



**Executive Board of the
United Nations Development
Programme, the United Nations
Population Fund and the
United Nations Office for
Project Services**

Distr.: General
23 April 2021

Original: English

Annual session 2021

7 to 11 June 2021, New York

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

Evaluation

**Management response to the evaluation of the UNDP
Strategic Plan, 2018-2021**

I. Introduction

1. In 2020, the Independent Evaluation Office completed an evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, in accordance with the multi-year evaluation plan approved by the Executive Board. The evaluation covers the period from January 2018 to December 2020 and encompasses the overarching vision and conceptual framework of the plan, its contribution to improving development results and organizational changes introduced to operationalize the plan.

2. The evaluation reviewed the clarity of the Strategic Plan's vision and the effectiveness of its key institutional enablers to help nations deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Accordingly, the objectives of the evaluation were to assess whether the current Strategic Plan: (a) offers a coherent vision, purpose and sense of mission for the organization; (b) is recognized across the organization as a guide for action to help countries meet their development needs, especially pertaining to the Sustainable Development Goals, and taking into account stakeholder expectations for services from UNDP; and (c) is contributing to improved development results within the three broad development settings identified in the Strategic Plan.

3. UNDP management welcomes the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations. The organization will build on areas identified as solid while responding to areas that require strengthening when developing the next strategic plan for 2022-2025.

II. Implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021

4. The Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 set the direction for a "Next Generation UNDP" to help countries achieve the aims of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It provides a clear vision of where the organization is headed and gave UNDP a clear "license to operate".

5. Befitting the ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals, the plan was designed to respond to the diversity of countries served and is reflected in three broad development settings: eradicating poverty; structural transformations; and building resilience. The plan described how two new platforms, at the country level and globally, would enable the organization to deliver support more effectively. It outlined six signature solutions—poverty, governance, energy access, gender equality, resilience and environmental sustainability—along with innovation and dynamism that were to be woven into UNDP work. The plan further articulated performance and innovation streams that aimed to adapt ways of working and promoted an integrated service offer.



6. Three years on, the original objectives of the plan have been and are being fulfilled. Even with the humanitarian and recovery responses related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, UNDP maintained its focus on the development of programmes and solutions guided by the Goals. Its multidimensional and whole-of-society approach made it possible for UNDP to pivot and address large, systemic challenges and advance integrated ways of eradicating multidimensional poverty.

7. In 2020, the agility and extensive country office reach of UNDP were the reasons for the speed and scale of its COVID-19 responses. By March 2020, UNDP had established the Rapid Response Facility and allocated \$30 million to 110 countries at a time when immediate actions were needed but few fungible resources were available. This first injection of capital was followed by a second wave of investments midyear. The Rapid Financing Facility, funded at \$105 million, was approved and made available to 129 countries, enabling UNDP to implement its COVID-19 offer 2.0, “Beyond Recovery: Towards 2030”, to tackle the impacts of the pandemic by focusing on governance, social protection, green recovery and digital disruption. UNDP worked with United Nations agencies, United Nations country teams, resident coordinators and other partners, including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, to prepare 119 socioeconomic response plans and lead the development of 144 socioeconomic impact assessments in 97 countries, generating critical data to help guide decision-making about COVID-19 at the country level.

8. The Strategic Plan was designed to be flexible and enable the organization to respond to long-term goals and urgent needs in times of crisis. UNDP action in response to COVID-19, across three development settings and using six signature solutions, is part of the commitments made in the plan. To enhance its operational backbone, UNDP made purposeful management interventions to improve financial stability, effectiveness and accountability. In 2020, contributions to flexible and predictable regular resources reached the highest volume since 2016, ensuring the stable basis for the COVID response. Through the “People for 2030” strategy, UNDP is significantly stepping up efforts to attract, retain and develop top talent to help countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. The #NextGenUNDP, inclusive of the launch of the People for 2030 strategy and UNDP digital strategy, and creation of the Global Policy Network, accelerator labs, Finance Sector Hub and the Crisis Bureau, made it possible for UNDP offer more coherent, integrated and rapid responses.

10. UNDP takes careful note of the evaluation’s findings, conclusions and recommendations. In response to the recommendations, UNDP makes the following points.

III. Findings and conclusions of the evaluation

11. UNDP welcomes the recognition of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 as a forward-looking vision for change in a challenging context, and that UNDP swiftly adapted its capabilities to support the reform of the United Nations development system at its own significant cost and investment. UNDP appreciates the effort made to contextualize the findings against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and other uncertainties, and the flexibility afforded by the plan to respond to such challenges.

12. UNDP appreciates the evaluation’s positive findings on the efficiency gains of the Global Policy Network deploying expertise within the organization. Since the creation of the network in July 2018, UNDP has significantly reorganized its policy and programme support function—anchored by the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, the newly established Crisis Bureau and in collaboration with regional bureaux—to facilitate a more agile model of rapid deployment of expertise, solutions and tools for more effective responses to the complex development challenges countries face in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

13. UNDP recognizes the need for a more strategic approach to move from project-based towards portfolio and system approaches and that more work is needed to make the Global Policy Network fully operational. This includes improving staff capabilities for systems thinking; enabling an innovative culture; rewarding performance; identifying risks and mitigation strategies; and measuring the development of staff capabilities. Work is ongoing to

further clarify and map out roles and responsibilities of the Global Policy Network and the regional bureaux.

