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Acronyms

BSP	Bureau of Strategic Planning
CapED	Capacity Development for Education
CI	Communication and Information
CLT	Culture Sector
CS	Corporate Services
ED	Education Sector
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
EPR	Emergency Preparedness and Response
ER	Expected Result
GE	Disaster Risk Reduction
GEAP II	Gender Equality Action Plan II
GI	Geographical Indication
GoM	Government of Malaysia
GWP-Med	Global Water Partnership Mediterranean
HQ	Headquarters
ICC	International Coordinating Council
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
ICM	International Centre of Martial Arts
ICSP	Instrument Contributing to Peace and Stability
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFAP	Information for All Programme
IGE	Inclusion and Gender Equality
IHP	International Hydrological Programme
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IITE	Institute for Information Technologies in Education
IOS	Internal Oversight Service
IYIL	International Year of Indigenous Languages
KMI	Knowledge Management and Information Systems
LAP	Lima Action Plan
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex
LLECE	Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación
LTUC	Luminus Technical University College
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAB	Man and the Biosphere
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFIT	The Malaysia funds–in–trust
MIL	Media and Information Literacy
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
MS	Member State
MTS	Mid-term Strategy
MUCP	Malaysia UNESCO Cooperation Programme
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OREALC-UNESCO	Oficina Regional de Educación para América Latina y el Caribe/UNESCO (Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean)
OSPA	Operational Strategy for Priority Africa
PAX	UNESCO Sector for Priority Africa and External Relations
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism

QA	Quality Assessment
RBM	Results-Based Management
RCCH	Rural Crafts and Cultural Hubs
RFP	Request for Proposal
RP	Regular Programme
SC	Natural Sciences Sector
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SHS	Social and Human Sciences Sector
SIDS	Small Islands Developing States
SISTER	System of Information on Strategies, Tasks and the Evaluation of Results
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely (characteristics of good indicators for M&E)
SO	Strategic Objective
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SSC	South-South Cooperation
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
UN SWAP	UN system-wide Action Plan
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
VTC	Vocational Training Centre

Abstract & Acknowledgements

ABSTRACT

This report synthesizes key findings and insights from a review of seven corporate and twenty-two decentralized UNESCO evaluations completed mostly in 2020 and early 2021. Drawing on this evidence, the report discusses key crosscutting findings affecting UNESCO's programming, describes contributions to various Expected Results in the 40 C/5 Programme, reflects on trends in UNESCO performance against OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, and assesses evaluation quality against United Nations Evaluation Group criteria.

The synthesis finds that UNESCO continues to build on its comparative advantages in areas such as convening power and partnerships and has advanced in addressing some challenges identified in past reviews. Some sticking points remain in areas such as intersectoral cooperation, where opportunities are identified for building on synergies across the Organization. Monitoring and evaluation is also identified as an area where progress is being made but work remains to better capture outcome level results and facilitate learning from experience. Knowledge management and communication functions also have potential to further support results and visibility of UNESCO's positive efforts. Two corporate evaluations in this year's synthesis highlight progress and challenges in implementing UNESCO's Global Priority Gender Equality and Global Priority Africa. As UNESCO prepares to launch its new Medium-Term Strategy (2022-2029), as the first entirely within the 2030 Agenda era, opportunities are also noted to sharpen efforts to "leave no one behind" by addressing the interests and needs of the most vulnerable populations and groups.

This year's synthesis takes note of the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic both for programming and for evaluation. The review found that COVID-19 has also fostered several good practices and learning opportunities, prompting reflection on how to ensure best use of online communication options and build resilience into programming.

The synthesis outlines how UNESCO initiatives contribute to its Strategic Objectives, Expected Results, and Sustainable Development Goals, among other planned results. The portfolio of evaluations show that UNESCO builds on its prestige, profile, networks, and partnerships to perform well on the relevance and coherence of its programming, which stakeholders consider timely and important. A number of SDG's were identified as receiving either a primary or secondary contribution from one or more of the initiatives assessed this year. Generally, assessments of effectiveness were also positive, and achievements were identified that could be classified at least at immediate outcome level. Effectiveness was often linked to mobilization of appropriate UNESCO expertise, direct engagement by UNESCO personnel, and strong partner relationships. Many evaluations found efficient use of resources, but also highlighted that operational issues within UNESCO at large, including cumbersome administrative, financial, and M&E procedures, created bottlenecks affecting programme performance. Finally, the synthesis provided insights on factors that promote sustainability, an area that continues to be a challenge.

Overall, the assessment of evaluation quality was positive, but several areas for improvement were noted, such as further enhancing integration of gender and human rights and a more standardized approach to presenting recommendations and other key report elements. The quality assessment identified the need to continue and strengthen existing efforts to provide guidance and strengthen capacity for decentralized evaluations.

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1.Introduction

1. UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service (IOS) Evaluation Office commissions regular synthetic reviews of corporate and decentralized evaluations of UNESCO's work.[1] The present report draws on seven corporate and twenty-two decentralized evaluations completed mostly over the preceding year.[2] It will be presented to the 212th session of the Executive Board in October of 2021.

1.1 Rationale

2. The purpose of the review is to contribute to UNESCO learning and accountability by identifying key achievements and lessons from evaluations as well as reflecting on the quality of the evaluation reports themselves. This report highlights significant information about progress towards the Expected Results (ER) set out in the approved 40 C/5 Programme and Budget documents and in line with the 37 C/4 Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021. Building on past synthetic reviews, it also discusses crosscutting themes related to how the Organization carries out its programmatic work, identifying good practices, opportunities for improvement, and areas of emerging strategic interest. The review of evaluation quality is intended to guide UNESCO efforts to maintain and improve a high standard of evaluation in line with the 2015 *UNESCO Evaluation Policy and UNEG Norms and Standards*.

1.2. Evaluation Questions

3. Six principal questions guided the synthetic review:

- What are the characteristics of the annual evaluation portfolio in terms of programming and results covered?
- What learning can be gleaned from this set of evaluations in relation to systemic issues or emerging opportunities that may be addressed to support future UNESCO performance?
- How has UNESCO performed against relevant 40 C/5 ERs for each of its Major Programmes?
- Where does UNESCO stand in relation to the OECD-DAC standard evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact (or orientation towards impact) and other standards identified in its evaluations?
- What conclusions can be drawn about the quality of UNESCO evaluations? [3]
- What has been the impact of COVID-19 on the conduct and quality of evaluations?

1.3. Report Structure

4. Following this introductory section **(Part I)**, the report is structured around the guiding questions above. **Part II** is an overview of this year's evaluation portfolio. **Part III** discusses crosscutting issues and opportunities emerging from the synthesis that affect the Organization's progress towards its strategic objectives, including reference to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the evaluations and the initiatives they assessed. A management response to crosscutting issues and opportunities is presented in Appendix 4. **Part IV** shows how the work of UNESCO assessed in this year's portfolio contributes to various Expected Results defined in the 40 C/5 Programme and Budget under the Major Programmes. [4] **Part V** uses evidence from the evaluations to reflect on overall trends in UNESCO's performance against standard OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. **Part VI** assesses the evaluations against the UNEG quality checklist and highlights some areas of strength and weakness.

1.4. Approach

5. The synthesis was based on a desk review of twenty-nine evaluations provided by UNESCO's IOS Evaluation Office, complemented by reference to relevant policy and planning documents, such as the 34 C/4 Medium-Term strategy and the related C5

1 This responds to the request of the Executive Board, at its 186th session, to continue to report periodically on evaluations completed (186 EX/Decision 6(VI)).

2 A few evaluations from late 2019 that had not been submitted in time for the 2020 synthetic review and have been included this year.

3 Against the UNEG quality checklist for evaluation reports.

4 While the formulation of individual ERs or their numbering may change over the biennia, for the purpose of this comparison and to ensure consistency, ERs as defined in the 40 C/5 have been applied.

