

Evaluation
of the
United Nations
Development Assistance Framework (2019-2023) in
Cambodia
Evaluation Report

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BEEP	Basic Education Equivalency Programme
CARD	Council for Agricultural and Rural Development
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CCC	Cooperation Committee Cambodia
CCCA	Cambodia Climate Change Alliance
CDC	Council for the Development of Cambodia
CDHS	Cambodian Demography and Health Survey
CF	Cooperation Framework
CLEAN	CLimatE Adaptation & mitigatioN financing mechanism
CMAA	Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPMIS	Child Protection Information Management System
CRD	Crisis Risk Dashboard
CSDG	Cambodia Sustainable Development Goal
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCPS	Development Cooperation and Partnership Strategy
DPs	Development Partners
EMT	Evaluation Management Team
EQ	Evaluation question
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ET	Evaluation Team
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FoNPAM	Joint Forum of Networks of People Living with HIV
GAP	Good Agricultural Practice
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GTG	Gender Thematic Group
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HR	Human Rights
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HRTG	Human Rights Thematic Group
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
INFF	Integrated National Financing Framework
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JPs	Joint Programmes
JWP	Joint Work Plan
LDC	Least Developed Country
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning
LNOB	Leaving No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAF	Management of Accountability Framework

MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MLMUPC	Ministry of Land Management Urban Planning and Construction
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MOH	Ministry of Health
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoLVT	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
MOP	Ministry of Planning
MoSAVY	Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MRD	Ministry of Rural Development
MRT	Mid-Term Reflection
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
NAPVAW III	National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women III
NCS	National Council for Sustainable Development
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGO Forum	NGO Forum on Cambodia
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
NSPC	National Social Protection Council
NSFSN	National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition
NSPC	National Social Protection Council
OECD/DAC	Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OMT	Operations Management Team
PAGE	Partnership for Action on Green Economy
PLHIV	People Living with HIV
PMT	Programme Management Team
PWD	People Living with Disability
QA	Quality Assurance
RBM	Results-Based Management
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and Foster Conservation, Sustainable Management of Forest and Enhancement of Forest Carbon Stocks
RG	Results Group
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
RS-IV	Rectangular Strategy-Phase IV
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SERF	Socio-Economic Response Framework
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
TG	Thematic Group
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
TWGs	Technical Working Groups

UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention for Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDCO	United Nations Development Cooperation Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEDAP	United Nations Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework on Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Resettlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
UN-SWAP	United Nations System Wide Action Plan
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
US\$	United States dollar
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the independent evaluation of the Government of Cambodia and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) (2019-2023).

Objectives and scope of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide a transparent and participatory platform for learning and dialogue with stakeholders about the UNDAF's performance to strengthen programming and results, improve UN coordination in the country, ensure accountability of the UNCT toward UNDAF stakeholders and inform the development of the new UNSDCF (2024–2028). The objectives of the evaluation were to: i) assess the contribution of the UNDAF to national development results; ii) identify factors affecting UNDAF's contribution and explaining enabling factors and bottlenecks; iii) assess sustainability of the UN system support and iv) provide recommendations for improving the UN's system contribution to national development priorities. The primary users of the evaluation are the UNCT, including non-resident UN agencies; the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Council for Development of Cambodia and other line ministries; and civil society.

Scope and main areas of enquiry

The scope of the evaluation process included all interventions of the UN Development System at the national and subnational level across the five outcomes and 15 intermediate outcomes of the UNDAF, as well as programming principles of human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), disability inclusion, sustainability, resilience and accountability. The evaluation covered the period January 2019 to March 2022.

The UNDAF 2019–2023 places the SDG Agenda and the SDGs at its core, aiming to complement efforts of the RGC and other stakeholders to achieve growth and prosperity for the country. The UNDAF is built around five interrelated outcomes linked with Cambodia's opportunities and challenges and considering the UN's comparative advantage in the country. The five UNDAF outcomes are: Outcome 1: Expanding social opportunities, Outcome 2: Expanding economic opportunities, Outcome 3: Promoting sustainable living, Outcome 4: Strengthening participation and accountability, and Outcome 5: Managing urbanisation.

Methodology

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) 2021 Guidelines focusing on the OECD/DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact and complemented with UNEG suggested criteria of coordination of the UN system support and programming principles. The UNDAF evaluation was conducted in a participatory manner, ensuring the participation and involvement of UN agencies and key stakeholders. Findings are based on a desk review of documents, key informant interviews, stakeholder meetings and a structured questionnaire administered to stakeholders with information triangulated between these sources. The review of the Theory of Change (ToC) was used to understand how the outputs were used to contribute to the outcomes, and the extent to which these were linked with the assumptions underlying the ToC.

Key findings

Relevance and adaptability: Is the UNDAF doing the right things?

The UNDAF strategic priorities are well aligned with the National Strategic Development Plan (2019-2023) and the Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) (2016-2030), which are further harmonised with other national and development sectoral plans. The UNDAF strategic priorities are responsive to other national priorities and contributes to the achievements of the country's international and regional commitments.

The UNCT has been resilient, responsive and strategic in its implementation of the UNDAF, addressing emerging and emergency needs. The UNCT developed the Socio-Economic Response Framework (SERF)

to respond to the pandemic and repurposed its resources and interventions in a collaborative and coordinated manner through the annual work-planning process to mitigate the impact of the pandemic for the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized populations. UN agencies promptly responded to other emergencies, such as natural disasters.

Effectiveness: Is the UNDAF achieving its objectives?

Implementation of the UNDAF has provided critical support to the Government. Progress is positive across all five UNDAF outcomes. The contributions of UN Agencies, particularly through technical assistance, have remained fundamental in facilitating progress towards national objectives and CSDGs. The country's resilience and speed of recovery from the pandemic is partly attributable to the strategic coordination, facilitation and service delivery role played by UN agencies, in cooperation with national institutions and other development partners, particularly in managing the health response, preparing the policy package in support of individuals and the economy, and facilitating recovery. Policy and institutional changes in the social sector and the expansion of social safety nets have reduced disruption in access to services and sustained livelihoods; also with the contribution of UN agencies' work under RG1. Under RG2, RG3, and RG 5 UN agencies have contributed to strategic thinking on increased competitiveness, innovation and a green, inclusive economy, but its role remains small compared to the needs in the sectors. Concerted efforts between the RGC, the UNCT and other partners will be needed to sustain growth and a resilient economy, along with the integration of industrial, agriculture, environment and climate change, and sustainable urban development. The UNDAF theory of change envisages a mix of strategies to achieve clear and tangible benefits for the people of Cambodia in the areas of social and economic inclusion, human rights and sustainable urban growth, while countering the impact of climate change. Contributions of the UN system have targeted the most vulnerable, for instance poor and or/remote populations, People Living with HIV (PLHIV), precarious and migrant workers, people living in areas requiring demining, children and families, those stranded because of lockdown measures and providing support for protecting human rights; and sustaining government capacities to minimize disruption in essential services, especially health and education. UN agencies have contributed to major institutional and legislative changes, across virtually all areas of development. The UN agencies have contributed to the establishment of institutional frameworks, capacities and approaches. The degree to which these are implemented in practice is gradually increasing, as behavioural changes and shifts in mentality require time to materialize at national scale and all levels of multi-governance, in particular regarding human rights and leave no one behind approaches. Further support is needed for the implementation of legal and strategic frameworks, including at the subnational level.

Efficiency: How well are resources being used?

The UNCT prioritized activities based on the needs (demand side) rather than on the availability of resources (supply side), and reallocated resources according to the collective priorities and changing needs. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the UN agencies played a key role in mobilizing resources, technical assistance and direct support to alleviate the negative social and economic impacts through short and mid-term responses. In addition, the UN agencies were able to leverage government and non-government capacities to pursue development initiatives across multiple areas, ranging from social protection, economic inclusion and environmental sustainability, through provision of a wide range of expertise which creates strong preconditions and solid capacity to anticipate needs and respond to demands. However, availability of funding has not always enabled a systematic approach to development and has led to UN agency responses being at times opportunistic, resulting in small scale actions and inter-agency competition. The UNDAF does not have an explicit financing or resource mobilization strategy, and an integrated funding framework has not been established.

Coherence of the UN system support: How well does the UNDAF fit?

The UNCT collaborated with the Government, international organizations, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and the private sector to enhance the achievement of results. However, this

evaluation identified gaps and difficulties in engaging these partners. The CSOs believe that UN agencies do not properly support them, particularly when they tackle important issues like human rights. Strengthened long-term partnerships with stakeholders would enhance the UNDAF's coherence.

Coordination: How well is the UNDAF implementation coordinated?

The UNDAF coordination mechanisms for UNDAF implementation contributed to an increased synergy. The UN has strengthened inter-agency coordination through joint programming and advocacy, where different UN agencies have joined hands, expertise and resources in delivering development cooperation. Nevertheless, the UNDAF Results Framework tends to be mostly a retrofitting exercise of different UN strategies. In addition, Result Group's (RG) work is demanding and lacking additional resources, which limits the ambitions of UN reform. The work done with the accelerators is diversely appreciated – some find it interesting, while others find it limited. The efforts made on strategic thinking (i.e., Foresight, Preferred Future, and Shifting Mindsets) is promising. UN agencies have strengthened their coordination through 11 joint programmes (JPs), which is a significant improvement with respect to the previous two UNDAF cycles which only had 3. However, these JPs are generally not created by the Results Groups through UNDAF work planning processes, and are rather resource-driven, taking advantage of funding opportunities. One RG offered a possible model of four Joint Programmes to address sustainable living and climate change, which approached these issues and available opportunities more strategically. While more evidence would be needed regarding the connectedness within JPs, cooperation and synergy between agencies is sometimes limited. The UNDAF coordination structure did not contribute much to ensure ownership and engagement by national counterparts. The engagement with the Government was mainly undertaken at the Resident Coordinator (RC) level, and less at RGs level. Nonetheless, the need for a collective engagement with the Government on the implementation of the UNDAF is required from the UNCT under the reform process, as spelled out in the 2021 Management of Accountability Framework (MAF).

Sustainability: Will the benefits last?

The long-standing strategic partnership and the trusting relationship developed with the government by UN agencies are key enabling factors to generate meaningful change through the UNDAF. The alignment of UNDAF strategic priorities with national objectives and the continuous harmonization at the higher policy as well as sectoral levels ensure some Government ownership and investment in its desired outcomes, which are key prerequisites for sustainability. However, innovation and change often requires time and resources and the prospects for sustainability of results are higher where the UN's interventions have been scaled up over more than one UNDAF cycle and where the sector's vision and capacities are more mature. The UNCT is called to intensify its convening and capacitating role for rights-holders and their representatives to ensure a critical mass of demand for civic space and accountability.

Orientation towards impacts: What difference does the UNDAF make?

Through the work and contributions of UN agencies, there has been notable progress towards the CSDGs. Although measuring impact over the short period of time covered by this evaluation is not possible, UN agencies have contributed to making a difference in the five interconnected outcomes of the UNDAF strategic framework; including improvement in some socio-economic and development realities in Cambodia by reducing vulnerability and enhancing sustainability; improving human development; diversifying the domestic economy; increasing productivity and competitiveness; seeking to realize human rights and gender equality; and addressing factors giving rise to violence, insecurity and injustice.

The UNDAF interventions have helped reduce vulnerability against crises and helped foster resilience and the socio-economic livelihoods of the populations living in rural and urban settings. The numerous UN

initiatives have been to assist the RGC, CSOs, and other partners in enhancing their ability to respond to shocks and crises in the future.

Programming principles

Human Rights-based Approach: The UNCT has contributed to the mainstreaming of the programming principle on Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) through the UNDAF delivery. An impressive body of work has been undertaken, with the UNCT Human Rights Strategy, the 2021 UNCT Retreat on Human Rights in the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Human Rights Markers, data and indicators, the follow-up to the key observations and recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review and human rights mechanisms, addressing the capacity gaps of duty-bearers and of rights-holders, and paying the maximum attention to groups in situations of vulnerability, in an attempt to leave no-one behind. The Human Rights Theme Group did not regularly liaise with the RGs and did not frequently report to the UNCT on progress on mainstreaming HRBA in the UNDAF implementation.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE): The GEWE principle was proactively mainstreamed through the UNDAF, supported by a number of key exercises, such as the Gender Equality Scorecard Exercise which found 20 of the 44 outcome indicators (or 45.5 percent) to be gender sensitive and monitored the advancement of GEWE. Out of the six JPs reviewed through the Scorecard Exercise, three clearly mainstreamed gender, and there is now a JP on credit guarantees for women's enterprises. The Gender Theme Group (GTG) contributed significantly to UNDAF processes, such as the Common Country Analysis (CCA), gender evaluations of outcomes, indicators, and annual reviews. The UNCT encouraged the participation of CSOs and women's rights advocates in the implementation of the UNDAF, in particular joint initiatives, the CCA process, high-level visits and events, awareness raising campaigns, and UN agencies' programmes. The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) received technical aid and other support for creating comprehensive GEWE policies and guidelines, etc. The GTG also supported Results Groups in applying the UN-Info Gender Equality Marker in the joint work plans. The thorough Gender Equality Mainstreaming (GEM) training given to the GTG and RGs is regarded as the group's most valuable contribution. The evaluation found, however, that the GTG lacks dedicated financial resources to carry out its yearly work plan, and is reliant on agencies' in-kind contributions, the majority of which are supported by the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO).

Conclusions

The main conclusions of the evaluation are as follows:

Relevance and Adaptability: The Evaluation team confirms the relevance of the UNDAF strategic outcomes and priorities as they contribute directly to key national priorities. Its outcomes are also relevant in terms of internationally agreed goals and human rights commitments, the Cambodian 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The UNCT has been resilient, responsive and strategic in its implementation of the UNDAF. It addressed emerging and emergency needs, including with the humanitarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effectiveness: Implementation of the UNDAF achieved notable Results under Outcome 1 particularly enhanced through its multifaceted interventions for pandemic response and ensuing efforts to prepare the country response, provide relief measures and ensure continuity of essential health and education services. UNDAF interventions under Outcome 3 have also been relatively effective, particularly regarding the nutrition agenda and increasing awareness on climate and disaster risk reduction. Several project-level successful achievements are visible under Outcomes 2 and 4, but most interventions in Outcome 5 have been fragmented and did not succeed in showing outcome-level results. Under Outcome 4, the UNDAF has pushed the human rights and governance agenda forward, but the extent of Government and society level uptake is still to be assessed. Effectiveness has been undermined by a shortfall in funding, particularly in areas such as urbanisation and access to services, and a concentration of resources in COVID-19-centred interventions.

Efficiency: The UNCT has prioritised activities based on the needs and has repurposed resources to adjust interventions. Competing priorities of agencies have led to the pursuit of numerous small-scale projects and interventions without much integration. The UNDAF lacks a resource mobilisation strategy and an integrated funding framework, which has limited incentives for joint programming and the potential to leverage work under joint programmes to maximise outcomes. The RC has played an effective role in leveraging leadership and the diverse expertise of the UN agencies and fostering strategic partnerships with development partners.

Coherence: The UNCT worked in partnerships with the Government, development partners, CSOs, academia, and the private sector, according to these actors. The UN is viewed as a trusted partner and reference among all these actors. However, there is room for progress in enhancing long-term partnerships: (i) with the Government, stressing that partnership with UN agencies was sometimes hampered by a lack of coordination among UN agencies; (ii) with the CSOs, involved in an ad-hoc way and in short-term partnerships with the UNCT, with few synergies and coordination among agencies - at both national and subnational level – and lacking support from the UN system, especially when addressing critical issues like human rights; (iii) with development partners, who consider the partnership with the UNCT very beneficial, but lacking a specific UN strategy; (iv) and with the private sector, research and academic institutions, with whom the UN engagement is limited.

Coordination: The mechanisms for the UNDAF implementation contributed to an increased synergy, in particular through 11 Joint Programmes (JP), even if these are rather resource-driven. The evaluators consider interesting a possible model of four Joint Programmes to address sustainable living and climate change, designed by RG3. While more evidence would be needed regarding the collaboration within JPs, cooperation and synergy between agencies is sometimes limited. Based on collected evidence, the UNCT under RCO leadership has also strengthened inter-agency coordination through joint programming and advocacy, which is encouraging in terms of higher-level results, like in the case of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluation also found that the RGs' work is demanding and lacking additional resources, which places limitations to the ambitions of UN reform, and that the work done with the Accelerators is widely appreciated. The efforts made on strategic thinking (i.e., Foresight, Preferred Future, and Shifting Mindsets) are promising. Finally, the UNDAF coordination structure did not contribute much to ensure ownership and engagement by national counterparts.

Sustainability and orientation towards impact: Innovation and change often requires time and resources and the prospects for sustainability of results are higher where the UN's interventions have been scaled up over more than one UNDAF cycle, and where the sector's vision and capacities are more mature. UN agencies have contributed to making a difference in the five interconnected outcomes of the UNDAF, including: improvement in some socio-economic and development realities in Cambodia by reducing vulnerability and enhancing sustainability; improving human development; diversifying the domestic economy; increasing productivity and competitiveness; seeking to realize human rights and gender equality; and addressing sources of violence, insecurity and injustice. The UN interventions have helped reduce vulnerability to shocks and helped foster resilience and the socio-economic livelihoods of the populations living in rural and urban settings.

Recommendations

1. The UNCT and Government should ensure that the next UNSDCF is based on the new guidelines for developing a Cooperation Framework to improve the design, conception and usefulness of the instrument to capture a shared vision and mission in the context of the SDGs.
2. The UNCT should encourage and enhance Government participation in the strategic management of the next UNSDCF.
3. The UNCT should develop partnership strategies to more effectively engage CSOs, the private sector, academia and development partners to encourage more deliberate and systematic engagement with these actors to enhance UNSDCF effectiveness.

4. The UNCT should capitalize on the comparative expertise and resources of implementing UN Agencies to strengthen joint programming, reduce duplication of efforts, and implement targeted joint programmes, to reach higher level results.
5. The UNCT should strengthen its strategic positioning through the next UNSDCF by pursuing the efforts made on strategic thinking and designing the UNSDCF in a manner that facilitates integration across sectors.
6. UN agencies should increase their cooperation through the Results and Theme Groups and use them to help the UNCT to strategically manage the UNSDCF, with the RC/UNCT leadership.
7. The UNCT, under the leadership of the RC, should ensure greater mainstreaming of the UNSDCF guiding principles on Leave No One Behind and the Human Rights-Based Approach.
8. The UNCT, under leadership of the RC, should ensure a greater mainstreaming of the UNSDCF guiding principle on gender equality and women's empowerment.
9. The UNCT and the Government should contemplate creating an integrated funding framework in the next UNSDCF, and adequate funding instruments to ensure the scale of impact necessary for attaining the 2030 Agenda.

The ET has developed suggested actions to achieve these recommendations as elaborated in the full evaluation report. This evaluation report and these recommendations will be followed by a mandatory management response and action plan prepared by the UNCT.

Introduction

1. This report presents findings, conclusions and recommendations of the independent evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2019-2023 in Cambodia. The evaluation was commissioned by the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT). It is based on the Evaluation Terms of Reference (TOR) and the Inception Report, which were previously approved by the Evaluation Management Team (EMT) and the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG). See Annex 1: Terms of Reference for the UNDAF evaluation.
2. The UNDAF Cambodia 2019-2023¹ was developed in alignment with the national development priorities of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) as articulated in the Rectangular Strategy-Phase IV (RS-IV)² and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.³ The UNDAF was signed by 24 United Nations (UN) agencies and describes the collective response of the UN system to national development priorities. It reflects the comparative advantage of the UN by emphasizing the thematic competence of UN organizations involved.
3. Under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC), the UNCT in Cambodia is responsible for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the UNDAF, in partnership with the RGC, and in collaboration with civil society, academia and development partners.
4. The evaluation provides UN partners and UN agencies with an opportunity to reflect collectively on the contribution of the UN system to changes in the development context, based on the expected UNDAF outcomes, identifying the emerging issues, enabling factors and specific UN interventions that may have contributed to any observable result changes. It assesses the UNDAF according to the following criteria: a) Relevance and adaptability; b) Effectiveness; c) Efficiency; d) Coherence of the UN System support; e) Coordination; f) Sustainability; g) Orientation towards impacts; h) Programming principles.

Purpose and Objectives

5. The overall **purpose** of the UNDAF evaluation is to:
 - Provide a transparent and participatory platform for learning and dialogue with stakeholders about what worked, what did not work and why in delivery of the UNDAF's outcomes. Regarding the timing for conducting the evaluation, based on United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidelines, the evaluation is needed during the penultimate year of UNDAF implementation to assess the performance and contribution of the UNCT against the results framework and to identify lessons learned and provide recommendations to inform the preparation for the new UNSDCF (2024-2028) and for improving UN coordination at the country level.
 - Support greater accountability of the UNCT to UNDAF stakeholders.
6. The **objectives** of the evaluation were:
 - To assess the **contribution of the UNDAF** to national development results through evidence-based judgements using evaluation criteria.
 - To identify **factors** that have affected the UNDAF's contribution; why the performance is as it is; and explaining the enabling factors and bottlenecks.
 - To assess the **sustainability** of the UN system support.
 - To provide clear and actionable **recommendations** for improving the UN system's contribution to national development priorities, especially for incorporating into the new UNSDCF.

1 <https://cambodia.un.org/en/38874-united-nations-development-assistance-framework-2019-2023>.

2 Royal Government of Cambodia, Rectangular Strategy Phase IV of the Royal Government of Cambodia of the Sixth Legislature of the National Assembly (2018-2023)

3 Royal Government of Cambodia (2018), Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) Framework 2016 - 2030

Scope

7. The evaluation covered all UN Development System (UNDS) agencies, funds and programmes (resident and non-resident) conducted in Cambodia by the UNCT. Geographically, the evaluation covered both national and sub-national levels of UNDAF implementation, with a particular focus on two provinces of Kampong Cham and Kampong Thom. The evaluation time period was January 2019 – 31 March 2022.

Programming principles

8. While there are no standalone objectives specific for the assessment of human rights and gender equality considerations, the evaluation team (ET) explored how the UNDAF integrated a gender and human rights lens to assess the extent to which the UNDAF contributed to leaving no one behind. This element of the evaluation is essential given that the UNDAF Guidelines, which guided the Cambodian UNDAF drafting, highlight the importance of programming principles, especially integrating Human Rights, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) in the UNDAFs as a central programming principle, responding to the overarching principle of Leaving No One Behind to achieve the SDGs.⁴ The section on programming principles below provides further details on the ET's approach to this element of the evaluation.

Evaluation criteria and questions

9. The evaluation assessed the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors, and causality. It also analysed the conformity to cross-cutting programming principles. For the complete list of evaluation questions, see Annex 2: Evaluation criteria and key questions.

10. This UNDAF has been assessed according to evaluation criteria suggested in the TOR. Some of these criteria are inspired by the revised standard Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact).⁵ Other criteria are suggested by UNEG to improve the OECD criteria.⁶

11. The number of evaluation questions (EQs) was contained at 15, as recommended in the latest evaluation guidelines.⁷ In addition, United Nations Development Cooperation Group (UNDCO) suggested to limit the evaluation questions to ensure that they would be manageable given the characteristics, objectives and scope of this evaluation. Some changes were made to the key evaluation questions following discussions with the RCO and the United Nations Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific (UNEDAP). In addition, two EQs were added after the Inception Report was finalized, to help the evaluation team present its consolidated analysis on the Programming Principles in a self-contained section of the report: one on the mainstreaming of the Human Rights-Based Approach in the UNDAF, and the other on the mainstreaming of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the UNDAF.

12. The evaluation team has further explained the meaning of each criterion with short narratives for the evaluation questions, as follows:

Relevance and adaptability: Is the UNDAF doing the right things?

- To what extent are the UNDAF strategic priorities consistent with country needs, national priorities, the country's international and regional commitments, including on CSDGs, leaving no one behind, human rights, sustainable development, environment, and gender equity?
- How resilient, responsive and strategic was the UN in addressing emerging and emergency needs including humanitarian response especially those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups, for example, in assessing the COVID-19 impacts and in

4 See: UNDAF Guidance, UNDG, 2017 -- <https://undg.org/document/2017-UNDAF-guidance/> and UNDAF Companion Guidance -- <https://undg.org/programme/undaf-companion-guidances/>

5 Better Criteria for Better Evaluation, Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use, OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, December 2019.

6 UNEG Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (September 2021).

7 [Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework](#), United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), September 2021.

reprioritizing/adapting its support to provide timely support to the country and to ensure the achievement of the UNDAF results?

Effectiveness: Is the UNDAF achieving its objectives?

- How effective has the UN been in achieving the results outlined in the results framework?
- What have been the benefits for the people and institutions targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized population?
- To what extent has the UN contributed to key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes that are critical for catalysing progress towards the UNDAF desired impact including the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, and disability inclusion?

Efficiency: How well are resources being used?

- To what extent has the UN collectively prioritized activities based on the needs (demand side) rather than on the availability of resources (supply side), and reallocated resources according to the collective priorities and changing needs if/where necessary?
- Was the UNDAF supported by an integrated funding framework and by adequate funding instruments? What were the gaps, if any? Have resources been allocated efficiently?

Coherence of the UN system support: How well does the UNDAF fit?

- To what extent has the UN strengthened the coherence of support by UNCT members and sought partnerships (with civil society/private sector/Government/academia, research institutions/international development partners) to enhance achievement of results?
- To what extent was the UNDAF designed and delivered in line with international and national programming principles?

Coordination: How well is the UNDAF implementation coordinated?

- To what extent has the UNDAF coordination structure (through the Results Groups, Thematic Groups, Accelerators, Humanitarian Response Forum, and the Scaling Up Nutrition coordination) for the UNDAF implementation contributed to a coherent and increased synergy (for example through joint programming) accelerating the progress and jointly supporting CSDG acceleration in Cambodia? What are bottlenecks towards a coherent and increased synergy?
- To what extent has the UNDAF coordination structure contributed to ensure ownership and engagement by national counterparts?

Sustainability: Will the benefits last?

- What mechanisms, if any, has the UN established to ensure socio-political, institutional, financial and environmental sustainability?
- What is the likelihood that progress towards the CSDGs is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time?

Orientation toward impacts: What difference does the UNDAF make?

- To what extent are the UNDAF achieved results demonstrating sound and sustainable progress towards the achievement of the expected CSDG targets?
- To what extent have UN interventions stemming from the UNDAF strengthened economic and individual resilience and contributed to reducing vulnerability against shocks and crises?

Programming principles

- To what extent was the UNDAF programming principle – Human Rights-Based Approach – mainstreamed in the UNDAF?
- To what extent was the UNDAF programming principle – Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – mainstreamed in the UNDAF?

- The evaluation criteria above and associated final evaluation questions and sub-questions have guided the evaluation of the UNDAF 2019-2023. An Evaluation Design Matrix was developed, which guided the data collection process to find specific evidence for each evaluation criterion and question, with data collection methods, and sources of information (see Annex 3: Evaluation design matrix).

Structure of the evaluation report

13. This evaluation report was prepared with the guidance provided by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG),⁸ including the UNEG Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (September 2021).⁹

14. This report presents the Country Context, a description of the UNDAF (2019-2023), the Evaluation Context, the Methodology, the Evaluation Findings, as well as the Conclusions, Recommendations, and the Limitations and Lessons Learned. It is complemented by numerous annexes, which present complementary information and tools that were used during the evaluation.

Country Context and the UNDAF 2019-2023

15. Since the adoption of the UNDAF 2019-2023, there have been significant changes in the development context including the economic, political and social landscape in Cambodia. The most significant shift has been brought about by the outbreak of the global Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which altered Cambodia’s development pathway.

16. Cambodia has sustained high rates of economic growth throughout the last decades. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth averaged seven percent annually between 2010 and 2019 and GDP per capita increased from US\$783 in 2010 to US\$1,590 by 2019.¹⁰ The country graduated to a lower-middle income economy in 2015, and the increase in prosperity and wealth was associated with a reduction of poverty and income inequality in the country. The main drivers of economic growth are industrial production, in particular the garment industry and other light manufacturing, as well as construction and tourism. The relative weight of the agricultural sector in the country’s output shrank significantly over the last decade: by 2019, the agriculture sector accounted for 17 percent of the Cambodian economy down from over 27 percent in 2010. In March 2021, Cambodia met the graduation criteria as a Least Developed Country (LDC) for the first time at the 2021 Triennial Review based on three criteria: Gross National Income per capita, Human Assets Index, and Economic and Environmental Vulnerability.

17. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the accompanying lockdown measures severely hit the Cambodian economy and are estimated to have reversed part of the social and economic progress achieved in the past decades. With the reopening of the economy in 2021 and rollout of the vaccination campaign, clear signs of recovery have emerged. The apparel, footwear and bicycle manufacturing industries, alongside agriculture, have experienced a comeback and continue to drive economic growth.¹¹ Recovery in the tourism sector has been slower, partially due to the prolonged travel restrictions, although sustained due to a revival of domestic demand. As a result, despite a contraction of 3.1 percent in 2020, real economic growth during 2021 is estimated at 3 percent¹² and growth is projected to accelerate in the medium term.¹³

8 Key UNEG Guidance includes Frequently Asked Questions for UNDAF Evaluations, UNEG, 2010; Quality Checklist for Evaluation TOR and Inception Reports, UNEG, 2010; Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports, UNEG, 2010; UNEG Guidance on Preparing TORs for UNDAF Evaluations, 2012; and Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, UNEG Guide, 2014.

9 [Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework](#), United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), September 2021.