14. UNDP appreciates the evaluation's positive findings on the measures taken to reduce management costs, consistently balance the budget, streamline processes and procedures, improve client orientation and reduce its carbon footprint. Investing in new technologies and rethinking capabilities for business effectiveness and efficiency have advanced the means for UNDP to improve agility, flexibility and client satisfaction. The digital strategy was an important and timely enabler of the Strategic Plan and digital initiatives are taking shape and have gained speed in the COVID response.

15. UNDP has made significant contributions to and invested in developing innovation capabilities and mainstreaming them in the organization. The accelerator labs highlighted social innovation at country level. Global and country support platforms are expanding expertise in regional hubs and country offices, enabling more context-specific, experimental approaches to problems.

16. UNDP management would like to highlight the following points:

(a) The Strategic Plan was intended to be aspirational and flexible in describing the role of UNDP in the broader context, underpinned by the objective to support countries and communities to achieve the aims of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementation of the plan promoted collaborative partnerships to support and finance the Goals, to integrate approaches more systemically for more balanced consideration of economic, social and environmental dimensions and to mainstream the principle of leaving no one behind. The evaluation recognizes that UNDP adapted to support new signature solutions, which are intended to be flexible and tailored to the needs of different countries. UNDP has increasingly tailored support to country-level contexts. The signature solutions are thematic clusters with 33 development outputs¹ that leverage the linkages, inter alia, between thematic areas, development contexts and teams and partners. The Strategic Plan provides direction without prescribing actions, recognizing that UNDP works in various development settings with some countries experiencing more than one context. Beyond making relevant contributions to development results, UNDP strengthened its programmatic offerings. These continue to evolve as UNDP gains a better understanding of how to strengthen the intersections to respond to complex, manifold development challenges and achieve the Goals;

(b) The transformative elements that were built into the design of the Strategic Plan were not meant to be "quick fixes". They are in different stages of implementation and will require continuing efforts, for example, to adapt financing modalities, capabilities and results frameworks towards more integrated and innovative approaches. These initiatives are helping to set the stage for more participatory, contextualized and integrated development solutions. UNDP welcomes the recognition that many of these processes take time to demonstrate impact. This transformation process will continue under the next strategic plan, evolving UNDP funding structures, capabilities and systems to better respond to the needs of its clients on the ground;

(c) Since 2018, the Global Policy Network has enabled the roll-out of systems and processes to connect solutions with development impact. UNDP communities of practice, housed on SparkBlue, act as incubators for new knowledge and co-creation of solutions, connecting over 130,000 visitors with more than 10,000 practitioners and experts across UNDP and beyond, from 143 locations. Separate corporate rosters were consolidated into a single Global Policy Network roster of experts for rapid response ("ExpRes"), with over 4,000 vetted experts covering the entire spectrum of UNDP work, and including new talent pools for emerging areas such as e-governance, digitalization and youth. UNDP offices were quick to profit from these more diversified and relevant profiles, deployable within short time frames; the usage of experts on the roster by 122 UNDP offices increased by over 60 per cent, to over 850 deployments in 2020. The roll-out of these tools was accompanied by increased global efforts to support country offices in all five regions by mobilizing over \$1 billion per year in

¹ The Strategic Plan originally had 27 development outputs. Six new outputs related to the UNDP COVID-19 response were added in 2020.

programme resources from a variety of funding sources, such as vertical funds, UNDP funding windows, emergency funding in response to COVID-19 and bilateral and multilateral donors;

(d) To strengthen its support to crisis- and conflict-affected countries and drive its vision for crisis prevention, response and recovery, UNDP established the Crisis Bureau in 2018, under the Global Policy Network. The bureau is strengthening and better articulating the ability of UNDP to address root causes and drivers of crisis and conflict, supporting crisis- and conflict-affected countries to overcome development deficits and reduce vulnerabilities, and prioritizing improved alignment and coherence of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts and actors;

(e) To effectively implement, monitor and report on the results detailed in the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, grounded in the work of country offices, UNDP implemented robust measures to strengthen its results architecture and data systems during the plan period. Through the digitization of country programme results and resources frameworks of country programme documents, UNDP established a linkage between ongoing and pipeline projects and country programmes and the strategic plan outputs, which are subsequently linked to relevant Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP introduced a series of “project markers” to enhance its results analytics, focusing not only on “what” results it achieved but also “how”, “with whom” and “for whom” it achieved those results (e.g., leave no one behind, joint programming with United Nations development system partners, South-South and triangular cooperation, the humanitarian—development nexus and COVID-19 responses). Leveraging the rich data on results that it has accumulated over the years, UNDP pioneered the use of satellite data, Internet of things sensors and artificial intelligence—machine learning—to analyse qualitative results, both successes and challenges for learning lessons. The artificial intelligence-powered analysis of successes and challenges was made available to all staff, who can draw data and evidence overlaid with country typology and regional differentiations in line with various analytical needs.

17. UNDP values the evaluation and the learning opportunities it provides for the organization and for informing the next strategic plan. UNDP notes the findings, conclusions and recommendations and the recognition of where progress has been made and areas which require strengthening.