Programme and Budget documents. For each evaluation, key data and evidence was recorded using a review framework drawing on synthesis reports from previous years and input from the Evaluation Office about issues and themes of interest. The framework captured information such as the Major Programme, ERs, Global Priorities, Priority Groups, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) addressed by each intervention evaluated; key findings by evaluation criterion and in relation to gender equality and human rights; and conclusions and recommendations. It also captured insights into crosscutting and systemic issues and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic both on programming and on the evaluation processes.

6. An assessment of each evaluation's rating against the UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports was also recorded. For corporate evaluations, quality assurance (QA) ratings carried out by independent external reviewers prior to the review were provided by the Evaluation Office.[5] For decentralized evaluations, QA assessment was conducted using the UNEG quality checklist for evaluation reports.

7. The recorded information was reviewed to identify and analyze key crosscutting issues, and material from the evaluations was synthesized under relevant 40 C/5 ERs.[6]

1.5. Limitations

8. This report represents the reviewer's best efforts to extract and present, useful information from the evaluations. However, several factors limit the depth and reliability of the synthesis. Among these, the following should be noted:

   - The scope and approach of the evaluations, as well as the scale of programming, varies considerably. The review included the evaluation of a UNESCO Prize with an operating budget of US$ 360,000, a three-country, three-agency joint programme with a budget of US$ 15,000,000, and several corporate evaluations covering large portfolios of cross-organizational areas of work or major thematic areas, such as the Operational Strategy for Priority Africa. This variation affects the extent to which comparison and synthesis across the portfolio are feasible.
   - The quality of evidence varies significantly across the evaluations, and particularly between the corporate and decentralized evaluations – the latter of which are often carried out with relatively smaller budgets and less guidance.[7] Nevertheless, it was possible to gather some pertinent, reliable findings from most reports.
   - Many of the evaluations focus primarily on activities and outputs with limited outcome-level analysis. Nor do most of them link findings explicitly to ERs or broader UNESCO strategic objectives. This makes it challenging to analyze how the evaluated programme areas or projects contribute to advancing C/5 level results.
   - The review represents only a sample of UNESCO programming. As such, it should be read in combination with previous years' reviews for a more complete picture of UNESCO work across Major Programmes and ERs over time.
   - While the review covers evaluations of past projects and programmes, many of the issues identified as crosscutting are already being addressed in the follow-up to individual evaluation recommendations and in the context of the strategic transformation and other organizational reform processes.
   - A number of evaluations were affected by COVID-19 restrictions which limited in-person data collection and field visits.

9. This report attempts to mitigate these limitations by aggregating information and weighting its importance in relation to the source, as well as focusing on broadly applicable themes and learning rather than specific details from individual programmes or projects. Nonetheless, Part IV summarizes more specific learnings from evaluations under the relevant ERs.

5 All UNESCO corporate evaluations undergo systemic external quality assurance. This practice is less frequently applied for decentralized evaluations, which are quality assured by programme staff with some support from Evaluation Focal Points and/or the IOS Evaluation Office.

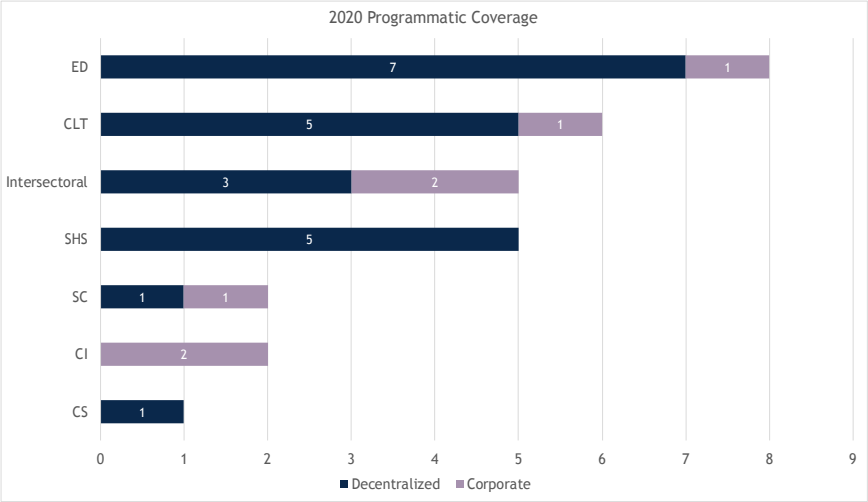
6 Some interventions contributed to more than one ER but, for consistency, only one ER was associated with each initiative, with the exception of intersectoral programmes that contributed to ERs from more than one Major Programme, and thematic corporate evaluations of crosscutting relevance, which have not been assigned to ERs. Most of the evaluations reviewed did not identify the relevant ER so assigning relevant ERs was part of the review process; assignment of ERs was subsequently validated by UNESCO staff. When evaluations identified contributions to Sustainable Development Goals, this was also recorded, and where SDGs were not identified, the review associated the object of each evaluation with a primary SDG and, as relevant, up to two secondary SDGs. SDG contributions were also validated by UNESCO programme staff.

7 Corporate evaluations were conducted with evaluation budgets ranging from US$ 50,000 to US$ 110,000, while budgets for decentralized evaluations were generally smaller, ranging from less than US$10,000 to a maximum US$ 60,000.

2. Overview of the portfolio

10. Twenty-nine evaluations were included in this year's synthetic review. The number of corporate evaluations (seven) is comparable to previous years, but the number of decentralized evaluations (twenty-two) is higher than the eighteen in the 2019 synthetic review and six for the 2020 synthetic review. This can be attributed to variations in project cycles, some late submissions of reports for the 2020 synthesis, and the recent more proactive role of evaluation focal points in collecting reports. Figure 1 illustrates the Major Programmes represented. Their distribution is roughly in keeping with the distribution of UNESCO Regular Budget resources across the Sectors.

Figure 1. Major Programmes Covered by the 2020 Evaluations[8 9]



8 *Outcome Harvesting: IIEP-UNESCO's Support to the Education Sector Plans in Jordan and Guinea* was included in the synthesis of findings and commentary on QA but not in the portfolio or quality statistics as it was an internal process, not an external evaluation.

9 The intersectoral category includes evaluations of Global Priority Gender Equality (which covers all Sectors), Operational Strategy for Priority Africa (OSPA) (which covers all Sectors), Youth Empowerment: Media and Information Literacy a Response to Prevent Hate and Violent Extremism (which covers CI and SHS Sectors), Malaysia Funds-in-Trust (which covers all Sectors), and Enhancing a Gender Responsive Film Sector in the Maghreb-Mashreq Region (which covers CI and CLT Sectors). Corporate Services (CS) refers to the decentralized evaluation Digitizing our Shared UNESCO History which has been managed by the Division of Knowledge Management and Information Systems (KMI).

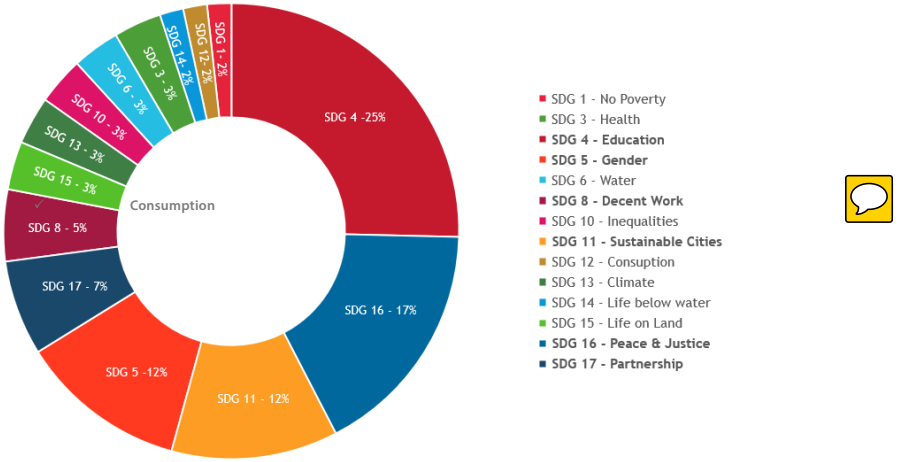
11. Table 1 shows the Expected Results in each Major Programme that have been covered by evaluations included in synthetic reviews over the last four years, since 2018.