10 World Bank 2017, Cambodia Sustaining Strong Growth for the Benefit of All Systematic Country Diagnostics

11 World Bank 2021, “Cambodia Economic Update, Living with COVID-19”

12 MEF, <https://mef.gov.kh/macro-economic/ការវាយតម្លៃ%E2%80%8Bកំណើនសេដ្ឋកិច្ច/>, accessed 17 July 2022.

13 World Bank 2022, “Cambodia Economic Update, Weathering the Oil Price Shock”

18. The impact of the crisis on employment has been severe, as export demands fell for the sectors providing the majority of formal employment. The negative impact was exacerbated by the national lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 and prolonged travel restrictions. The RGC has moved quickly to put into place a set of recovery measures worth 2.3 percent of GDP, including US\$300 million for a special COVID-19 related social assistance programme to support the poor and vulnerable,¹⁴ providing conditional and unconditional cash transfer to the poor, waiver of social security contributions for employees in strategic export sectors, as well as labour market activation and income substitution measures for those out of work. In addition, an economic recovery strategy was developed,¹⁵ which looks not only at the immediate response but also at opportunities to address the deeper issues exposed by the pandemic, such as the need to diversify, to invest in sustainability, and to protect the most vulnerable.

19. Cambodia's population was 15.6 million according to the General Population Census of 2019¹⁶ and is estimated to have reached 17.2 million in 2022.¹⁷ The population is quite young, with half of the population under the age of 27 in 2019 and age dependency ratio was relatively low at 62 percent, indicating a large potential for exploiting the demographic dividend to drive growth. Structural changes in the Cambodian economy, with the reallocation of economic activity – and employment – increasingly across new sectors at the expense of agriculture has proven an engine of growth. This change has also led to an urbanisation wave, underpinned by rural to urban migration, driven by the concentration of foreign direct investment, tourism and better employment opportunities in larger urban areas. While higher poverty in rural areas was initially a key factor driving migration, the prospects of higher income generation opportunities, better connectivity, mobility and youth's overall aspiration to live a life outside of their villages may have become stronger determinants in the recent years.¹⁸ Outward migration has also increased in recent years, mainly to neighbouring countries, which has increased inflow of remittances and partially helped to reduce poverty.

20. Growth has contributed to a rapid decline of those living under the poverty line, from 47.8 percent in 2007 to 13.5 in 2014. In 2020 Cambodia revised its national poverty line based on data from the Socio-Economic Survey 2019/2020. Under the new poverty rate, 17.8 percent of the population are poor. Poverty rates are lowest in Phnom Penh and urban areas (4.2 and 12.6 percent) and highest in rural areas (22.8 percent).¹⁹ Other aspects of multidimensional poverty remain salient, including chronic child malnutrition, high maternal mortality, access to health and education and access to water and sanitation. With 27 percent of the population comprised of women of reproductive age (2019) and a big adolescent and youth cohort, there is a need to increase support for family planning and sexual reproductive health and rights. Nevertheless, Cambodia has made considerable progress in improving health and education outcomes, including improvements in early childhood development, primary education, higher life expectancy and reduced child mortality rates. Cambodia's Human Development Index (HDI) increased from 0.368 to 0.594 between 2010 and 2019,²⁰ while inequalities decreased in all three HDI domains.

21. Cambodia is a signatory to all main UN human rights treaties. The human rights landscape has been subject of controversy in recent years, particularly regarding freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and political participation.²¹ The Cambodia Human Rights Committee maintains that restrictions in place are not human rights issues rather than linked with politics.²² Respect for socio-economic rights, including

14 COVID-19 Cash Transfer Programme for the Poor and Vulnerable Households

15 The Strategic Framework and Programs for Economic Recovery in the Context of Living with COVID-19 in a New Normal 2019 – 2023.

16 National Institute of Statistics, General Population Census of the Kingdom of Cambodia 2019, <https://www.nis.gov.kh/nis/Census2019/Final%20General%20Population%20Census%202019-English.pdf>

17 <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/KH>

18 WFP 2019, Vulnerability and Migration in Cambodia

19 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview#1>

20 UNDP 2020, Cambodia Human Development Report 2020.

21 United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Human Rights Committee Concluding Observations on the third periodic report of Cambodia, 18 May 2022.

See also Human Rights Watch 2021, ICJ Submission to the Human Rights Committee of 31 January 2022, at <https://www.ici.org/cambodia-ici-submission-to-the-human-rights-committee/> and Freedom House 2021, Freedom in the World 2021.

22 CHRC all set to debate rights report with UN expert panel, <https://chrc.gov.kh/national-reports/chrc-all-set-to-debate-rights-report-with-un-expert-panel/>

the right to food and social security, also remain under-supported²³ but some progress has been made to combat corruption, violence against women, trafficking, torture, and reduce overcrowding in prisons.

22. COVID-19 prevention provided the Government with pretext for continued tightening of legal and administrative measures that undermine human rights in the country. The RGC introduced new laws, namely the 'COVID-19 Law',²⁴ and additional sub-decrees, and it presented a number of draft laws and policies, such as the public order law and internet gateway sub-decree, which are prima facie inconsistent with Cambodia's international human rights law obligations.

23. Cambodia has seen improvements in gender equality in terms of income, health and education. However, social norms and beliefs restrict the expectations of society over women and girls and undermine their ability to achieve their full potential persists. Women and girls are often vulnerable, employed in precarious jobs in the agriculture and garment industries or in unpaid domestic work and the gender wage gap is significant, particularly in male dominated industries.²⁵ Prevalence of violence against women and girls is high.²⁶ Educational outcomes for both boys and girls were significantly impacted by school closures during the COVID-19 lockdowns²⁷ and despite improvements in school enrolment and completion rates, significant dropout rates persist in secondary school, in particular for boys, who are more likely to be expected to work.²⁸

24. Climate change presents particular challenges for Cambodia, which is listed as the eighth most vulnerable country globally to the phenomenon due to the growing frequency of droughts, floods and windstorms, as well as rising sea levels.²⁹ Cambodia is ranked 145th of 178 countries in the Environmental Performance Index.³⁰ To enable more efficient management of natural resources, Cambodia has set aside approximately 41 percent of its total territory for biologically protected zones. Due to high population densities and rising demands from a globalized market, resources are being over-exploited. Forest cover and natural habitats have changed as a result of protected area lands being converted to agro-industrial plantations, and at times undermining land tenure security for local inhabitants, in particular poor and indigenous communities. Direct habitat losses are also a result of other important development projects carried out inside and around protected areas, such as hydropower, mining, and road building. Moreover, the lack of alternative livelihood options for local residents results in forest degradation, over-exploitation of important species, and undervaluation of ecological services like carbon sequestration.³¹

25. The 4th State of the Environment Report of Cambodia, approved by the MoE in 2021, indicated that Cambodia has tremendous challenges with air pollution, climate change, inland freshwater resource exploitation, degraded soil quality, threatening biodiversity including protected areas, increasing waste, and environmental and food safety.³² These challenges are influencing the progressive efforts of Cambodia to achieve the CSDGs.

26. Overall, Cambodia needs to sustain key reforms to achieve its SDGs, to reduce vulnerabilities and increase sustainability. The country continues to have relatively low productivity, and an urgent need to invest in human capital through education and building new skills to address labour market needs and diversification of its economy, alongside greater investments in infrastructure and technology.

23 UN-Cambodia 2021, Cambodia Common Country Analysis

24 The Law on measures to prevent COVID-19 and other fatal and harmful diseases

25 UN 2020, Gender Deep Dive, CCA

26 UN-Cambodia. 2022. Gender Equality Deep Dive: CCA and UN Women <https://data.unwomen.org/country/cambodia>

27 Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and UNICEF 2022: Learning Loss in the COVID-19 Pandemic Era – Evidence from the 2016 – 2021 Grade Six National Learning Assessment in Cambodia.

28 UNICEF 2020, Why Are Boys Leaving Secondary School Early in Cambodia?

29 UNDP, Environmental Governance Reform (EGR), <https://www.undp.org/cambodia/projects/environmental-governance-reform-egr>

30 Ibid

31 USAID, Environment and Global Climate Change, <https://www.usaid.gov/cambodia/environment-and-global-climate-change>

32 MoE (2021). The 4th State of Environment Report of Cambodia. Ministry of Environment. https://data.opendevelopmentcambodia.net/en/dataset/68dcaa37-64b4-4337-81b7-398ed3ca1ed5/resource/8dd57e10-e96d-4971-b790-f569598e39ec/download/the-4th-state-of-environment-report-in-khmer_compressed.pdf

27. The UNDAF 2019-2023 in Cambodia reflects the UN system's collective approach in support of Cambodia's priorities and needs, as articulated through national development priorities and plans, including the Rectangular Strategy - Phase IV,³³ the CSDG Framework,³⁴ and the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2019-2023.³⁵ It is shaped by the central themes of the SDGs, with five interconnected outcomes and 15 intermediate outcomes.

28. The UNDAF 2019 – 2023 places the SDG Agenda and the SDGs at its core, aiming to complement efforts of the RGC and other stakeholders to achieve growth and prosperity for the country. The UNDAF is built around five interrelated outcomes linked with Cambodia's opportunities and challenges and considering the UN's comparative advantage in the country, as shown here in **Table 1**.

The UNDAF and the Sustainable Development Goals

29. The RGC is fully committed to the 2030 Agenda. For the UN in Cambodia, the Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) provide a framework for a more integrated UN system that has embraced the interconnected nature of sustainable development challenges.

30. The overall vision of the Cambodia UNDAF is to complement efforts of the RGC and all stakeholders to realize the 2030 Agenda. Central to this is the collective efforts to promote the realization of the basic rights—civil, cultural, economic, political and social – of all people in Cambodia, in particular through reducing inequities and vulnerability among those left behind.

31. Using its comparative advantage based on the different mandates of individual entities, the UN through the UNDAF provides financial and technical support to the RGC to develop and implement plans, policies and frameworks to ensure prioritization of issues affecting the most disadvantaged groups. The UN also supports addressing prohibitive social norms and gender inequality currently preventing girls, boys, women and men from exercising their rights and from adopting safe behaviours and practices and demanding accountability from duty bearers. The UNDAF seeks to strengthen national and sub-national administrations and private sector institutions to equitably deliver quality services, especially targeting the most disadvantaged groups.

32. To realize its vision, the UNDAF is shaped by the central themes of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs—People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership—taking into account the analysis made during UNDAF's preparation of Cambodia's opportunities and challenges and considering the UN's comparative advantage in the country. The development of the UNDAF was underpinned by the four global UNDAF integrated programming principles vital to the Cambodian country context: (i) leave no one behind; (ii) human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment; (iii) sustainability and resilience; and (iv) accountability.³⁶ The UNDAF also adopts the six mutually reinforcing UN programming approaches.³⁷

33. The UNDAF 2019-2023 in Cambodia, was formulated via inclusive and participatory processes. It is aligned with the national development planning process and priorities expressed in the Cambodia Rectangular Strategy Phase IV, as well as the SDGs. It underscores a strong partnership between the Government of Cambodia and the UN to join efforts towards the achievement of national development priorities, the SDGs and compliance with normative standards. The progressive and equitable increase of domestic resources towards the country's priority needs also contributes towards the collectively

33 <http://cnv.org.kh/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Rectangular-Strategy-Phase-IV-of-the-Royal-Government-of-Cambodia-of-the-Sixth-Legislature-of-the-National-Assembly-2018-2023.pdf>

34 https://data.opendevdevelopmentcambodia.net/laws_record/cambodian-sustainable-development-goals-framework-2016-2030/resource/d340c835-e705-40a4-8fb3-66f957670072

35 https://data.opendevdevelopmentmekong.net/dataset/087e8a03-f09d-4eb2-94f2-00d8d237b342/resource/bb62a621-8616-4728-842f33ce7e199ef3/download/nsdp-2019-2023_en.pdf

36 For more details see UNDG, 'Principles for integrated programming', accessible at <https://undg.org/programme/undaf-guidance/principles-for-integrated-programming/>.

37 The six approaches are: (i) Results-focused programming; (ii) Capacity development, (iii) Risk-informed programming; (iv) Development, humanitarian and peace-building links; (v) Coherent policy support; and (vi) Partnerships. For further details, see UNDG, 'Key approaches for integrated programming' accessible at <https://undg.org/programme/undaf-guidance/principles-for-integrated-programming/>

identified UNDAF priorities, aligned to national policies and sector plans, including the Rectangular Strategy Phase IV and the CSDGs.

34. The overall estimated budget to achieve the UNDAF is approximately US\$577.6 million. Interventions in Outcome 1 were estimated to amount to 46 percent of the total cost of implementation, followed by Outcome 2 (23 percent) and Outcome 3 (20 percent). It was projected at the start of the implementation in 2019 that about US\$369.9 million (64 percent) would be available, leaving US\$207.7 million (36 percent) to be mobilized throughout the UNDAF implementation.³⁸ By July 2022, a total of US\$ 482 million had been mobilised.

35. In the UNDAF, the UN Cambodia has indicated plans to develop a financing strategy for resource mobilization, to meet the significant increase in investment required to meet the SDGs.³⁹ It is likely that financing needs have increased in the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak and the ensuing economic and social crisis. During 2020, the UNDAF was repurposed to reallocate part of the resources towards the pandemic response and recovery goals of the Socio-Economic Response Framework (SERF). Of its estimated cost of approximately US\$88 million, US\$60.4 million were reallocated from UNDAF to finance health and socio-economic response and recovery goals, and US\$26 million were newly mobilised.⁴⁰

36. In response to the pandemic, the UN rapidly repurposed its UNDAF programming in 2020. In addition, in May 2020, the UN formulated a Socio-Economic Response Framework (SERF), with priority actions and additional resources structured in five pillars for 18 months or up to December 2021. Health is the first pillar, complementing the National COVID-19 Health Master Plan. The other pillars reflect additional social dimensions and the priorities of Cambodia's Economic Recovery Strategy⁴¹, including to extend social protection and essential services; restart the economy by stimulating jobs, industries and businesses; manage the macroeconomic response to ensure continued stability and sound policy choices; and sustain social cohesion and community resilience. 2021 was also a critical midterm landmark for the UN development system in Cambodia in its implementation of the UNDAF 2019-2023. As noted in the TOR, the UN system in Cambodia conducted the midterm UNDAF reflection to take stock of the emerging risks and opportunities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic in Cambodia and reflect on the lessons learned from the SERF and UNDAF repurposing; to continue discussions on the UNDAF coordination architecture and governance to strengthen collaboration; to address gaps particularly in the partnerships and SDG financing strategy; to improve efficiency and effectiveness in implementation; and to ensure relevance and agility of the UN development system to respond to emerging needs.

37. The ToC highlighting the pathway of the intervention logic, including the strategy, risks and assumptions of all five UNDAF strategic priorities, is in Annex III of the UNDAF 2019-2023 in Cambodia document. The UNDAF outcomes and intermediate outcomes and links with the CSDGs and Rectangular Strategy IV are listed in Table 1 below.

38 ToR, Evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2019-2023 in Cambodia, UNCT Cambodia, Feb. 2022.

39 UNDAF Cambodia 2019 – 2023, p. 80.

40 UN Cambodia Annual Report 2020, p. 44

41 The Strategic Framework and Programs for Economic Recovery in the Context of Living with COVID-19 in a New Normal 2019 – 2023.

Table 1 UNDAF Cambodia Strategic Outcome Areas (2019-2023)

Outcome areas	Intermediate outcomes	CSDGs	Alignment with Rectangular strategy
<p>1: Expanding social opportunities</p>	<p>1.1: By 2023, women and men, in particular marginalized and vulnerable populations, increasingly seek quality services and the realization of their basic rights, including during emergencies. 1.2: By 2023, public and private sectors provide quality services and expanded coverage for marginalized and vulnerable populations in line with international standards and norms (including during emergencies). 1.3: Public and private sectors sustainably increase and diversify domestic resources for social services and social protection, especially for marginalized and most vulnerable populations.</p>	<p>1 to 6, 10, 16 and 17.</p>	<p>Human resource development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the quality of education, science and technology; • Vocational training; • Improving public healthcare and nutrition; • Strengthening gender equality and social protection. <p>Promotion of private sector development and employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job market development.
<p>2: Expanding economic opportunities</p>	<p>2.1: More women and men have decent work both in wage and self-employment, are protected by labour standards, have higher skills in a progressively formalizing labour market, and high levels of employment are maintained. 2.2: Public institutions, businesses and entrepreneurs drive improved economic productivity and competitiveness, greater innovation, adoption of new technology and resilience to shocks. 2.3: Social norms, policies, laws and institutions promote economic inclusion, especially of women, people with disabilities, women and men living in remote areas and the extreme poor.</p>	<p>1 to 5, 8, 9, 12, 17 and 18</p>	<p>Human resource development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the quality of education, science and technology; • Vocational training; and • Strengthening gender equality and social protection. <p>Economic diversification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing key and new sources of economic growth; <p>Private sector development and employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job market development; • Promoting small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurship; and • Enhancing competitiveness. <p>Inclusive and sustainable development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of the agricultural sector and rural development.
<p>3: Promoting sustainable living</p>	<p>3.1: By 2023, women and men in Cambodia, in particular the vulnerable and marginalized, are empowered to equitably access, responsibly use and benefit from resilient basic services, land and natural resources with an increased resilience to cope with disasters/shocks and other risks.</p>	<p>2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13,</p>	<p>Human Resource development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening gender equality and social protection.

	<p>3.2: Relevant public and private sector actors use innovation, information and technologies to contribute to sustainable production and living, environmental protection, natural resource management and biodiversity conservation.</p> <p>3.3: Relevant public institutions consultatively develop, adopt, appropriately resource and implement, without discrimination, in partnership and coordination with the private sector and civil society, legal, policy, regulatory and planning frameworks related to sustainable production and living, compliant with relevant international standards and conventions.</p>	14, 15 and 17	<p>Private sector development and employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurship. <p>Inclusive and sustainable development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of agricultural and rural development; • Sustainable management of natural and cultural resources; and • Ensuring environmental sustainability and readiness for climate change.
4: Strengthening participation and accountability	<p>4.1: By 2023, women and men, including the under-represented, marginalized and vulnerable, enjoy their human right to participate, directly and through representative organizations, in public and civic affairs through collaborative decision-making processes and to monitor public programmes, seek accountability from democratic institutions, and access functional grievance mechanisms.</p> <p>4.2: Public institutions at national and sub-national levels, including an independent judiciary, effectively function in a more transparent, accessible, responsive and gender-sensitive manner.</p> <p>4.3: By 2023, laws and policies meet international norms and standards, and are effectively implemented and monitored, addressing the rights of the most vulnerable, including children, and providing opportunities and secure democratic space for women and men to exercise political rights, freedom of expression, association and assembly.</p>	5, 10, 16, 17 and 18	<p>Human resource development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening gender equality and social protection. <p>Economic diversification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing for digital economy and the fourth industrial revolution. <p>Private sector and job development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job market development. <p>Acceleration of governance reform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening cleanliness in public administration; and • Strengthening work effectiveness.
5: Managing urbanisation	<p>5.1: Marginalized and vulnerable groups in urban environments are empowered and protected in seeking and utilizing quality services.</p> <p>5.2: Urban authorities plan, manage and coordinate regulated quality services to the public, in a more participatory manner responsive to the needs of urban populations, including vulnerable and disadvantaged people and informed by data, evidence and best practices</p> <p>5.3: Relevant institutions develop appropriate and costed legal/policy frameworks to guide urbanisation, compliant with international norms and standards, and informed by data, evidence and best practices.</p>	1 to 11, 13 and 17	<p>Human resource development</p> <p>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening gender equality and social protection. <p>Inclusive and sustainable development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening management of urbanization.

38. The UN coordinates its efforts through national development coordination mechanisms, including Technical Working Groups, and ensures inter-ministry engagement under the overall coordination and oversight of the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC). The UNDAF is overseen by the UN Country Team (UNCT) under the leadership of Resident Coordinator. The UNCT is comprised of heads of all resident and non-resident UN agencies. It is the highest UN inter-agency coordination and joint decision-making body in Cambodia, ensuring UN coherence and alignment of UN support to national development priorities. On the planning and programming arms, one results group for each of the five UNDAF outcomes was established to lead and guide the UNDAF formulation and implementation, using joint annual work plans. The UNDAF results groups comprise individual agency programme staff contributing to each of the five outcomes. Each results group is co-chaired by two heads of agencies and include at least one M&E expert to support its work. The Programme Management Team (PMT) was functional at the beginning of the UNDAF cycle. It comprised of deputy or senior programme officer-level representatives from all member agencies. The UN Communications Group (UNCG) comprising communications focal points of UN agencies, disseminates UNDAF results achieved, best practices and success stories to promote scaling up. The group supports the development and roll out of joint advocacy initiatives identified by the UNCT and coordination groups. The Operations Management Team (OMT) brings together UN organizations’ operations managers. It provides the UNCT with recommendations on common services and business-related issues, identifying opportunities for collaboration and innovation to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of UN programmatic work. It provides recommendations on the harmonization and simplification of operational procedures for the effective implementation of the UNDAF. In addition, UNDAF Thematic Groups such as Human Rights, Gender and Joint team on AIDS; Accelerators (data, youth, nutrition, and social protection), and Humanitarian Response Forum have been established to provide technical support to UNCT on those relevant issues.

Table 2 UNDAF Cambodia Priority Areas and Lead Agencies

Priority Area	Lead UN Agency (Chairs and Co-chairs of the Results Groups)
People	UNICEF/UNFPA
Prosperity	UNDP/UNIDO
Planet	FAO/WFP
Peace	OHCHR/UNESCO
Urbanisation	UNESCO/IOM/UNOPS

Target stakeholders

39. The current UNDAF was signed by 24 UN Agencies, which have cumulatively contributed to the implementation of the current UNDAF, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator: ESCAP, FAO, IAEA, IFAD, ILO, IOM, ITC, UNAIDS, UNCDF, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UN Women, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNODC, OHCHR, UNOPS, UNV, WFP, WHO. **Table 2** provides the lead agencies for each of the focus areas.

40. The key stakeholders for the UNDAF implementation phase are: line ministries and governmental institutions, including ministries in charge of Planning; Health; Social Affairs, Industry and Science; Interior; Economy and Finance; Education; Justice; Women’s Affairs; Councils for Agriculture and Rural Development; Social Protection; Authorities for the protection of Angkor and Preh Vihear; the Council for the Development of Cambodia and others. A full list of key stakeholders is included in Annex 4.

Evaluation Approach and Methodology

41. This section provides a summary of the approach, methodology and management arrangements for the evaluation. For more detailed information, see Annex 5: Evaluation Approach and Methodology.

Approach

Theoretical design

42. The evaluation's theoretical framework, which drew on a naturalistic methodology, was intended to articulate the strategic concerns that underlie the design of the programme and its operational reality. Recognizing that it was often difficult and impractical to attribute results to interventions, contribution analysis was carried out by mapping the routes from interventions to results. The evaluation plan also included strategies for achieving gender equality and human rights (HR & GE).

Programming principles

43. The 2017 UNDAF Guidelines, which guided the drafting of the Cambodian UNDAF, highlighted the importance of programming principles, especially integrating Human Rights, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the UNDAF as central programming principles, responding to the overarching principle of Leaving No One Behind to achieve the SDGs.⁴² The evaluation examined the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), and Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), to assess how these were reflected in the UNDAF. Given the time available, the evaluation also explored other programming principles (environmental sustainability and resilience, accountability) in the general framework of the evaluation.

An evaluation at the strategic level – Outcomes and intermediary outcomes

44. UNDAF Evaluations are meant to be strategic exercises at the outcome and intermediary outcome levels, and do not involve evaluations of individual agencies' activities. To avoid unnecessary transaction costs for UN agencies and external partners, progress was measured at the highest possible level of the results chain, and the evaluation mainly focused on the key UNDAF outcomes and intermediary outcomes.

Methodology

45. The methodology used mixed methods, as detailed below, with information from the different lines of inquiry triangulated to improve the reliability of the findings. The evaluation analysed both quantitative and qualitative data. The evaluation was a fully participatory process, which included consulting a range of internal and external actors, as detailed below.

Programmatic approach and UN Joint Programmes

46. The evaluators applied a programmatic approach, by drawing from the evaluation reports/mid-term reviews of UN agencies, funds and programmes (especially Joint Programmes),⁴³ to better appreciate the inter-agency cooperation and collective results achieved.

47. The Theory of Change (ToC) Technical Meeting also provided a preliminary assessment of whether, during the implementation, there were any shifts in outputs, in terms of revision of formulation, change of activities due to emerging issues or other reasons. It allowed the ET to reflect on the main challenges related to the implementation of the UNDAF, and to identify and examine some factors both internal to

42 See: UNDAF Guidance, UNDG, 2017 -- <https://undg.org/document/2017-UNDAF-guidance/>; UNDAF Companion Guidance -- <https://undg.org/programme/undaf-companion-guidances/> and 2014 UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616>

43 The specific joint programmes that were reviewed in detail were Decent Employment for Youth in Cambodia, UN Joint Programme on Youth Employment, Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), Development Emergency Modality (Response to the Global Crisis on Food, Energy, Finance), Credit guarantees for women's enterprises, Social Protection Floors in Cambodia, Strengthened National Preparedness, Response and Resilience to COVID19. These were identified as most important through document review and the results group questionnaires.

the UN (for example, system reform) and external (for example, COVID-19) that may have positively or negatively influenced the effective and efficient implementation of the UNDAF.

Evaluating the response to the COVID-19 pandemic

48. A review of the UN’s pandemic response and recovery interventions was critical in assessing the UNDAF’s adaptability and relevance to the country’s situation. The evaluation considered the COVID-19 pandemic in both the evaluation content (e.g., through a specific question about the UNCT’s responsiveness, adaptation and reprioritization), and operations (e.g., methods for managing stakeholder participation and inclusiveness in the COVID-19 context).

Stakeholders mapping, analysis, and sampling

49. The participatory design ensured the participation and involvement of UN agencies and key stakeholders (government officials, CSOs, private sector, academia and development partners) in the different phases of the evaluation. To ensure this participation, as well as programmatic and stakeholders’ representativeness, consultations were held with EMs, RCO, UN agency staff, EMT and ERG, to help the evaluation team identify key stakeholders to be interviewed and specify the type of data collection to be associated with each entity. The comprehensive stakeholder mapping is in line with UNDAF evaluation guidelines. Annex 4 provides more details.

50. A final sample of 133 stakeholders was selected to participate in the evaluation at the national level, and 30 stakeholders at the sub-national level, as summarized in **Table 3** below. The purposive sampling technique helped ensure that selected stakeholders adequately reflected the diversity of stakeholders implementing the UNDAF, taking into account their level of involvement in the UNDAF. Sampling was based on the desk review and comprehensive stakeholder mapping, in line with UNDAF evaluation guidelines. Included stakeholders covered all five UNDAF outcome areas, and represented diverse outcomes and intermediary outcomes and programmes, projects or activities. The sampling focused on information-rich stakeholders who were best able to generate lessons learned. A focus included identifying stakeholders who had implemented cross-cutting strategies and used programming principles, such as the equity dimension, the rights approach and gender equality to ensure adequate information to answer the associated EQs. Additional criteria included holding a strategic position in the country and involvement in strategic partnerships and inter-agency collaboration, among others. Geographically, included stakeholders were primarily those operating in Kampong Cham and Kampong Thom where most UN programmes were implemented. The full list of stakeholders met is included as Annex 6.

Table 3 Stakeholders and means of data collection

Stakeholders	Means of data collection	Total people	Total females
UN staff	Questionnaires; semi-structured interviews	60	25
Government	Semi-structured interviews	31	4
Development Partners	Semi-structured interviews	10	0

CSOs (20 people) and Research Institutes (2 people)	Semi-structured interviews	22	3
Private sector (10 people)	Semi-structured interviews	10	2
Subnational stakeholders (government, service delivery units, communities)	CSOs, Semi-structured interviews	30	17
Total		163	51 (31%)

Data collection

51. The evaluation was mainly focused on a detailed review of qualitative data (programmatic and financial data, annual reports, UN-agency specific documents and evaluation reports, Government strategic documents and reports. Annex 7 provides the full list of documents reviewed.

52. In addition, over 130 interviews (as specified in **Table 3** above) were held with key informants. The interviews were semi-structured, framed by the list of evaluation criteria and questions, using simple interview guides for different stakeholders (see Annex 8). Semi-structured interviews were appropriate to allow the ET to structure the discussion to answer all relevant EQs while allowing participants to elaborate on their experience and insights in UNDAF implementation.

53. Meetings with the Results Groups, Thematic Groups and other working groups were held, and questionnaires were circulated to these stakeholders. Given the time constraints, the questionnaire for these stakeholders was included as the most efficient means to encourage the active and meaningful participation of the groups in the evaluation process by encouraging an initial self-reflection before the group KII. The questionnaire also facilitated the participation of both resident and non-resident agencies. Copies of the questionnaires used are included in Annex 9: Questionnaires for Outcome Groups and Annex 10: Questionnaires for Theme and Working Groups. The ET also conducted two stakeholders' meetings with the participation of the EMT and ERG respectively, aiming at validating the initial findings and collecting inputs on recommendations.

54. The 2021 Evaluation Guidelines recommend the development of a common understanding on the UNDAF Theory of Change. The ET prepared a document based on a template provided by DCO, which was completed during three Technical Meetings with the Results Groups, RCO, EMs and the ET. (See Annex 11: Analysis of the Theory of Change/Results Chain – UNDAF Cambodia 2019-2023). The critical reflection by the stakeholders including comments received from stakeholders' meetings, and incorporation of comments provided on draft report, were incorporated in the final evaluation report.

55. The ET did not collect primary quantitative data nor conduct site visits, given time constraints. Though the evaluation team did not collect primary data from service users, their perspectives were incorporated through document review.

Data analysis and interpretation

56. The ET consulted all the available documents, analysed the written responses to the questionnaires, and reviewed the most recent data per outcome in the Results Matrix. Secondary quantitative data from the Results Matrix and other sources were used to feed into the analysis of key results. An Initial Findings

Report was prepared and presented to the EMT and ERG. **Table 4** below summarizes the main data sources per evaluation criteria.