18. UNDP acknowledges **recommendation 1**, which calls upon the organization to better define its role in support of the 2030 Agenda and the COVID-19 pandemic response. The 2030 Agenda continues to be at the heart of the strategic plan with the goal of supporting countries to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and pursue their development trajectories. Overall, development challenges have grown in complexity over time, requiring new tools and solutions that address multiple challenges simultaneously. To meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda, including leaving no one behind, and of a repositioned and strengthened United Nations development system, UNDP is continuously enhancing its approach for a new era of development. UNDP will continue to strive to serve as a reservoir of knowledge, good practices and integrated inclusive and sustainable policies to meet the needs of people and the planet.

19. The UNDP response to the pandemic is delivered through the signature solutions in the three development settings. UNDP launched its initial offer, “Prepare, Respond, Recover” in March, followed by its “Beyond Recovery: Towards 2030” offer 2.0 in June 2020, accompanied by their rapid financing frameworks, the Rapid Response Facility and Rapid Financing Facility. These enabled UNDP to mount a coherent and collaborative corporate response to the development emergency of the pandemic while maintaining the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. UNDP is working with United Nations partners on the socioeconomic response and will continue to do so in the next strategic plan period.

20. The evaluation recognizes UNDP efforts in operationalizing the principle of leaving no one behind in its programming, including through its related marker and its engagement with different target groups. In the next strategic plan period, supporting countries to further their strategies for leaving no one behind will be vital during the decade of action, including a renewed focus on addressing underlying and root causes of the disadvantages and barriers faced by the most vulnerable and poorest, exacerbated by COVID-19.

21. The evaluation recognizes that about 90 per cent of UNDP country offices have been engaged in Sustainable Development Goal integration efforts. UNDP is committed to continuing to deliver an integrated approach to evidence-based policymaking for identifying and reaching those left behind, and to help countries achieve inclusiveness and sustainability. UNDP will make deliberate efforts to maximize the development impact of all the signature solutions, with the aim of achieving breakthroughs across the 2030 Agenda.

22. The multidimensional approach offers the greatest possibility for transformational change with three main goals for integration: (a) to drive evidence-based policymaking, including through the COVID-19 Data Futures Platform; (b) to facilitate networked learning and knowledge generation by stakeholder groups; and (c) to build enhanced, twenty-first century capabilities to navigate complex challenges to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

23. UNDP accepts **recommendation 2**. In the strategic plan, 2022-2025, UNDP will expand its support to partner countries in areas of innovation and digital transformation and create opportunities to deliver more responsive and effective services to citizens. UNDP will continue to invest in building a system transformation capability that guides tactical, incremental innovation.

24. UNDP created a Strategic Innovation Unit in 2020 to shift to a more transformative approach. This new unit also shifted the focus of the Innovation Facility, supported by the Government of Denmark and active since 2014, from small experimentation to systems transformation at scale. An independent evaluation of its first five years showed that the facility has created space to design new solutions and “do development” differently, built new skills and brought new partners on board. Shifting from rapid experimentation to system transformation—as recommended by the evaluation—necessitates a longer-term horizon, and as a result, in 2020 the facility pivoted to funding “deep demonstrations” meant to showcase progress from incremental transformation to innovation tackling systemic challenges.

25. Helping country offices and Governments navigate digital transformation has been a key priority for innovation. At a more strategic level, UNDP will work to better serve countries on the digital transformation agenda. Internally, UNDP will strengthen local digital capacities through the launch of the Digital Advocates Network. Designed as an agile learning network, it will allow UNDP to share digital expertise faster and create local delivery capacities. Externally, by implementing a “digital by default” approach, UNDP will mainstream digital elements and ways of working into all programmes and projects. With the launch of its data strategy in March 2021, UNDP aims to become a data-driven organization, and as a result deliver more responsive and effective services.

26. In June 2020, UNDP launched SparkBlue, an online engagement platform that powers six corporate signature solutions through eight communities of practice, empowering 10,000+ users from all regions to co-create new knowledge and share real-time insights on Sustainable Development Goal solutions efficiently and effectively. The SparkBlue knowledge communities act as nodes which connect learning insights to amplify, innovate and enhance development solutions within and outside of the organization. The platform allows UNDP to scale up efforts to become more integrated and inclusive, connecting expertise across the policy domains and the geographic nodes of the Global Policy Network, and incorporating a broader variety of voices and viewpoints in work for the decade of action on the 2030 Agenda.

27. Building on the momentum generated by SparkBlue and new digital collaboration solutions, a new knowledge management framework will be developed to advance implementation of the strategic plan for 2022-2025. The UNDP approach to knowledge will leverage the organization’s ability to convene, connect and be an innovator, advocate, partner and integrator, including with the public, private and financial sectors, the United Nations system and the broader development community. It will address how knowledge can positively impact the organization’s bottom line, generate new knowledge and insights, connect United Nations colleagues with global experts and communities to share intelligence and insights, co-create solutions and power the UNDP communities of practice. It aims at further improving the results UNDP delivers and boost the influence it exercises on its most important stakeholders.

28. UNDP accepts **recommendation 3** and will continuously work towards articulating the concrete benefits of integrating gender equality as a development accelerator. UNDP country offices and regional hubs will prioritize investments in strengthening government capacities to formulate and implement public policies that deliver for all. The global Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions will provide a concrete road map to mainstream gender equality in public institutions. UNDP will leverage the data on public policy responses collected and analysed by the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, developed by UNDP and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), to open political, economic and environmental policy dialogues at the national level with public institutions and other social actors. Through the new Gender and Crisis Engagement Facility, UNDP will invest more in tailoring its responses in crisis contexts to the specific situation of women and girls, with transformational approaches to increase women's leadership, economic empowerment and access to justice.

