituent scores per element, a score is then calculated per MI. The same logic is pursued at aggregation to the KPI level, to ensure a consistent approach. Taking the average of the constituent scores per MI, an aggregated score is then calculated per KPI.

### Scoring of KPIs 9-12

The scoring of KPIs 9-12 is based upon a meta-analysis of evaluations and performance information, rated at the MI level and aggregated to the KPI level. KPIs 9-12 assess results achieved as assessed in evaluations and annual performance reporting from the organisations. Other sources of information are reviewed and included as needed.

### Rating scales

Whenever scores are aggregated, rating scales are used to translate scores into ratings that summarise the assessment across KPIs and MIs. The rating scale used under MOPAN 3.1 is shown below.

 <b>Highly satisfactory</b> (3.51-4.00)	 <b>High evidence confidence</b>
 <b>Satisfactory</b> (2.51-3.50)	 <b>Medium evidence confidence</b>
 <b>Unsatisfactory</b> (1.51-2.50)	 <b>Low evidence confidence</b>
 <b>Highly unsatisfactory</b> (0.00-1.50)	
 <b>No evidence / Not applicable</b>	

A score of “N/E” means “no evidence” and indicates that the assessment team could not find any evidence but was not confident of whether or not there was evidence to be found. The team assumes that “no evidence” does not necessarily mean that the element is not present (which would result in a zero score). Elements rated N/E are excluded from any calculation of the average. A significant number of N/E scores in a report indicates an assessment limitation (see the Limitations section at the beginning of the report). A note indicating “N/A” means that an element is considered to be “not applicable”. This usually owes to the organisation’s specific nature.

## LIMITATIONS

This assessment was subject to a number of limitations and risks identified during the inception phase and documented in the MOPAN UNDP Inception Report. These limitations were monitored throughout the assessment process and mitigated where possible through adjustments to the approach, sequencing, and analysis.

**Assessment timeline and sequencing:** The assessment timeline was aligned to deliver preliminary findings by March 2026 to inform MOPAN members. This placed pressure on the assessment to adhere to a tight schedule. While the assessment team set aside sufficient time in line with the agreed timeline, any delays in document provision, interview availability, or review processes, including quality assurance and fact-checking, had the potential to adversely affect the assessment’s ability to meet key milestones and stakeholder needs.

The timeline also depended on UNDP’s timely delivery of documentation and support in organising interviews. Regular touchpoints were held with the UNDP focal point to flag outstanding issues and seek additional attention where required. Where adjustments to the timeline were necessary, these were considered without compromising the quality of the assessment, and stakeholders were informed accordingly.

**Organisational change and external reform context:** The assessment took place against a backdrop of organisational and system-wide change. In particular, the UN80 initiative and related reform processes coincided with each phase of the assessment, and increasingly during the latter phases. While the majority of the assessment period covered years prior to the introduction of UN80 reforms, the evolving nature of these initiatives, along with heightened funding pressures at both organisational and system levels, created uncertainty around future institutional arrangements and priorities.

There were a number of unknowns underpinning this risk, including the outcomes and timing of reform processes and their specific implications for UNDP. The assessment team therefore remained in close coordination with UNDP senior management, Institutional Leads, and MOPAN members to identify any necessary methodological or analytical adjustments as developments unfolded.

**Stakeholder selection and engagement:** UNDP works with a wide range of stakeholders across multiple forums and modalities. As a result, there was a risk that the selection of stakeholders for interviews and the partner survey might not fully capture the breadth of UNDP's partnerships and engagement models. If not adequately addressed, this could have affected the accuracy of findings related to partnership coherence and effectiveness.

To mitigate this risk, the assessment team worked closely with UNDP to identify a stakeholder sample broad enough to reflect diverse perspectives, while remaining sufficiently focused to capture views from key partners. Particular attention was given to the selection and engagement of external stakeholders including UN Resident Coordinators and other UN agencies (both at HQ and country level sample).

**Documentation availability and representativeness:** UNDP has undergone a period of organisational change since the previous MOPAN assessment, including staff turnover and the completion of a Joint Inspection Unit Management and Administrative Review. As a result, some documentation generated during the assessment period may no longer fully reflect current practices or institutional arrangements.

To address this limitation, the assessment prioritised the most recent and relevant documentation and triangulated documentary evidence with interview insights and leadership perspectives. Where appropriate, the analysis notes changes over time to reflect UNDP's performance trajectory across the full assessment period.

**Methodological limitations:** The MOPAN 3.1 methodology is based on a predefined framework of KPIs, micro-indicators, and elements formulated using precise and sometimes binary language. This does not always align neatly with how organisations document or present their systems and practices. As a result, scoring outcomes may highlight areas for improvement that UNDP itself may interpret differently.