Table 4 Main data sources per evaluation criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Main data sources
Relevance and adaptability	Document review, interviews with Results Groups, and key informants from selected UN agencies, government counterparts, development partners, and CSOs.
Effectiveness	Analysis of the UNDAF Results Matrix, interviews of Results Groups and the RCO.
Efficiency	Data from the RCO, questionnaires from Results Groups and various interviews with UN agencies.
Coherence	UN Analysis of Multi-Stakeholder Engagement and other documentary evidence, questionnaires from Results Groups and various interviews with UN agencies, government counterparts, development partners, CSOs, research and academic institutions, and the private sector.
Coordination	Document review, questionnaires from Results Groups and various interviews with UN agencies.
Sustainability	Document review, questionnaires from Results Groups and various interviews with UN agencies, government counterparts, development partners, CSOs, research and academic institutions.
Programming principles	Document review, questionnaires from the Human Rights Theme Group, the Results Groups and various interviews with UN agencies, government counterparts, development partners, CSOs, research and academic institutions.

Triangulation

57. To ensure impartiality and reduce the risk of bias, the ET reflected the views of diverse groups of stakeholders. The ET triangulated information for all the evaluation criteria and questions to ensure the maximum validity and reliability of the data analysis. Team members regularly compared notes and opinions to ensure a broader understanding of the data presented, with clarifications sought as required throughout the evaluation process.

Data collection mission and field visit

58. Given the improvement in the COVID-19 situation, the evaluation team undertook a mission to Cambodia, with 13 days in Phnom Penh and two days at the provincial level, namely Kampong Cham and Kampong Thom where most UN programmes were implemented.

Validation and Dissemination Workshop

59. A stakeholders’ validation workshop was conducted in October, for the ET to present the draft evaluation report to the EMs, RCO, UN agencies, EMT and ERG, and other stakeholders, to discuss and validate the evaluation findings and their relevance to the country context. Then, a second workshop is

to be organized, in which the ET will present the final evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations, as well as the process for the management response.

Ethical considerations

60. The evaluation adhered to, and was guided by, the *UNEG Norms and Standards (2016)* and the *UNEG Ethical Guidelines (2020)* at every stage of the evaluation process. The evaluation aimed to be gender sensitive and responsive, as well as ensure confidentiality and the avoidance of harm.

Data availability and reliability

61. The availability of relevant data and documentation regarding the UNDAF's activities has been good, with a broad range of documents made available from multiple sources. Additional data, as identified during the evaluation, has also been collected. Overall, this has allowed the ET to have confidence that there is a solid and reliable base for the data analysis. The ET also believes that the information and data provided to them accurately report on the areas under evaluation.

Evaluation management arrangements

62. The UNDAF evaluation was supported by three different layers, each with responsibility for overseeing and managing the evaluation. These included the two Evaluation Managers (EMs) from the RCO and UNFPA, the Evaluation Management Team (EMT) and the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG). Key Government line ministries, civil society organizations and research institute representatives were consulted in the evaluation process.

63. The KonTerra Group was the entity undertaking the evaluation, using three external, independent consultants. The Evaluation Team (ET) was responsible for producing the Inception and Final Evaluation Reports. Full biographical details of the consultants are available here: Annex 12: Biography of Consultants.⁴⁴

Quality assurance

64. Quality assurance on the products was carried out at different levels throughout the evaluation cycle, starting from the evaluation team producing coherent and well-written reports. KonTerra undertook an internal quality review to suggest improvements to the draft reports before submission. The evaluation manager, together with UNEDAP and DCO, add a third layer of technical and strategic feedback, through the provision of comments to reports, to be integrated into the final report.

Limitations

65. A main limitation was the insufficient data for tracking the progress of all indicators in the UNDAF Results Matrix. This limited the ETs ability to track all results achieved by the UNDAF. Furthermore, the limited number of concluded JPs restricted ET ability to assess their efficiency.

66. Per the UNDAF evaluation guidelines, UNDAF evaluations are designed based on cost-efficient data collection methodologies. While this is a practical reality, the ET had to prioritize information rich stakeholders and geographic areas with the highest concentration of UNDAF programming. While the comprehensive stakeholder analysis helped ensure a representative sample within the available resources of the evaluation, some perspectives may be excluded, notably direct inclusion of vulnerable service users.

67. The ET attempted to fill data gaps and compensate for any bias introduced in sampling by conducting a thorough desk review in addition to the KIIs with stakeholders. Where possible, the ET sought to rely on programme and project evaluations conducted by UN agencies in order to synthesise evidence. At the time of evaluation, only a limited number of such evaluations were available, mostly at project level. A number of agency programmatic evaluations were underway but had not been finalised during 2022.

⁴⁴ For more information on the Evaluation Team, see Annex 1: Terms of Reference, page 28.

Evaluation Findings

68. This section provides the evaluation findings responding to the evaluation questions under each evaluation criterion, as well as on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impact, HRBA and GEWE. It is also the basis for a Summary of Performance Rating, which provides a 'rating' by the evaluation team against each of the criteria/issues. According to the new UNEG Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (September 2021), this Summary Performance Rating is expected to facilitate regional and global performance synthesis. It has been provided to the RCO separately.

Relevance and Adaptability: Is the UNDAF doing the right things?

1. Alignment to Cambodia's Development Priorities and Needs

EQ 1: To what extent are the UNDAF strategic priorities consistent with country needs, national priorities, the country's international and regional commitments, including on CSDGs, leaving no one behind, human rights, sustainable development, environment, and gender equity?

Finding: The UNDAF strategic priorities are well aligned with the National Strategic Development Plan (2019-2023) for the sixth legislative term of the Royal Government of Cambodia, and the Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) (2016-2030), which are further harmonised with other national and development sectoral plans. The UNDAF strategic priorities are responsive to other national priorities and contributes towards the achievements of the country's international and regional commitments.

69. The UNDAF strategic priorities are well aligned with the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2019-2023, which aims to move Cambodia from the lower-middle to the upper-middle income category country by 2030; while at the same time to achieve the CSDGs. Actualizing these visionary outcomes, the NSDP outlines key strategic policies and actions towards land, water, capital and market to accelerate the desired growth in agriculture (diversification), water management, business connectivity, industrial development and environmental protection. The NSDP envisions to achieve a greater "net real transfer" of development resources to the targeted beneficiaries, particularly those in rural areas of Cambodia.⁴⁵

70. The UNDAF strategic priorities are directly linked with government policies and line ministry programmes as they are inspired by government national priorities. Such alignment makes the UNDAF highly relevant to national visions and development expectations, in particular the Rectangular Strategy IV and the Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDG) Framework. Table 1 details specific areas of alignment with both the Rectangular Strategy IV and the CSDGs.⁴⁶

71. The Theory of Change (TOC) Technical Meetings conducted during the data collection phase of this evaluation with the five Results Groups provided a preliminary assessment of whether, during the implementation, there were any shifts in outputs, in terms of revision of formulation, or change of activities due to emerging issues or other reasons. The TOC meetings concluded that the risks, assumptions and strategies set out in the ToC adequately responded to the new situation in the wake of the pandemic; which further exacerbated existing vulnerabilities that had already been captured in the ToC. Hence no changes were warranted in the intermediate outcomes despite the pandemic crisis, some activities were repurposed to respond to the situation⁴⁷. The UNDAF's Theory of Change was therefore considered by these meetings to be sound, and that it did not need to be reconstructed by the ET for this evaluation (See Annex 11: Analysis of the Theory of Change/Results Chain – UNDAF Cambodia 2019-2023). The meetings also confirmed that during the design of the UNDAF, there had been good alignment

45 RGC (2019). National Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023. Royal Government of Cambodia. Phnom Penh, Cambodia, p. IV

46 See Annex II: UNDAF RESULTS MATRIX 2019-2023

47 In all results areas UN agencies were able to adjust activities under the existing objectives which were sufficiently broad to accommodate changes. One Covid-specific output was added under RG2 related with Covid cash payments.

between intermediate outcomes and outcomes and between intermediate outcomes and the Rectangular Strategy Phase IV.

72. The Results Groups interventions have addressed the core of the Rectangular Strategy-Phase IV, that is, accelerating the governance reform, in particular, institutional reform and capacity building. The results of the RGs and Joint Work Plans are very much relevant with the country efforts to enhance the government accountability and building a more peaceful, just and inclusive Cambodian society, as per SDG 16 (16.3/16.6/16.7 and 16.10).⁴⁸

73. Findings from interviews support the evaluation teams findings that the UNDAF (2019-2023) strategic priorities are well aligned to the priorities of the Cambodian NSDP, and well aligned with and relevant to national policies and strategies, and the Cambodian 2030 agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. Planning and implementation processes and expected outcomes of the UNDAF and NSPD were coordinated during the design.

2. Responding to Emerging and Emergency Needs

EQ 2: How resilient, responsive and strategic was the UN in addressing emerging and emergency needs including with the humanitarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic that affected especially the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups? This includes assessing the COVID-19 impacts and reprioritizing/adapting its support to provide timely support to the country, and ensure the achievement of the UNDAF results.

Finding: The UNCT has been very resilient, responsive and strategic in its implementation of the UNDAF, addressing emerging and emergency needs, including with the humanitarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic that affected especially the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups. The Results Framework was sufficiently broad to accommodate changes and the development during 2020 of the Socio-Economic Response Framework (SERF)⁴⁹ shows how resilient, responsive and strategic the UNCT has been. UN agencies repurposed their resources and interventions in a collaborative and coordinated manner through the annual work-planning process to mitigate the impact of the pandemic for the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized populations.

74. The COVID-19 pandemic required rethinking and re-strategizing efforts and commitments to plan and perform priorities and needs. As a result, the implementing UN Agencies adapted and modified their activities in response to the emerging responses and unplanned needs of Cambodia. The UNDAF results framework remained unchanged, but the results areas and intermediate outcomes were sufficiently broad to accommodate contextual changes. The five Results Group's annual joint workplans were adjusted annually to respond to the effects of the pandemic so that needs were prioritised and addressed in a timely manner.

75. In their replies to the evaluation questionnaire, members of the five Results Groups indicated that the SERF is a clear example of how the UNCT ensured its relevance and resiliency to continue supporting the government in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. The assessment of the pandemic on Cambodia's socio-economic aspects, commissioned by the UNCT, provided strategic insights for interventions towards stimulus packages and a Covid-19 recovery plan.⁵⁰ The SERF focused on three core priorities – prevent and stop the transmission of the virus and save lives; mitigate the socioeconomic impacts on the most vulnerable; and set the stage for an inclusive, sustainable and equitable recovery. The SERF detailed programmes, funds and delivery deadlines for immediate measures by the end of 2020, and intermediate interventions by the end of 2021. It brought clarity and cohesion to UN agency efforts, headed by the UN Resident Coordinator (RC), and improved coordination with the government and development partners.

48 Written reply of RG4 to the evaluation questions (July 2022). The evaluation did not identify specifics on how workplans contributed to each CSDG.

49 The UN Cambodia Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19, August 2020 (<https://cambodia.un.org/en/download/60604/110320>)

50 UNCT (2020). *Assessment of the Economic and Social Impacts of COVID-19 pandemic in Cambodia*. United Nations Cambodia. Phnom Penh, Cambodia

The SERF concentrated on five interconnected pillars⁵¹ to help Cambodia recover from the pandemic and resume its development. In their respective programme areas, all UN agencies gave priority to COVID-19 response actions and identified any gaps that needed to be filled. Government representatives and international partners alike emphasized the critical role played by the RCO and UN agencies in coordinating actions and delivering services and technical advice.

76. According to the 2021 Annual Report,⁵² and linked with the examples listed below, the UNCT made a significant contribution to the COVID-19 response during the pandemic in many different areas. The UNCT and UN Agencies have been responsive and strategic in addressing emerging and emergency needs caused by the pandemic, particularly access to services and income, including those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups. For instance:

- The UNCT has accelerated integrated support for human rights and the SDGs by: protecting health services and systems; expanding social protection and basic services including facilitation of the Covid-specific cash transfer scheme; accelerating a green economic recovery; and designing a forward-looking SDG financing architecture.
- Under the technical leadership of the World Health Organization (WHO), the UNCT supported the Government's comprehensive health response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the process, it catalysed actions to build resilience in health systems and sourced urgently needed medical equipment to address COVID-19. The UNCT and partners ensured essential and basic health services for all⁵³, as well as prevention of gender-based violence mechanisms and child protection services, were not disrupted during the pandemic.
- The UNCT worked with the Government on the right to social security, to ensure the most vulnerable were included in the contributory and non-contributory social protection system, including the portability of social security benefits for migrant workers in ASEAN. The UNCT helped facilitate safe working environments, the continuation of micro and small businesses, decent employment and access to jobs through support to government in preparing their policy response and direct assistance to companies and workers through provision of hygiene and sanitary equipment and training on protection protocols.
- The UNCT supported policies and investments to fast-track the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which increased the resilience of vulnerable communities, in particular those living in remote areas and relying on agriculture, fisheries and forestry for their livelihoods as well as indigenous communities to climate change while promoting a green recovery from the pandemic such as increasing access to clean and affordable electricity; climate resilient water infrastructure and supporting sustainable forest management practices.

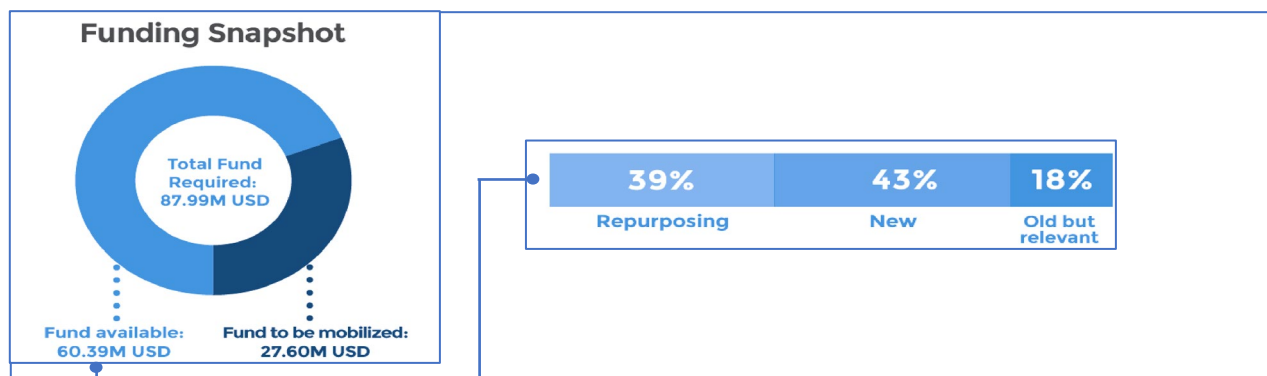
77. Separately, a funding reallocation from existing programmes to prioritize the UN's SERF was required, in addition to the resource mobilization by mapping and re-programming the UNDAF interventions. The total budget for the SERF implementation was around US\$88 million. Thirty-nine percent of the US\$60 million available was re-purposed from UNDAF, and the other US\$28 million mobilized for a total of 207 activities in the five pillars (see Figure 1 below). However, 18 percent of the existing budget of UNDAF's outputs and activities remained relevant to the SERF.

51 Pillar 1: Healthy first – protecting health services and systems during the crisis; Pillar 2: Protecting people – leaving no one behind; Pillar 3: Economic response and recovery; Pillar 4: The macroeconomic response; and Pillar 5: Promoting social cohesion and investing in community-led resilience and response.

52 UNDCO (2021). *Annual Results Report 2021*. United Nations Development Coordination Office. Phnom Penh, Cambodia (p.5)

53 The WHO coordinated the government's response to counter the effects of the pandemic through direct support to healthcare institutions, capacities and direct supplies as well as awareness and communication; and immunisation campaign; in addition UNDP and other UN agencies contributed to the expansion of the social protection programmes to include more eligible categories and prepare the Covid-specific cash transfer programme.

Figure 1 Breakdown of UNDAF's Budget



Source: Resident Coordinator's Office (December 2021)

78. UNDAF outcomes and intermediate outcomes (outputs) have not been formally revised, but the UN agencies have modified their programme implementation approaches during the pandemic. To keep activities ongoing and to ensure the participation of beneficiaries, the UN agencies and stakeholders have digitalized many activities and provided facilities and support for marginalized groups to access services, even from remote areas. For instance, walk-in services were transformed into online services, and in-person capacity building became digital knowledge transfer. Working approaches have been modified. The UNDAF document was not changed, but the joint workplans evolved and interventions were repurposed to respond to emerging issues. UNDAF outcomes are covering many aspects and are broad and comprehensive enough to accommodate the outputs resulting from the modified programme implementation.

Effectiveness: Is the UNDAF achieving its objectives?

1. Suitability of the indicators to measure progress

Finding: The UNDAF Results Matrix is defined at intermediate outcome level. By the end of 2021, 31 percent of indicators show positive trends; while data is not available for nearly half (47%) of the indicators. UN Agency contributions towards achieved results are easily identifiable; however, as expected, results are generally not attributable to UN agencies alone.

The UNDAF ToC and results framework were not updated in the aftermath of the pandemic. The ToC was sufficiently comprehensive to accommodate the adaptation of work, but the design of the Results Matrix does not fully reflect the repurposed interventions which were heavily skewed towards COVID-19–related actions or actions that were possible to implement under the COVID-19 circumstances. The SERF emerged as the main delivery framework at least during 2020 and it was retroactively aligned with the UNDAF results framework. The Results Matrix draws on a set of high level and ambitious indicators which are not always representative of the logic of interventions implemented under the UNDAF. Streamlining the allocation of activities and outputs under the various outcomes to establish more inherent links and synergies across the intervention areas would contribute to building a more robust and representative Results Matrix.

79. The analysis of the effectiveness of the UNDAF is based on a contribution analysis, informed by the theory of change underlying its development. The performance of the UNDAF was therefore assessed against these targets.

80. The UNDAF results framework was not updated in the aftermath of the pandemic, instead it was repurposed with the SERF emerging as the main delivery framework, at least during 2020. This was intentional as government frameworks, from which the result framework and indicators within the results matrix are anchored within, were also not revised at the time. Secondly, the ToC for the UNDAF was comprehensive enough to accommodate the new types of intervention and focus. However, the

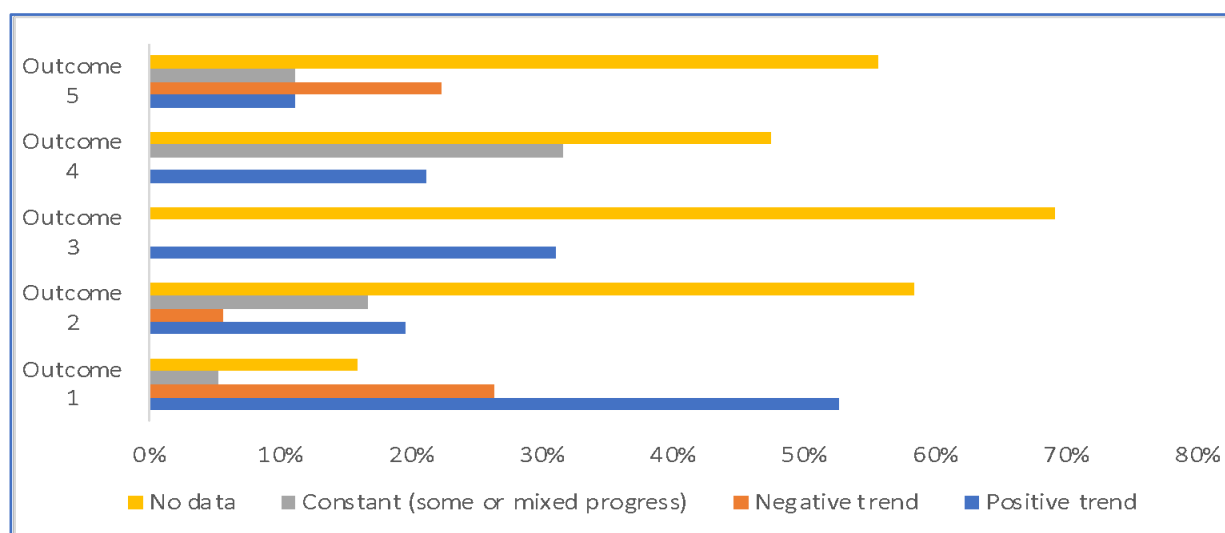
Results Matrix does not fully capture important COVID-19-specific contributions, specifically in the health domain, which were substantial within the SERF.

81. The Cambodia UNDAF results matrix is designed at outcome level with targets set against specific intermediate outcome indicators for each of the four outcomes and the 15 intermediate outcomes. The majority of intermediate outcome indicators are derived from national strategic frameworks and CSDGs, in line with aid-effectiveness principles.⁵⁴

82. Importantly, data is not available in the 2021 Results Matrix for approximately 47 percent of the intermediate outcome indicators, mainly in cases where indicators are reported through periodic surveys and/or where data is not readily available for other reasons. The Result matrix includes a high number of indicators (approximately 125) for its 15 intermediate outcomes; which are mainly collected and reported by official sources. Data sources for each indicator are available in Annex 13.

83. The majority of Results Matrix indicators for which data is available show positive progress, although not all appear on track to be achieved by 2023. The evaluation team’s assessment of output indicators against targets is summarised in Figure 2. Overall, 31 percent of indicators show positive results – with another 11 percent showing some degree of progress – usually where intermediate results have been achieved towards the main indicators. Annex 14 provides a comprehensive review of output achievements.

Figure 2 Repartition by outcome of output indicators against progress towards achieving set targets



Source: UNDAF Results Matrix 2021; with the Resident Coordinator’s Office

84. Despite the contribution of UN agencies and the government’s own efforts, the pandemic has caused drastic social and economic damage. A longer-term perspective will be needed for full recovery and the country’s graduation from LDC.

85. Outcome 1 is the intervention area with the highest percentage of positive results reported, ranging from increase in access to some services to increased government spending on social protection as a share of GDP (2.5 percent vs. the baseline of 0.92 percent); although this increase appears to have crowded out investment in the health and education sectors (see Annex 14: Achievement of UNDAF outputs). Under Outcome 2, data for employment related indicators are largely missing, particularly regarding adult literacy rates, gender statistics and employment of vulnerable people. About 36 percent of indicators show some degree of progress. In Outcomes 3, 4, and 5 data is not reported for upwards of half of the outcome indicators. Of the data available, all Outcome 3 indicators and half of Outcome 4 indicators show positive trends. Outcome 5 includes a noticeable percentage of indicators with a negative

⁵⁴ Indicators, targets and baselines are set at the intermediate outcome level; however, this report refers to them as outcome indicators for ease of use.

trend. These are related to access to prevention services in main cities and national frameworks and policies to enhance multi-governance urban management capacity.

86. The Results Matrix draws on a set of high level and ambitious indicators which are not always representative of the logic of interventions under the UNDAF. These types of impact indicators are useful to keep at a higher level to track the country's progress over time and take stock of longer-term development strategies but may not accurately represent progress or regress that can be confidently linked to the role of the UN; although the degree of the relevance and effectiveness of their role towards the results can be attested to. In other cases, despite remarkable work that the UN and other actors may have done to improve social protection and alleviate poverty, it is counter-intuitive to measure outcome progress based on the poverty rate (for example, such as in Outcome 5), which is driven more by structural and cyclical economic trends than four-year interventions under the UNDAF.⁵⁵

87. Directly linking the set of indicators with the types and nature of interventions would be more appropriate especially if they include, where possible, easily attainable data. If indicator measurement relied on more attainable data progress could be tracked more consistently to measure progress, for instance in terms of access to services, rather than waiting for expensive surveys every five or ten years.

88. Finally, there is large variation in the level of indicators defined in the Results Matrix, with some impact level indicators and other process or output-based indicators; as well as in the level of disaggregation. For instance, some indicators are broken down into detailed sets by various beneficiaries/recipients while others provide only summary data. In this sense, the percentage of indicators achieved or not achieved may be misleading unless interpreted in conjunction with the objective or intervention area. More importantly, some indicators are repeated across more than one intermediate outcome (in slightly different forms); and some would be more meaningful under other intermediate outcomes.

89. The design of the five outcomes of the UNDAF – and the underpinning Results Matrix - allows sufficient flexibility to plan and adapt different outputs and activities over the years. However, some objectives guiding the various intermediate outcomes need better streamlining across outcomes to avoid overlaps. This may be a concern – not in terms of the actual delivery of activities which are adequately planned at agency and project level; but rather in terms of lost opportunities to create synergies and increase the overall effectiveness of UNDAF implementation

2. Achievement of the UNDAF Intermediate Outcomes

EQ 3: How effective has the UNDAF been in achieving the results outlined in the results framework? What are the challenges that the UN has encountered in order to achieve the intended results?

Finding: Progress is positive across all five UNDAF outcomes. The contribution of UN Agencies, particularly through technical assistance, has remained fundamental in facilitating progress towards national objectives and CSDGs. The country's resilience and speed of recovery from the pandemic is partly attributable to the strategic coordination, facilitation and service delivery role played by UN agencies, in cooperation with national institutions and other development partners, particularly in managing the health response, preparing the policy package in support of individuals and the economy, and facilitating recovery. Policy and institutional changes in the social sector, and the expansion of social safety nets, have led to a less than expected disruption in access to services and sustained livelihoods; in part with UN agency contribution. The UN Agencies have contributed to strategic thinking on increased competitiveness, innovation and a green, inclusive economy, but its role remains small compared to the needs in the sectors. Concerted efforts between the RGC, the UN and other partners will be needed to sustain growth and a resilient economy, along with the integration of industrial, agriculture, environment and climate change, and sustainable urban development.

⁵⁵ Please see Annex 14 for a more detailed analysis of indicators.

90. The analysis presented in this sub-section is based on the UNDAF Annual Reports 2019, 2020, and 2021, the replies to the questionnaires from Results Groups, the UNDAF Theory of Change and various interviews with UN agencies, government partners, CSOs and private sector representatives. It also includes an analysis of the suitability of indicators and their achievement based on the Results Matrix 2021. A more detailed overview of interventions and achievements under each outcome, progress against indicators and their soundness, is presented in Annex 14. Achievement of UNDAF outputs.

Outcome 1: People - Expanding Social Opportunities

91. Based on the identified challenges, the theory of change outlines targeted measures to address access to service delivery under Outcome 1, in particular education, health and social care; social protection and relevant financing frameworks. Outcome 1 consists of three intermediate outcomes focusing on access to social services through concurrent work with 1) rights-holders and 2) duty-bearers, and 3) increasing and strengthening the financing mix for social services.

92. **Intermediate Outcome 1.1:** Following the changes brought on by the COVID-19 response, indicators for this Intermediate Outcome (IO) 1.1 are no longer fully relevant for the bulk of activities carried out and they fail to account for the substantial work undertaken in preparing the pandemic response. There was a significant change in activities from 2020 onwards, as the focus shifted to pandemic response preparedness through direct service delivery and, later, on assessing the impact and preparing policy responses. The health response was dominated by new emergency preparedness activities, including under SERF. Other existing activities were adapted, such as the digitisation of learning programmes. Finally, some activities, including those addressing issues of access to primary healthcare and HIV, lost traction due to barriers of utilisation of public services. As a result, setbacks in achievements were noted regarding access to healthcare services for pregnant women and PLHIV; though progress in diagnosing and treating severe malnutrition in children appears to have been sustained.

93. **Intermediate Outcome 1.2:** Under IO 1.2, important work was carried out in three domains linked with direct service delivery in primary healthcare services (excluding COVID-19): *nutrition*, in particular the school feeding programme and its adaptation during school closure (led by WFP); *education*, such as early childhood education, primary education, inclusive education as well as teachers' continuous professional development (led by UNICEF and UNESCO); and *support to migrant workers* (led by IOM). Indicators related to access to healthcare, sexual reproductive health and communicable and non-communicable diseases are targeted under this IO; alongside activities on access to primary healthcare for women and infants, including health service provision through telemedicine. Under Outcome 1.1 a deteriorating trend is noticeable in both domains, namely, in service availability on the one hand and stretching of both government and UN capacities on the other due to the necessity to reallocate most efforts to the COVID response.

94. Achievements in the area of Education continue to show positive trends in 2021 as reported in the Results Matrix.⁵⁶ It is important to note, however, that these impact type indicators on educational attainment build on progress achieved over multiple cycles of teacher development, quality teaching, education and learning. It is likely that setbacks in education for Cambodian children due to school closure during the pandemic and limited accessibility to online instruction will be visible in subsequent years. Lastly, UNESCO continued support for teacher development even during the pandemic, including support for the adoption of the Continuous Professional Development System and capacitating a dedicated office under the MEYS for this purpose. Teacher training had not yet started by 2021.

95. Notably, activities related with gender-based violence did not have a prominent role over the period, apart from some interventions linked with police response and drafting of work manuals, under the

⁵⁶ Progress reported in the Results Matrix related with educational outcomes is contradicted by a study undertaken by MoEYS' Education Quality Assurance Department with UNICEF support on learning outcomes for six graders, which confirms significant learning losses in 2021 vis-à-vis 2016 results. See https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/sites/unicef.org/cambodia/files/2022-04/Grade%206%20NLA%20Report%20Final%20April%205_clean_Final.pdf

support to migrant workers' output through UN Agencies, in partnership with the government, have worked together to ensure the essential services for VAW/GBV operate through regular online supervision and online counselling. UNFPA also provided over 1,000 dignity kits to survivors of GBV and their family members during COVID-19. More importantly, service directory has been updated for service referral and coordination.