29. To meet the recommendation related to the Gender Seal, by end-2025 UNDP aims to reach at least 80 per cent of all offices, including in crisis contexts and headquarters units. The Gender Seal will increase focus and support in two areas: (a) increasing financial investments for gender equality through portfolio reviews and enhancing capacities for an improved use of the gender marker as a monitoring, accountability and decision-making tool; and (b) increasing staff gender capacities through the implementation of a comprehensive learning plan and recruitment of staff with new capacities at global, regional and country office levels.

30. To complement both actions, UNDP will introduce a global course on leadership for gender equality, targeting resident and deputy resident representatives. This will equip senior leaders with knowledge on how to expand and further articulate the benefits of integrating gender equality and the empowerment of women as accelerators of sustainable development. The course will support the achievement of tangible benefits in UNDP policy, programming and advocacy work.

31. UNDP agrees with **recommendation 4**, which suggests making more effective use of its Global Policy Network to improve mobility of expertise throughout UNDP. This ambition for the network is aligned with and reflected in the vision of UNDP as a learning organization, which is one of the key objectives of the 2021-2023 people development strategy, one of the pillars of People for 2030. The strategy is closely aligned with business needs and capacity gaps identified through regular, organization-wide capacity mapping and assessment exercises. The focus of the 2021-2023 strategy is on staff having ownership of their development journeys, with managers and the organization at large playing an enabling and supporting role, including through the systems, tools and processes of the Global Policy Network.

32. The country support platforms have contributed new tools to design, manage and evaluate interventions of a systemic nature. The process of analysing complex and "wicked" problems incorporates a systemic approach in mapping, deep listening and sense-making. UNDP will use the learning and experiences from the country support platforms to advance the understanding of using them as "integration engines" for navigating complex challenges by working with multiple stakeholders, using a variety of methodologies, to develop portfolios of integrated solutions to address complex, systemic challenges.

33. UNDP welcomes the evaluation's acknowledgement of its continuous efforts to strengthen results-based management and systems and acknowledges **recommendation 5**. UNDP is strongly committed to General Assembly resolution 75/233 of 21 December 2020 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, which underscores the importance of results-based management. UNDP continues to be guided by the resolution with regard to system-wide performance and results in relation to the 2030 Agenda.

34. The design of the UNDP results-based management and relevant systems has been guided by and adheres to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Results-based Management Handbook. As requested by the Executive Board in its decision 2017/6, the UNDP approach to results reporting on the strategic plan has been harmonized with those of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

and UN-Women, along with the architecture of their integrated results and resources frameworks.

35. UNDP acknowledges the continuous challenges of the current approach to results-based management and systems, including unavailability of timely data for several Sustainable Development Goal indicators at the impact and outcome levels. In the past, UNDP has demonstrated tangible results and showcased consistent achievements in transparency and accountability, solidifying its position as a strong partner and a key player in the reform of the United Nations development system. In designing the integrated results and resources framework for the next strategic plan, UNDP will improve several elements, building on the solid results architecture and database developed in 2018-2021.

36. To measure outcome-level results, UNDP will adopt holistic but still workable metrics, leveraging its global public data to the extent possible, including the flagship Human Development Index and Multidimensional Poverty Index. To measure output-level changes, UNDP will adopt several types of measurements and leverage modern data capabilities to capture the diversified nature of its interventions in different development contexts. The quality and robustness of milestones and targets for indicators will be enhanced by leveraging the substantive expertise and contextualized knowledge of the Global Policy Network and the regional bureaux, combined with statistical analysis. UNDP will integrate external assessments and lessons from evaluations, audits and surveys to enrich its performance analysis.

37. UNDP will holistically redesign current systems by leveraging its new cloud enterprise resource planning system and streamlining existing platforms, thus enhancing results planning, performance monitoring and sharing of lessons to improve UNDP results at all levels and increase transparency. Underpinned by a new data platform with a central repository of data for both operations and programmes, a knowledge management platform, benefiting from the use of artificial intelligence, will enable UNDP personnel to learn lessons and share valuable knowledge and experience. Modernized collaboration platforms will accelerate knowledge-sharing by connecting people who can contribute more effectively together to improve decision-making to increase programme and project performance and results. UNDP will continue to ensure the cybersecurity of its systems and data, while respecting United Nations data privacy principles

38. UNDP agrees with **recommendation 6**. Increasing the levels of quality funding (un-earmarked and lightly-earmarked resources) is an important part of the overall UNDP resource mobilization strategy. It aligns with the funding compact and the mutual commitment between Member States and the wider United Nations development system towards increasing the share of regular resources and thematic and pooled funding. Compared to the other multilateral institutions, the United Nations system remains funded predominantly through highly-earmarked contributions. In 2018, 79 per cent of all contributions to United Nations operational activities for development were earmarked, a situation which the funding compact aims to shift. Such a shift in funding behaviour will be a key enabler for UNDP and other United Nations agencies to move away from operating mainly with projectized funding.

39. In 2020, funding partners contributed 99 per cent of the \$700 million annual strategic plan target for contributions to regular resources. However, regular resources account for 13 per cent of the total funding to UNDP, far short of the 30 per cent target in the funding compact. Being the most flexible funding modality, regular resources allow UNDP to invest in programmes where the need is greatest and lay the foundational work in programme design that will help attract more funding from other sources. For instance, this flexibility and agility of regular resources helped UNDP to make rapid decisions about funding and respond proactively to the challenges of COVID-19.