Table 1: Expected Results as defined in 40C/5 covered in Synthetic Reviews 2018-2021[10]

	ER1	ER2	ER3	ER4	ER5	ER6	ER7	ER8	ER9	ER10
ED	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	✓	✓
SC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
SHS	✓	✓	✓	✓						
CLT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
CI	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				

12. UNESCO increasingly seeks to align and report its efforts in relation to the 2030 Agenda. Figure 2 shows SDGs with meaningful alignment with initiatives in this year's evaluation portfolio, with SDGs 4, 5, 8, 11, 16 and 17 as those most represented. A more detailed breakdown is available in Appendix 3.

Figure 2: SDG Coverage of Evaluated Initiatives[11]



10 Coverage was validated with UNESCO Programme Sectors. Shaded cells indicate absence of ERs for that Major Programme in C/5 40 Programme. Note that ED ER8 is covered by the currently ongoing evaluation of UNESCO Education Sector's work on inclusion in education.

11 SDG 2 – Zero hunger, SDG 7 – Clean Energy, and SDG 9 – Industry and Innovation are not included in Figure 2 because they are not or not significantly represented in the evaluations included in this year's synthesis.

3. Crosscutting findings

13. This section of the review steps back from specific programme and project environments to identify broader areas of progress or challenge across the Organization, including issues that UNESCO may wish to address as it moves into the next C/4 Medium-Term Strategy. The evaluations in the portfolio provide evidence that UNESCO continues to build on its comparative advantages in areas such as convening power, partnerships, and networks. They also demonstrate progress on some challenges identified in the past and highlight sticking points in areas such as intersectoral cooperation and monitoring and evaluation. Two major corporate evaluations in this year's synthesis address issues related to implementing UNESCO's Global Priority Gender Equality and Global Priority Africa.

3.1. UNESCO's strong reputation and convening power are valued assets

14. As in past reviews, UNESCO's prestige, reputation as a neutral broker, and broad networks at global, regional, and national levels emerged from this year's evaluations as clear assets. UNESCO's reputation and linkages with Member States, other International Organizations, academic and civil society institutions, and other key entities underpin its effectiveness, allowing it to coordinate and convene key actors from national to global levels, influence policy, and access appropriate expertise and experience. These assets were illustrated in the evaluation of the *Laboratorio latinoamericano de evaluación de la calidad de la educación* (LLECE),[12] which noted that the high degree of legitimacy enjoyed by OREALC-UNESCO facilitates regional policy dialogue on education and connections with other international entities working on education quality. The evaluation of *UNESCO's Work in the Thematic Area of Media and Information Literacy (MIL)* also described how UNESCO's reputation as a neutral broker, along with its recognized research expertise, have gained the Organization recognition as the "global intellectual lead" in MIL. The evaluation of *Consolidação da Rede de Escolas SESI como referência para a Educação Básica no Brasil*[13] noted that UNESCO's capacity to aggregate knowledge and experience from around the world was essential to achieving the project goal of updating the SESI technical education network's pedagogical approaches.

15. The final evaluations of *Patrimonie mondial forestier d'Afrique centrale (CAWHFI)*[14] *and Development of Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs in West Bengal to Support Intergenerational Transmission of Rural Craft and Performing Arts (RCCH)* highlighted UNESCO's prestige as comparative advantages that make the Organization an ideal partner. In the former, this helped strengthen relationships among various conservation actors at different levels. In the latter, it positioned the Organization to bridge policy on Intangible Cultural Heritage with practice on the ground. Nevertheless, while partnering with UNESCO is often seen as advantageous, the specific role the Organization can play is not always clear. Several evaluations suggested more could be done to bring these assets into focus and capitalize on them more strategically during project implementation.

3.2. Collaborative and participatory ways of working support effectiveness

16. Several evaluations identify participatory management and partnership as UNESCO hallmarks. Linked to the expertise and dedication of UNESCO staff and implementing partners, and building on strong relationships with relevant Member State and other institutions, such approaches foster ownership and support capacity – important for training and skills transfer. Ownership over processes and knowledge associated with UNESCO initiatives is a positive factor for sustainability, as several evaluations pointed out. This was highlighted in the LLECE evaluation, which found that Member States conducting education quality surveys through LLECE valued its participatory style and collective decision-making processes, which they perceived as very different from other international studies. This fostered commitment and

> "To highlight the participatory approach adopted by UNESCO, some implementing organizations stressed the importance of the continuous support provided by UNESCO throughout the implementation phase of the project. 'UNESCO helped with its experience: we were always in contact with UNESCO at all stages of the project.'" (*Evaluation of Enhancing a Gender Responsive Film Sector in the Maghreb- Mashreq Region*)

12 English translation: Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education (LLECE).

13 English translation: Consolidation of the Social Service of Industry (SESI) Schools Network as a reference for Basic Education in Brazil.

14 English translation: Global Forest Heritage of Central Africa.

increased capacity in national technical teams. Along similar lines, IIEP's respectful way of working with national officials and technical teams on education sector plans in Jordan and Guinea influenced education ministries' own approaches and helped develop their sector leadership, contributing to the sustainability of results.

17. Similar observations emerged in evaluations of two other very different projects – *Design and Testing of a Multipurpose (transboundary) Groundwater Monitoring Network (Albania & Montenegro) Project* and *Enhancing a Gender Responsive Film Sector in the Maghreb- Mashreq Region*. Both describe how a participatory approach, including close involvement of project staff and excellent cooperation among stakeholders, helped establish ownership over the process and promote sustainability or expand reach. Meanwhile, the evaluation of the *International Centre of Martial Arts for Youth Development and Engagement under the auspices of UNESCO* observed that governance of the initiative had been improved by the adoption of a more participatory approach.

3.3. Promising opportunities for intersectoral collaboration continue to face challenges

18. UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021 (37 C/4) describes the need to deploy multidisciplinary and integrated approaches to address complex challenges. The nine strategic objectives (SOs) in the MTS are not exclusively linked to particular programmes but are expected to "require contributions and interventions from several programmes in an interdisciplinary manner." [15] Yet despite increasing attention to intersectoral cooperation over recent years, aligned with the holistic vision built into the 2030 Agenda, the last two synthetic reviews underlined UNESCO's difficulties in moving from aspiration to operationalization in this area.

19. This year's evaluation portfolio illustrates several efforts to reach across Major Programme areas on issues of common interest. *UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB)*, UNESCO's work as the lead agency for the *2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages*, and UNESCO's work on MIL were all identified as offering rich opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and capitalizing on this helped achieve programming targets. The corporate evaluation of MAB noted significant information sharing and joint or coordinated actions with other UNESCO programmes such as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme, and World Heritage, as well as close work with UNESCO Chairs and Category 2 Centres. On MIL, *Youth Empowerment: Media and Information Literacy as a Response to Prevent Hate and Violent Extremism* was a successful joint project between the Communication and Information (CI) and Social and Human Sciences (SHS) sectors. *The Global Priority Gender Equality evaluation* also highlighted positive examples, such as collaboration between the Education and Natural Science sectors on women and girls in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

Several evaluations included recommendations* to step up intersectoral collaboration. For example:

- Engage all UNESCO Programme Sectors and relevant Corporate Services in coordinating and implementing the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) (Corporate IYIL evaluation)
- Launch and lead interdisciplinary working groups specifically related to media and information literacy (MIL) (Corporate MIL evaluation)
- Designate Priority Africa senior-level focal points in each Programme Sector responsible for moving forward multisectoral flagships or initiatives (Corporate OSPA evaluation)
- Encourage projects developed jointly with, and between different sections within UNESCO, where such synergy adds value to heritage conservation outcomes (Decentralized evaluation of Support of UNESCO's Activities in the Field of Heritage)
- Develop a modality for sharing lessons learned among projects in different Sectors (Decentralized evaluation of Malaysia Funds-in-Trust Projects)

*Some recommendations have been slightly reworded.