96. **Intermediate Outcome 1.3:** Interventions under IO 1.3 became even more salient during the pandemic, when the Government and its partners needed to repurpose resources towards protection from the immediate health and social impact of the pandemic. Led by UNDP, work intensified for the expansion of the safety nets – with more categories becoming eligible for various types of benefits. As a result, current Government spending on social protection had increased to 2.5 percent of the total budget by 2021. The data is not readily available on the distribution of this increase; however, the increasing number of eligible beneficiaries indicate that the trend already started in 2019 and was further accelerated during 2020 and 2021 (indicator 1.3.1). By 2021, Government spending on the health sector had decreased compared with 2019. In the wake of the demonstrable investment the RGC made for health sector response; it would be interesting to explore whether that decrease indicates a relatively higher reliance on external funding for the health sector. In the education sector, however, the decrease in spending is large (0.9 percentage points) compared with the baseline (3.5 percent of GDP). There is no data on AIDS-related spending. In general, continuation of AIDS related activities has been challenged by a lack of adequate funding as well as a perceived lesser importance compared with other health emergencies. However, UNAIDS advocated for and succeeded in expanding eligibility for the IDPoor programme to PLHIV.

Outcome 2: Prosperity - Expanding Economic Opportunity

97. Interventions under Outcome 2 aim at supporting sustainable and inclusive economic growth by addressing structural barriers in labour supply and demand, as well as promoting the development of competitive and green industries. This work is underpinned by social inclusion objectives, with interventions focusing on the economic empowerment of youth, women, people with disabilities, rural and migrant communities, and other vulnerable communities. Outcome 2 consists of three intermediate outcomes, addressing 1) employment and employability, 2) increased productivity, and 3) policies for inclusion of the marginalized and addressing geographic disparities, including the support to demining.

98. The Theory of Change for Outcome 2 is based on the acknowledgement of the shortcomings of Cambodia's increasing socio-economic disparities and its overall economic growth model, which is not sustainable in the absence of interventions to support increased productivity. At the objective level, the strategies identified to tackle these problems, through expansion of decent work opportunities, support to private sector competitiveness and an inclusive economy are sound; however, interventions have at times been scattered between higher level policy and strategy work; activation of youth and women; firm and sector level interventions, as well as social policies such as services for elderly and poverty determinants; or COVID-19-specific cash transfers, which are better addressed under Outcome 1.

99. Interventions under IO 2.1. focus on employment and employability of the people of Cambodia, in particular young women and men as well as other more disadvantaged categories; alongside support to those working in precarious jobs or working environments. UNESCO and ILO provided support to the development of the Lifelong Learning Policy and institutional capacity building for Recognition of Prior Learning; alongside support for inclusive employment and digitalisation of TVET. However, its indicators have been pitched at a quite a high level, which is not necessarily reflective of the type of activities UN Agencies help to implement. For instance, the work carried out to support youth employment, skills matching with labour market needs as well as Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET), cannot objectively have a noticeable impact on employment rates, which are influenced much more strongly by factors outside of the remit of a development partner, such as the economic climate. The same is applicable for employment rates for people with disabilities. Other meso-level indicators could be more representative of the UN's interventions in this domain, such as for instance the number of youths not in

training, education or employment; rates of attendance of TVET courses; or number of specialisations provided.

100. It is worth noting that indicators under the human capital formation stream of activities have not been measured throughout the period of implementation of the UNDAF. UN Agencies have provided some assistance to adult literacy programmes in schools as well as workplaces; however, a well-thought-out strategy to tackle the issue of human capital formation – linking early education, formal schooling as well as adult training -- seems to be lacking. Under this Outcome, aspects of decent work – targeted in some provinces and at enterprise level through UN Agency work - have not been captured at outcome indicator level (see also IO 2.2). It is worth noting that in general it appears that limited progress has been achieved overall in Cambodia on industrial relations and workers’ rights during the period under review (see also Outcome 4).

101. Interventions under IO 2.2. include support to increasing productivity and innovation in the economy through important inputs for enhancing the Government’s knowledge, policies and instruments to facilitate growth of competitive sectors. Government representatives underlined the value added of specialised support from UN Agencies in the area of industry, science and technology. In particular, UNIDO supported the implementation of Cambodia’s Industrial Development Policy (IDP) through: the supporting the design of policy instruments based on international best practice and improving capacities for the IDP monitoring and evaluation framework; the formulation of the Cambodia Trade Integration Strategy 2019 -2023; and undertaking a competitiveness survey for SMEs; as well as support for the Agricultural Development Policy (2022–2030), Agriculture Master Plan 2030 and Action Plan for Inspection and Control of Quality and Safety of Fishery Products; and capacitating the national fishery quality infrastructure system. Important work for the nationalisation of SDGs was supported including the Voluntary National Review (2019) and the M&E plan for the NSDP.

102. Indicators under IO 2.2 are mainly process–based, linked with the adoption of policies and documents, and have generally progressed well, despite slower than envisaged progress in LDC graduation and related activities. Notably, some activities related with working conditions – potentially having an impact on the livelihoods and wellbeing of workers – are either stalled or no information is available. This is the case for the survey of industrial conditions (no data) and strategy for the garment sector⁵⁷ finally adopted in March 2022. From a coherence point of view, these activities are better linked with IO 2.1. (women and men have decent work) than with 2.2, which focuses on productivity and competitiveness.

103. The intervention logic for IO 2.3 appears to fit best with Outcome 1; which focuses on aspects of social inclusion and support for demand and supply of basic social services. Outcome 2, in turn, has a stronger focus on activation for economic growth and resilience and supporting the Government and private sector in becoming more competitive and productive. A new COVID-19 related output was added under this IO, under which assistance was provided for the establishment and cooperation of the COVID-19-specific cash transfer scheme to more than 600,000 households.

104. As part of the IO 2.3, the UN has continued supporting the clearance of Cambodia’s mine-affected land under the leadership of the Cambodia Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority, with more than 60 km² ⁵⁸ of land released for productive use (2019 to mid-2022), and more than 100,000 people benefitting. It is now linked more closely to the release of land that supports livelihood development. Notwithstanding the fact that mine clearing has a direct impact on the livelihoods of

⁵⁷ Cambodian Garment, Footwear and Travel Goods Sector Development Strategy (2022-27)

⁵⁸ Figure reported by RG written questionnaire, referring to landmines cleared with UN support during the UNDAF implementation (2019–mid-2022). As per the Result Matrix, between 2019-2021, 26 km² of land had been cleared.

affected communities, the degree to which the development focus adds value to the core demining activities is called into question in terms of best use of resources for results.⁵⁹

105. Some efforts have been made on gender related activities, but progress has been slow in understanding the determinants of vulnerability and poverty, although a gender wage gap report was prepared and efforts to support the RGC set up a Credit Guarantee Scheme for women entrepreneurs were initiated during 2021⁶⁰. The bulk of this work is carried out under Outcome 1; where evidence-based policies targeting multiple deprivations are supported. In addition, no progress has been reported as pertains to a minimum wage policy – also linked with other labour related interventions earlier captured in this report. Challenges encountered in the area were exacerbated by limited access during the pandemic.

Outcome 3: Planet – Promoting sustainable living

106. Interventions under Outcome 3 focus on creating an enabling environment for growth and better livelihoods for the people of Cambodia while preserving the environment and increasing resilience to climate change. The theory of change for this outcome identifies a series of problems concentrated around uneven access to natural resources and land tenure, livelihoods at risk because of poor basic infrastructure and access to food, low agricultural productivity, and persistence of multidimensional poverty, exacerbated by climate change risks. Responses to these challenges focus on the intermediate outcomes of 1) increasing equity in access to basic services and resources; 2) strengthening resilience through better governance and sustainable food, agricultural and environmental systems and 3) improved legal frameworks and government capacity. Strong linkages with Outcome 1 – in terms of shock-responsive social protection approaches and nutrition; as well as Outcome 2 – in terms of support to agricultural production are noticeable.

107. The set of indicators measuring progress for IO 3.1 are logically linked with the intermediate outcome; but are not always underpinned by relevant joint workplan activities, as in the case of land titles (small related activities are reported under IO 3). Important progress has been achieved in terms of access to basic drinking water, sanitation and hygiene through support for the formulation of strategic documents and direct engagement with local government and communities, which have been identified as key inputs by the government. Furthermore, the percentage of communes vulnerable to disaster shocks has decreased dramatically in 2021 (33 percent) from the baseline year (49 percent), also due to UN Agency support in DRR in flood-prone and flood-affected areas, with NCCDS, among other national and subnational disaster management committees, and through coordination platforms, such as the Humanitarian Response Forum (HRF). UN Agencies have provided key contributions towards increasing access to water and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) infrastructure, both through assistance to the RGC for the formulation of national strategic frameworks as well as direct engagement with local governments and communities to put in place facilities reaching the most vulnerable, such as rural communities and ID Poor beneficiaries.

108. The set of indicators and outputs underpinning efforts under IO 3.2, focusing on sustainable production and living and environmental protection are linked logically from a project management perspective. Strong linkages between IO 3.2 (and outcome 3 in general) and Outcomes 1 and 2 are immediately visible particularly regarding nutrition related indicators, which are presented under IO 3.2 from the demand/recipient side rather than supply in a similar fashion as in Outcome 1⁶¹ – food security and nutrition supply side. Similarly, agricultural productivity is at the heart of interventions under Outcome 2. However, strong linkages between agricultural food systems and food and security outcomes

⁵⁹ "...Landmine clearance enables socioeconomic development in some of Cambodia's most remote and impoverished areas. However, CFR represents a unique funding and work stream which should not be diluted. CFR and CMAA are not ideally equipped to implement development programs but can more directly facilitate linkages to them." Final Evaluation Report, "Clearing for Results Phase 3", December 2019, p. 7.

⁶⁰ Support was provided in the framework of UNDAF's work for the broader Integrated National Financing Framework for CSDGs and the joint Programme Unlocking Cambodian Women Potential Through Fiscal Space Creation (a Credit Guarantee Scheme for Women-owned Enterprises) implemented by UNCDF, UNDP, IOM and IFAD.

⁶¹ Under health indicators, measuring number of children with malnutrition admitted for care – which may be misleading as it cannot capture i.e., improvements in overall incidence. Arguably, indicators 3.2. would be better suited under Outcome 1.

are duly recognised and may have underlined the need to address these issues concurrently. At the same time, agricultural productivity and intensification is often at odds with environmental objectives.

109. No data is available for the majority of indicators under this IO 3.2, most notably as regards agricultural productivity (3.2.1) and protection of natural resources (3.2.3). In 2021, 25 percent of Cambodia's land was protected as natural or cultural heritage, up from 15 percent in 2017. Work has commenced together with authorities to improve sustainable management of natural resources. The decentralization and sub-national administration reform processes face challenges as regards land rights and natural resources management and governance, particularly within the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve.

110. Other efforts in nutrition include support to the CARD's food systems dialogue and roadmap aiming at establishing a systems approach in the area of nutrition as well as establishing linkages with social protection systems to establish shock responses for instance to COVID-19 and climate hazards. UN Agencies role in the coordination of the development partner forum Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) linked with the Nutrition accelerator is viewed by stakeholders across the board as an important contribution to ensure that government and donor efforts are not diverted away from the goal given that, despite encouraging progress in recent years, malnutrition remains a concern and some development setbacks may have occurred in the wake of the pandemic. According to CDHS 2021, there was a decrease in the prevalence of stunting for children under 5 as compared with 2014 (22 percent vs. 32 percent); but prevalence of wasting remained the same (10 percent).⁶²

111. Under IO 3.3 no data is reported for three of the four indicators formulated to track progress. Arguably, the objectives of this intermediate outcome (should) have been captured through the indicators of IOs 3.1. and 3.2. Notably, government expenditure on climate-related action has increased significantly to 2.2 percent of GDP. The UNCT has continuously advocated for a climate change policy and supported the government in formulating actions to that effect, including the climate change strategy under RG3 and through the Long-Term Strategy for Carbon Neutrality (LTS). The strategy was approved and submitted to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2021. Cambodia is only the 2nd LDC and the 1st country in ASEAN to submit an LTS with a 2050 target.

Outcome 4: Peace - Strengthening participation and accountability

112. Under Outcome 4 the UN focuses its efforts on enabling better participation of the most vulnerable and marginalized in development through strengthening of governance and accountability frameworks and promoting change of negative social norms. The programme strategy under this outcome is organized around three intermediate outcomes, focusing on 1) public participation and accountability; 2) strengthening capacity of public institutions and 3) supporting formulation and implementation of laws and policies in line with international norms and standards on political rights, freedom of expression, association and assembly.

113. Progress under this Outcome has proven difficult, with additional barriers to consultations and interactions posed by the pandemic restrictions; the adoption of several pieces of legislation in the absence of consultation as well as the need to prioritise programme resources to the alleviation of emergent situations excessive hardships for vulnerable populations during the pandemic.

114. The bulk of the work under IO 4.1 is related to the empowerment of stakeholders and interest groups to influence the policymaking process and ensure that their rights are acknowledged and respected. UN Agencies supported the consultation and legislative process for a number of important pieces of legislation, including the Access to Information bill; the Child protection law; the Policy for Labour Migration and Dispute Guidelines and risk assessment in garment factories as input for the tripartite Labour Council. Despite the UNCT's efforts and protest, Covid-related laws were passed without any consultations, some imposing significant limitations on freedoms. The Results Matrix identifies a number of laws that need to be developed and/or amended under the objectives of this intermediate

⁶² See <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/PR136/PR136.pdf>. Baseline (2014 data) from Results Matrix.

outcome; of which a few have been achieved, such as the Social Security Law, the Child Protection Law; the National Disability Law, etc. Important shortcomings remain in crucial areas related with alignment with international treaties women rights and human rights in general (see IO 4.3).

115. Under IO 4.2, efforts are made to monitor the extent to which implementation of legislation takes place in line with the standards. Eight of the 11 indicators under this IO are not measured, the majority pertaining to data on unsentenced detainees; as well as data on accessibility standards; pricing for public services and legal aid. Some regress has been noted with the availability of GBV referral mechanisms: in 2021, which were operational in only four provinces and four districts, far from the target for 2023 (18). Child protection mechanisms are being expanded with UN support, following the roll out of digital case management system (Primero) nationwide at provincial and district level; appointment of new social workers by the MoI and Standard Operating Procedures for child protection services and referrals developed. The UN has supported the RGC every year to conduct a 16-Days Campaign against GBV.

116. Under IO 4.3, efforts have focused on the improvement of legal and regulatory frameworks and availability of data on discrimination or breach of rights for vulnerable categories or populations at large. UN Agencies have contributed to the development of various draft laws and reports, including the law establishing a National Human Rights institution. Despite these achievements, none of the target legislation identified in the Results Matrix have been amended as yet; most notably legislative amendment to align the legal framework with Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) requirements (although an action plan has been presented to the Ministry of Women's Affairs); alignment with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) requirements such as improvements in criminal legislation, as well as defamation; cybercrime and nationality related legislation; as well as alignment with ILO Conventions on Trade Union Law. Consultations for the Law on Association and Non-Governmental Organisations were put on hold because of the pandemic.

Outcome 5: Urbanisation - Managing Urbanisation

117. The theory of change for Outcome 5 identifies challenges directly linked with the fast pace of development and urbanisation in the country, which may lead to unintended consequences in terms of creating pockets of urban poverty, poor quality of life and environmental pressures. The cross-sectoral nature of this outcome is closely linked with other UNDAF outcome areas, particularly Outcomes 1 and 3. It brings an additional layer focusing on coordinating urbanisation through new thinking in the areas of urban policy development, planning, budgeting and financing. Interventions are deployed under three intermediate outcomes focusing on 1) access to services for marginalized urban populations; 2) capacities of urban authorities and 3) urbanisation policy frameworks.

118. Interventions under Outcome 5 are very closely interlinked with efforts under Outcome 3 (sustainable living) with a number of thematic areas of operation coincide almost fully, in particular activities to increase access to basic services such as water and sanitation and environment related work, in particular disaster risk preparedness. At the policy level, UN Habitat and other UN agencies supported the RGC to organize a highly successful Urbanisation Forum in 2019; which brought together the RGC and development partners in taking stock of the development and pledging their commitments towards a more equitable and sustainable urban development. However, the momentum was lost with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and with the priorities shifting. UN Agency programme resources remain quite limited. Progress under this outcome has been modest, including because of the limited funding – and opportunities for further synergies with interventions under other outcomes could be explored further.

119. No data is reported under about half of the indicators for Outcome 5. Some progress was made with increased access to clean water for urban populations, the rehabilitation of urban water systems and waste management and energy in different provinces, the strengthening of the disaster risk preparedness and management in urban settings (Angkor Wat), and enhancing multi-governance urban management capacity. However, data is lacking on urban waste treatment (indicator 5.2.3); and other

indicators are pitched at a level too high that can be hardly attributable to programming under the UNDAF (decrease in urban poverty).

120. Overall, RG members highlight challenges linked with the lack of national frameworks or policies to enhance multi-governance urban management capacity. Beside the smart city initiatives, the efforts under this outcome have been diverted to the health and labour sectors in urban areas. There is a lack of tangible policies on better urban planning, sustainable and green spaces.

1. UN's plausible contribution to UNDAF outcomes

EQ 4: What have been the benefits for the people and institutions targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized population?

Finding: The UNDAF theory of change envisages a mix of strategies to achieve clear and tangible benefits for the people of Cambodia in the areas of social and economic inclusion, human rights and sustainable urban growth, while countering the impact of climate change. The UN provided salient contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic to expanding access to social safety nets, reaching out and providing services to the most vulnerable, for instance poor and/or remote populations, PLHIV, precarious and migrant workers, demining, children and families, those stranded because of lockdown measures and providing support for protecting human rights; and sustaining government capacities to minimize disruption in essential services, especially health and education. There has been a relatively heavier emphasis on development of strategic documents as opposed to support for implementation.

121. The UN contributions under Outcome 1 were specifically targeted to serve people and communities and improve their well-being. In the wake of the pandemic, and following the formulation of the SERF, people and in particular the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalised populations were targeted through direct and tangible services. Vulnerable persons received a larger proportion of immediate support such as cash, hygiene supplies, personnel protective equipment, dignity kits, learning materials and other food rations. The UNCT was able to reach around 10 million people on health awareness and prevention, a major effort contributing to the success of the country in suppressing the COVID-19 spread.

122. At the same time, work intensified towards supporting the government prepare a policy response and direct relief measures through the expansion of existing social schemes (IDPoor) to include, for example, people living with HIV and people with disabilities; providing equipment (e.g., tablets) to facilitate quicker outreach; establishing a new cash transfer to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, among others.⁶³ New programmes were established to cater to needs of those who were particularly affected, such as returning migrants; whereas efforts intensified for the outreach with services to vulnerable categories, including people living with HIV, disabilities, LGBTQ, etc. Interventions were underpinned by a strong gender component, with the rights of women, children and human rights streamlined into policy design and implementation. Under Outcome 1, UN Agency interventions enabled the bridge between the rights-holders and duty-bearers, by creating platforms where ideas and opinions from population, especially the marginalized and vulnerable, have reached the policy level, which was valued by both government representatives as well as NGOs.

123. Similarly, under the support for economic inclusion, measures targeted youth, women and men in terms of increasing employability and addressing the skills mismatch between labour demand and supply. Several measures were designed to target specific population groups, such as those lacking literacy skills, workers in vulnerable settings including informal workers and increasing access to finance for women entrepreneurs.

⁶³ The direct contributions of UN to vulnerable populations have also been attested in the Final Evaluation Report of the SDG Funded Joint Programme for Supporting the National Social Protection Policy Framework in Cambodia (April 2022)

124. As a result of the work of RG4, in the cases of the Access to Information Law and the development of the Media, Information, and Digital Literacy Strategy, a model of inclusive consultative process and law-making process was implemented for the first time, with participation and engagement of all sectors of society, private sector, persons with disabilities, rural communities, and indigenous people. Human right activists, gender advocates, youth and marginalised groups, including women migrant workers, women living with HIV/AIDs, and LGBTIQ persons, have improved their capacity to dialogue and advocate with policy makers and service providers to demand the implementation of the Government's international commitments and obligations from the SDGs, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and Treaty Bodies.

125. The Joint Programme Safe and Fair, an EU-UN Initiative implemented by UN Women and ILO, benefited women migrant workers and their family members. These include the GBV service provision and the support of the Migrant Resource Centre for labour violence and employment, as well as GBV related service information, and strengthening capacity development for gender responsive services. Some 3,484 women migrant workers benefited from psycho-social, health or social services, information and skills certification (2020 – 2021). Public campaigns reached a total of 205,406 members of the Cambodian public - changing attitudes and behaviours towards women migrant workers and addressing violence against women migrant workers.

126. The intervention logic for the UNDAF envisages a mix of policymaking support and capacity building, alongside supporting direct service delivery and working directly with rights holders to increase awareness and demand. In this context, substantial work was carried out to design policies and build systems, in the form of numerous strategic frameworks, action plans and policy papers as well as supporting evidence/data generating capacity of the Government.⁶⁴ Key progress in the area of social services, referral and counselling services for GBV and social protection measures verified during the current UNDAF cycle are the results of sustained efforts over more than a decade to achieve the desired legislative and institutional changes. During the current cycle, the Cambodia Disability Rights Initiative JP supported the update of the draft National Disability Law, that was prepared using a rights-based approach in line with the United Nations Convention for Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The draft law was informed by a comprehensive analysis of the priorities and aspirations of PWDs, namely with respect to access to education, social protection, justice, employment, and livelihood enhancement.

2. Institutional, Behavioural and Legislative Changes

EQ 5: To what extent has the UN contributed to key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes that are critical for catalysing progress towards the UNDAF desired impact including the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, and disability inclusion?

Finding: UN Agencies have contributed to major institutional and legislative changes across virtually all areas of development. Institutions benefitted from capacity development and direct technical and financial assistance, reinforced by multi-year interventions for systemic reforms. UN Agencies have contributed to the establishment of institutional frameworks, capacities and approaches. The degree to which these are implemented in practice is gradually increasing, as behavioural changes and shifts in mentality require time to materialize at national scale and all levels of multi-governance, in particular regarding human rights and leave no one behind approaches. Further support is needed for the implementation of legal and strategic frameworks, including at the subnational level.

127. The UNDAF's approach is intentional in addressing the need for institutional, behavioural and legislative changes across all outcome areas. The UNCT has provided capacity building activities for government institutions at the central and provincial level; working together to develop new legislation

⁶⁴The UN supported the preparation of the Assessment of Covid impact; several surveys carried out by NIS/MoP in addition to a Covid-specific panel survey; as well as numerous reports and studies on the effects of the pandemic in various sectors and subsectors. Substantial work was carried out with the nationalisation of the CSDGs, VNR and Un is currently supporting the preparation of the new National Development Plan.

and strategies; securing government buy-in and commitment towards change, while also working with the demand side of services through activities to empower citizens and their representatives. Specific examples of work towards institutional, behavioural and legislative changes have been included in Annex 14: Achievement of UNDAF outputs.

128. Under Outcome 1, assistance for health, education, social policy and financing assistance has addressed regulatory frameworks and capacity building, alongside awareness and information campaigns. However, gender-related issues have received a less prominent role.

129. Under Outcome 2, support to youth employment and TVET has been accompanied with outreach activities targeted for youth information, including the most vulnerable; while support to strategic frameworks in agriculture and industrial policy has been carried out alongside direct engagement with factory workers on improvement of labour conditions. Under the nutrition domain, the school feeding programme involved local communities to help them have ownership of the programme and provide further support to local livelihoods.

130. Similarly, under Outcomes 3 and 5 work on climate change, disaster risk reduction and access to basic infrastructure has required working with government at all levels to build a common perspective and vision as well as institutional capacity. Cambodia demonstrated its commitment to climate action through increasing climate expenditure to 2.2 percent of GDP; and taking concrete action such as banning development of coal fired power plants and import duty facilities for electric vehicles.

131. Under Outcome 4, activities target changes in social norms directly and the UN has worked with both institutions and rights-holders towards systems building and creation of a favourable enabling environment. Much of the work has been substantiated by data and reports to ensure that policies the UN contributes to are based on evidence as well as to contribute to government buy-in. Although UN Agencies have, in most cases, adequately leveraged this mix of strategies and their know-how and close working relationship with stakeholders in the country, progress is at times slow.

132. Changes in mentality and approaches, which are often a pre-condition to achieving sustainable progress, require time and resources. UN Agencies have at times adopted an incremental approach to institutional change – such as in the social protection area, where advocacy for the expansion of services has been ongoing for many years; or in the Urbanisation domain, where the Smart City initiative is a small-scale undertaking that may showcase potential benefits from adopting policies for inclusive and resilient urban centres. Progress has been slower in addressing human rights related challenges, despite targeted work for development of legal frameworks, systems building as well as empowerment of the most vulnerable. The UN agencies and their workplans allocate significant resources to supporting the development of multiple strategies and action plans, with at times multiple strategic documents developed for the same sector. Support to implementation is provided, with UN Agencies increasingly engaging at the provincial and local level. However, a critical assessment of the need for newer strategies could help free up more resources for implementation.

133. Inclusion of leave no one behind principles in programming does not easily translate at the implementation level. Increased attention has been given to issues of inclusion, such as disability including through the Social Protection and Disability Programmes but the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy is not well-known for all UN agencies in Cambodia and further efforts are needed to influence disability inclusion into wider UN Agency programs and policies at the country level.⁶⁵

Efficiency: How well are resources being used?

1. Prioritized activities based on needs

⁶⁵ United Nations Joint Programme Access to Justice without Barriers for Persons with Disabilities – Lessons Learnt and Recommendations for Future action, April 2021

EQ 6: To what extent has the UN collectively prioritized activities based on the needs (demand side) rather than on the availability of resources (supply side), and reallocated resources according to the collective priorities and changing needs if/where necessary?

Finding: The UNCT prioritized activities based on the needs (demand side) rather than on the availability of resources (supply side), and reallocated resources according to the collective priorities and changing needs. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the UNCT and RCO played a key role in mobilizing resources, technical assistance and direct support to alleviate the negative social and economic impacts through short and mid-term responses. In addition, UN agencies were able to leverage government and non-government capacities to pursue development initiatives across multiple areas, ranging from social protection, economic inclusion and environmental sustainability, through provision of a wide range of expertise which creates strong preconditions and solid capacity to anticipate needs and respond to demands. However, availability of funding has not always enabled a systematic approach to development and has led to the UN Agency responses being at times opportunistic, resulting in small scale actions and inter-agency competition.

134. To some extent, UN agencies mobilized resources based on priorities or needs, informed by studies and consultations including both the demand and supply sides. Vulnerable groups in rural and urban areas were consulted to ensure that their needs were incorporated into strategies and policies. For example, the members of the RG 1 conducted a series of comprehensive consultations to assess the needs of citizens prior to developing the smart cities strategies and solution-focused initiatives, and engagement of PLHIV and key population communities in the development of Fast Track City Strategic Plan. Technical or policy studies, assessments, surveys and preliminary consultations are always key for UN Agencies and Results Groups to uphold while developing a new project or programme. For example, online surveys among PLHIV and key populations were conducted to understand the emerging needs, vulnerabilities, and challenges to accessing the services in times of pandemic, and the findings from the surveys were used as evidence-based advocacy and for the reprioritization of programmes.

135. Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN supported the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) to conduct a baseline socio-economic impact survey, followed by UN-led high-frequency phone surveys, trying to understand the changing needs and vulnerabilities of the population over time. Several UN agencies also advocated for the government to tailor national support services to the population. More explicitly, the UN collectively prioritized activities based on the real needs of the target populations – migrants returning home due to the pandemic. Responses were made based on the rapid assessment of COVID-19 impacts on those populations.

136. An HIV Funding Request Application for 2021-2023 Global Fund grant was prepared based on needs of the people living with HIV and key populations. It was particularly tailored to reach the unreached and hidden populations.

137. The UNCT has been effective in mobilizing its own internal and donor resources towards the achievement of the UNDAF outcomes, as well as utilizing the networks of non-government organizations and community actors, to reach out to the vulnerable populations to make their voices heard, as confirmed by NGOs and donors. However, the UNDAF is very broad and comprehensive, and agencies have at times focused on achieving the objectives of small-scale projects without a careful consideration of the contribution towards higher level outcomes and achieving synergies or partnerships. For instance, multiple agencies focus their efforts on leveraging funds from smaller funding initiatives, while less attention has been devoted to joint programming.

2. Funding frameworks and allocation of resources

EQ 7: Was the UNDAF supported by an integrated funding framework and by adequate funding instruments? What were the gaps, if any? Have resources been allocated efficiently?

Finding: The UNDAF aims to ensure that priorities and needs are adequately financed and accurately identifies the resources available and funding gaps. Throughout the five-year UNDAF implementation, all UN agencies have established realistic resource mobilization targets based on an analysis of spending from the preceding programming cycles. However, there is no explicit financing or resource mobilization strategy, and an integrated funding framework has not been established. The evaluation did not find enough evidence to evaluate if resources have been allocated efficiently.

138. The analysis presented in this section is based on documentary evidence, the replies to the questionnaires from Results Groups and various interviews with UN agencies.

139. The UNDAF Common Budgetary Framework requires both UN agencies' individual responsibility and shared responsibility with UNCT in financing the framework. It advises that all agencies carefully analyse their spending from the previous programming cycle and allocate resource according to realistic targets within the UNDAF five-year implementation. These types of financing and programme strategy of the UNDAF reflect the diverse efforts and contributions of UN agencies, but also indicate the absence of a UN fundraising strategy for the UNDAF as a whole.