40. In support of the next strategic plan, UNDP will continue to emphasize the importance of flexible and predictable funding, noting its alignment with the funding compact. This includes efforts to encourage multi-year pledges and agreements and increased contributions to thematic and pooled funding. In line with the management responses to the evaluation of UNDP development cooperation in middle-income countries (DP/2020/22), and the evaluation of UNDP support for climate change adaptation (DP/2021/7), UNDP will factor the broader topic of the allocation of programme funding to countries in its engagement with the

Executive Board on the integrated resources plan and integrated budget, 2022-2025 and its midterm review.

41. In line with the evaluation's recommendation, UNDP will take steps to shift from a project-driven approach to fundraising and advocacy at the portfolio level, supporting efforts to attract better-quality funding that is less projectized and less transactional. UNDP will explore using new and existing mechanisms to mobilize and channel funds to strategic initiatives as opposed to small individual projects. These strategic initiatives—“portfolio offers”—in areas of work that best demonstrate the UNDP comparative advantage will be shaped through consultations with partners with common priorities, while meeting UNDP strategic and corporate objectives. UNDP will refine and adapt internal programmatic and operational systems, tools and capabilities to be more flexible to help make the portfolio-driven approach a reality.

42. In an effort to bring coherence and scale to its work on financing for the Sustainable Development Goals, UNDP established the SDG Finance Sector Hub in 2019. Accordingly, UNDP supports countries with tailored service offers to advance financing for the Goals across different development contexts including fragile and conflict-affected countries and small island developing States. The service offers include flagship initiatives such as integrated national financing frameworks to align public financing to the Goals; “SDG Impact” to assist countries in leveraging private sector financing and investment; the Insurance and Risk Finance Facility to build resilience from national to local levels; and exploring the potential of digital finance with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF).

43. UNDP will further integrate work in this area through its country, regional and global networks, working with both public and private sector entities, as well as United Nations agencies including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNCDF, UNICEF, the United Nations Environment Programme and in partnership with international financial institutions and others.

44. UNDP welcomes **recommendation 7**, which seeks to ensure that the People for 2030 strategy is delivered, together with learning and development strategies to improve the capabilities of its workforce.

45. Launched in June 2019, People for 2030 aims to progressively transform the organizational culture and capabilities to deliver better development results by equipping UNDP with a modern, forward-looking human resource function which is both efficient and effective, addressing the root causes of issues identified in external management reviews, audit recommendations, evaluations and in the course of an extensive internal consultation exercise.

46. The initial phase covers the period 2019-2021 and focuses on re-architecting UNDP policies and approaches in human resources management. It concentrates on nine focus areas: (a) “strive for excellence in the work that we do”; (b) “enhance the UNDP career experience”; (c) “deploy our people strategically”; (d) “develop our people and our people managers”; (e) “take care of our people”; (f) “foster and leverage our diversity”; (g) attract and select top talent”; (h) contract modalities; and (i) human resources effectiveness and people analytics.

47. The second phase of the People for 2030 strategy will be aligned with the next strategic plan, focusing on the implementation of the new human resources capabilities and policies, with the aim of ensuring that UNDP capitalizes fully on its workforce, which, as the evaluation points out, constitutes its main asset, in addition to progressively driving a change in organizational culture.

48. Regarding the role of the Office of Human Resources, the Assistant Administrator/Director of the Bureau for Management Services ensures that all Executive Group decisions are informed by the People for 2030 learning and development strategies. The Deputy Director is a member of the Organizational Performance Group. The Director, Office of Human Resources makes presentations in both the Executive Group and Organizational Performance Group on human resources-related topics to ensure that both groups are provided direct technical expertise as necessary. The Director also has a reporting

line to the Administrator on strategic human resources issues in addition to the reporting line to the Director of the Bureau for Management Services.

IV. Conclusion

49. Given that the new strategic plan for the period 2022-2025, currently being developed, is a continuation of the current plan, the insights provided by the evaluation are valuable in highlighting areas of strength that should be continued and weaker areas that require more work. The overarching objective of UNDP remains to support countries and communities to achieve the aims of the 2030 Agenda, which will remain at the heart of the new strategic plan, with a focus on how UNDP will scale up and accelerate results towards the Sustainable Development Goals in a fast-changing context exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

50. UNDP remains committed to the reform of the United Nations development system, moving beyond the re-orientation that immediately followed the de-linking processes and increasing the capacities of UNDP and partners to develop the systemic solutions needed for complex development challenges. Aligning with the evaluation, UNDP will sharpen its offer of integrated policy support for the Goals through a systems approach.

51. Many of the processes begun under the current Strategic Plan are in various stages of implementation and will require continuing efforts, for example, improvements to the business model, adapting financing modalities, capabilities and results frameworks towards more integrated and innovative approaches. The next strategic plan will continue the transformation process, further evolving UNDP funding structures, capabilities and systems to better respond to the needs of its clients.

Annex. Evaluation recommendations and UNDP management response

Recommendation 1. In the next strategic plan, UNDP should better define its role and value proposition in support of the 2030 Agenda and the COVID-19 pandemic response, with attention to the organization’s altered position at the country level following the reform of the United Nations development system; and should anchor its work on its most recognized comparative strengths, with particular focus on principles of inclusiveness and sustainability to build forward better with attention to leaving no one behind.