20. Nevertheless, many evaluations echoed observations in the 2020 synthesis about organizational, resource, and financial management barriers to realizing UNESCO's full potential for intersectoral cooperation. The corporate evaluation of *UNESCO's Work in the Thematic Area of Media and Information Literacy (MIL)* found that despite the inherently interdisciplinary and holistic nature of MIL work, which was reflected in several examples of successful intersectoral cooperation, collaboration across sectors remains hampered by a traditional focus on disciplinary specializations and rigid budget, operational, and performance assessment structures. The evaluation of

15 UNESCO 37 C/4 Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021, p. 17.

UNESCO's Action to Revitalize and Promote Indigenous Languages noted that although Organization's lead role for the International Year of Indigenous Languages called for cooperation across Major Programmes to achieve an ambitious Action Plan, no budget was allocated to support intersectoral work and collaboration was mainly limited to information sharing. The evaluation found significant variances in the extent to which the Indigenous languages theme was addressed across sectors. The corporate evaluation of the *Operational Strategy for Priority Africa (OPSA)* also observed that while its flagship programmes are expected to promote intersectoral work, this happened inconsistently and generally thanks more to individual initiative than organizational strategy.

21. Missed opportunities for collaboration and communication *within* sectors or institutes also came up in this year's portfolio. While highlighting emerging examples of inter-team collaboration at IIEP, [16] the evaluation of *IIEP's Research Programme - 9th Medium-Term Strategy (2014-2017)* noted that benefits could be gained from improved linkages between IIEP research and the work of other IIEP departments and pillars. Both evaluations of UNESCO prizes that were included in this review *(Review of the Second Cycle of the UNESCO-Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Prize for Outstanding Practice and Performance in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Teachers and Evaluation of the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture)* also suggested that greater strategic engagement and linkages within and beyond their lead sectors could increase the prizes' visibility and impact.

3.4. Joint initiatives leverage UN system synergy, but coordination can be difficult

22. Joint initiatives, partnerships, and collaboration with other UN agencies are part of the 2014-2021 MTS commitment to participate in the UN system and contribute to "Delivering as One." Joint initiatives can generate efficiency by capitalizing on different agencies' comparative advantages and harnessing synergies to advance shared priorities and Member State development objectives. However, coordination issues can undermine this promise. UNESCO carried out *Appui à la résilience des jeunes face aux conflits sociopolitiques au Burundi* [17] jointly with UNFPA and UNICEF to capitalize on complementary approaches to working with youth. In this project, inadequate coordination between partners led to serious challenges, and young beneficiaries were faced with competing and overlapping activities.government representatives; development partners, civil society representatives and project beneficiaries.

23. The Global Priority Gender evaluation found that operational challenges in gender-related joint projects carried out with other UN agencies contributed to delays in implementation. The US$ 15 million *Joint Programme on Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women through Education* in Mali, Nepal, and Tanzania with UNFPA and UN Women, for which UNESCO is the administrative and global convening agent, has also faced challenges. The joint programme's midterm evaluation found limited "team spirit" between the agencies, weak collaboration at central level, and colliding agency interests in the countries. The evaluation noted that more frequent and substantial dialogue between UNESCO, UNFPA, and UN Women would be needed to build on results to date and get the project back on track in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. An exception was Mali, where country-level programme coordination and partnership management was considered a "foremost example" of "One UN" in action, with the frequency and structure of Technical Committee meetings bringing together a range of UN and government counterparts and very positively influencing Programme dynamics and national ownership

Coordination failures can lead to competing project activities

Poor coordination and planning among partners in the *Appui à la résilience des jeunes face aux conflits sociopolitiques au Burundi* project resulted in duplication and overlap in activities, with negative effects for youth participants. The evaluation described, as an example, how one agency's partners arrived in the field to support young people in setting up "solidarity" or savings groups after the other partner agencies had already encouraged them to form savings and credit groups as part of these agencies' work with partners in the communities. Young people were already taking part in functioning groups and found it difficult to belong to two solidarity groups at the same time and meet the savings requirements for both.

16 These include training courses developed entirely or in part from research projects (online course on Internal Quality Assurance, content of Transparency and Ethics in Education and Teacher Management course updated, MOOC on Early Childhood Education) and research outputs that were used to generate regional technical dialogues with authorities of Ministries of Education in the framework of the Network of Educational Policy Specialists of Latin America.

17 English Translation: Support for Youth Resilience to Sociopolitical Conflict in Burundi.

24. Several evaluations highlighted untapped opportunities for UN system cooperation beyond joint programmes. The evaluation of *UNESCO's Work in the Thematic Area of Media and Information Literacy (MIL)* noted opportunities for leveraging interaction with sister UN agencies to position MIL within the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and lead on MIL in UN Country Teams. The evaluation of *UNESCO's Action to Revitalize and Promote Indigenous Languages* also noted that UNESCO did not fully capitalize on UN networks in its leadership role for the IYIL and recommended mapping and mobilizing such networks for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032).

3.5. Improved monitoring and evaluation is needed to better capture UNESCO's outcome level results and facilitate learning

25. Many of the evaluations in this year's portfolio point to shortcomings in monitoring and evaluation (M&E). This is a potential cause for concern since M&E was flagged as requiring "urgent attention" in the 2020 synthesis and mentioned in 2019. It is worth noting that while some improvements and positive examples were noted, results of UNESCO's ongoing efforts towards systemic improvement are generally not visible in this report because it covers initiatives that mostly pre-date these efforts. [18]

26. As in previous years, evaluations demonstrated a heavy focus on activities and outputs and weaker attention to higher-level results, including links to the SDGs. Mention of broader UNESCO accountability frameworks – such as Strategic Objectives and ERs was also absent from most decentralized evaluations. Other evaluations highlighted the need to harmonize programming such frameworks within UNESCO and beyond. In principle, each project or intervention is allocated within UNESCO's internal project management, monitoring, and reporting system (SISTER) and must be linked to higher-level outcomes; often, however, this is not explicit in project documents and indicators can be inadequate to capture these contributions.[19] (See also Part VI of this report on the quality of evaluations.)

27. The absence of such alignment creates difficulties for aggregating results at the organizational level and will ultimately challenge efforts to evaluate, learn from, and communicate results achieved during the implementation of UNESCO's current Medium-Term Strategy. The Bureau for Strategic Planning (BSP) technical guidance documents on results-based management (RBM) and theory of change (ToC) aim to help sectors develop ToCs at programme and project level and establish linkages to C/5 results. However, improvement in this area may not yet be apparent in the portfolio of interventions assessed in this synthetic review.

28. A number of evaluations observed insufficient attention to M&E or weak M&E capacity within programmes. Although some improvements have been noted over the last biennia, some evaluations, such as the corporate *Evaluation of UNESCO's Action to Protect Culture in Emergencies*, observed that UNESCO's indicators remain largely focused on measuring outputs and are thus limited for measuring outcomes or impact on communities. The corporate evaluation of the MAB programme found that M&E was not carried out regularly, or even at all, by some actors and in some countries and suggested that a less cumbersome M&E system, managed by the

A positive example of M&E in action

The evaluation of Provision of TVET, On-the-Job Training, and Entrepreneurship Education to Youth Affected by the Syria Crisis in Jordan is an exception to the evaluations that emphasized problems related to M&E. A key finding was that "UNESCO reinforced project efficiency with proper M&E activities." The evaluation noted that ongoing monitoring, such as visits to employers, and survey, and follow up with students and families was summarized and formalized in regular progress reports. These reports included sections on measuring results as well as qualitative narrative and facilitated ongoing risk analysis and adopting of mitigation measures that helped ensure project success.