140. The total budget required for the UNDAF was estimated at US\$577.6 million at the start of the UNDAF cycle, with a funding gap of US\$207 million (36 percent of total cost, as shown in **Table 5**). With the onset of COVID-19, US\$60.4 million (or approximately 60 percent of the budget available for 2020) was reallocated from UNDAF resources to finance health and socio-economic response and recovery goals, and US\$26 million were newly mobilised.⁶⁶ At the time of the evaluation, the UNDAF budget between 2019–2022 amounted to US\$482 million, representing an additional US\$112.1 million mobilized by UN agencies during the UNDAF implementation period.⁶⁷

Table 5 UNDAF Budgetary Framework versus Actual Mobilization

UNDAF Outcomes	2019-2023 (US\$)		2019–2022 (US\$)
	Total Required	Projected to be Available (2019)	Total budget available
Outcome 1: Increasing Social Opportunities	266,906,000	201,147,500	218,138,131
Outcome 2: Increasing Economic Opportunities	131,395,744	75,061,598	55,007,350
Outcome 3: Sustainable Living	115,356,506	54,006,329	123,615,878
Outcome 4: Participation and Accountability	44,680,433	22,515,421	37,875,290
Outcome 5: Managing Urbanisation	19,305,500	17,175,500	47,420,334
Total	577,644,183	369,906,348 (64%)	482,056,984
Funding gap		207,737,835 (36%)	95,587,199

Source: Resident Coordinator's Office

⁶⁶ UN Cambodia Annual Report 2020, p. 44

⁶⁷ UNDAF Budget and Expenditure, Resident Coordinator Office, 1 August 2022. Note that the funding gap may have not decreased commensurately as funding needs (i.e., estimated cost of actions) is likely to have increased due to Covid.

141. According to the RCO, it is unclear to what extent will the UNCT succeed in mobilizing resources to meet the target of US\$577.6 million by the end of 2023. However, if the UNCT maintains its pace of committing roughly \$100 million annually, UNDAF funding will reach its target. Nevertheless, it is still necessary to have a joint financing and resource mobilization strategy to increase finance, joint-synergy, ownership, and unity as one UN over the implementation of the UNDAF. With the joint financing and resource mobilization strategy, it is also anticipated that resources will be more securely mobilized and that UNDAF priorities will be expanded and elevated to meet pressing development needs in Cambodia.

142. The UNDAF budget delivery rate has been relatively high between 2019-2021, at 85 percent. Delivery under Outcome 1 increased since 2020, reflecting higher needs in the social sectors for all outcomes during the pandemic. Delivery was slower in Outcome 3 in 2020 and 2021, at only 65.1 percent and 67.3 percent respectively, due to challenges encountered with implementation during the pandemic, and the resulting shift in priorities (**Table 6**).

Table 6 Budget commitment, expenditure and delivery rate (2019-2021)

Outcome	Budget (US\$ million)								
	2019 ⁶⁸			2020			2021 ⁶⁹		
	TC	TE	%DR	TC	TE	%DR	TC	TE	%DR
Outcome 1	51.56	35.72	69.27	45.76	45.02	98.37	61.85	57.73	93.34
Outcome 2	14.76	11.95	80.97	12.71	17.72	139.40	12.12	9.12	75.28
Outcome 3	18.26	17.00	93.10	20.18	13.14	65.12	55.40	37.30	67.33
Outcome 4	9.49	8.21	86.51	8.47	7.87	92.99	9.10	8.06	88.58
Outcome 5	7.52	7.48	99.51	13.99	12.34	88.18	9.24	8.47	91.62
Total	101.58	80.36	79.10	101.13	96.10	95.03	147.71	120.67	81.70

Source: Resident Coordinator's Office Key: TC = Total Commitments, TE = Total Expenditures, DR = Delivery Rate (%)

143. Financial resources have been budgeted and disbursed for implementing the UNDAF and responding to the actual needs of most vulnerable populations as targeted by the programmes, based on evidence generated through data and studies.⁷⁰ Moreover, the UNCT has collectively prioritized activities based on the real needs of the target populations. For example, the results and recommendations from the UN's 2020 rapid assessment on the COVID-19 impact on returning migrants were used to immediately respond to the needs of the group. However, some Government institutions indicated that although there is a general agreement on the areas of cooperation target outcomes, better coordination with the UN agencies would be desirable at the level of projects and activities. In addition, some private sector representatives felt that UN agencies allocated a disproportionate part of their resources to producing data and reports instead of more tangible actions.

144. Under the UNDAF, some UN agencies, for instance in the areas of food and nutrition, work on similar approaches and joint programming but with separated budgets. Agencies also implement joint

68 UNCT (2019). Results Report 2019 – United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2019-2023. United Nations Cambodia. Phnom Penh, Cambodia

69 UNDCO (2021). Annual Results Report 2021. United Nations Development Coordination Office. Phnom Penh, Cambodia

70 For instance, during the pandemic, the National Institute of Statistics (affiliated with the Ministry of Planning) was supported by the UN to conduct a baseline COVID-19 social economic impact survey, followed by UN-led high-frequency phone surveys, in order to understand the changing needs and vulnerabilities of the population over time, and adjust the government's policy response. also, the results and recommendations from the UN's 2020 rapid assessment on the COVID-19 impact on returning migrant were used to immediately respond to the needs of the groups – just one of the numerous assessments carried out.

programmes, sharing both resources and activities, and aiming to accomplish common outputs and outcomes. Social protection, human security, gender, migration and youth employment are clear examples of such joint efforts. Due to the limited number of concluded JPs, there is limited evidence on their efficiency. An evaluation of the Joint Programme on social protection found that the cost allocated to capacity building activities will reap substantial returns over years, without the substantial additional annual cost. The results in terms of expansion of social protection coverage are expected to far exceed these costs. The materials and tools developed can be used for training current and future social protection practitioners in the country. Similarly, the investments in the development of frameworks and the design of transfers and pension programmes offer a high return on the operationalisation of the framework. The midterm review of the Youth Employment JP found that in terms of costs and benefits, the five UN agencies benefitted a lot from working together, which offered opportunities for scaling up the contributions of other UN agencies, and to use synergies and different networks.

Coherence of the UN System support: How well does the UNDAF fit?

3. Coherence of UN's intervention with its partners

EQ 8: To what extent has the UN strengthened the coherence of support and sought partnerships (with civil society, private sector, local government, parliament, academia, research institutions, and international development partners) to enhance achievement of results?

Finding: The UNCT collaborated with the Government, international organizations, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and the private sector to enhance the achievement of results though this evaluation identified gaps and difficulties in engaging these partners. The CSOs believe that UN agencies do not properly support them, particularly when they tackle important issues like human rights. Strengthened long-term partnerships with stakeholders would enhance the UNDAF's coherence.

Multi-Stakeholder engagement

145. The UN Development System Reform envisioned that the 2030 Agenda can be achieved through enabling a systemic shift toward strategic partnerships with multi-stakeholders. The Mid-Term Reflection noted that there is a strong need to develop a multi-stakeholder strategic framework.⁷¹

146. In 2021, the UN Cambodia published an Analysis of Multi-Stakeholder Engagement for Sustainable Development in Cambodia, seen through a civil society engagement lens.⁷² The report attempts to contribute to strengthening the multi-stakeholder dimension of national development planning and SDGs mainstreaming by analysing current practices in Cambodia, sharing good practices, and proposing recommendations in alignment with the implementation of the United Nations Cooperation Framework. The report includes the CSOs' engagement and participation in the 2030 Agenda implementation, the challenges and opportunities to strengthen stakeholder engagement, and identification of solutions to address the challenges posed to effective stakeholder engagement by the COVID-19 pandemic.

147. The multi-stakeholder engagement approach was also applied in the UNDAF implementation with the participation of representatives of the RGC, CSOs, development partners, academia, and the private sector, in numerous occasions, both at technical and high levels. However, this evaluation found gaps and challenges with regards to the depth and breadth of the engagement.

148. According to documents and interviewees, the UNDAF engaged the most important stakeholders, such as government, CSOs, development partners, the private sector, and academia. UN Agency work offers a forum for open discussion that allows these actors to influence policy formulation and implementation. The co-design and partnership approach seems to be a recent innovation, which is

⁷¹ UNDAF Mid-term Reflection, Forwarded Actions (30 September 2021)

⁷² UN (2021). Analysis of Multi-Stakeholder Engagement for Sustainable Development in Cambodia, Civil society engagement lens. United Nations Cambodia. Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Dr. Runsinarith Phim.

a progressive move from the more conventional donor-driven agenda. The UNDAF is perceived as a platform to leverage cooperation and partnership.

COVID-19

149. As explained by the Analysis of Multi-Stakeholder Engagement, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted stakeholder engagement, as the effectiveness of working online was uneven and the pandemic hindered other communication channels. For small groups with high level of technical skills to use online tools, working online was effective. It became less effective when it involved large numbers of participants. While engaging stakeholders online allows for a wider participation from stakeholders, the quality may not be as effective as face-to-face arrangements which can help stakeholders understand and connect with each other more easily.

Government

150. UN agencies have actively engaged in the Government-Development Partner sectoral Technical Working Groups (TWGs), which aim to facilitate dialogue and coordinate external assistance. UN agencies co-chair several sectoral TWGs.

151. One example of multi-stakeholder engagement is the United Nations Youth Task Force (UNYTF) as an interactive platform for dialogue with young people led by young people to help accelerate the SDGs. More specifically, the Dosslarb Media Mentoring Programme is a partnership between Heinrich Boll Stiftung, DanChurchAid, EU, and UN Agencies to support DOSSLARB CAMP.

152. On the other hand, Government interviewees stressed that their partnership with UN Agencies was sometimes hampered by a lack of coordination among the UN Agencies in the ways of working, for example on the social assistance programme, national security fund, and data processing. They stated that there was sometimes a lack of sufficient focus in UNDAF implementation on the country priorities as mandated in the Post COVID-19 Recovery Needs plan.⁷³ They consider that agencies have their own agenda and priorities, and that UN programmes should more closely contribute to national priorities and the SDGs as a whole.

Civil Society Organizations

153. Despite their limited awareness of what the UNDAF is, some Civil Society Organizations (CSO) indicated that the UN is strategically positioned in Cambodia to support the development and socio-economic needs and priorities. This was observed particularly during the pandemic. Local and national CSOs felt that there is a lack of synergies and coordination among UN agencies in their work with CSOs, at both national and subnational levels.

154. Moreover, many interviewed stakeholders echoed the limited strategic engagement of the UN agencies with CSOs, which are involved in an ad-hoc way, rather than having a long-term partnership strategy. CSOs in Phnom Penh, Kampong Cham and Kampong Thom echoed this sentiment – meaning that UN Agencies ask them to deliver intended outputs with limited funding or longstanding engagement. Their interventions are short term without a long-term perspective. UN projects are usually up to 18 months, and some do not exceed US\$50,000 (for example, UNDP GEF).

155. National and sub-national CSOs feel that they are not fully supported by UN agencies, especially when these CSOs address critical issues like Human Rights. They recognize the UN agencies' role in advocating with key government institutions, but such efforts have not always helped lessen tension and promote mutual dialogues and respect. Local CSOs with funds from UN projects are addressing critical and challenging issues in the area of human rights. When tensions arise between the CSOs and the local or national Government, there is limited protection or backing up by UN agencies in terms of effectively voicing their concerns with the Government.

⁷³ The Strategic Framework and Programmes for Economic Recovery in the Context of Living with COVID-19 in a New Normal 2019 – 2023.

156. CSOs interviewed also claimed that UN agencies and Development Partners have more power in the engagement process, considering their capacity and financial resources to commit to activities, while smaller CSOs are not closely engaged. While smaller CSOs have been active at the sub-national levels and have aligned their activities and strategic plans to achieve certain UNDAF outcomes, a closer engagement with CSOs would be vital for effective implementation of the UNDAF and CSDGs.

157. CSO and provincial departments interviewees in Kampong Cham and Kampong Thom provinces explained that, despite the partnership efforts, UN agencies are not yet seen as working as one, since they engage different stakeholders for similar purposes. UN agencies are supporting some projects which are similar in nature and beneficiaries, but in locations. CSOs stress that UN agencies are also fund-seekers and are driven by their donors, and they sometimes compete with one another.

Development Partners

158. The UN Reform has reinforced the ability of the UNCT to engage with development partners (DPs) in a more strategic and coordinated manner. Partners interviewed appreciate that an independent RC can represent the interests of the UN family in a more comprehensive manner. With the UN co-chairing the Lead Development Partner Facility, which is the donor coordination mechanism, the UNCT is better able to strategically coordinate and advance SDG acceleration, as prioritized through the UNDAF, to the wider Thematic Working Groups. New policy dialogue spaces were created, bringing in diverse voices on topical issues, such as freedom of expression/access to information for transparency and good governance, alternative media and civic engagement strategies. Australia, US, China, UK, Switzerland, Sweden, Japan, the European Union, and international NGOs have acknowledged the importance of the UN system leadership in providing a multi-stakeholder engagement platform for issues that need to be addressed in an impartial and evidence-based manner.⁷⁴

159. Development partners interviewed consider the partnership with UN agencies to be very beneficial. They appreciate the data, information, knowledge and expertise provided by UN agencies, as well as the collaboration with them at the policy level. The UNCT's ability to liaise with and relate to RGC for different reforms is also useful. The UNDAF implementation and role of the RC have helped to avoid some fragmentations among DPs, and improved synergy for DPs.

160. Although DPs have been involved in various programmes and initiatives through the multi-stakeholder engagement approach, there is no detailed UN strategy for partnering with them. The EU-UN strategic dialogue on critical issues has been held to map out of what could be done together. There are some overlaps between UN agencies and DPs and misunderstanding on who funds what. There is a call for more transparency, clearer roles, and defined responsibilities.

Development Cooperation and Partnership Strategy

161. The RGC has established several mechanisms to engage different stakeholders to mobilize resources for national development. The Development Cooperation and Partnership Strategy 2019-2023 (DCPS), which provides a comprehensive framework for promoting development partnerships in Cambodia, is the only mechanism that recognizes the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships in achieving the CSDGs. The DCPS (2019-2023) provides new consultation mechanisms with civil society, and with all development partners at sector and at sub-national levels. It also sets a path, principles, mechanisms and tools for promoting effective development cooperation and result-based partnerships, to engage DPs, including UN agencies.

Private sector

162. Private sector company representatives interviewed have not been deliberately involved through the UNDAF towards long-term common outcomes. There is no strategic cooperation or partnership strategy for the private sector. For instance, there is a lack of private sector investment,

⁷⁴ UNCT Annual Coordination Report 2019.

particularly in the joint programme development process for the SDG Fund.⁷⁵ There is also very limited engagement from the private sector, especially youth business associations. Unlike World Bank, ADB, EU and JICA, there is no common UN strategy for private sector engagement. Instead, engagement of the private sector is based on individual UN agencies. The Strategic Partnerships Working Group was initiated by UNCT and led by UNESCO, UNOPS, UNDP and RC's Office. The Group has supported private sector engagement on UNSDCF outcome areas,⁷⁶ but there is no evidence to claim the strategic involvement to date.

163. The UNDAF Mid-Term Reflection noted that there is a strong need to develop a private sector partnership strategy.⁷⁷ The positioning of UN agencies with the private sector is not considered strategic by private firms met by the evaluation team. These firms have been contracted for different climate resilience projects in the areas of WASH and solid waste management, including through collaboration with UN agencies and the Joint SDG Fund. They see the roles and the work of UN agencies as supporters and accelerators. However, private sector actors are not much involved in the UNDAF implementation, with a few exceptions. It is also not clear for the private sector interviewees how they could ensure their participation in the implementation of the CSDGs or other long-term policies of Cambodia, due to the limited engagement of UN agencies with the private sector.

Academia

164. UN actor engagement with research and academic institutions and think-tanks is limited, according to those met by the evaluators. Some have offered technical comments or concrete inputs, such as in science and technology for the CSDG implementation, however, the engagement of academia, which should be significant to support the CSDG processes, is minimal.⁷⁸ It has been proposed that the UNCT launch collaborative projects with universities to conduct evidence-based and scientific research on the CSDGs.⁷⁹

Coordination: How well is the UNDAF implementation coordinated?

4. Coordination structure and synergies

EQ 10: To what extent has the UNDAF coordination structure (through the Results Groups, Thematic Groups, Accelerators, Humanitarian Response Forum, and the Scaling Up Nutrition coordination) for the UNDAF implementation, contributed to a coherent and increased synergy (for example through joint programming) accelerating the progress and jointly supporting CSDG acceleration in Cambodia? What are the bottlenecks towards a coherent and increased synergy?

Finding: The UNDAF coordination mechanisms for UNDAF implementation contributed to an increased synergy. UN agencies have strengthened their coordination through 11 joint programmes, which is a significant improvement with respect to the previous two UNDAF cycles. However, these JPs are generally not created by the Results Groups through UNDAF work planning processes, and are rather resource-driven, taking advantage of funding opportunities. That said, one RG offered a possible model of four JPs to address sustainable living and climate change, which approached these issues and available opportunities more strategically. While more evidence would be needed regarding the connectedness within JPs, cooperation and synergy between agencies, within these JPs, is sometimes limited. The UN has also strengthened inter-agency coordination through joint programming and advocacy, where different UN agencies have joined hands, expertise and resources in delivering development cooperation. Nevertheless, the UNDAF Results Framework tends to be mostly a retrofitting exercise of different UN strategies. In addition, RG's work is demanding and lacking additional resources, which limits to the

⁷⁵ Reflections and Recommendations on Component 2 of the Joint SDG Fund, March 2021

⁷⁶ UNDCO (2021). *Annual Results Report 2021*. United Nations Development Coordination Office. Phnom Penh, Cambodia (p.44)

⁷⁷ UNDAF Mid-term Reflection, Forwarded Actions (30 September 2021)

⁷⁸ UN (2021). *Analysis of Multi-Stakeholder Engagement for Sustainable Development in Cambodia*. United Nations Cambodia. Phnom Penh, Cambodia

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

ambitions of UN reform. The work done with the accelerators is diversely appreciated – some find it interesting, while others find it limited. The efforts made on strategic thinking (i.e., Foresight, Preferred Future, and Shifting Mindsets) is promising.

165. The primary UNDAF coordination mechanisms are Results Groups, Thematic Groups, Accelerators, Humanitarian Response Forum, and the Scaling Up Nutrition coordination.

Results Groups

166. Five results groups, one for each of the UNDAF outcomes, were established to lead and guide the UNDAF formulation and implementation, using Joint Annual Work Plans. Under the leadership of the RC, Results Groups developed UN Joint Work Plans to operationalize the UNDAF, identify opportunities for closer inter-agency collaboration (e.g., through joint programming and joint programmes), to collectively monitor and report on progress towards joint outputs, and to provide periodic inputs to update the Common Country Analysis (CCA).⁸⁰ The Result Groups undertook joint analysis of the policy environment, key development issues and emerging trends related to priority areas, to ensure that the groups' work plans addressed pressing development constraints.

167. According to the RCO, the practical operation of Results Groups did not match the UNDAF document or the Results Groups' TOR. Heads of Agencies (HoA) who were supposed to co-chair RGs to take appropriate decisions and lead the Results Groups in the implementation of the Joint Work Plans. In practice the HoAs delegated this task to their deputies, and sometimes the communication from UNCT meetings did not fully reach these deputies. However, HoAs also need to be kept informed by the RCO on UNDAF related exercises, communications and deadlines, for internal enforcement.

168. The Annual Joint workplans are a compilation of project or output level interventions at specific agency level rather than a coordinated set of well-thought-out interventions that aspire to achieve value added towards the UNDAF outcome objectives. The RGs do not specifically take stock of overall progress under the joint workplans, which do not have any M&E mechanisms attached. The UN has fallen short of building coherence across the broad portfolios of each agency under the five outcomes.

169. Though RGs are called to meet at least once every two to three months, according to the RCO and some RG interviewees, RGs met just once per year to prepare the Annual Results Report and the Joint Work Plans for the following year. In addition, some RGs do not have the anticipated M&E focal points to support enhance M&E work and the quality of results reporting (RG3, RG4, and RG5).⁸¹

170. During interviews and in questionnaire replies, the RGs indicated that their activity was put on hold one to one and a half years because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which occurred in the middle of the UNDAF cycle. The framework became less useful at some point though agencies came together and developed the SERF.

171. UN interviewees indicated that RGs have worked sufficiently well but acknowledged room for improvement. Interviewees noted that membership required a lot of effort, time (meetings), and reporting. Though RGs are considered a useful tool, results depend on the time each agency puts into it. Importantly, RG work is enshrined in the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) which explains the dual accountability system at the centre of the UN reform effort – accountability of UN agencies to their agency mandates and to RGs on results towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.

172. As noted by the Supporting Coordination Infrastructure document, the new Cooperation Framework is the most important instrument for the planning and implementation of UN development activities in each country. In this context, the Mid-Term Reflection noted that Result Groups are central to the UN Development System Reform and the new generation of Cooperation Frameworks. RGs are the main coordination mechanisms for the UNSDCF at the operational level, where significant

⁸⁰ Cambodia Common Country Analysis, Towards an Inclusive, Equitable and Sustainable Recovery, May 2021

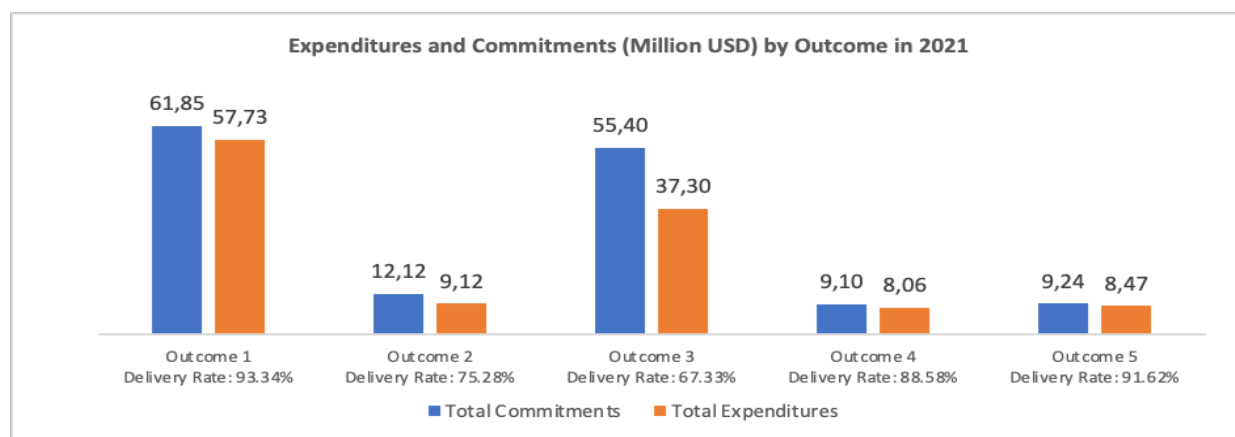
⁸¹ Supporting Coordination Infrastructure, UNDAF 2019- 2023 & SERF 2020-2021, as of 17 Feb 2021.

programmatic issues are discussed, and where the implementation of the respective Cooperation Framework outcomes is ensured. It is a call to the leadership of the co-chairs, secretariat and RG members to step up their efforts and collaboration. For example, RGs are called to coordinate regular meeting/discussions on substantive emerging development issues/trending shifts/big bold ideas to inform the joint programming and programmes. RGs may consider exploring innovative solutions to make RGs forums to be dynamic and more forward-looking. Finally, as pointed out by the RCO, ownership is required from Heads of Agencies. In Vietnam, for instance, RGs are headed by HoAs, and as a result, there is more willingness to overcome obstacles at all levels of the organizations

173. It is also pointed out that RGs are not equal. For instance:

- RG5 has nine agencies and limited funding, compared to RG1 with more funds and many agencies involved. RG2, RG4, and RG5 also have limited funding. See Figure 3 below.
- Bigger agencies, like UNICEF or UNDP, may have some staff to dedicate work to RGs. Other agencies would need some funding for their work related to RGs. There is a call for revisiting the commitment and capacities of each agency member of the RGs. While there are clear differences between agencies and their capacities, the call to revisit commitments should not lead to overburdening larger agencies.
- Groups 2 and 3 are intertwined in trying to prepare the country for a green economy. The membership and financial volume of RG 2 is small, and its contribution and impact are limited, hence the discussion about a possible consolidation of these two groups.

Figure 3 Expenditures and Commitments (US\$ million) by Outcome in 2021



Source: Resident Coordinator’s Office

174. As explained by the UNCT Annual Coordination Report 2019, following the formal finalization and endorsement of the UNDAF, the UNCT embarked upon the development of Joint Work Plans across the 5 outcome areas to increase coherence and programmatic synergies across the 5 outcome areas and among the UNCT members in 2019. The UNDAF Joint Work Plans and reporting have provided coherence to a limited extent, in the context of urgent and timebound requests for support from the Government in responding to the pandemic in 2020-2021.

175. The 2021 Mid-Term Reflection (MTR) acknowledged the need to step up the efforts and the renewed commitments of the Result Groups, Theme Groups, and the Accelerators at both levels – the co-chairs/chairs/leads, and the participating members. The MTR clearly noted the importance to strengthen and coordinate for increased coherence and efficiency across all the internal UN coordination architecture. Participants also called for a strategic engagement between the UN coordination mechanism and the Government counterparts, as well as other important stakeholders, namely CSOs and the Private Sector.

176. The Mid-Term Reflection noted that Result Groups are the coordination platforms for constructive engagement to advocate with one voice when the UN communicates with the government. This requires the leadership of the RC, with support of the RCO, to bring the Result Groups together for a regular engagement with the counterparts.

177. The RGs stressed the importance of the role of the RCO, with respect to the RGs. At times it has felt as if some secretariat work has been delegated to RG co-chairs – while at the same time, the RCO was empowered by the reform, with significantly more staff, assuming a more technical role than before. There is therefore a need to review the extent to which RCO's coordination mandate (and workload) is being passed off to RG leads (who are not mandated, staffed or resourced to play this role). RGs also stressed that their work is quite significant and adds up to their agencies' responsibilities. The evaluation team observes that the RGs TOR are very ambitious, especially their numerous expected roles, both for the groups and for their chairs.⁸²

UN Theme Groups

178. Among the UN Theme Groups, the evaluation focused on two. Their results and contributions are evaluated in the section below on the programming principles:

- **Gender Theme Group (co-chairs: UNFPA and UNDP).** Its key functions were described as follows: (i) The development and dissemination of research and analysis around gender equality and women's empowerment – this also supports the UNCT members and leadership by providing data, intelligence analysis and in-depth understanding of the gender-related issues and challenges that shape UNCT work; (ii) Support to the development and implementation of the UNDAF, the country analysis, strategic prioritization, results framework and M&E; and (iii) Support/lead the design of the UN Joint Programmes on gender equality and to use joint programming processes as a way to promote greater coherence among the individual entities of the United Nations System at country level.
- **Human Rights Theme Group (Chair: OHCHR).** Its key functions were: (i) to promote and support advocacy of human rights standards and implementation of recommendations of international human rights mechanisms; (ii) to enhance the UN's technical and policy advisory function to government ministries and other partners in Cambodia to contribute to a strengthened national human rights protection system; and (iii) to support the implementation of the human rights-based approach (HRBA) to programming.⁸³

Scaling up nutrition (SUN)

179. With respect to scaling up nutrition, WFP and FAO led efforts to provide full support to the Government to meet SDG nutrition targets, as noted by the 2019 UNCT Annual Coordination Report. The Government recognised that nutrition has a central role in achieving the SDGs as an accelerator for achieving many targets for the Agenda 2030. UN agencies supported the Government by drafting the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition (NSFSN) 2019-2023. UNICEF and FAO played a leadership role as Co-Facilitators of the Technical Working Group for Social Protection and Food Security. The UN Network for the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement (currently led by WFP, including FAO, UNICEF, IFAD and WHO) continued to support Cambodia in combatting malnutrition, and the agencies concerned provided coordinated action and reporting. The Network played a critical role in facilitating, together with the Council for Agriculture and Rural Development, the establishment of a national SUN Business Network to mobilize greater engagement of the private sector in addressing key nutrition priorities. RGs questionnaire replies explained that agencies also supported the drafting of Cambodia's Roadmap for Food Systems for Sustainable Development 2030, setting the Nutrition for Growth targets and writing the Country Operational Roadmap for the GAP on Wasting. UN agencies worked well together

⁸² Terms of Reference of Results Groups UNDAF Cambodia 2019-2023, Endorsed by UNCT, 7 March 2018.

⁸³ Supporting Coordination Infrastructure, UNDAF 2019- 2023 & SERF 2020-2021, as of 17 Feb 2021.

and with civil society and development partners to support an intense programme of work during 2019-2021.

Programme Management Team

180. In 2019, following the SDG Leadership Lab, the UNCT decided to discontinue the Programme Management Team (PMT), and to optimize instead coordination through the five results groups and the four accelerators. Previously, the PMT was established to provide strategic guidance on programmes to the UNDAF Result Groups on UNDAF implementation with a focus on promoting coherence, complementarity and collaborative action where possible. The PMT interfaced with UNDAF Result Groups, the UN Theme Groups, and the UN Communication Group. The PMT was comprised of deputy heads of agencies or heads of programmes, or their equivalents across all resident and non-resident agencies operating in Cambodia. The PMT was chaired by a deputy representative, head of programme or equivalent of a resident UN agency.⁸⁴

181. Based on numerous discussions with RGs, the RCO and questionnaire replies from RGs, the evaluation team reached the conclusion that, given the current chairmanship of the RGs, the absence of the PMT may have been a limitation in the strategic management of the UNDAF as it may have disrupted the inherent links between the leadership of RGs and higher-level management of each UN agency, thus undermining the usefulness of RGs as crucial groups in leading UNDAF strategy and implementation.