Management response:

UNDP acknowledges **recommendation 1**, which calls upon the organization to better define its role in support of the 2030 Agenda and the COVID-19 pandemic response.

The 2030 Agenda remains at the heart of the strategic plan with the goal of supporting countries to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and pursue their development trajectories. Development challenges have grown in complexity over time, requiring new tools and solutions that address multiple challenges simultaneously. To meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda, including leaving no one behind, and of a repositioned and strengthened United Nations development system, UNDP will continuously refine and enhance its approach for a new era of development, building on its strong foundation of development experience, grounded in practice, performance and relationships of trust.

In the new strategic plan for 2022-2025, UNDP will make deliberate efforts to maximize the development impact of all the signature solutions with the aim of making breakthroughs across the 2030 Agenda. Supporting countries to further their strategies for leaving no one behind is pivotal during the decade of action, including a renewed focus on addressing underlying and root causes of the disadvantages and barriers faced by the most vulnerable and poorest, exacerbated by COVID-19. UNDP will strive to be a reservoir of knowledge, good practices and integrated inclusive and sustainable policies to meet the needs of people and the planet. Under the new plan, UNDP will support the next generation of country programmes and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks with a focus on inclusiveness and sustainability for the COVID-19 recovery.

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
1.1 Develop guidance to include inclusiveness and sustainability into a next generation of country programmes for the COVID-19 recovery in alignment with the new strategic plan	June 2022	Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS), Crisis Bureau, regional bureaux		
1.2 Publish research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Sustainable Development Goals to guide country-level policy design and implementation	December 2021	BPPS, regional bureaux, Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy (BERA)		
1.3 Prepare guidance to help countries integrate strategies for leaving no one behind into development plans, building on the work of the COVID-19 socioeconomic impact assessments and multidimensional vulnerability assessments	December 2022	BPPS, Crisis Bureau, regional bureaux		

Recommendation 2. To meet the increasing demands driven by the change in context brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP work on innovation should prioritize support to partner countries on digital transformation, address administrative bottlenecks that hinder innovation, ensure improvements to knowledge management systems and develop a more deliberate approach to tracking and scaling successful innovations that can accelerate result.

Management response:

UNDP accepts **recommendation 2**. In the strategic plan, 2022-2025, UNDP will expand its support to partner countries in areas of innovation and digital transformation and create opportunities to deliver more responsive and effective services to citizens.

Successfully scaling digital innovations is a key priority for UNDP. Throughout 2020, the Chief Digital Office has been piloting and developing systematic mechanisms to scale digital innovations across the organization, via the “Digital Sprint” initiative and later the “Digital X Scale Accelerator” initiative, which provides some resources and supports key innovations to scale, in close collaboration with the Strategic Innovation Unit and the accelerator labs. In 2021, UNDP will continue this initiative while addressing related administrative bottlenecks such as policies and processes.

Helping country offices and Governments navigate digital transformation has been a key priority for innovation and the digital agenda. At a more strategic level, the Chief Digital Office will work closely with the Strategic Innovation Unit to better serve countries with regard to the digital transformation agenda. Internally, UNDP will strengthen local digital capacities through the launch of the Digital Advocates Network. Designed as an agile learning network, it will allow UNDP to share digital expertise faster and create local delivery capacities. By implementing a “digital by default” approach, UNDP is mainstreaming digital elements and ways of working into all programmes and projects. With the launch of the UNDP data strategy in March 2021, UNDP aims to become a data-driven organization and thus deliver more responsive and effective services.

In June 2020, UNDP launched SparkBlue, an online engagement platform that powers six corporate signature solutions through eight communities of practice, empowering 10,000+ users from all regions to co-create new knowledge and share real-time insights on Sustainable Development Goal solutions. Building on the momentum generated by SparkBlue, a knowledge management framework will be developed to advance implementation of the strategic plan 2022-2025. The UNDP approach to knowledge will leverage the organization’s ability to convene and connect, to be an innovator, advocate, partner and integrator—including with the public, private and financial sectors, the United Nations system and the broader development community.

In May 2020, the accelerator lab team, together with Columbia University, produced a strategy to scale up innovation in development inter alia by identifying different approaches to scaling up for innovation. The accelerator lab team is committed to implementing the strategy across the existing and new cohorts of accelerator labs. In addition, with the creation of the Strategic Innovation Unit and the pivot in approach for the Innovation Facility, UNDP will continue to explore a transformational approach to innovation through “deep demonstrations”.

2.1 Develop a knowledge management framework to advance implementation of the strategic plan 2022-2025	December 2021	BPPS		
2.2 Build “Digital Advocates Network” and implement a “digital by default” approach to all programmes and projects	December 2021	Executive Office (Chief Digital Office)		
2.3 Implementation of UNDP data strategy	December 2021	Executive Office (Chief Digital Office) Bureau for Management Services		