This evaluation also situated the initiative it assessed within broader results frameworks, noting the 39 C/5 Main Line of Action in Education, Expected Result, and SDGs with which it aligned.

18 The UNESCO BSP RBM Team has made efforts in supporting Sectors in formulating more outcome-based indicators, leading to some improvements compared to the past. However, this is an issue that still requires stronger M&E capacities and dedicated resources in the Sectors. In 2020 the BSP RBM Team issued updated guidance (e.g., RBM Guiding Principles, project templates) and an RBM eLearning course. The Team has also been facilitating coaching to help strengthen Sectors' programming and monitoring frameworks.

19 SISTER (System of Information on Strategies, Tasks and the Evaluation of Results) is one of the Organization's IT-based management tools which follows and supports the Results-Based Management (RBM) approach as applied in UNESCO.

MAB Secretariat, would generate data that HQ and Field Offices could use to target support to the MAB National Committees and Biosphere Reserves most in need of support. Along similar lines, the evaluation of the *Appui à la résilience des jeunes face aux conflits sociopolitiques au Burundi* [20] noted that although each agency in the joint programme contributed quarterly reports on time, this was a largely vertical process that did not support horizontal learning across partners (which, presumably, might have mitigated some of this project's coordination issues noted in section 3.1).

29. Across the board, limited M&E capacities and weak monitoring tools are continuing problems that require attention. The evaluations of both *IIEP's Research Programme - 9th Medium-Term Strategy (2014-2017)*[21] and of *UNESCO's Action to Revitalize and Promote Indigenous Languages* observed that these initiatives had subpar M&E elements. For example, the IYIL2019 Action Plan lacked a clear theory of change and an adequate results framework with SMART indicators [22] to guide its implementation. This is confirmed by the number of decentralized evaluations that do not refer to results frameworks, suggesting that these either did not exist or suffered from a lack of attention in the interventions assessed – although in some cases the lack of reference to results frameworks may be linked to evaluation quality issues.

30. There is also room for improvement in ensuring M&E frameworks and systems capture results generated through collaboration across sectors or partners. This was, among other examples, illustrated in the evaluation of *Media and Information Literacy* and in the evaluation of *UNESCO's Action to Revitalize and Promote Indigenous Languages*, which pointed out that although SISTER allows cross-sectoral results to be flagged, this is not a requirement, so data on such results is inconsistent. This is part of the overall challenge of siloed programming and reporting structures which weakens efforts to promote cross-Programme work. M&E systems and tools were also identified as problem areas for UNESCO's crosscutting Global Priorities – Africa and Gender Equality.

20 Support for Youth Resilience to Sociopolitical Conflict in Burundi.

21 Notably, while correct in 2014-2017, the evaluators recognized that the situation was considerably improved under the 10th Medium-Term Strategy. By mid-2021, IIEPs Research and Development team was in the process of updating the monitoring framework and procedures for the 11th MTS.

22 SMART Indicators are: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely.

3.6. Knowledge management and communication functions have more potential to support results and visibility

31. The 2014-2021 MTS points out that knowledge management and information and communication technologies are essential for UNESCO's work, which is heavily focused on creating and sharing knowledge and information. The Organization has work ahead to improve its practices in these areas. Several corporate and decentralized evaluations suggest needed improvements in capturing and sharing information and lessons within and across programming. The corporate evaluation of UNESCO's work on MIL illustrated this well; it rated the effectiveness of knowledge management as underdeveloped at Field Office level and found insufficient resources and systems supporting it centrally. Sound information is generated through programming experience, but weak collection, sharing, and application practices prevent this from systematically feeding analysis, learning, and decision-making.

32. Similar observations on knowledge management and communications emerge from other evaluations. Often the effectiveness of project outputs is constrained by gaps in disseminating, collating, or learning from them. The evaluation of the *Joint Programme on Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women through Education* recommended the development of evidence-based knowledge sharing about replicable elements, as well as the development of a communications strategy. The evaluation of the *Consolidação da Rede de Escolas SESI como referência para a Educação Básica no Brasil* suggested that a central repository for better knowledge management could increase project effectiveness and sustainability. On similar lines, the evaluation of IIEP's research programme observed that an improved communication strategy to target and tailor research dissemination could help outputs reach a wider range of audiences and strengthen policy influence. Several evaluations – including the corporate evaluation of *Action to Protect Culture in Emergencies* – called for communications strategies to enhance visibility and better tell results stories.

3.7. Uncertainty remains on how to operationalize Global Priority Africa more effectively

33. Africa has been a priority for UNESCO for more than 20 years. The Operational Strategy for Priority Africa (OSPA), launched in tandem with the 37 C/4 MTS, is intended to guide this commitment into action, identifying urgent concerns such as the heightened need for education, training, and social and occupational integration; support for building inclusive knowledge societies; support for building inclusive and resilient societies in the face of social change; and the need to create and maintain conditions for peace and security. The OSPA was to serve as a framework for all UNESCO actions in favour of Priority Africa, especially through six flagship programmes that were intended to raise the profile of Priority Africa, as recommended by the Member States.

34. This year, following mixed evidence on Priority Africa performance from past synthetic reviews, a corporate evaluation of the OSPA assessed the strategy's success. It found that although the African region has access to a larger proportion of funding than other regions and the number of projects implemented in Priority Africa flagship programmes has increased, resources remain insufficient relative to needs and the promise of the flagship programmes as vehicles for mobilizing additional extrabudgetary or voluntary resources for Priority Africa has not materialized. There are several successful examples; the evaluation of *UNESCO's Work in the Thematic Area of Media and Information Literacy (MIL)* found that Global Priority Africa was fully integrated in the overall strategy of the thematic area. However, ongoing challenges prevent consistent implementation of this priority. Overall, the evaluation found that OSPA had not played a significant role in determining programming in favour of the African region; indeed, it found that knowledge of OSPA across UNESCO was limited. Considerable confusion was noted in relation to the purpose of the flagship programmes, which are seen as not being sufficiently operational. This is a particular obstacle at Field Office level.

35. Looking towards the development of a successor OSPA, several issues should be addressed. The dominant message from the evaluation is the need to clarify, raise awareness around, and provide better institutional support for operationalizing Global Priority Africa through the flagships. Similar issues were echoed in most of the corporate and some decentralized evaluations in this year's synthesis. For example, the evaluation of *UNESCO's Action to Revitalize and Promote Indigenous Languages* found that Africa could be even more prioritized and supported by UNESCO. The evaluation recommended addressing the need for improved institutional support through thematic working groups for Priority Africa within programmes and interventions, a contract management system across the Organization, utilizing multiple communication channels to reach out to contacts in places less well represented on current lists, and increasing Member State involvement and participation in the Priority and activities.

3.8. UNESCO has advanced on gender equality, but more effort is needed, especially for transformative results

36. Support for improvements in gender equality understood as a fundamental human right, a requirement of social justice, and a necessity for economic development, is a central tenet of UNESCO's work, yet synthetic reviews in both 2020 and 2019 identified Global Priority Gender Equality as an area of inconsistent progress. This year, a corporate evaluation of Global Priority Gender Equality 2014-2019 provided an overall assessment of institutional and programme mainstreaming as well as gender-specific programming.[23] UNESCO's many achievements on this front include the institutionalization of gender equality through the Division for Gender Equality, the creation of the Priority Gender Equality Action Plan for 2014-2021 (GEAP II), an active Gender Focal Point Network with many committed members, and the use of the Gender Marker to identify the level of contribution to gender equality in programming. Flagship programmes and partnerships on gender equality have also begun to take UNESCO beyond traditional "women's inclusion" approaches, with initiatives aimed at gender equality transformative results. The evaluation noted that according to MOPAN in 2017-2018, 7.2 percent of UNESCO's Regular Programme (RP) budget was allocated to dedicated Priority Gender Equality programmes while 40.4 percent of its regular programme resources were designated as contributing to gender equality overall. Importantly, the evaluation found that UNESCO staff overwhelmingly support increased efforts on gender equality both institutionally and in programming. A majority feel that top UNESCO managers put gender equality among the priorities on their agenda.