Joint Programmes

182. The UN system has strengthened the coordination through joint programmes, where UN agencies work together under one agreement. According to a List of Joint Programmes provided by the RCO to the ET, a total of 11 Joint Programmes have been implemented during the duration of this UNDAF, and a Concept Note has been submitted for one additional JP (Cambodia innovative CLimatE Adaptation & mitigation financing mechanism – CLEAN). This is a significant improvement with respect to the previous two UNDAF cycles, when, according to the previous evaluation of the UNDAF, only three joint programmes were implemented. This shows a deliberate effort by the UNCT to increase coordination through JPs. The 11 JPs represented a total budget of over US\$13 million in 2021, according to the 2021 UNDAF Annual Results Report. Based on documentary sources and questionnaire replies from RGs, some of the programmes currently implemented are described below. Annex 16 includes additional information.

183. **Decent Employment for Youth in Cambodia** (ILO, UNICEF and UNESCO) provided employment services to vulnerable adolescents and youths, with the support of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC). The employment services include career guidance/counselling, pre-employment training, job-readiness training, job matching, and job placement. As a result, 13,534 adolescents and youth (45 percent women) accessed employment services in 2020-2021. Out of them, 471 (57 percent women) obtained employment in various occupations, and among them, 245 (67 percent women) are in formal employment. Targeted business support training and mentoring services were provided to 112 MSMEs in targeted provinces. Despite some competition between agencies, and perhaps a lack of strategic priorities that would have driven the resource mobilization from agencies, the programme brought coherence, convergence and consolidated synergies of different interventions of these agencies, in the support to the government (including the National Employment Agency) and partners (including the private sector) to help young people to access decent employment opportunities.

184. **UN Joint Programme on Youth Employment** is the successor of Decent Employment for Youth, but with a focus on young people, by providing access to formal and non-formal education, soft and entrepreneurial skills and career guidance. Despite some interesting results, the programme is not currently perceived as one programme, but rather as a sum of activities by different agencies. A joint vision and spirit is not yet fully developed among the implementing agencies. In terms of costs and

⁸⁴ Supporting Coordination Infrastructure, UNDAF 2019- 2023 & SERF 2020-2021, as of 17 Feb 2021.

benefits, however, the five UN agencies have benefited a lot from being in the joint programme – working together offered opportunities for scaling up the contributions of other UN agencies and to use synergies and different networks.⁸⁵

185. **Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE):** Despite challenges faced during a surge in COVID-19 cases, a joint application for a Joint Programme involving five UN agencies (ILO, UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO and UNITAR) to work together using their comparative advantage was developed in consultation with relevant line ministries. It has been approved by the PAGE Secretariat, and will involve working with various line Ministries and the private sector in promoting a green economy.

186. **Development Emergency Modality (Response to the Global Crisis on Food, Energy, Finance):** Supported by the SDG Fund, UN agencies (FAO, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP) strengthened the Government data collection, analysis and forecasting capacities, with a particular emphasis on crop monitoring, food price and market functionality monitoring, household socio-economic conditions, food security and nutrition, and macro socio-economic analysis and forecasts. With effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms in place, targeting the key drivers of the evolving crisis in Cambodia, the ultimate goal is to provide timely evidence-based analyses and forecasts to inform the Government policy responses and allocation of resources for supporting social assistance measures for the most vulnerable.

187. **Credit guarantees for women’s enterprises:** Using the Global SDG Fund, UNCDF, UNDP, IOM leveraged their comparative expertise to support the government in setting up a credit guarantee mechanism to support women-led SMEs in accessing financial resources. UNCDF focused on regulatory mechanisms for credit guarantee, whereas UNDP looked at policy options to increase access for women owned enterprises. IOM’s role was to link supported MSMEs to generate employment for returnee migrants who are affected by COVID-19.

188. **Social Protection Floors in Cambodia** was funded by the Joint SDG Fund and implemented by UNICEF, ILO and WHO, together with the European Union, SIDA and the Government. This JP is one of the UN’s joint responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, through integrated approaches to social protection, supporting the implementation of the National Social Protection Policy Framework in close collaboration with the newly established National Social Protection Council and development partners. About 700,000 households comprising nearly 2.8 million people benefited from the cash transfer programme. In collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), the UN’s economic modelling demonstrated that social protection programmes helped reduce poverty by about 3.4 percentage points and save GDP growth by nearly one percentage point.

189. **Strengthened National Preparedness, Response and Resilience to COVID19:** IOM, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO respond to COVID-19 by addressing the needs of returning migrants from Thailand in Battambang, Banteay Meanchey and Oddor Meanchey province. Initially funded by the SDG Funds, its second phase (March 2022-March 2023) is funded by the Japanese Government.

190. Other joint programmes include: Building back better through participation (UNESCO, OHCHR); Strengthening Freedom of Expression and Media Development in Cambodia (UNESCO, OHCHR); Accelerating Disability Rights in Cambodia (UNDP, OHCHR, UNESCO). The draft proposal for Cambodia innovative climate Adaptation & mitigation – financing mechanism (CLEAN) was accepted by the SDG Fund.

Box 1: Sustainable Living, Climate Change, Priorities for joint programming.

RG3 drafted a possible model of four Joint Programmes to address sustainable living and climate change. This model approached these issues and available opportunities more strategically, potentially putting the UN in a better position, than approaching these opportunities separately. The RCO played an important supportive role.

⁸⁵ Mid-Term-Review of the First 16 Months of the First Phase of the United Nations Joint Programme on Youth Employment, Final Report, Diana Cáceres-Reebs, Phnom Penh, 18th of April 2019.

Cambodia is facing a number of complex environmental challenges that, coupled with COVID-19, induced economic and health crisis, is testing its capacities to adapt and respond to the changing context. At the same time, there is a clear opportunity for a paradigm shift in practices that can support socio-economic growth, while minimizing impacts on the environment. The transformational shift towards a more climate-smart, circular, sustainable (economic) development model can be better supported.

Currently, the UN is working on a variety of programmes and projects that address the issue of environmentally sustainable development from different angles, with individual UN agencies taking the lead in specific sectors in line with their respective mandates. However, there is a need to accelerate the coherence and impact of these interventions, by pulling resources (technical and financial), and with that in mind, four new Joint Programmes were proposed.⁸⁶

Joint programming and advocacy

191. UN inter-agency coordination was strengthened through joint programming and advocacy. The different UN agencies have collaborated in delivering development cooperation and assistance to the population through the Government and CSOs. Based on questionnaire replies from RGs, examples of joint programming and advocacy include:

- Support provided by multiple UN agencies to government to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and deliver their support jointly, building on their comparative advantages and respective mandates.
- Synergies were increased through joint annual work planning and reporting in the case of the joint support provided to the national HIV programme by UNAIDS and WHO, and the support provided to the IDPoor registration for PLHIV by UNAIDS and UNDP.
- Led by the RCO, and with engagement of UN Women, UNICEF, UNOPS and OHCHR, joint advocacy talking points to address the situation of overcrowded prisons were developed and discussed with the Government, including the Ministries of Interior and Justice.
- The UN mobilized joint action to end Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in the context of COVID-19, based on the SG's political engagement strategy to end GBV. For International Women's Day, the Resident Coordinator wrote an Op-ed about the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls. A joint UN campaign for International Women's Day was produced, as well as support for the 16 days of activism, to raise awareness about gender equality and GBV among Cambodian youth.
- OHCHR and UN Women supported CSOs in the follow up on UPR recommendations, in particular on sexual orientation and gender identity. Following a discussion between an LGBTI NGO coalition, UN agencies and diplomats met with the Government to discuss supporting the implementation of these recommendations.
- The United Nations Youth Task Force (UNYTF) has been jointly supported by a number of agencies through a pool fund.
- A joint collaboration between agencies led them to support the Government in developing the Smart Cities Strategy and Framework. They supported the organization of the UN Cambodia Urban Forum on smart, sustainable, and inclusive urban development. The agencies are currently working to coordinate a National Urban Forum (addressing some key topics, such as smart cities, affordable housing, and green cities) to guide the urbanisation agenda in Cambodia.

Bottlenecks towards an increased synergy in joint programming and joint programmes

192. Results Groups and documents consulted indicated that there are bottlenecks towards an increased synergy between UN agencies in the area of joint programming and joint programmes. These include the following:

- **Limitations due to the design of the UNDAF**, which is mostly a retrofitting exercise of the different agency strategies. Consequently, the UNDAF is as effective as the individual agencies

⁸⁶ Sustainable Living, Climate Change, Priorities for joint programming.

are. The next UNDAF risks being the same, because of the way the UN is set up. Nevertheless, as long as there is an active RCO, the programmatic framework of UNDAF provides a space to collaborate.

- **Lack of adequate resources for Results Group** coordination, work planning, joint programming, M&E and reporting: Agency heads or deputies are often over-stretched, especially during Quarters 1 and 4 of the year, when they must lead processes for their own agencies. Other agency-specific human resources that are nominated to the Secretariat are also often over-stretched and not able to spend the required time and/or are not sufficiently exposed to rationalize and consolidate inputs received from various agencies for drafting workplans and reports at the UNDAF outcome level.
- **Limited financial resources entails competition amongst agencies** to secure funds for meeting their corporate targets, despite their openness to coordinate and engage in joint programming and programmes. There can be tensions among UN agencies involved in similar activities with different funding, rather than combining forces. There is a lack of information on how projects are funded by each of the agencies.
- **Different financial and administrative guidelines** can complicate assistance provided by different UN agencies as they constrain joint programming and are a barrier to coordination.
- **Some donors are reluctant to enter into joint programmes** because of high transaction costs, as it means an 8 percent General Management Support (GMS) cost for the lead agency, along with an additional 8 percent GMS against agreements executed between the lead agency and other UN agencies. The Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) was identified as a possible alternative financing source for joint programmes.
- **Fostering a collaborative UNCT leadership is not sufficient to overcome challenges of high transaction costs** for developing and implementing joint programmes (noted in the 2019 UNCT Annual Coordination Report 2019).
- **Flexibility and adaptation of systems is needed** based on the needs and opportunities of the specific country context. This is required for the UN to be more responsive on the ground.
- **JPs are rather resource-driven**, taking advantage of funding opportunities. They are generally not created by the Results Groups through UNDAF work planning processes. There are limited incentives for joint programmes, such as including joint work and resource mobilization as key performance indicators in staff Performance Evaluation Reports (PERs) for both the RC and UN Heads of Agencies.
- **Systems of fund distribution and reporting** on implementation of JPs tends to reinforce a single agency implementation of activities.

193. More evidence would be needed to assess the connectedness within JPs and the quality of inter-agency cooperation (beyond the number of JPs). This analysis could help enhance learning and improve the future joint programmes. Currently, there are only a few final reports of JPs that concluded and produced a final report (Human Security/Smart City, SMEs, Social Protection, Disability), or a Mid-Term Review (Youth Employment). It would be interesting to conduct a deeper analysis of the cooperation within JPs, in both the previous and current UNDAF cycle. The evaluation team found that cooperation and synergy between agencies, within these JPs, were sometimes limited or not analysed. For example:

- The Youth Employment JP MTR concluded that the programme was not perceived as one programme, but rather as a sum of the activities by different agencies. Specifically, at provincial level no one seemed to know UNJP as umbrella, bringing these different activities together. Furthermore, the design of several activities was found to be supply-driven by the mandate of the different UN agencies, instead of being developed towards the overall objective of the programme. As discussed above, the five UN agencies benefited a lot from working together which offered opportunities for agencies to scale up the contributions of other UN agencies, and to use synergies and different networks.

- The Human Security/Smart City JP 2021 report highlights the importance to set the focus of the Smart city strategy for Sihanoukville that serves the people’s needs, especially with a particular attention on the marginalized and vulnerable, through the Human Security approach, however, it does not deal with inter-agency coordination issues.
- The Joint Programme on social protection evaluation found that the programme activities were designed jointly by the UN agencies implementing them, but the implementation of the activities was mostly independent, with limited interaction between agencies. While this ensured an efficient use of the individual strengths of UN agencies, it significantly limited progress towards improving longer-term coherence and coordination among agencies or advancing the one-UN approach in the longer run.
- The Joint Programme on disabilities stressed that the UNCT is in a unique position to promote disability inclusion with the RGC and other stakeholders, but it did not discuss inter-agency coordination issues.

Accelerators

194. In developing the UNDAF, the UN has identified key accelerators or catalytic programme areas to trigger positive multiplier effects across the UNDAF outcomes and the SDGs. The UN in Cambodia planned to use these accelerators as key drivers for strategizing and prioritizing programming, to increase the speed of attaining one or several SDGs and UNDAF outcomes, and to boost dynamic interactions across SDGs and UNDAF outcomes. This includes promoting synergy and complementary approaches and leveraging the work of each agency to obtain shared results; pooling expertise; working together to build stronger partnerships; and eliminating overlap and duplication.

195. According to the Supporting Coordination Infrastructure document, the four accelerators are reflected in each of the outcomes and the results frameworks, and are the following:

- i. Strengthening capacity for the implementation of the National Social Protection Policy Framework towards poverty eradication in Cambodia.
- ii. Improving nutrition for sustained economic growth and equitable development benefits.
- iii. Youth: Empowering youth to realize their full potential, and Cambodia to reap its demographic dividend
- iv. Ensuring greater availability and use of high-quality disaggregated data for sustainable development.

196. During the discussion with Results Groups and Thematic Groups, and in the questionnaires filled up by the two Accelerator Teams considered more functional (Social Protection and Data), it was pointed out that the Accelerators may have sometimes been considered duplicative of other groups (Nutrition). However, for other UN interlocutors, Accelerators were a very interesting part of the UN family because they were concentrated around specific themes and their members discussed about those topics strategically. The Accelerators could be used to approach the high-level policy dialogue for example when they hold dialogues with the Prime Minister. The delivery mechanism that would enable implementation of those ideas discussed in the Accelerators remains unclear, but some interviewees considered them more useful than RGs, although the potential of some of these accelerators has not been fully unlocked.

197. In terms of specific results, members of the Accelerator group on Social Protection engaged in joined or agency-specific advocacy activities. As a result, the new Government – Development Partners Coordination mechanisms for Social Protection includes the RC as the Chair of the Policy-input group, and ILO, UNICEF and WHO as coordinators for employment-based social security, social assistance, and social health protection groups, which is a significant achievement and recognition of the work of the UN in the sector. The group has also prepared several policy advocacy briefs related to COVID-19 that have influenced the government decisions on the investment into social protection during the pandemic, and have opened policy dialogue on informal workers, social assistance and formalization among other policy

areas. Agencies have also promoted the integration of the cash transfer programmes under the Family Package, the development of the Shock-Responsive Social Protection, the piloting of the graduation from poverty approach.

198. The key challenges in the functioning of the Social Protection Accelerator included inconsistency of the meetings due to high level of pressure to deliver on concrete programmes within COVID-19 context and a somewhat higher focus on the coordination and joint advocacy with other development partners. Closer collaboration and exchange among agencies could have contributed to even stronger results. The agencies also collaborated under the umbrella of the joint programme on social protection, with common advocacy and results. More regular meetings, exchange of information, and in-depth discussions between agencies have the potential to avoid overlaps and increase the strength of joint advocacy.

199. Through the Accelerator group on Data co-chaired by MoP and UNFPA, efforts have been stepped-up through the partnership with the EU, Germany, Sweden, and OECD Paris 21 to support the production of population data, the data analysis, and utilization of evidence for policy formulation, planning and programming. The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated a great need for data for better policymaking and service delivery, to improve lives, particularly of women and girls, in households and areas affected by the pandemic. Thanks to Development Partners and UN Agencies' work to ensure quality and timely use of data, particularly data from the 2019 census, the final results of the 2019 census, including its in-depth data analysis reports by thematic areas, were successfully released by the Government, and the census results were used for scaling up social assistance to the population affected by the pandemic, building the foundations for universal access to social protection. Transformative policies in social protection, seemingly unthinkable before the crisis, suddenly became a possibility.

200. UN agencies provided both technical and financial support to the government (MoP and MoH) for conducting the 5th round of the Demographic and Health Survey 2021. In addition, new data from national surveys was updated in the statistical platform called "CamStat" and upgraded to be more friendly for tracking progress of the development and CSDGs. However, a gap remains regarding the generation and development of data interoperability in response to a high demand from policy makers, planners, and programmers. Data availability in an ecosystem, in a timely fashion, for measuring progress of development indicators, including the SDGs, is a clear limitation for UNDAF accountability. To meet data needs and prioritization, all UN agencies in the country will need to join efforts to help measure and accelerate progress and help to make the SDGs possible.

Possible duplications

201. The issue of duplication has come up repeatedly not only with the Accelerators but also with all the modalities of joint work, including the groups that were formed for the COVID-19 response. Looking across all modalities of UN cooperation and collaboration groups to comprehensively understand to what degree duplication has been happening, and how to make these groups more effective and efficient, is not possible with available evidence and evaluation scope. It could be useful for the UNCT and these groups to analyse these duplications and possible scenarios for the coordination structure.

202. The UNDAF Mid-Term Reflection indicated that the Result Groups, Thematic Groups, and Accelerators are called to scale up their efforts and renew their commitment to the UNDAF, and to strengthen coordination mechanisms.

Strategic thinking

203. According to some interviewees from UN agencies and development partners, as well as the UNDAF Mid-Term Reflection,⁸⁷ the COVID-19 pandemic revealed a big shift, with UN agencies responding together, and using collective assets and intelligence which represented a strong added value.

204. The Mid-Term Reflection in September 2021 recommended that, to inform the formulation of Joint Work Plans (e.g., joint programming and joint programmes), the Result Groups (and Theme Groups) may consider having in-depth discussions within the respective groups on expanding current scenarios to shape further the bold ideas needed to contribute collectively over the next two years. It was also suggested that the UNCT should further develop foresight scenarios and that the RCO should develop a policy brief with recommendations on how/where to integrate foresight into UN Cambodia's way of working and capacity-building.

205. Furthermore, the UNCT organized a retreat in February 2022, facilitated by UN Global Pulse, which addressed the Shifting Mindsets, the Preferred Future of Cambodia 2050 (key drivers, youth voices, and Cambodia Vision 2050) and a Transformed UNCT (with bold changes needed). The report noted that the UN System, including UNCTs, need to respond to complex global challenges, sustaining operational capacity, and demonstrating leadership in a context of high uncertainty. Continuing business as usual is no longer an option; cultural, systemic and behavioural changes are required to deliver UN agencies mandates effectively.

206. The evaluation team considers that this reflection about the future and how to enhance strategic thinking is very important and timely. The team also wishes to commend the UNCT for a very interesting report, with well-designed mind maps, and a lot of very useful information and food for thought. These efforts could probably be an example for other country teams that may want to enhance their strategic reflections.

5. Ownership and engagement by national counterparts

EQ 11: To what extent has the UNDAF coordination structure contributed to ensure ownership and engagement by national counterparts?

Finding: The UNDAF coordination structure did not contribute much to ensure ownership and engagement by national counterparts. The engagement with the government was mainly undertaken at the RC level, and less at RGs level. The need for a collective engagement with the government on the UNDAF is required from the UNCT under the reform process, as spelled out in the 2021 Management of Accountability Framework (MAF).

207. The Mid-Term Reflection and UN interviewees and Results Groups raised the issue of the lack of ownership in the UNDAF. Issues identified included:

- The feeling that UNDAF ownership by government counterparts is currently missing as there is no national joint UN – Government Steering Committee to oversee UNDAF.
- The engagement with the government was mainly undertaken at the RC level, and less at RGs level.
- The need to understand what the Government needs from the UN to build a strategic engagement with the Government. There requires a change government perception from thinking about the UN as a grant provider and agency for capacity replacement to perception as providing value added in terms of technical expertise and capacity development of the government institutions.

⁸⁷ Several documents were consulted by the evaluation team, including Results of UNDAF Midterm Reflection; UNDAF Midterm Reflection, Forward Actions (as of September 2021); Session 5, Proposed Next Steps; Some proposed key steps/options for UNCT as the result of UNDAF Internal Reflection; Concept Note on UNDAF 2019-2023 Midterm Reflection.

- It would be important to build on lessons learned from the COVID-19 response and identify how to deliver as one UN system during the pandemic and subsequently.
- It would be useful to identify what are some new ways of working together that are particularly aligned with government needs, what is the value added of the UN, and what the difference does it make for the ones left behind.
- The need for a collective engagement with the government on the UNDAF is required from the UNCT under the reform process, as spelled out in the 2021 Management of Accountability Framework (MAF).
- There is a lack of meaningful engagement at the working level with the RGs, however, it is important to strike a balance, between the absence of Government institutions in the RGs and the high labour-intensive transactions that are required just to coordinate between UN agencies. Agencies are also called to meet more regularly with line ministries in connection with UNDAF reporting.
- It is unclear how the UN could generate a more meaningful engagement with the government in the UNDAF in the remaining period of its cycle
- Finally, Government and development partner interviewees noted that the Ministry of Economy and Finance has the power to coordinate the line ministries.

208. When it comes to CSOs, the UNDAF coordination structure did not contribute much to ensure their engagement. They too stressed that the UN agencies should improve their coordination, including at sub-national level.

Sustainability: Will the benefits last?

EQ: 12: What mechanisms, if any, has the UN established to ensure socio-political, institutional, financial and environmental sustainability? and

EQ 13: What is the likelihood that progress towards the CSDGs is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time?

Finding: The long-standing strategic partnership and the trusting relationship developed with the government by UN agencies are key enabling factors to generate meaningful change through the UNDAF. The alignment of UNDAF strategic priorities with national objectives and the continuous harmonization at the higher policy as well as sectoral levels ensure some Government ownership and investment in its desired outcomes, which are key prerequisites for sustainability. However, innovation and change often requires time and resources and the prospects for sustainability of results are higher where the UN's interventions has been scaled up over more than one UNDAF cycle and where the sector's vision and capacities are more mature. The UNCT is called to intensify its convening and capacitating role for rights-holders and their representatives to ensure a critical mass of demand for civic space and accountability.

209. Sustainability considerations were embedded in the UNDAF at the design stage by virtue of its coherence with national strategies, such as the Rectangular Strategy and the CSDGS. Furthermore, UNDAF workplans are discussed and agreed with government, leading to the RGC having a considerable degree of ownership over the results of the UNDAF. The UNCT has developed a strong partnership with the Government, which helps ensure continuous dialogue at the highest levels, including through the UNCT – RGC annual high-level forum. Hence, Government ownership and its commitment towards development results pursued through the UNDAF are key enabling factors for progress, in which the trust for the UN's role as a neutral and long-standing partner plays an important role, as confirmed by all stakeholders.

210. The intervention logic for the UNDAF's interventions deploys a mix of technical assistance and capacity building at national and subnational levels, alongside human and financial resources. UN Agencies are perceived as providing high quality assistance, including through the employment of international and national expertise, which helps retain capacities in-country. In addition, the UN has

adopted a long-term strategy to work towards results, through building institutions, policy framework and capacity development; while working with communities and civil society to increase awareness and demand for rights and services. The UNCT's work has been scaled up or taken over by government to ensure its effects are not limited in scope, but nation- or society-wide. As a general rule, the UN addresses systemic improvements and changes, although at times interventions are framed as isolated projects.

211. A number of UN supported initiatives have been approved and/or taken on board to be implemented by the government, including the gradual takeover of the school-feeding programme and the expansion of the education scholarship programme; a dedicated office under the MoEYS managing the national Continuous Professional Development System; increased budgets in social services; adoption of the BEEP programme to provide marginalised, out-of-school, unskilled or low-skilled youth with basic education equivalency and skills development opportunities; several TVET curricula; comprehensive sexual education curricula for in-school and out-of-school students and numerous strategies and action plans.

212. Institution building and capacity development for national officials is crucial to enable transfer of know-how and replication of good models. Support to evidence-based policy making, including through increasing capacity for National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Finance and Economy, Ministry of Industry etc., is a good example of interventions that have the potential to create multiplier effects for more sustainable results across the board. However, the Cambodian public administration has relatively high percentages of staff turnover, which increases the cost and to some extent undermines capacity development effectiveness in the medium term.

213. This mix of strategies is likely to ensure an enabling environment for sustainability. However, mixed results have been reported by several stakeholders in the area of human rights, despite continuous capacity building for public institutions. The UNCT is seen as having the potential to play a more prevailing role in capacitating and supporting the civil society sector work with rights-holders to increase their awareness and making their voices heard, to increase outreach as well as sufficient public demand for increased civic space.

214. The design, scale and funding available for the UNDAF's interventions needs to sustain the efforts and ambitions for results. In the area of managing urbanisation, for example, there is still a lack of tangible policies on better urban planning, sustainable and green spaces because the government's vision on the sector has not yet fully materialized, while UN's contribution has been limited by low levels of funding.

215. The UN is active in encouraging innovation, including for the development of financial strategies and new service models. The UN has also embarked on digitalization of service provision, including telemedicine for maternal and child health. However, interventions focusing on bringing new approaches and innovation require time to generate scale and policy impact, hence some interventions will need further support to become sustainable.

216. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have reversed some progress in particular in terms of social and economic outcomes and continued government commitment to increase investment in key sectors is necessary.

Orientation towards impact: What difference does the UNDAF make?

Sustainable progress towards the CSDGs

EQ 14: To what extent are the UNDAF results demonstrating orientation towards impact including the achievement of the expected CSDG targets?

Finding: Through the work and contributions of UN agencies, there has been notable progress towards the CSDGs. Although measuring impact over the short period of time covered by this evaluation is not possible, the UN has contributed to making a difference in the five interconnected outcomes of the

UNDAF strategic framework; including improvement in some socio-economic and development realities in Cambodia by reducing vulnerability and enhancing sustainability; improving human development; diversifying the domestic economy; increasing productivity and competitiveness; seeking to realize human rights and gender equality; and addressing factors giving rise to violence, insecurity and injustice.

217. The incremental contribution of UNDAF implementation on advancing the achievements of SDGs/CSDGs and NSDP is noticeable in the national context. Using result-focused programming and management, UN agencies have developed programmes and plans to put commitments into attainable actions. Also, to encourage synergies and increase the impact of its work in Cambodia, UN Agencies and coordination structures within the UNDAF such as RGs have initiated partnerships with the local communities, donors, CSOs, and technical and development partners. Examples of successful partnerships in HIV work, contributing to SDGs 3, 4, 5, 16, and 17 include the implementation of innovative prevention and differentiated HIV testing, the provision of people-centred treatment services, the building of community capacity, the promotion of comprehensive sexual education, the promotion of gender equality with the inclusion of a diverse group, the successful mobilization of international and domestic resources, and the development of operational guidelines to initiate and enhance integration and sustainable AIDS response are the examples of.

218. The work of RG1 proves that the institutions engaged by the UN have benefited from on-going capacity building to respond to emerging and emergency needs and ensuring continuation of essential health services. For example, the UNCT was able to reach around 10 million people on COVID-19 awareness and prevention, a major effort contributing to the success of the country in suppressing the COVID-19 spread and country re-opening.⁸⁸ The government institutions have received financial and technical support from UN agencies, building capacity of government and NGOs for designed evidence-based national strategies, policies and plans, as well as their implementation, monitoring, evaluation.

219. The SDG targets were set before the pandemic. There are numerous areas where reaching these goals may no longer be feasible because of significant socio-economic events.⁸⁹ The UNESCAP acknowledges in one of its reports that the Asia-Pacific area is not on track to achieve any of the 17 Goals by 2030.⁹⁰ This is due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the negative effects of climate change in the region. Despite the disruption, UN agencies strived to overcome hardships to assure that UNDAF remains strategically positioned and dynamic. The UNDAF delivery has successfully integrated human rights, sustainable development, the environment and the principles and goals of gender equality, as well as improved the health and sanitation services of people in rural areas in line with leave no one behind principles to achieve the government's vision on access to sustainable water supply and sanitation services and living in a sanitary environment by 2025.

220. CSDG and SDG targets are at the core of all the programmes implemented by the UN agencies and RG members, and the orientation towards impact has been recorded in the annual reports. However, the UN is only one actor in a much larger scene, and thus the extent to which demonstrable results are seen will vary significantly. For instance, WFP has worked closely with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) to put into practice a more suitable School Feeding model for government ownership. Almost all of WFP's initiatives have been properly transferred to MoEYS, who will continue to offer scholarships using a cash-based model. In particular, the government will continue to increase its capacity to undertake initiatives like school nutrition programmes, literacy programmes, and support for school

88 Written responses of GR1 to evaluation questions (July 2022)

89 UN (2022). Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2022 – Widening disparities amid COVID-19. United Nations Publication, retrieved from <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/asia-and-pacific-sdg-progress-report-2022>

90 *ibid.*, p. xii

infrastructure.⁹¹ MoEYS Policy Department has formulated the School Feeding Policy, which is a significant step forward towards government ownership and the sustainability of the programme.

221. The Cambodia Climate Change Alliance (CCCA) programme management and outcomes have been effective, consistent with UNDP requirements, and responsive to issues that emerged during implementation. Together with UN system partners, CCCA is widely viewed as a trusted partner of the RGC. The Ministry of the Environment (MoE) in particular has contributed to the capacity strengthening and advocacy for inclusive and sustainable development, in line with the SDGs/CSDGs.⁹²

222. It should also be emphasized that the strategic outcomes of the UNDAF are similar to the development framework for considerably bigger development partner assistance programmes, such as the EU-Cambodia Multi-Annual Indicative Programs 2021-2027⁹³ and JICA Official Development Assistance. However, it does not appear that there is a methodical way to evaluate the numerous contributions of implementation of the UNDAF's on Cambodia's priorities. The way that the UNDAF strategic priorities fit into the Cambodia's development landscape serve as a catalyst to improve the efficiency of national and subnational budgeting and development processes in the direction of NSDP and CSDGs rather than large scale investments.