		(BMS)		
2.4 Establish a system to track successful innovations and a governance mechanism to scale successful innovations linked to the Sustainable Development Goals	December 2022	Executive Office		
2.5 Capture and disseminate the lessons learned from the “deep demonstration” approach to scale successful innovations	December 2022	BPPS		
Recommendation 3. UNDP should further articulate how to expand and achieve the concrete benefits of integrating gender equality and women’s empowerment as a catalytic development accelerator for the 2030 Agenda and the Goals. The Gender Equality Seal process should be recommended to all offices, with efforts to increase financial investment in gender across all areas. UNDP should more adequately equip the organization with staff specialized in gender who are able to implement systems that focus on gender-responsive and transformative results.				
Management response:				
<p>UNDP accepts recommendation 3 and will continuously work towards integrating gender equality and women’s empowerment as a development accelerator. As part of this effort, UNDP country offices and regional hubs will prioritize investments in strengthening government capacities to formulate and implement public policies that deliver for all. The Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions will target public institutions and provide a concrete road map to mainstream gender equality. UNDP will leverage the data on public policy responses collected and analysed by the UNDP—UN-Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker to open political, economic and environmental policy dialogues at the national level with public institutions and other social actors. Through the new Gender and Crisis Engagement Facility, UNDP will invest more in tailoring its responses in crisis contexts to the specific situation of women and girls, with transformational approaches to increase women’s leadership, economic empowerment and access to justice.</p> <p>To equip senior leaders with knowledge on how to expand and further articulate the benefits of integrating gender equality and the empowerment of women as accelerators of sustainable development, UNDP will introduce a course on leadership for gender equality, targeting resident and deputy resident representatives.</p>				
3.1 Launch the Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions	December 2021	BPPS		
3.2 Scale up Gender Equality Seal to reach 80 per cent of UNDP country offices and headquarters units	December 2025	BPPS, regional bureaux, Crisis Bureau		
3.3 Conduct a leadership course on gender equality for resident representatives and deputy resident representatives	December 2021	BPPS, BMS		
Recommendation 4. UNDP should make more effective use of its Global Policy Network to improve mobility of expertise, with greater programming rigour through well-defined targets, milestones and effectiveness measures. In addition, a more comprehensive and strategic approach should be promoted for the establishment of country support platforms, by advancing their conceptual framework and criteria for assessment and by providing mechanisms for practical support and guidance to promote portfolio- and systems-based approaches.				

Management response:

UNDP agrees with **recommendation 4**. This ambition for the Global Policy Network is aligned with, and reflected in, the vision of UNDP as a learning organization, which is one of the key pillars of People for 2030. The strategy is aligned with business needs and capacity gaps identified through regular capacity mapping and capacity assessment exercises across the organization. The focus of the 2021-2023 people development strategy is on staff having ownership of their development journeys, with managers and the organization at large playing an enabling and supporting role, including through the systems, tools and processes of the Global Policy Network.

The country support platforms have contributed to new tools to design, manage and evaluate interventions of a systemic nature. The process of analysing complex and “wicked” problems incorporates a systemic approach in mapping, deep listening and sense-making. UNDP will advance the learning and experience of the country support platforms through integrated platforms that contribute to navigating complex challenges by cultivating and managing rich networks of actors with a focus on wider relational dynamics across many entities; break down silos through co-creation processes; and tap into the collective intelligence of the United Nations ecosystem through an integrated portfolio approach.

4.1 Develop and implement Phase 2 of People for 2030, ensuring UNDP Focus Area 4. Closing the capacity gap, in alignment with the strategic plan, 2022-2025	Development of Phase 2: October 2021 Implementation of Phase 2: December 2025	BMS		
---	--	-----	--	--

Recommendation 5. UNDP should holistically redesign its entire results and performance monitoring and reporting framework and system, with (a) indicators better aligned to the timeliness and utility of data and methods that can help more credibly measure results; (b) more ambitious milestones; and (c) greater focus and guidance for consistently capturing and promoting learning for country offices to improve results and accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Management response:

UNDP welcomes the evaluation’s acknowledgement of its continuous efforts to strengthen results-based management and systems and acknowledges **recommendation 5**. UNDP is strongly committed to General Assembly resolution 75/233 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, which underscores the importance of results-based management. UNDP will be guided by the resolution with regard to the system-wide performance and results in relation to the 2030 Agenda.

The design of UNDP results-based management and relevant systems has been guided by and adheres to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Results-based Management Handbook. As requested by the Executive Board in its decision 2017/6, the approaches to results reporting on the strategic plan were harmonized with those of UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women, along with the architecture of their integrated results and resources frameworks.

UNDP acknowledges the challenges related to the current results-based management approach and systems, including unavailability of timely data of several Sustainable Development Goal indicators at the impact and outcome levels. In the past, UNDP has demonstrated tangible results and showcased consistent achievements in transparency and accountability, solidifying its position as a strong partner and key player in United Nations development system reform. In designing the integrated results and resources framework for the strategic plan, 2022-2025, UNDP will improve several elements, building on the solid results architecture and database built in 2018-2021.