23 Data collection options for this evaluation were affected by the restrictions on travel and in-person meeting created by the COVID-19 pandemic and as a result the evaluation focused more on institutional mainstreaming and presented less evidence on gender-related programming

37. Nevertheless, the evaluation highlighted many areas for improvement. Despite staff interest, capacity remains limited, and greater support is needed to ensure that programming reflects in-depth, intersectional gender analysis, with a focus on outcomes rather than "tick box" mainstreaming. The evaluation noted that UNESCO does not fully capitalize on potential strategic partnerships to promote gender equality. It also identified gaps in M&E for gender equality and weak internal systems for communication and learning, as well as inconsistencies between the GEAP II results framework and baselines, indicators, and targets in 40 C/5.

38. Other evaluations in this year's portfolio broadly corroborated the findings of the corporate evaluation, demonstrating growing but still inconsistent attention to gender equality in programming and pursuing transformative impacts. Often, gender equality considerations are not mainstreamed or included in programme design, although some evaluations noted efforts made to address this during implementation. This was the case in *Protecting Cultural Heritage and Diversity in Complex Emergencies for Stability and Peace*, which did not incorporate gender equality in its design but sought to ensure women's inclusion – for example, UNESCO organized a workshop on the protection of cultural property during armed conflict for female military personnel from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and the UN Interim Force in Lebanon. As a "first-of-its-kind" event in the traditionally male-dominated military sector, the experience had value and the effort to implement an activity specifically with women signals increasing awareness that gender issues should be identified, addressed, and mainstreamed across all initiatives.

39. Still, apart from a few gender-specific initiatives such as the *Joint Programme on Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women through Education and Enhancing a Gender Responsive Film Sector in the Maghreb-Mashreq Region*, gender equality often appears as an afterthought that is addressed primarily through numerical participation by women in project activities. Many initiatives covered by evaluations in this year's review do not appear to have addressed gender equality to any significant extent, or at all – and the evaluations themselves also rarely highlighted gender issues. For example, the evaluation of the *UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Sites in Europe* did not incorporate a gender-responsive approach although it could have critically examined the design of a regional project that did not build gender considerations into work on site management or governance. Greater effort and investment are needed in mainstreaming gender equality across all programming and structures, ensuring a strong culture of gender equality and strengthening understanding by all staff members of how, concretely to support, implement, and report on gender initiatives and results in their work.

3.9. UNESCO's commitment to "leave no one behind" requires a sharper focus

40. UNESCO's 2014-2021 MTS identifies the importance of promoting inclusion in a diverse and changing world marked by inequalities of many kinds. The focus on Priority Groups such as youth and Indigenous peoples, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), as well as the two Global Priorities – Gender Equality and Africa – contribute to addressing these realities. Additional efforts are now required to bring these issues to the forefront and operationalize them more consistently, and from a more intersectional perspective, across UNESCO programming. This is in line with the draft MTS for 2022-2029, which revolves around the SDGs and underlines "Leave No One Behind" as "the central promise of the 2030 Agenda." The draft MTS commits UNESCO to work against poverty and inequality, focus on the most vulnerable populations and groups, and combat all forms of discrimination and racism, exclusion, marginalization, and prejudice.

41. Many UNESCO initiatives take place or tackle issues in conflict-affected and disaster-prone areas or remote communities and address the needs of groups vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization. Yet, while UNESCO identifies Youth as a Priority Group, only about a third of this year's portfolio of evaluations assesses initiatives that mainstream youth issues or identify youth as the primary beneficiaries and/or partners. Relatively few directly address the needs of Indigenous peoples, Small Island Developing States, or Least Developed Countries, other UNESCO Priority Groups. Meanwhile, except for the evaluation of Global Priority Gender Equality 2014-2019, LGBTQI people and issues are not addressed at all in this year's portfolio, and rights-based language or references to rights are rare across the evaluations (with the exception of the dedicated evaluation of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous languages).[24] Several evaluations encourage more intentional efforts to address the needs of vulnerable groups. The evaluation of LLECE notes that the Lab's work addresses SDG target 4.1[25] but suggests opportunities for more

24 LGBTQI issues arise twice across the 30 evaluations – once in the corporate evaluation of Global Priority Gender Equality in relation to staff support for a more gender responsive organization and once as part of an activity description and indicator under an outcome in a country-level results framework for the Joint Programme on Empowering Adolescent Girls and Youth Women through Education.

25 Target 4.1 is "By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes."

strategic engagement on targets such as 4.5, which considers disparities in access and performance in education of students in vulnerable groups (by gender, socioeconomic status, disability, Indigenous identity, etc.). Nevertheless, some evaluations noted progress in this area. The corporate *Evaluation of UNESCO's Action to Promote Culture in Emergencies*, for example, observed improvement in the inclusion of women, youth, and other disadvantaged groups, which in the past had been largely a box-ticking exercise. This was especially evident in preparedness and early-recovery work, in which more time was available to plan for it.

42. Inclusion of persons with disabilities is an emerging area of interest for UNESCO. References to disability are extremely limited in strategic documents[26] but UNESCO participates in the UN system-wide Disability Inclusion Strategy Accountability Framework exercise,[27] has a focus on the inclusion of children with disabilities in its work on education, and addresses the accessibility of ICT for people with disabilities in its work on communication and information. Nevertheless, the reviewed evaluations included few substantial references to disability. Terms of reference for a few evaluations – such as the corporate evaluation of *Action to Protect Culture in Emergencies* – included questions related to disability, but for the most part, these were not followed up. One exception was the evaluation of the *International Centre of Martial Arts for Youth Development and Engagement under the Auspices of UNESCO*, which noted efforts to include youth with disabilities in ICM work on martial arts and flagged as a potential model the ICM young researcher project, which established an online education platform for martial arts educators with disabilities. The evaluation of the *Inclusão de Pessoa com Deficiências: Ampliando conhecimento, aperfeiçoando mecanismos de promoção, formulação e implantação de Politicas Publicas de Acessibilidade*, an SHS programme launched in 2009 through a Technical Cooperation Agreement with the Government of Brazil, covered a project entirely oriented to developing knowledge and data to support inclusion of people with disabilities.[28]

26 The draft MTS for 2022-2029 mentions disability in its discussion of social cohesion, under the heading of SO3; there is one reference to disability in the current MTS, in relation to potential of ICTs to empower "women and men including those living with disabilities with the tools to leverage knowledge." (p. 37)

27 Similar to UN SWAP 2.0, the Disability Inclusion Strategy was launched in 2019 with a policy and an accountability framework to help entities track and report on their progress on implementation in relation to 15 performance indicators covering programming and operations in development and humanitarian contexts. (UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, *Technical Notes: Entity Accountability Framework*)

28 See UNESCO website, Inclusion in Education. A corporate evaluation of UNESCO Education sector's work on inclusion in education was in progress as this synthesis was being prepared.

3.10. COVID-19 restrictions have created challenges, but also some opportunities

43. The rapid development and spread of COVID-19 and the resulting public health restrictions presented challenges for 13 of the 29 evaluations included in this year's synthesis, as well as affecting some of the initiatives evaluated. Challenges, such as delays, inability to collect in-person data, and travel bans prevented many evaluations from being carried out as planned or with traditional approaches and resources. However, these limitations also fostered several good practices and learning opportunities. Evaluators, project teams, UNESCO Field Offices, and the IOS Evaluation Office adapted to the constraints with innovation, such as through greater use of remote data collection and creative approaches to data collection. Evaluation methodologies were adapted, relying more heavily on document reviews and remote data collection methods such as e-surveys and virtual interviews and focus groups. Applying these participatory data collection approaches, evaluators were able to manage and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on evaluation findings.