223. The UNDAF midterm reflection⁹⁴ acknowledges some positive shifting trends, including a change in the narrative regarding human rights as a comparative advantage, the opening opportunity for engagement with a new generation of policy makers/influencers (leadership lab), a change in engagement at the grassroots level as well as with the private sector, and an increase in social protection investments. The Accelerator Group on Social Protection had also influenced the Government's decisions on the investment into social protection during COVID-19 resulting in US\$714.9 million investment by the Government, reaching 700,000 poor and vulnerable households as beneficiaries.⁹⁵

224. Cambodia increased its commitment to climate action. The government updated its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), including stronger targets (a 34 percent emissions reduction target by 2030, up from 27 percent in the previous NDC); submitted a Long-Term Strategy for Carbon Neutrality to the UNFCCC (the 2nd LDC to submit a strategy with a 2050 target), announced a moratorium on the development of new coal-fired power plants (aside from those already approved), and increased public climate expenditure to 2.2 percent of GDP.⁹⁶ Cambodia has also completed the REDD+ readiness phase and can now move on to the implementation phase and prepare to receive result-based payments.

Strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability

EQ 15: To what extent have UN interventions stemming from the UNDAF strengthened economic and individual resilience, and contributed to reducing vulnerability against shocks and crises?

Finding: The UN interventions have helped reduce vulnerability against crises and helped foster resilience and the livelihoods of the populations living in rural and urban settings. The numerous UN initiatives have been to assist the RGC, CSOs, and other partners in enhancing their ability to respond to shocks and crises in the future. For example, the MPTF project on migrants aims to increase the capacity of local governments and frontline support providers. The programme also included the economic empowerment of the most disadvantaged migrants in terms of subsidies for livelihood training so they could practice their skills to use and support their livelihoods.

91 WFP (2020). Endline Evaluation of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) McGovern-Dole Grant Food for Education Programme for WFP Cambodia. FY 2017-2019. Final Evaluation Report: Volume 1 – Main Report. Decentralized Evaluation for Decision-Based Decision-Making. World Food Programme. Phnom Penh, Cambodia

92 CCCA (2019). Final Evaluation of Cambodia Climate Change Alliance – Phase II Programme. Phnom Penh, Cambodia (<https://bit.ly/3vNbrkw>)

93 The European Union Cooperation with Cambodia has focused on the three strategic priorities – Green Growth and Decent Jobs, Education and Skills Development, and Good Governance.

94 UNDAF Mid-Term Reflection, Forward Actions, as of 30 September 2021

95 Voun Dara (June 26, 2022). Cash assistance for poor continues. Retrieved from <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cash-assistance-poor-continues>

96 Written responses of RG3 to evaluation questions (July 2022)

225. The RGs highlighted that, in attempting to build resiliency against shocks and crises, capacity of the government and CSOs has been improved through UN interventions. Local authorities and other stakeholders were capacitated and managed to provide effective assistance to the pandemic-related in-migrations in their localities. For instance, the MPTF initiative enhanced the economic empowerment of the most vulnerable migrants in terms of livelihood skills by providing grants so that they could support their families.⁹⁷ With respect to the education sector, the RGs adopted a system strengthening approach through the implementation of their interventions, ensuring that the processes are country-owned to build structures and institutional capacities to strengthen the resilience of its systems, and to continue providing quality social services even in the event of shocks and crises. Educators were given regular opportunities to update and upgrade their abilities and to adapt to societal changes and unanticipated crises through Continuous Professional Development.

226. The UN's contributions assisted in fostering resilience and the socio-economic well-being of populations living in rural and urban areas, as well as reducing their vulnerability to disasters. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN provided support for the design, setup, implementation, and outcomes monitoring of the government's Cash Transfer Programme targeting 700,000 of the poorest and most vulnerable people from the most impacted households in Cambodia.⁹⁸ During the pandemic UNAIDS also gave strategic advice to minimize service disruption among female entertainment workers, men who have sex with men, and transgender women, through cutting-edge methods including virtual outreaches and HIV self-testing. Additionally, cash-for-work programmes and training opportunities that specifically targeted unemployed hospitality and tourism employees in Siem Reap province increased their fortitude and sped up the country's recovery from the economic downturn.

227. UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) to build national MRD and Provincial Department of Rural Development (PDRD) water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) official's capacity in climate resilient WASH programming and supported the preparation of provincial climate WASH risk assessments and action plans in two provinces in 2022. The UNCT's 2021 Annual Report noted that, through the contribution of private firms engaged by UN agencies, 8,053 households benefitted from secure access to water through climate-resilient infrastructure, and 5,929 IDPoor households gained access to safe water services.⁹⁹ The capacity and systems of Government and private sector stakeholders on drinking water services was strengthened in 2021 with water supply mapping, climate risk assessments, and adaptation tools developed and rolled out at national and sub-national level.

228. RG5 achieved notable progress in strengthening resilience, namely towards CSDG on good health and well-being, by increasing support and prevention services to vulnerable populations, in particular returning migrants and women during the pandemic of COVID-19. RG5 ensured that all populations were protected and have access to basic health services. Such resilience also contributed to reducing inequalities. In addition, there was considerable progress toward CSDG on climate action with an increase of projects and initiatives aimed at addressing the impacts of climate change (for example development of a disaster risk reduction management plan for Angkor, Smart Green ASEAN Cities project, etc.). Last but not least, RG5 ensured the continuity of conservation activities during the pandemic for the safeguarding cultural heritage in Cambodia (CSDG 11). In terms of environmental management, RG3 has made remarkable contributions to resource Government reforms and policies, resulting in 41 percent of Cambodia being designated as protected areas.¹⁰⁰

229. There is a strong possibility that some outcomes will be sustained because a substantial number of UN initiatives incorporate system strengthening, capacity building, knowledge management/exchange

97 Written responses from RG1 to evaluation questions (July 2022)

98 UNDP (2022). *Socioeconomic Impacts of the COVID-19 Cash Transfer Programme in Cambodia: Micro and Macro-level Evaluations*. United Nations Development Programme. Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

https://nspc.gov.kh/Images/Economic%20Report%20July%202022_2022_07_26_18_32_05.pdf

99 UNDCO (2021). *Annual Results Report 2021*. United Nations Development Coordination Office. Phnom Penh, Cambodia (p.27)

100 Written responses of RG3 to evaluation questions (July 2022)

of experiences, and behaviour change. However, the pandemic and the present war in Ukraine and resulting impacts on the global economy have put considerable pressure on Cambodia, to be on track in many CSDG indicators. Although the government's commitment to many programmes has increased over time, it remains relatively low and therefore, sustainability remains an issue. In this regard, the national finance commitment must be strengthened to ensure long-term sustainability.

Programming principles

6. Human Rights-Based Approach

EQ 9a: To what extent was the UNDAF programming principle – Human Rights-Based Approach – mainstreamed in the UNDAF?

Finding: The UNCT has used the UNDAF delivery to contribute to the mainstreaming of the programming principle on Human Rights-Based Approach. However, the Human Rights Theme Group operated mainly online due to the COVID-19 crisis, and did not regularly liaise with the RGs, nor frequently report to the UNCT on progress on mainstreaming HRBA in the UNDAF implementation. That said, an impressive body of work has been undertaken including the UNCT Human Rights Strategy, the 2021 UNCT Retreat on Human Rights in the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Human Rights Markers, data and indicators, the follow-up to the key observations and recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review and human rights mechanisms, addressing the capacity gaps of duty-bearers and of rights-holders, and paying the maximum attention to groups in situations of vulnerability, in an attempt to leave no-one behind.

There are opportunities for improvement in the area of gender mainstreaming in the UNDAF design and implementation. Only 3 of 5 Outcomes employ gender sensitive language and strive to mainstream gender throughout. Out of the 44 Outcome indicators, 20 indicators (45.5 percent) are gender sensitive and track progress against gender equality and the empowerment of women. Three out of six JPs visibly mainstreamed gender. On the positive side, while there was no specific JP on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, at the time of the Scorecard (2020), there is now the JP on Credit guarantees for women's enterprises.

230. The UNDAF document indicated that the effective implementation of the UNDAF requires that the UN system operates in a manner that promotes coherence, ensuring that core programming principles and approaches are fully considered and applied. One of the expected roles of the Results Groups is to mainstream normative programming principles and any crosscutting themes and issues relevant to the country, into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of interventions implemented under the UNDAF, ensuring normative-operational linkages, while addressing national needs and priorities.¹⁰¹

231. With respect to the Human Rights-Based Approach principle, the Human Rights Theme Group (HRTG) is part of the mechanisms in charge of contributing to the UNDAF implementation and is part of the coordination infrastructure.¹⁰² The HRTG may have not been as active as planned, due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors.

232. The HRTG reply to the questionnaire, the complementary meeting with the group, the discussions with the RGs, the Heads of Agencies, the RC, and other interviewees, and documents consulted, provided a good information on the use of the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) in the UNDAF context.

¹⁰¹ Terms of Reference of Results Groups, UNDAF Cambodia 2019-2023, 7 March 2018.:

¹⁰² Supporting Coordination Infrastructure, UNDAF 2019-2023 & SERF 2020-2021, as of 17 Feb 2021.

Human Rights Markers

233. The UN Info human rights markers were used by RGs in the Joint Work Plans to identify their level of contribution to address human rights issues. These markers have been somehow useful to ensure that human rights are taken into consideration in the work and interventions of the RGs. The RGs followed a guidance note on UN INFO, which describe how to mainstream Human Rights Markers in the Joint Work Planning process.¹⁰³

234. The human rights markers gave an indication of the outcomes where human rights were being mainstreamed. In the 2022 Joint Work Plan, a column was added to indicate the human rights markers, with a coding scale from 0 to 3 and numbers attributed to each outcome and intermediary outcome, as shown in **Table 7** below.¹⁰⁴

Table 7 Coding human rights markers

Code	Progress Specification
0	Not expected to contribute to realization of human rights
1	Limited contribution to realization of human rights
2	Significant contribution to realization of human rights
3	Principal contribution to the realization of human rights

235. The markers also helped shape the UNCT Human Rights Strategy workplan, which includes activities from most Results Groups. Activities with the highest markers were incorporated into the Human Rights Strategy. However, a more focused analysis would be needed, with recommendations and follow-up actions for each Results Group.

UNCT Retreat on Human Rights

236. In 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNCT organized a Retreat for strengthening the capacity of the UN to protect and promote human rights in Cambodia.¹⁰⁵ One of the purposes was to ensure a collective leadership to demonstrate in action human rights commitment, ownership and accountability. One of the expected results was to define principles and criteria for joint action on the human rights response strategy.

237. After discussing human rights from a range of perspectives, the UNCT retreat participants talked about the strengthening the UNCT collective leadership and capability, to proactively respond to the systemic deterioration in the human rights situation. The discussions and joint actions identified in the Retreat validated and, in many ways, enhanced the seven pillars initially identified for the Strategy. Finally, the Retreat participants decided to continue the development of the UN Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan – with the identification of concrete actions.

238. The evaluation team noted the quality of this Retreat report, and the importance of its decision to prepare the UNCT Human Rights Strategy. The team found that the Retreat organized during the pandemic showed the UNCT's reactivity to an evolving human rights situation in the COVID-19 context.

¹⁰³ UN INFO Standard User Guidance, Version 1.16, Tracking the UN Promise Towards 2030, UNSDG, 2019. See in particular the guidance on the markers pages 43-45.

¹⁰⁴ See UNDAF Joint Work Plan 2022, provided by the Resident Coordinator Office.

¹⁰⁵ UNCT Cambodia Retreat, Strengthening the capacity of the UN to protect and promote human rights in Cambodia, Report, February 17-19, 2021.

Human Rights Strategy

239. The UNCT Retreat was instrumental for the elaboration of the UNCT Human Rights Strategy,¹⁰⁶ and its 2022 Workplan.¹⁰⁷ The Human Rights Strategy sets out a common approach for the United Nations System in Cambodia to promote and protect human rights. The Human Rights Strategy is called to contribute to implementation of the UNDAF, and to the formulation of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

240. Acting as a framework for the UNCT as it steps up its work on the protection and promotion of human rights, the Strategy fosters a more integrated way of working across the UN System and its three pillars – peace, sustainable development and human rights – to ensure that human rights rest at the core of all UN System actions in Cambodia.

241. The Strategy represents a clear commitment of the UNCT to implement the Secretary-General’s Call to Action on Human Rights and to sharpen the preventative approach. In so doing it also reinforces the Human Rights Up Front Action Plan and the Secretary-General’s Prevention Agenda. The Strategy reinforces the United Nations commitment to support the Government to implement its international human rights obligations and the United Nations Sustainable Goals and to partner with other stakeholders, civil society, international community and private sector to this end.

Data and indicators

242. To some extent the UN has succeeded in strengthening data collection and analysis capacities to incorporate indicators with a human rights approach by the Government and the disaggregation of data by race, sex, geographic location, etc. In particular:

- The UN provided evidence related to human rights challenges generated from surveys and assessment of People Living with HIV Stigma, which were critical for policy and programmatic discussions.
- The UN collects data related to human rights violations, which is disaggregated by gender, age and nationality. The data is processed via the Cambodia Crisis Risk Dashboard (CRD) and visualized to provide an overall picture of civic space in Cambodia. The system can help in generating analysis on a wide range of dimensions. It includes data on all human rights (political, civil, economic, social, environment) though even if disaggregated data seems still insufficient.
- UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Planning to include Child Discipline (CD) questionnaires in 2021 CDHS which was implemented with UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP support, with comprehensive data analysis on CD related indicators been narrated in the DHS report.
- Additionally, administrative child protection data have been regularly collected by the government and analysed through Child Protection Information Management System (CPMIS), with disaggregation by types of child protection concerns, age, sex, vulnerabilities, etc.

Observations and recommendations

243. The key observations and recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and human rights mechanisms (the global ones, not the regional) have been referred to in the UNDAF document (Annex IV). In terms of implementation of observations and recommendations, the evaluation observed the following:

- UPR recommendations are included in the UNDAF but not linked with the outcomes in the results framework.

¹⁰⁶ UNCT Human Rights Strategy 2021-2028, United Nations Cambodia.

¹⁰⁷ Human Rights Strategy Joint Workplan 2022, UN Cambodia.

- UNDAF progress reports do not report on progress on recommendations of UPR and other human rights mechanisms.
- The HRTG is not asked to review the UNDAF progress reports to include information on the human rights mechanisms.
- Observations and recommendations have been used during UNDAF implementation to guide programming, for example through advice provided by the HRTG after reviewing funding proposals, which usually suggests including specific recommendations in the results frameworks.
- Observations and recommendations are often invoked when advocating with the Government.
- Based on the Joint Work Plans of all Results Groups, the HRTG developed the 2022 workplan for the UNCT Human Rights Strategy. The activities were based on the priorities defined by the UNCT, as well as those activities with a high human rights marker.
- Separate efforts are also in place to advocate for the Government to adopt an implementation plan, to facilitate tracking progress in the implementation of recommendations.

Capacity gaps of duty-bearers and of rights-holders

244. The evaluation found that UNDAF implementation addressed capacity gaps of *duty-bearers*, by contributing to the design of policies, initiatives or projects that promoted human rights in the country. These include the 2019 National Dialogue on Public Policies and Laws on Cambodian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) Citizens, and the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Patient Satisfaction Feedback (PSF) from People Living with HIV (PLHIV). OHCHR also supported the drafting of the law establishing a National Human Rights Institution and helped the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Social Affairs to develop policies aimed at reducing the number of people in detention. UNICEF also supported the development of the National Strategy on Social Service Workforce and Training Strategies for Social Service Workforce. The Police Academy also got support for developing the Major Subject Book on Police Response to Child Protection.

245. The UNDAF implementation also contributed to reducing the capacity gaps of *rights-holders*. For example, UNAIDS strengthened communities' participation in the national AIDS response through the Joint Forum of Networks of People Living with HIV and KP (FoNPAM) mechanism. Key populations community networks capacities on data collection and evidence-based advocacy were strengthened. The UN, led by WHO, has also organized a mass campaign on the awareness raising and prevention of COVID-19, reaching millions of rights-holders.

246. It should be noted, however, that there may not be a common understanding among the UN agencies on where the capacity gaps are. At the UNDAF programmatic level, rights-holders are generic (e.g., 'women and men, including those underrepresented, marginalized and vulnerable'). Results Group did not do a gap analysis in terms of which rights-holders are covered by which agency, and which human rights are addressed.

247. Furthermore, UNDAF implementation has contributed to building capacities of civil society in Cambodia covering a wide range of topics such as human rights monitoring, advocacy, digital security, etc. It also engaged with the human rights mechanisms and conducted a security needs assessment for human rights defenders. However, overall, capacity building or activities aimed at reducing capacity gaps are not always based on needs assessments. More coordination would be needed within the UNCT to avoid duplications or targeting the same groups for capacity building activities.

Root causes

248. UNDAF formulation and delivery did pay some attention to root causes of inequalities, vulnerability, and discrimination. However, this was not done systematically. The UNDAF Theory of Change identified problems (e.g., for outcome 4, limited access to justice, constrained political participation, etc.), but it did not identify root causes of those problems. The UNDAF indicators are not linked to root causes (for example, measurement of norms, attitude, behaviour). However, the UNDAF

adopts a pragmatic approach at times by focusing on current needs or existing opportunities, in order to build on incremental progress towards addressing root causes.

Groups in situations of vulnerability

249. In an attempt to leave no-one behind, groups in situations of vulnerability, poverty and suffering from discrimination benefited from priority attention in the UNDAF implementation. These groups include persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, old people, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, low-income families, persons with HIV, LGBTIQ persons, human rights defenders, ethnic minorities, etc.). For example, efforts to include people living with HIV (PLHIV) in the IDPoor registration have continued, resulting in 2,045 PLHIV households being included in the programme as of December 2021.

250. Some outcomes and intermediate outcomes indicate the priority of 'vulnerable' groups; however, it is not done systematically. It is not always clear how specific vulnerable groups are identified for each outcome and intermediate outcome and any gap (or coordination) by agencies. In another country, the CCA identified structured vulnerabilities and their prioritization. Then, results (outcomes) were formulated in clarifying which outcome address which structural vulnerability. In doing so, monitoring of UNDAF's contribution to specific populations left behind was clearer.

The Human Rights Theme Group and the Results Groups

251. The evaluation also tried to determine how the HRTG worked with the Results Groups in relation to HRBA, and how human rights mainstreaming was ensured – or not – in each of the Results Groups. This is the essence of programming principles, one of the functions of the HRTG being to support the implementation of the human rights-based approach to programming.¹⁰⁸

252. As mentioned above, the use of the human rights markers in the Joint Work Plans by RGs has helped the groups to identify the level of contribution of each outcome and intermediary outcome to address human rights issues. Subsequently, the HRTG has used this information to shape the UNCT Human Rights Strategy workplan.

253. There is no formal system in place where the HRTG would regularly liaise with the RGs. The 2016 TOR for this group¹⁰⁹ appears to be outdated. To remain coherent, effective and relevant, the HRTG should, in addition to the coordination with the UNCT, interface with the other UN Theme Groups, the M&E Group, the UN Communication Group, the UN Learning Team and the Operations Management Team. RGs are not mentioned. In practice, the RGs also met rarely, decreasing opportunities for interactions with the HRTG. There is, however, the 2021 Progress report on the SG's Call to Action for Human Rights¹¹⁰ and the reporting under the UNCT Human Rights Strategy, which provide a certain level of accountability.

254. The HRTG is supposed to report annually to the UNCT. In addition, ad hoc reports may be provided as necessary. The chair or a representative of the HRTG can be requested to join UNCT meetings as needed. However, the frequency of this reporting appears to be insufficient. It is also unclear if in the HRTG should report on progress on mainstreaming HRBA in the UNDAF implementation in its report to the UNCT.

7. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

EQ 9b: To what extent was the UNDAF programming principle – Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – mainstreamed in the UNDAF?¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Supporting Coordination Infrastructure, UNDAF 2019-2023 & SERF 2020-2021, as of 17 Feb 2021.

¹⁰⁹ Terms of Reference, UN Human Rights Theme Group (as approved by the UNCT on 21 September 2016).

¹¹⁰ 2021 Progress report on the SG's Call to Action for Human Rights, January-December 2021.

¹¹¹ This Evaluation Question was added after the Inception Report was finalized, to help the evaluation team present its consolidated analysis on the principles in a self-contained section of the report.

Finding: Based on feedback from, and discussions with, key informants, the evaluation team considers that the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) principle was proactively mainstreamed throughout the UNDAF, supported by a number of key exercises. The UNCT undertook a Gender Equality Scorecard Exercise. Twenty of the 44 outcome indicators (or 45.5 percent) were found to be gender sensitive and monitored the advancement of GEWE. Out of the six Joint Programmes, three clearly mainstreamed gender, and there is now a JP on credit guarantees for women’s enterprises. The Gender Theme Group (GTG) contributed significantly to UNDAF processes, such as the CCA, gender evaluations of outcomes, indicators, and annual reviews. The UNCT encouraged the participation of CSOs and women’s rights advocates in the implementation of the UNDAF, in particular joint initiatives, the CCA process, high-level visits and events, awareness raising campaigns, and UN agencies’ programmes. The MoWA received technical aid and other support for creating comprehensive GEWE policies and guidelines. The GTG also supported Results Groups in applying the UN-Info Gender Equality Marker in the joint work plans. The thorough Gender Equality Mainstreaming (GEM) training given to the GTG, and RGs is regarded as the group’s most valuable contribution. However, the GTG lacks dedicated financial resources to carry out its yearly work plan, and is reliant on agencies’ in-kind contributions, the majority of which are supported by the RCO.

255. The Gender Theme Group (GTG) reply to the questionnaire, the complementary meeting with the group, the discussions with the RGs, the Heads of Agencies, the RC, and other interviewees (mainly development partners, CSOs, research and academic institutions), and documents consulted, provided evidence on the mainstreaming of the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in the UNDAF context.

256. With respect to the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment principle, the Gender Theme Group is also part of the mechanisms in charge of contributing to the UNDAF Implementation, and it is part of the coordination infrastructure.¹¹²

Gender Markers

257. Just like for the Human Rights Markers, some Gender Markers were used by RGs in the Joint Work Plans to identify their level of contribution to address gender issues, following the guidance note on UN INFO (see the section above on HRBA).

Gender Equality Scorecard

258. A Gender Equality Scorecard Exercise was conducted by the UNCT in 2020.¹¹³ The UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard is a globally standardized rapid assessment of UN country level gender mainstreaming practices. The tool highlights the growing importance of interagency collaboration and coordination to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) results at the country level. At the time of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard Exercise in Cambodia, the UN System in Cambodia was in the second year of the implementation of the UNDAF 2019-2023 and had been operating within the global COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020.

259. In the planning dimension, for UNDAF Outcomes, the score approaches minimum requirements as only some Outcomes (1, 2 and 4) visibly mainstreamed gender while others lacked substantive gender analysis and description. For UNDAF Indicators, the score meets minimum requirements as 45.5 percent of the indicators (20 of 44) are gender sensitive and track progress against GEWE.

260. In the programming dimension, the indicators focus on gender mainstreaming and gender sensitivity in joint programmes, communication and advocacy and UNDAF M&E. The team assessed six out of eight Joint Programmes (JPs) and found that three of the six JPs visibly mainstreamed gender, one did not address gender, one lacked gender sensitive indicators and one results framework was not

¹¹² Supporting Coordination Infrastructure, UNDAF 2019-2023 & SERF 2020-2021, as of 17 Feb 2021.

¹¹³ UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard Assessment Report and Action Plan United Nations Country Team in Cambodia Phnom Penh, Cambodia, January 2021.

available for assessment. The JP indicator is scored “approaching minimum requirements” as only half of the JPs mainstreamed gender. There is no JP specifically targeting gender equality and there is an absence of a formal screening system to ensure gender mainstreaming in JPs.

261. For UNDAF M&E, the score is also “approaching minimum requirements” as while the UNDAF Results Report 2019 and UNDAF Results Matrix monitoring sheets contain progress against some gender specific indicators, specifically for Outcomes 1 and 4, and to some extent Outcome 5, there is no updated information against indicators in Outcomes 2 and 3. Furthermore, targeted gender training on gender sensitive M&E has not taken place for M&E focal points in the UNDAF Results Groups.

262. The partnership dimension measures UN system engagement with the government system, including the national women’s machinery in Cambodia, as well as engagement with GEWE CSOs. Partnerships were a strong area of focus for the UNCT in Cambodia. For joint engagement with government, the score is “exceeding minimum requirements”. For Indicator 3.2 which measures engagement with GEWE CSOs, the score is “meeting minimum requirements” as the UNCT actively joined and supported several initiatives to foster GEWE.

263. With respect to the results dimension, the UNCT has achieved or is on track to achieve some gender equality and the empowerment of women results as planned in the UNDAF outcomes in line with SDG priorities including SDG 5. 2020 was the second year of UNDAF implementation thus is quite early to assess achievement of results. Nevertheless, the UNDAF Results Report 2019 indicates that the UNCT has achieved some of the key results and is on track to achieve the gender equality targets and results as planned in the UNDAF 2019-2023. Reasonable progress has been made, especially under Outcomes 1 and 4 and to some extent, progress under Outcomes 2 and 3. Finally, only one outcome level UNDAF result has contributed to transformative change in relation to GEWE. Though results show some progress is being made towards GEWE, none of them can be qualified as transformative under the UNCTSWAP Guidance definition.

Participation of women and girls in the implementation of the UNDAF

264. The UNCT has collaborated with GEWE CSOs and women’s rights advocates on joint initiatives. Women’s rights advocates/CSOs have participated in the CCA process on various occasions/years, have been invited to high-level visits and events, and engaged in awareness raising campaigns and events. Various UN entities engaged with women and girls in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their programmes; this includes women entertainment workers, women living with HIV, LGBTQI persons, girls in school, coalition of government women leaders, women’s champions networks, and women human rights defenders. Creating space for meaningful contribution remains an area for continuous improvement especially at the local level. (For more information see UNCT SWAP Indicator 3.2 – UNCT meets minimum requirements).

Mainstreaming of GEWE in UNDAF implementation

265. The GEWE principle has been mainstreamed in the UNDAF outcomes, outcome indicators, joint programmes, and joint communication activities (see UNCT SWAP Indicator 1.2; 1.3; 2.1; 3.1 etc.). GEWE is visibly mainstreamed across some outcome areas in line with SDG priorities, including SDG 5. UNDAF Outcomes 1, 2 and 4 employ gender-sensitive language, particularly in the Outcome statement. Out of the 44 Intermediate Outcome indicators, 20 (45.5 percent) are gender sensitive and track progress against GEWE. Gender Equality is visibly mainstreamed into at least 50 percent of JPs. The UNCT has contributed collaboratively to joint communication activities and joint advocacy campaigns on GEWE. When the UNCT SWAP assessment was made in 2020, it was quite early to assess achievement of results. The principle of GEWE has been further mainstreamed in UNDAF implementation through promoting gender sensitive and responsive policies and programmes within various sectors of the government, as well as internal gender audits.

Role of the Gender Theme Group in mainstreaming GEWE

266. The UN Gender Theme Group (GTG) is co-chaired by UNDP and UNFPA since 2021, previously chaired by UN WOMEN. The GTG has a TOR and meets regularly. It made notable inputs to UNDAF processes, including the CCA, gender reviews of outcomes, indicators and results matrix, and participates in annual reviews. It also supports Results Groups in applying the Gender Equality Marker. The GTG developed a work plan in 2021 and 2022, with concrete actions on how to mainstream GEWE in the UNDAF, as well as in government policies and processes, as well as build capacities of government, CSO partners, and UN colleagues alike.

267. With respect to the dynamic of working with the Results Groups, some GTG members are also the members of the Results Groups, who have provided technical inputs and reviews on relevant documents, including UNCT confidential reports to the CEDAW committee, annual workplan, M&E Framework, and reports of the results groups. This has facilitated the integration of GEWE to some extent in the RG's workplans.

UNDAF contribution to the design of policies, initiatives, projects, advocacy in promoting GEWE

268. The UNCT has collaborated with various government agencies and partners on initiatives that foster gender equality within the current UNDAF cycle (UNCT SWAP indicator 3.1 met). Technical assistance and other support have been provided to MOWA for developing the overarching GEWE policies, strategies, guidelines, etc. The UNCT has also continued to integrate gender within thematic and sectoral interventions related to Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCs) and climate action, natural resource management, disaster resilience, food security and nutrition, agriculture, fisheries, HIV/AIDS, health, statistics, youth, etc. This has strengthened the GEWE approach in government policies, strategies, etc. The UNCT has also provided capacity building on various aspects of GEWE.

Development of national/institutional capacities to ensure sustainability

269. Institutional capacities have been developed to ensure sustainability of gender mainstreaming in public policies. Several UN agencies have joined to provide technical support and strengthen the capacities of MOWA to lead the development and implementation of key gender equality policies – the Neary Rattanak V and NAPVAW III, and the draft Policy on Gender Equality – as well as to enhance the MOWA's capacity to coordinate across ministries for better gender mainstreaming across sectors. However, MOWA faces some systemic issues within the political economy and broader governance framework of the country, impairing its ability to deliver on its mandate despite good intentions from the ministry and development partners (including UN Agencies). Institutional capacities for developing and implementing gender-sensitive policies have also been developed with other line ministries such as MoSAVY, MoEYS, MoInformation, and other stakeholders including women leaders, media professionals/journalists, teachers, service providers, local authorities, and communities, which resulted in gender mainstreaming at many levels. Moreover, the Government, with support from UNDP, UN Women and other agencies have established and built capacities of national gender mechanisms, such as the Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCC) and the Gender Based Violence against Women Technical Working Group (GBV-TWG) at the national and provincial levels, with the objective of building sustainability.