As discussed above, within the flexibility permitted by the framework, the assessment team tailored elements of the methodology to UNDP's mandate and operating context. These adaptations are documented in the Inception Report and reflected in the assessment framework chapter of this report.

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**Celebrating  
resilience and  
sustainability for  
the blind in Idlib,  
Syria**

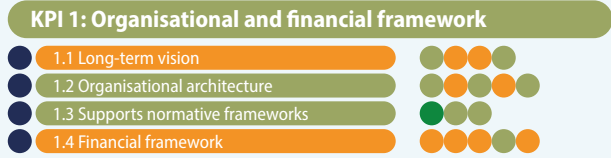
A young man with seeing difficulty from Idlib is weaving a basket. His craft is displayed at the Craft Exhibition for the Blind organised by the Shafak Organisation’s Makani Community Center. The Exhibition provides an opportunity for persons with disabilities to showcase their talents, boosting inclusion and social cohesion. This creates resilience for all during disasters and humanitarian crises, as social bonds help individuals to better withstand and recover from crisis.

Photo: © UNDP / OCHA / Saleem Algerk

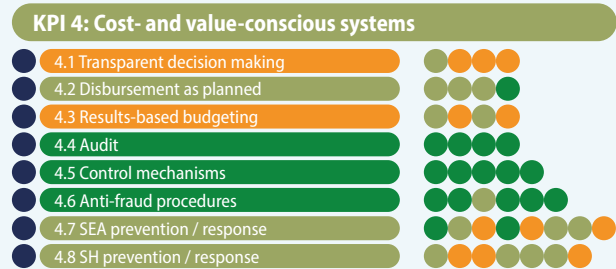
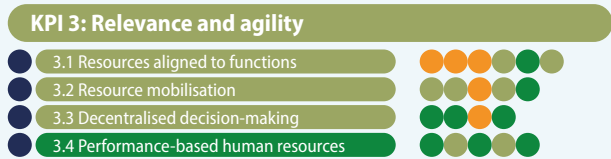
# ANNEX

FIGURE 12. UNDP PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

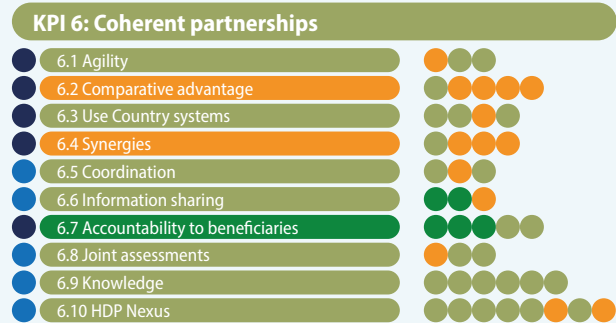
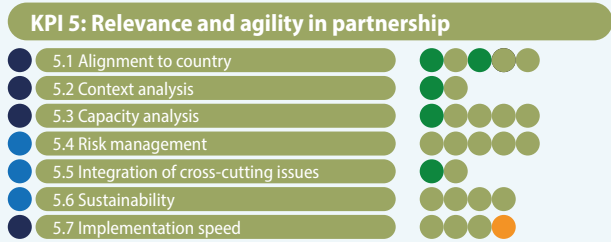
## Strategic management



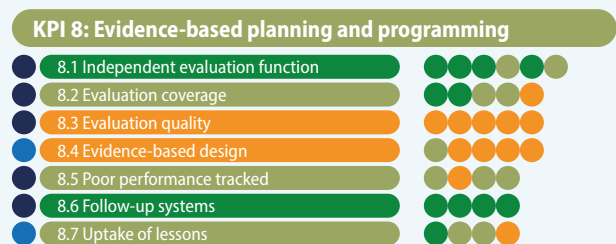
## Operational management



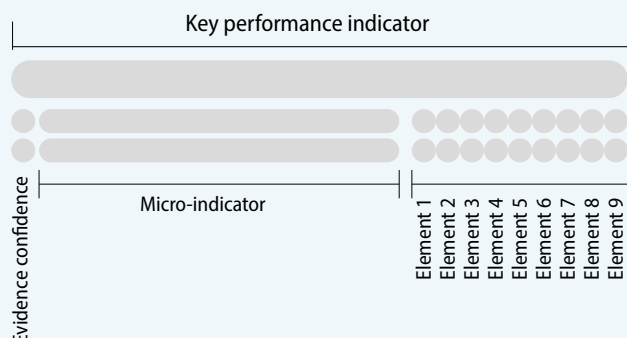
## Relationship management




## Performance management




## Results





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