44. Following are a few examples of challenges, solutions, and learning related to the pandemic:

- COVID-19 restrictions prevented the evaluation of *UNESCO Thematic Area: Media and Information Literacy (MIL)* from conducting planned field visits and led to greater use of remote data collection. The evaluators addressed this in creative ways. For example, they hosted "coffee talks," regular short conversations with the main Section responsible for MIL programme coordination around a succession of topics during the data collection period. They also formed a contrast panel composed of selected external stakeholders to consider emerging findings as the evaluation was being carried out. By applying participatory data collection approaches, the evaluators were able to manage and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the findings.
- The *Provision of TVET, On-the-Job Training, and Entrepreneurship Education to Youth Affected by the Syria Crisis in Jordan* project was forced to adapt to strict lockdown measures and restrictions in the country. When the pandemic hampered students' on-the-job training, the project developed and launched a five-week virtual course on digital skills. UNESCO supported the students with internet and devices when needed and helped pave the way to a broader transition towards

blended learning modalities. UNESCO's expertise in TVET allowed the project to adapt to COVID-19 and continue implementation.

- An interesting reflection linked to COVID-19 was noted in the corporate evaluation of UNESCO's IYIL work. The IYIL Steering Committee provided a platform for dialogue with Member States, but Indigenous peoples' representatives could not always attend in-person Steering Committee meetings in Paris, unlike representatives of Member States who were based there. When Steering Committee meetings moved online in 2020 in response to the pandemic, they became more accessible, enabling Indigenous peoples to participate on a more equal footing.
- The evaluation of the *Joint Programme on Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women through Education* was adapted to respond to the COVID-19 situation. When the pandemic halted programme implementation at country level, UNESCO and the evaluation team decided nonetheless to *continue* the evaluation to ensure its findings would inform the resumption of activities. Restrictions due to COVID-19 required increased use of secondary data, as well as re-scoping and re-interviewing in many cases to address new questions arising from the pandemic. Two beneficiary surveys were also expanded to ensure best possible use of feedback from important stakeholders. The evaluation report refers to the consequences of COVID-19 and assess how the suddenly changing global and national context may influence further implementation, noting the new sustainability challenges. The evaluators noted that when activities resumed, there would be a need to focus on recovery from the pandemic's socioeconomic impacts and assess whether initial gains for women's entry into the labour market had been reversed or threatened.
- The *Evaluation of Enhancing a Gender Responsive Film Sector in the Maghreb-Mashreq Region* described how the project was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused some delays, shifted some events (such a film launch) online, and required greater reliance on virtual communication. The evaluation noted that since the project had used technology for communication from the start, this adaptation was not difficult, and suggested that the project lessons learned document should highlight the importance using technology and social media, especially in regional initiatives, to guarantee the sustainability of the relationships among beneficiaries and stakeholders and ensure continuous and wider access to project resources. Although the *implementation of the Malaysia Funds–in-Trust (MFIT)* Projects was completed before the outbreak of COVID-19, the pandemic led to introspection by project participants. Key informant interviews and surveys emphasized that in future, where possible, connections should first be established through physical meetings "to establish a sense of community and shared values and trust," which could then be maintained using online communications mechanisms.

4.Contributions to expected results

45. This section of the synthesis summarizes some of the main contributions to UNESCO Major Programme Expected Results reported in this year's portfolio of evaluations. While interventions were designed in the framework of Expected Results as formulated in C/5s of the respective previous biennia, and the formulation of individual ERs or their numbering may change over the biennia, for the purposes of this report and to ensure consistency, ERs defined in 40 C/5 have been applied. (See Appendix 1 for a list of reports reviewed.)

4.1. Major Programme I – Education

46. The Education Sector was represented in this review by eight evaluations, in addition to being represented in three evaluations of crosscutting initiatives. While overall contributing to SDG 4 Quality Education, several evaluations assessed initiatives that contribute to ER 1, 2, 5, and 7 and 10 which are closely aligned to several specific SDG targets.

ER 1: Improved national education policies and plans to advance access to equitable and quality early childhood care and education, primary and secondary education through a systemwide lifelong learning approach

47. Working with Member States and others to improve national educational policies and plans contributes to UNESCO's high-level Strategic Objective 1 of "supporting Member States to develop education systems to foster high quality and inclusive lifelong learning for all", ER 1, and ER 10.[29] The corporate evaluation of the *Laboratorio latinoamericano de evaluación* de la calidad de la educación (Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education) – LLECE – assessed a longstanding initiative which, with current annual operating costs of approximately US$ 1 million, leads the implementation of a system for student learning assessment for most Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Brazil. Thanks to the LLECE, which is notable for including early years and primary schooling, some countries in the region now have twenty-five years of longitudinal data. The evaluation noted LLECE's positive contribution to improving educational evaluation systems, strengthening the capacities of technical teams involved in these processes and – indirectly – improving the quality of education in the region.

48. Limitations in LLECE's efforts on dissemination, positioning, and profile leave room for improvements in closing the loop on the use of study results to support policy change. The evaluation also identified strategic opportunities to build on the responsibility held by UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO) for leading monitoring and support of the efforts of countries in the region to meet their Agenda 2030 education targets. The evaluation observed that capitalizing on this role and the connections it brings with the UNESCO Statistical Institute, OECD, and others to build on LLECE's acknowledged legitimacy and the positive regard in which LLECE and OREALC/UNESCO are held would be an avenue for strengthening LLECE's sustainability.

49. The *OpenEMIS Initiative* used a customizable and open-source toolkit to facilitate the process of setting up reliable national information systems adapted to the needs of education administrations, in support of evidence-based education policies and plans. OpenEMIS contributes towards objectives articulated in the UNESCO Education Strategy (2014–2021), particularly ER1, supporting sector-wide planning, policies, and reforms. However, the decentralized evaluation of the initiative found that OpenEMIS must be more widely deployed to increase its relevance. The evaluation also highlighted that UNESCO HQ has not enabled sufficient resources to coordinate, evaluate, and manage OpenEMIS globally and recommended exploring various approaches to secure ongoing funding for OpenEMIS development and support. The evaluation observed that while UNESCO Institutes such as IIEP, Institute for Information Technologies in Education, and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) have not been involved in the implementation of OpenEMIS, scope exists to involve them in order to strengthen the link between OpenEMIS and the demand for and use of education data. Other national and international agencies involved in education planning and EMIS development could also be engaged through collaborative mechanisms such as workshops, international forums, and committees to help guide OpenEMIS development.

29 Research and foresight monitoring and reporting on the SDG 4–Education 2030 Agenda have effectively generated evidence, recommendations, and insight to advance progress towards SDG 4.

50. The initiative faced a number of challenges in coordination with the technical partner. The original joint oversight committee was not maintained and management changes in UNESCO HQ limited institutional memory, leading to some oversight weakness emerge. The evaluation recommended addressing these issues by re-establishing the steering committee with representation from a broader range of stakeholders, including other donors.

51. UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) is the sole UN entity dedicated to educational planning and management, offering Member States knowledge and expertise relevant to challenges in their country contexts. UNESCO's work in educational planning and management contributes not only to ER 1, but also ER 10, "Research and foresight, monitoring and reporting on SDG 4–Education 2030 agenda have effectively generated evidence, recommendations and insight to advance progress towards SDG 4." The *Evaluation of IIEP's Research Programme - 9th Medium-Term Strategy (2014-2017)* [30] provided an in-depth look at the results of IIEP's research portfolio under the key themes identified in the institute's strategy. These relate to the overall IIEP Thematic Priorities: policy research to reduce gender inequality; policy research on teachers' careers and work; research for decentralized educational finance and governance reform; and research on mainstreaming conflict and disaster risk reduction measures into education policy planning. The evaluation examined six of nine research projects launched under the 9th Medium-Term Strategy, representing the bulk of IIEP research and development activities for the period. The evaluation found the IIEP's research was very relevant, covering many issues of great importance to educational planning. It also found that the research delivered strong results at immediate outcome level, with evidence that key research findings have reached policymakers in national education ministries and other sector stakeholders such as teachers' unions and organizations in civil society, as well as generating some influence in international organizations. As with LLECE, opportunities were noted to strengthen dissemination for greater policy impact, communicating research to a wider range of audiences in actionable and engaging formats. IIEP research could also be more closely linked with other pillars of IIEP work.