270. The UNCT actively and extensively engaged the government, especially the national women's machinery in all UNDAF processes, while also strengthening the data and statistical architecture and capabilities across the line ministries, Ministry of Planning, and National Institute of Statistics. For example, the UNCT supported the MoEYS in developing and upgrading Cambodia's education-related data management systems to generate sex-disaggregated data. UNDP and other agencies supported the NIS to revisit the C/SDGs indicators and update new data regarding gender, health, education, and other sectors in the Camstat platform. Another example is the technical assistance to the National Council for Sustainable Development to set up an online transparency system to track and report on progress made

in implementation of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the finance received, and the capacity support needed (UNDP and FAO). Cross-cutting aspects such as gender equality will be monitored and reported annually, with action reporting by the ministries via the system for the first time in January 2022.

Effectiveness of GTG contributions and how to achieve better results

271. The most effective contribution made by the GTG in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment is considered to be the extensive Gender Equality Mainstreaming (GEM) training provided to GTG and RGs in 2021, with the participation of the regional Issue-Based Coalition on Gender equality.

272. In terms of what could have been done differently to achieve better results, the UNCT SWAP Gender Scorecard Assessment was conducted in 2019, with the involvement of the GTG and RGs. However, this was only a semi-participatory process and the integration of GEWE was ad-hoc. For example, the development of annual workplans and reports, and the exercise to assess the gender equality marker was conducted by individual agencies. In 2022, a more coordinated approach to support the development of the joint work plans was adopted, where the GTG members in each RG were identified and assigned to support RGs in the JWP formulation, however, the extent to which this was done was not analysed.

Economic and human resources available

273. More economic and human resources would have enhanced the effective GEWE mainstreaming in the UNDAF. To date, the GTG does not have any dedicated financial resources attached to facilitating its annual work plan. It is dependent on in-kind contributions of agencies based on their mandates, as well as their availability of funds and human resources.

274. More ownership and active participation of GTG members would have helped lead some of the GTG activities. Most activities are driven by the GTG secretariat, implying a heavy involvement for the RCO which currently has some dedicated resources. However, greater clarity on the roles and value-addition of the RCO, in coordination and facilitation of GTG and other UNDAF groups, would be needed.

275. Lastly, more investment from the leadership of each agency and more resources would help to bring the groups together for regular reflection and learning. In addition, capacitating the members on UN accountability in promoting GEWE and strengthening technical gender expertise would be very useful. Indeed, many GTG members are gender focal points within their agency are not necessarily gender technical experts (including on the various specialized thematic/technical areas of the RGs), which affects the GTG’s ability to substantively advance GEWE in the UNDAF.

Limitations and Lessons Learned

276. As mentioned in the 2021 UNEG UNSDCF Guideline/Template for Evaluation Reports, this section provides an opportunity for the RC, the RCO, the UNCT, but also to DCO, the Regional Hubs, and UNEG to reflect on opportunities and challenges presented by this evaluation, in order to ensure best practice in future UNSDCF evaluations globally. These observations and lessons may also feed into the UN Reform evaluation thinking and provide opportunities to learn from one of the first evaluations conducted in 2022 within the context of the new guidelines. The Evaluation Team’s input to this discussion is set out in **Table 8**.

Table 8 Limitations and lessons learned

Context / Observations	Lessons
1. Overview of the new requirements of the 2021 evaluation guidelines	Lesson 1:

This evaluation took place in a context in which the UN system is trying to strengthen the evaluation function, especially the UNDAF/UNSDCF evaluations, based on the latest General Assembly QCPR Resolution. This is clearly reflected in the new evaluation guidelines (September 2021). The new guidelines and some tools (i.e., TOC, QA, etc.) are being tested during new evaluations.

Compared to the previous guidelines, the new ones add nine requirements, which imply additional efforts from the evaluation teams:

1. Preparing a systematic purposive sampling framework for the Inception Report, to identify interventions and stakeholders, based on a comprehensive stakeholder mapping and analysis, drafted by the Evaluation Manager, and reviewed by the RCO, the Evaluation Management Team and the Evaluation Reference Group, in order to identify the direct and indirect partners of the UNDAF.
2. Development of a common understanding on the UNDAF Theory of Change, through a synoptic tool and a Technical Meeting, and the preparation of a reconstructed TOC, if needed.
3. Development of a new format for the evaluation design matrix, in which the evaluation questions are supplemented by sets of hypotheses that capture the key aspects of the intervention logic associated with the scope of the questions.
4. Preparation of a Performance Rating (Evaluation guidelines appendix 6).
5. Compliance with a DCO Quality Assurance tool.
6. Writing of a 15 pages Initial Evaluation Report, supported by a PowerPoint.
7. Extensive review process of the draft report, following comments from numerous actors. For this evaluation, these actors are the Evaluation Manager, the RCO, the Evaluation Management Team, the Evaluation Reference Group, the UNCT, Results Groups and Theme Groups, the M&E Task Force, other UN groups and staff, DCO and the Regional Team, as well as counterparts and partners.
8. Preparation of an Evaluation Brief.
9. Presentations of the evaluation at both a Validation Workshop and a Dissemination Workshop.

These new requirements show that UNDAF evaluations are now much more complex than before, involving many more actors and processes, requiring significant coordination, and a number of time-consuming activities.

With respect to the previous guidelines, the new ones add a number of new requirements which imply additional effort from the evaluation teams. It is important that these requirements be commensurate with the resources planned for UNDAF evaluations.

<p>2. A time-consuming stakeholder mapping and sampling</p> <p>The Evaluation Guidelines (p. 14) indicate that “A systematic stakeholder identification and mapping of the development actors, including development landscape analysis, should be conducted as part of the planning phase of the evaluation. Detailed stakeholder mapping and analysis will be done during the inception phase”.</p> <p>The team had to invest significant time for the comprehensive stakeholder mapping and purposive sampling during the inception phase. The process leading the team, RCO and UN agencies to decide who were the key stakeholders of the UN in Cambodia, who was going to be included in the comprehensive mapping, and who was going to be included in the sampling and participate to the data collection process, could have been much shorter.</p>	<p>Lesson 2:</p> <p>It would be important to have a more streamlined process for the comprehensive stakeholder mapping and the purposive sampling, since these are time-consuming processes. The comprehensive stakeholder mapping should be the responsibility of the Evaluation Manager, and reviewed by the RCO, the Evaluation Management Team and the Evaluation Reference Group, as noted in the Guidelines (section 6, p. 22), and should be ready before the evaluation starts, for the consultants to use for the sampling in coordination with the different stakeholders.</p>
<p>3. The importance given to the Theory of Change analysis</p> <p>The ToC Technical Meeting is a new requirement under the new evaluation guidelines. The requirements increased with respect to the TOR, and became particularly time consuming, with the organization of three meetings with RGs. Part of the time needed for these TOC meetings was also due to a learning by doing approach, and instruments that were shared by DCO during the course of the evaluation needed some adaptations to be used at their full potential. The team developed, however, a successful participative methodology that helped alleviate the abstract character of this exercise.</p>	<p>Lesson 3:</p> <p>It will be important to be pragmatic and efficient in dealing with the new requirement on the TOC, by keeping the objectives of this/these meetings simple. Also, organizing a single TOC meeting would decrease the investment of time for both the Evaluation Team and the RGs’ participants.</p>
<p>4. Suitability of indicators to measure progress</p> <p>The lack of sufficient data for tracking the progress of all indicators made it difficult to appreciate results achieved by the UNDAF. Indeed, data was not available for 47 percent of the indicators. In addition, the UNDAF Results Matrix was not updated in the aftermath of the pandemic, and an updated matrix was not made available to the evaluators.</p> <p>The Results Matrix drew on a set of high-level and ambitious indicators, which were not always representative of the logic of UNDAF interventions.</p> <p>Finally, the attribution of results was not always possible given that other factors could have influenced the outcomes. While the UN’s contributions towards the achieved results could be shown, in the majority of cases results could not be attributed to the UN alone.</p>	<p>Lesson 4:</p> <p>It will be important to have sufficient data for tracking the progress of all indicators and appreciate results achieved by the next UNSDCF. Similarly, it will be important to improve the design and usefulness of the next UNSDCF Results Matrix. Outcomes and intermediary outcomes, and indicators, should be clearly attributable to the UN Development System, making sure that the UNSDCF is achievable in five years, and not be overly ambitious.</p>

Conclusions

Conclusion 1 – Relevance and adaptability:

277. Based on the UNDAF document, the questionnaire replies from Results Groups, and various interviews, the evaluation team confirms the relevance of the UNDAF strategic outcomes and priorities, as they contribute directly to key national priorities, as laid out in the Cambodia National Strategic Development Plan (2019-2023), the Rectangular Strategy IV and sectoral strategies. Its outcomes are also

relevant in terms of internationally agreed goals and human rights commitments, the Cambodian 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The UN's work is valued for its independence and reliability and is increasingly important in the context of the need to expand civil space and the ability to enhance interactions between partners. The UNDAF coordination and delivery has built-in flexibilities that have allowed timely adjustment of interventions to accommodate the needs arising from external unexpected shocks. UN Agencies played a crucial role in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cambodia. The Socio-Economic Response Framework (SERF) is a clear example of how resilient, responsive and strategic the UNCT has been.

Conclusion 2 - Effectiveness:

278. The analysis of effectiveness, mainly based on the analysis of the UNDAF Results Matrix by the evaluators and on interviews of Results Groups and the RCO, showed that the implementation of the UNDAF achieved notable Results under Outcome 1 – Expanding Social Opportunities, in particular enhanced through its multifaceted interventions in the wake of the pandemic and ensuing efforts to prepare the country response, provide relief measures and ensure continuity of essential health and education services. UNDAF interventions under Outcome 3 have also been relatively effective, particularly regarding the nutrition agenda and increasing awareness on climate and disaster risk reduction. There are several successful achievements under Outcome 2 such as support to youth employment, adult literacy, agriculture masterplan, industrial policy and Outcome 5 such as increased water access to some urban communities; smart city initiative and the 2019 Urbanisation Forum; but most interventions have been fragmented and did not succeed in showing outcome level results. Under Outcome 4, implementation of the UNDAF has pushed forward the human rights and governance agenda, but the extent of Government and society level uptake is still to be assessed. The evaluators note that there is more potential to create synergies and multiplier effects within and across outcomes.

279. Effectiveness has been further undermined by a shortfall in funding, particularly in areas such as urbanisation and access to services, and a concentration of resources in COVID-19-centred interventions. The UNCT has leveraged its strategic positioning in the country to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. Its work in post-pandemic response from a health, social and economic recovery perspective expanded social protection schemes, supported child and youth development and the nutrition agenda, and produced tangible results. UN Agency responses to the humanitarian emergencies has been one of the strengths of UNDAF implementation. This is a particularly relevant area of work, aligned with Cambodia's needs which would benefit from further resources mobilization efforts to expand disaster risk response and resilience programming. A better integration of interventions with partners and UN agencies would strengthen their effectiveness. The UN has adopted a system change approach to development, working concurrently with capacity development, institution building and legislative and strategic change. There has been a heavy emphasis on the development of numerous strategies, policy documents, action plans and reports in each sector.

280. The UNDAF Results Matrix, however, is not fully coherent, with indicators often pitched at high outcome level and very diverse numbers and levels of indicators per intermediate outcome which may create biases of interpretation for the evaluation of effectiveness. Frequently, there are no direct links between results defined at intermediate outcome level with ambitious indicators, and output level indicators, which may undermine the coherence of the results chain, as well as the accountability for implementation.

Conclusion 3 - Efficiency:

281. The UNCT has prioritised activities based on the needs, according to interviewees. It has adapted approaches and repurposed resources to respond to emerging needs. Shortfalls in mobilisation of funding have hindered optimisation of the UNDAF. As observed by CSOs, competing priorities of agencies have led to the pursuit of numerous small-scale projects and interventions without much integration. The UNDAF lacks a resource mobilisation strategy and an integrated funding framework, which has

limited incentives for joint programming and the potential to leverage work under joint programmes to maximise outcomes. The RC has played an effective role in leveraging leadership and the diverse expertise of the UN and fostering strategic partnerships with development partners.

Conclusion 4 - Coherence:

282. With respect to external coherence of support and partnerships, the UNCT worked in partnerships with the Government, development partners, CSOs, academia, and the private sector. The UN is viewed as a trusted partner and reference among all these actors. The multi-stakeholder engagement approach was applied in the UNDAF implementation, even if it was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this evaluation found gaps and challenges with regards to the engagement with these partners and noted that the UNSDCF's coherence could be improved. Based on documentary evidence and interviews, the evaluators observe room for progress in enhancing long-term partnerships: (i) with the Government, stressing that partnership with UN agencies was sometimes hampered by a lack of coordination among UN agencies; (ii) with the CSOs, involved in an ad-hoc way and in short-term partnerships with the UN, with few synergies and coordination among agencies - at both national and subnational level - and lacking support from the UN system, especially when addressing critical issues like human rights; (iii) with development partners, who consider the partnership with UN agencies as very beneficial, but lacking a specific UN strategy; (iv) and with the private sector, research and academic institutions, with whom UN agency engagement is limited.

Conclusion 5 - Coordination:

283. The mechanisms for the UNDAF implementation contributed to an increased synergy, particularly the 11 Joint Programmes, even if these are rather resource-driven. The evaluators consider interesting a possible model of four Joint Programmes to address sustainable living and climate change, designed by RG3. While more evidence would be needed regarding the collaboration within JPs, cooperation and synergy between agencies is sometimes limited. Based on collected evidence, the UNCT under RCO leadership has also strengthened inter-agency coordination through joint programming and advocacy, which is encouraging in terms of higher-level results, like in the case of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluation also found that the RGs' work is demanding and lacking additional resources, which places limitations to the ambitions of UN reform. The work done with the Accelerators is mostly appreciated. The RCO led efforts on strategic thinking (i.e., Foresight, Preferred Future, and Shifting Mindsets) are promising. Finally, the UNDAF coordination structure did not contribute much to ensure ownership and engagement by national counterparts.

Conclusion 6 – Sustainability and orientation towards impact:

284. Regarding sustainability, key enabling factors include the UNCT's long-standing partnership with the Government and the trusting relationship developed to generate meaningful change through the implementation of the UNDAF. However, based on documentary evidence, the replies to the questionnaires from Results Groups and various interviews, the evaluation found that innovation and change often requires time and resources and the prospects for sustainability of results are higher where UN agency interventions have been scaled up over more than one UNDAF cycle, and where the sector's vision and capacities are more mature. The evaluators also noted the need to intensify the UNCT's convening and capacitating role for rights-holders and their representatives to ensure a critical mass of demand for civic space and accountability. Although measuring impact over the short period of time covered by this evaluation is not possible, the evaluation observed that UNDAF implementation has contributed to making a difference in the five interconnected outcomes of the UNDAF, including: improvement in some socio-economic and development realities in Cambodia by reducing vulnerability and enhancing sustainability; improving human development; diversifying the domestic economy; increasing productivity and competitiveness; seeking to realize human rights and gender equality; and addressing sources of violence, insecurity and injustice. The evaluators also concluded that UN

interventions have helped reduce vulnerability to shocks and helped foster resilience and the socio-economic livelihoods of the populations living in rural and urban settings.

Conclusion 7 - Human Rights-Based Approach:

285. Through UNDAF delivery, the UNCT contributed to the mainstreaming of the programming principle on a Human Rights-Based Approach. Efforts included the significant work undertaken on the UNCT Human Rights Strategy, the important 2021 UNCT Retreat on Human Rights in the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Human Rights Markers, data and indicators, the follow-up to the key observations and recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review and human rights mechanisms, addressing the capacity gaps of duty-bearers and of rights-holders, and paying the maximum attention to groups in situations of vulnerability, in an attempt to leave no-one behind. However, based on questionnaire replies and interviews, the evaluation team observed that the Human Rights Theme Group could have met more regularly and liaised more regularly with the RGs, and reported more frequently to the UNCT.

Conclusion 8 - Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment:

286. Similarly, through UNDAF delivery, the UNCT contributed to the mainstreaming of the programming principle on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) in the UNDAF design. Based on the Gender Equality Scorecard Exercise conducted by the UNCT, there are opportunities for improvement in the area of gender mainstreaming in the UNDAF design and implementation. That said, the UNCT encouraged the participation of CSOs and women’s rights advocates in the implementation of the UNDAF. Furthermore, the UNCT collaborated and advocated with various government agencies and partners on initiatives that fostered gender equality, including on policies, strategies, guidelines, etc. The UN Gender Theme Group made notable inputs to UNDAF processes, including the CCA, gender reviews of outcomes, indicators and results matrix, annual reviews, UN-Info Gender Equality Marker, training, etc. However, the Scorecard Assessment was conducted through a semi-participatory process with individual agencies, instead of the RGs. Finally, the GTG does not have any dedicated financial resources to implement its annual work plan.

Recommendations

287. The evaluation team offers nine recommendations, together with suggested actions to help implement them, as set out in **Table 9** below. Many stakeholders were involved in developing these recommendations through the revision of the draft report and the Stakeholders Workshop. The team is aware, however, that the implementation of some actions may be on-going, including in the framework of the new Cooperation Framework preparations. Similarly, while recommendations are inspired by the experience of this UNDAF and by UN Reform, the evaluators recognize the challenges in enhancing the relevance, and effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and the programming principles of the next Cooperation Framework. In addition, the evaluation team bears in mind that all capacities (technical, human, financial) may not be in place to fully respond to all recommendations.

288. These recommendations are aimed to trigger reflection and concrete action around the UNDAF implementation in the context of the CSDGs and UN Reform. This evaluation report and these recommendations will be followed by a mandatory management response and action plan drafted by the Evaluation Management Team and approved by the Evaluation Reference Group.

Table 9 Table of Recommendations

Key Recommendations	Suggested actions
<p>Recommendation 1: The UNCT and Government should ensure that the next</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Result Framework to better reflect the contributions of the UN Development System, based on data and indicators that are

<p>UNSDCF is based on the new guidelines for developing a Cooperation Framework to improve the design, conception and usefulness of the instrument to capture a shared vision and mission in the context of the SDGs.</p> <p>High priority</p> <p>By June 2023 and on-going</p> <p><i>Linked to Conclusion 5. Coordination</i></p>	<p>evenly distributed across outputs and with data that is available periodically.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that the UNSDCF outcome and output targets in the results framework are relevant and realistic in five years, and not overly ambitious. ● Conduct an indicator validation exercise/evaluability exercise on a regular basis to ensure the suitability of the results matrix to measure results.
<p>Recommendation 2:</p> <p>The UNCT should encourage and enhance Government participation in the strategic management of the next UNSDCF.</p> <p>Medium priority</p> <p>By June 2023 and on-going</p> <p><i>Linked to Conclusion 5. Coordination</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue efforts to strengthen Government participation in, and strengthen their engagement with, the UNSDCF through establishing a functioning national joint UN-Government Steering committee as mentioned in the UNSDCF guidance. ● Ensure that yearly review with government counterpart (in accordance with the UNSDCF guidance) on the UNSDCF implementation is organized by the UNCT, reviewing results and addressing more substantive issues, to ensure a more meaningful participation of high-level Government officials in the UNSDCF implementation and strategic management. ● Address line ministries' needs through joint learning opportunities, using learning as a way to deepen the Government's engagement on topics such as COVID-19 response, foresight, impact investing, etc., and enhance work at sub-national level. ● Encourage a meaningful engagement of Government at the working level with the RGs, while striking a balance between the absence of Government institutions in the RGs and the highly labour-intensive transactions that are required to coordinate between UN agencies.
<p>Recommendation 3:</p> <p>The UNCT should develop partnership strategies to more effectively engage CSOs, the private sector, academia and development partners to encourage more deliberate and systematic engagement with these actors to enhance UNSDCF effectiveness.</p> <p>Medium priority</p> <p>By June 2023 and on-going</p> <p><i>Linked to Conclusion 4. Coherence</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve UNSDCF's coherence by developing a multi-stakeholder strategic framework to enhance long-term strategic partnerships with stakeholders. ● Strengthen synergies and coordination among UN agencies in their work with CSOs through more strategic engagement at both national and subnational levels. A long-term partnership strategy should be developed to guide UN agencies in engaging CSOs, and UN agencies should avoid ad-hoc involvement with CSOs. ● Ensure stronger support to local and national CSOs by UN agencies in coordination with development partners, especially when these CSOs address critical or sensitive issues like Human Rights, including where possible support to strengthening CSO fora. ● Strengthen or define a more specific partnership strategy with development partners involved in various programmes and initiatives, building on complementarities, and avoiding duplications.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Elaborate a partnership strategy with the private sector. ● Prepare a long-term UN engagement strategy with research and academic institutions and think-tanks, which may include the launch of collaborative projects to conduct evidence-based and scientific research on the UNSDCF strategic objectives and the CSDGs.
<p>Recommendation 4:</p> <p>The UNCT should capitalize on the comparative expertise and resources of implementing UN Agencies to strengthen joint programming, reduce duplication of efforts, and implement targeted joint programmes, to reach higher level results.</p> <p>Medium priority</p> <p>By June 2023 and on-going</p> <p><i>Linked to Conclusion 5. Coordination and 6. Sustainability and orientation towards impact</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to implement and further develop Joint Programme activities where the possibility of higher-level results exists; reduces duplication of efforts, particularly in strategic areas. ● Strengthen inter-agency cooperation, connectedness and synergy through joint programming and advocacy, where different UN agencies combine expertise and resources to achieve higher level results. ● Mobilize resources for, and implement, targeted Joint Programmes that are selected after a cost-benefit analysis, reflecting complementarities amongst UN agencies to collectively work together on common national development priorities, and where there is the possibility for higher-level results and reduced duplication of efforts in particularly strategic areas. ● Envisage the implementation of the UNSDCF through some key Joint Programmes created by the Results Groups through UNDAF work planning processes, using the possible model of four Joint Programmes imagined by RG3 to address sustainable living and climate change. ● Build on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 response and identify how the UNCT delivered as one UN system during the pandemic and in its aftermath to improve implementation of the UNDAF and subsequent UNSDCF.
<p>Recommendation 5:</p> <p>The UNCT should strengthen its strategic positioning through the next UNSDCF by pursuing the efforts made on strategic thinking and designing the UNSDCF in a manner that facilitates integration across sectors.</p> <p>High priority</p> <p>By June 2023 and on-going</p> <p><i>Linked to 5. Coordination</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue pursuing the efforts made by the UNCT on strategic thinking (i.e., Foresight, Preferred Future, and Shifting Mindsets) building on UNCT’s comparative advantage. ● Design the next UNSDCF in a manner that facilitates integration across sectors such as environment and urbanisation; economic development and agriculture; social protection and employment; education, health and digital transformation. Reduce the number of outcomes to lessen the administrative burden for the RGs with the aim of improving joint programming. ● Continue to focus on social and economic development in particular social protection, health, child and youth development and the nutrition agenda to respond to the ongoing priorities in the Cambodian context. ● Keep developing the portfolio in the areas of disaster risk response and resilient productive systems through enhanced efforts for resource mobilization (to expand funding) and better integration of interventions among the different UN agencies.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work together through strategic partnership with the government at national and particularly subnational level to achieve the strategies and laws that have been developed but not implemented.
<p>Recommendation 6:</p> <p>UN agencies should increase their cooperation through the Results and Theme Groups and use them to help the UNCT to strategically manage the UNSDCF, with the RC/UNCT leadership.</p> <p>Medium priority</p> <p>By December 2023 and on-going</p> <p>Linked to Conclusion 5. Coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider reactivating the UN Programme Management Team (PMT), to optimize coordination through the Result Groups, the Theme Groups, and the UN Communication Groups, and the Accelerators, and to provide strategic guidance on UNSDCF implementation with a focus on promoting coherence, complementarity and collaborative action where possible. ● Improve internal cooperation mechanisms and synergies between agencies involved in the implementation of the UNSDCF to reach higher-level results, through Results Groups’ meetings and community platforms. ● Have regular Results Groups’ meetings (for example quarterly) to ensure proper implementation and monitoring, and to support the UNCT in strategically managing the UNSDCF with the use of JWPs and a simple M&E Framework. ● Strengthen Results Groups’ efforts to ensure strong mainstreaming of programming principles in their JWPs and strategies (especially LNOB, HRBA and GEWE), with the support of the Gender and Human Rights Theme Groups, through regular meetings between the RGs and the TGs. ● Have the Results and Theme Groups report on a regular basis to the UNCT to support the UNCT in strategically managing the UNSDCF through regular updates on implementation and other relevant issues. ● Incorporate the UNSDCF-related tasks undertaken by agencies’ staff in their job descriptions and have proper incentives to enhance their motivation and commitment to joint work. ● Ensure the RCO roles and added value is clearly communicated to Results Groups, Theme Groups, and other groups. This can be done through a document made available to all or meeting/presentation. ● Analyse possible duplications and scenarios for the coordination structure to understand to what degree duplication has been happening and how to make these groups more effective and efficient going forward.
<p>Recommendation 7:</p> <p>The UNCT, under the leadership of the RC, should ensure greater mainstreaming of the UNSDCF guiding principles on Leave No One Behind and the Human Rights-Based Approach.</p> <p>High priority</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reflect Leave No One Behind (LNOB), along with the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) approaches, in activities and indicators of the programmes implemented to ensure that these approaches are at the centre of the next UNSDCF as cross-cutting principles, essential for achieving all Results, together with other guiding principles as specified in the revised UNSDCF Guidelines. ● Use the OHCHR guidance on National Mechanisms for Reporting & Follow-up to ensure that the development and implementation of the next UNSDCF appropriately responds to observations and recommendations of the UPR and other HR mechanisms.

<p>By December 2023 and on-going</p> <p><i>Linked to Conclusion 7. Human Rights-Based Approach (programming principles)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that future updates of the CCA accurately identify the most vulnerable populations, where they are situated, what their needs are, and elaborate on how the UN can contribute best to address their evolving situation. The UNCT may also conduct dialogues with Government counterparts at national and subnational level to identify the needs of the most vulnerable based on a Human Rights situation analysis, ahead of the CCA. ● Provide ongoing capacity building for Government counterparts on the needs of vulnerable groups and the importance of disaggregated data. ● Reflect on how the UNSDCF could address the root causes of inequality, vulnerability and discrimination, in addition to addressing the actualization of problems, current needs or existing opportunities. This would require having indicators linked to root causes.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct a gap analysis to better understand which rights-holders are covered by which agency(ies), which outcome area(s), and which human rights are addressed to avoid duplication or targeting the same groups for capacity building activities. ● Develop capacity building activities for UN programme staff, Government officials, and other partners to consolidate their knowledge on LNOB, HRBA and GEWE. Additional activities for staff involved in the design and drafting of the new UNSDCF would also be very useful. ● Keep dedicating sufficient time in UNCT meetings to discuss human rights issues, and to identify common strategies or activities to tackle those aspects with development partners. ● Strengthen advocacy and the dialogue between the UNCT and the Government on sensitive issues, through structured discussions, by involving UN Agencies, CSOs and development partners, and by leveraging the role of the RC, in the spirit of the newly issued guidelines. ● Conduct a Human Rights situation analysis focusing on vulnerable populations to inform the design and implementation of the new UNSDCF. This will help ensure that the next UNSDCF precisely identifies the vulnerable groups for addressing the principle of Leave No One Behind (LNOB). ● Strengthen the role of the Human Rights Theme Group with more regular meetings and activities with Results Groups. ● Continue to implement human rights markers in UN Info, which can be used by RGs in the Joint Work Plans, to identify their level of contribution to address human rights issues, and to ensure that human rights are taken into consideration in the RGs' work. ● Continue to implement the UNCT Human Rights Strategy and its Workplan, which sets out a common approach for the United Nations System in Cambodia to promote and protect human rights, and to report on the Strategy, which will inform the UNCT's annual progress report on the SG's Call to Action for Human Rights.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attribute a specific budget to the Human Rights Theme Group for regular awareness-raising activities.
<p>Recommendation 8:</p> <p>The UNCT, under leadership of the RC, should ensure a greater mainstreaming of the UNSDCF guiding principle on gender equality and women’s empowerment.</p> <p>High priority</p> <p>By December 2023 and on-going</p> <p><i>Linked to Conclusion 8. Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (programming principles)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Based on the Gender Equality Scorecard exercise, consider having a specific outcome on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment or reflect GEWE in the next UNSDCF through specific goals and targets, gender disaggregated data and indicators. These goals, targets and data would need to be regularly monitored to ensure corrective action when activities are not on track. ● Increase collaboration with more regular meetings and activities between the Results Groups and the Gender Theme Group to regularly monitor the gender sensitivity and responsiveness of interventions. ● Encourage a more active participation of GTG members to lead some activities, instead of having most activities driven by the GTG secretariat. ● Attribute a specific budget and allocate more economic and human resources for effective GEWE mainstreaming in the UNSDCF. This should enhance/replace current reliance dependent on the in-kind contributions of agencies. ● Continue to implement the UN Accountability System to Promote GEWE, specially the UNCT SWAP gender scorecard (annually); and implement the recommendations of the SWAP gender scorecard. ● Consult existing guidelines to develop strategies to better mainstream GEWE within UNDCF. Suggested guidance are the UNEG guidance on “UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator”, the UNDG “Resource Book for Mainstreaming Gender in UN Common Programming at the Country Level”, the UNDG “Resource Guide for UN Gender Theme Groups”, and UNEG “Guidelines for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation”.
<p>Recommendation 9:</p> <p>The UNCT and the Government should contemplate creating an integrated funding framework in the next UNSDCF, and adequate funding instruments to ensure the scale of impact necessary for attaining the 2030 Agenda.</p> <p>High priority</p> <p>By September 2023 and on-going</p> <p><i>Linked to Conclusion 3. Efficiency</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify potential areas for additional resource mobilization, including South-South Cooperation, Public Private Partnerships, and Government investment funds. ● Explore possibilities to get funds from the Government for the next UNSDCF. ● Leverage funds and ensure a careful consideration of the contribution towards higher level Results and achieving synergies or partnerships, with enough attention devoted to joint programming.