<p>In accordance with the 2020-2023 information technology strategy, UNDP will holistically redesign current the results planning, monitoring and reporting systems by leveraging the new enterprise resource planning system and streamlining a wide range of existing platforms. This new architecture will enhance capability for results planning, performance monitoring and sharing lessons and learning to improve results at all levels and increase transparency. Underpinned by a new central repository of data for both operations and programmes, a knowledge management platform, benefiting from the use of artificial intelligence, will enable UNDP personnel to learn lessons across the organization and to share valuable knowledge and experience. Modernized collaboration platforms will accelerate knowledge-sharing by connecting people who can contribute more effectively together to further improve decision-making and increase programme and project performance and results.</p>				
5.1 Develop the integrated results and resources framework of the strategic plan 2022-2025, adhering to General Assembly resolution 75/233 and harmonized with UNICEF, UNFPA and UN-Women	September 2021	Executive Office, BPPS, Crisis Bureau, BERA and regional bureaux		
5.2 Holistically redesign the results planning, monitoring, lessons learning and reporting system (the corporate planning system) that links results at all levels to support the implementation of the strategic plan 2022-2025 by streamlining the new enterprise resource planning system and existing platforms	December 2022	Executive Office, BPPS, BMS, BERA and regional bureaux		
<p>Recommendation 6. To deliver fully on the promise in the Strategic Plan to evolve and innovate its business model, UNDP should fully operationalize adaptive management, additional funding models and financing capabilities to support systems transformation for countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. This should address constraints to the funding of integrated programmes, portfolios, platforms and innovation and allow the organization to move away from operating mainly with projectized funding.</p>				
<p>Management response:</p> <p>UNDP agrees with recommendation 6. Increasing the levels of quality funding (un-earmarked and lightly-earmarked resources) forms an important part of the overall UNDP resource mobilization strategy. It aligns with the funding compact and the mutual commitment between Member States and the wider United Nations development system towards increasing the share of regular resources and thematic and pooled funding.</p> <p>In support of the next strategic plan, UNDP will continue to emphasize the importance of flexible and predictable funding, noting its alignment with the funding compact. This includes efforts to encourage multi-year pledges and agreements, as well as contributions to thematic and pooled funding. In line with the management responses to the evaluation of UNDP development cooperation in middle-income countries (DP/2020/22) and the evaluation of UNDP support for climate change adaptation (DP/2021/7), UNDP will factor the broader topic of the allocation of programme funding to countries in its engagement with the Executive Board on the integrated resources plan and integrated budget, 2022-2025 and its midterm review.</p> <p>In line with the evaluation’s recommendation and as part of the design of the new strategic plan, UNDP is taking concrete steps to shift from a project-driven approach to fundraising and advocacy at the portfolio level, supporting efforts to attract better-quality funding that is less projectized and less transactional. UNDP has developed a portfolio acceleration protocol that has been rolled out to 40 offices and should continue to leverage it as a strategic asset. UNDP will explore using new and existing mechanisms and platforms to mobilize and channel funds to strategic initiatives as opposed to small individual projects. These strategic initiatives or “portfolio offers” in areas of work that best demonstrate the UNDP comparative advantage will be shaped by broad-based consultation with partners who share common priorities, while meeting UNDP strategic and corporate objectives.</p>				

<p>In 2019, UNDP established the SDG Finance Sector Hub to bring coherence and scale to its work on financing for the Goals. UNDP supports countries with tailored service offers to advance financing for the Goals across different development contexts including fragile and conflict-affected countries and small island developing States. The service offers include flagship initiatives such as integrated national financing frameworks to align public financing to the Goals; “SDG Impact” to bring in the private sector; the Insurance and Risk Finance Facility to build resilience from national to local levels; and exploring the potential of digital finance with UNCDF.</p>				
6.1 Provide regular updates on progress in the implementation of the funding compact commitments, including the shift to flexible funding, through the structured funding dialogues and accompanying reports	December 2023	Executive Office, BERA, BPPS, Crisis Bureau, regional bureaux		
6.2 Develop a framework for the integration of portfolio approaches into UNDP internal programmatic and operational rules and regulations, systems and capabilities	December 2022	Executive Office, BPPS, BMS, BERA		
<p>Recommendation 7. In recognition that the main asset of UNDP is its workforce, the organization should timely deliver on its “People for 2030” and learning and development strategies that can improve staff capabilities for systems thinking and transformation; reward high performance that is results-focused; and enable an innovative culture within the organization.</p>				
<p>Management response:</p> <p>UNDP welcomes recommendation 7, which seeks to ensure that People for 2030 is implemented, together with learning and development strategies to improve the capabilities of its workforce.</p> <p>Launched in June 2019, People for 2030 aims to progressively transform the UNDP culture and capabilities to deliver better development results by equipping UNDP with a modern, forward-looking human resource function, which is both efficient and effective, addressing the root causes of issues identified in external management reviews, audit recommendations, evaluations and in the course of an extensive internal consultation exercise.</p> <p>The initial phase covers the period 2019-2021 and focuses on re-architecting UNDP policies and approaches across the field of human resource management. It concentrates on nine focus areas: (a) “strive for excellence in the work that we do”; (b) “enhance the UNDP career experience”; (c) “deploy our people strategically”; (d) “develop our people and people managers”; (e) “take care of our people”; (f) “foster and leverage our diversity”; (g) “attract and select top talent”; (h) contract modalities; and (i) human resources effectiveness and people analytics.</p> <p>The second phase of the People for 2030 strategy will be aligned with the next strategic plan, focusing on the implementation of the new human resources capabilities and policies, with the aim of ensuring that UNDP capitalizes fully on its workforce, which, as the evaluation points out, constitutes its main asset, in addition to progressively driving a change in organizational culture.</p>				
7.1. Develop and implement Phase 2 of People for 2030	Development of Phase 2: October 2021 Implementation of Phase 2: December 2025	BMS		

7.2 Design and deliver a learning and development strategy, including an offering for programmatic and technical areas for all personnel in UNDP	March 2021	BMS, BPPS, regional bureaux		
--	------------	-----------------------------	--	--