30 This evaluation notes that IIEP's research activities contribute to ERs under 38 C/5 (2014-2017). ER1 under 38 C/5 is "National capacities strengthened to develop and implement policies and plans within a lifelong learning framework" – corresponding to the 40 C/5 ER1 noted here: ER11 under 38 C/5.

52. Financing was identified as a sustainability risk both for IIEP's research function and for LLECE; outreach to new and existing partners was identified as a necessity in both cases. IIEP's research is heavily dependent on budgetary resources, and for LLECE, greater contributions from participating Member States are required to offset the loss of funding as Latin America has declined in priority as an ODA destination. The "looking ahead" section of the IIEP evaluation identifies dominant trends in education system research needs, particularly regarding implications of COVID-19 on education systems and learning and several issues related to equity and inclusion. It also notes the limited contribution of IIEP's research and development activities to addressing gender equality, mainly due to lack of resources and expertise and because gender equality was not explicitly defined as a priority in the 9th MTS. The contribution to Global Priority Africa was considered to be good.

ER 2: Equitable and responsive TVET systems established to equip youth and adults, both men and women, with relevant skills for employment, decent work, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning

53. UNESCO's Major Programme in Education identifies efforts to establish and strengthen TVET systems as a key priority. This work has the potential to respond to the Education Sector's commitment to support Member States implementation of SDG 4 – in particular, SDG targets 4.3 and 4.4 – as well as SDG target 8.6.[31] Three evaluations reviewed showed that UNESCO had made significant contributions to this ER, *Consolidação da Rede de Escolas SESI como referência para a Educação Básica no Brasil*, Provision of TVET, On-the-Job Training, and Entrepreneurship Education to Youth Affected by the Syria Crisis in Jordan, and Reforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Iraq.

54. *Through the Provision of TVET, On-the-Job Training, and Entrepreneurship Education to Youth Affected by the Syria Crisis in Jordan*, UNESCO supported the Government of Jordan's capacity to address Syrian refugee youth needs through access to TVET, thereby generating more sustainable livelihoods, improved employability prospects,

31 SDG Target 4.3: by 2030 ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university; SDG Target 4.4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship; SDG Target 8.6: Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, with developed countries taking the lead

and greater empowerment and hope for the future for these young people, reducing their risk of radicalization and contributing to the future reconstruction of Syria. UNESCO's role as the only UN entity with a mandate in TVET was recognized as a valuable comparative advantage in this project, providing needed technical expertise to address critical challenges in areas such as curriculum development and teaching quality.

55. The *Reforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)* in Iraq project targeted 400,000 Iraqi young people in Central and Southern Iraq and Kurdistan Region who choose TVET, as well as 20,000 employers requiring a workforce with technical and vocational skills. The project worked with line ministries, authorities, and TVET institutions such as TVET schools and Vocational Training Centres (VTC), as well as other relevant stakeholders including the Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Oil, and representatives of industry, services, and commerce. Planned for three years (2015 – 2018), the project faced delays due to crises and instability in Iraq and received no-cost extension until 2020. The project's original objectives were ambitious regarding policy outcomes in the context of the challenging political and economic situation, and the TVET governance model it produced has not been translated into legislation. Nevertheless, capacity strengthening outcomes from individual student level through to policymakers have been achieved, building up a professional community of practice in TVET developers, with a shared understanding of TVET reform needs, including for cooperation with the private sector.

56. These TVET initiatives made limited contributions to UNESCO's Global Priority Gender Equality, despite the promise of TVET for advancing gender-transformative change by supporting women's entry into nontraditional fields. In both the Iraq and Jordan projects, women's participation in TVET increased, but in Jordan, increased enrolment relied on female students choosing beauty therapy specializations which, as the evaluators noted, is not aligned with UNESCO's advocacy for increased involvement of women in STEM fields. However, fifteen women were trained through an agriculture curriculum pilot and supported in entrepreneurship post-training to establish a cooperative women's farmers' market. The evaluation highlighted this as a promising model for UNESCO to support in future initiatives.

57. The mid-term evaluation of *Consolidação da Rede de Escolas SESI como referência para a Educação Básica no Brasil* also contributes to the establishment of equitable and responsive TVET systems in Member States, in this case, by supporting efforts to update the SESI school network high school and technical school pedagogy to address contemporary needs in line with Brazil's new national basic education model. The project supports the development of new curricula as well as improved teaching strategies and education management. The evaluation – which was hampered by pandemic-related restrictions – provides limited insight into outcomes achieved to date but observes that key actors value UNESCO's contributions of knowledge and expertise and concludes the initiative is on track for positive impacts. Moving into the second half of the project, the evaluator recommended that stakeholders review and adapt activities, resources, and timelines as needed to reflect emerging needs to date.

ER5: National teacher policies developed and/or implemented and teacher-training programmes improved to increase the supply of qualified and motivated teachers

58. The *UNESCO-Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Prize for Outstanding Practice and Performance in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Teachers* is awarded every two years to recognize and enhance the work of candidates in national or international NGOs, institutions, and communities. The review of this Prize was very positive, with the evaluator highlighting the relevance, effectiveness, prestige, and visibility it affords and recommending renewal. Nonetheless, as discussed in Section 5.3 of this report, the evaluation identified several options for increasing programmatic linkages for the Prize and strategic support to its laureates, based on leveraging resources and opportunities inside UNESCO. Suggestions included facilitating the participation of laureate teachers in relevant programmatic or policy meetings or platforms. If pursued, such actions could strengthen the contribution of this Prize to ER 5.

ER7: National capacities strengthened to address gender equality holistically in national education systems

59. The decentralized *Mid-term evaluation of the Joint programme on empowering adolescent girls and young women through education shows* that this major initiative, suspended in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has yet to fully realize its potential despite a strong design and promising work in the three countries where it is being implemented: Mali, Nepal, and Tanzania. The programme, funded exclusively by the Korean International Development Agency at international level, with contributions from the Government of Norway in 2019 to support sexual and

reproductive health and rights (SRHR) work in Mali, takes a holistic approach in line with ER7, contributing not only to SDG4 – Quality Education and SDG5 - Gender Equality but also to SDG3 - Good Health and Well-being. It combines support for quality education for adolescent girls and young women with efforts to strengthen linkages between education and health sectors. It also seeks to address structural barriers that prevent young women's access to the labour market and supports their full participation in civil society. The programme seeks to produce a wide range of interconnected results, from strengthened teacher training institutions to policy and advocacy for education and health and changes in knowledge and attitudes at community level.

60. The evaluation found that the Joint Programme has the potential to produce more gender-balanced education systems, better health, and more inclusive labour markets. Beneficiaries in all three countries were highly satisfied with interim results in keeping with an overall programme design oriented to gender-transformative change. Nevertheless, country-level results frameworks and implementation are often more gender-responsive than gender-transformative in practice. In addition to the disruptions caused by the pandemic, significant administrative and funding complications at the outset delayed start-up, and coordination issues amongst the three implementing partners also affected implementation. The evaluation recommended that, in the pandemic recovery context, partners take stock of achievements and make concerted efforts to improve joint management and coordination as well as reviewing pathways to impact in close cooperation with local partners, to establish a renewed and realistic approach that draws more consistently on synergies among partners.

61. Implemented in Mali and Tanzania as well as in Nepal, the joint programme contributes to UNESCO's Global Priority Africa, as well as addressing the Youth priority group. As a major gender-specific programme with gender-transformative results in its design, this initiative is fully aligned with the Global Priority Gender Equality and offers important opportunities to develop and share learning in this area across the Organization.

4.2. Major Programme II – Natural Sciences

62. One corporate evaluation and one decentralized evaluation focused solely on the Natural Sciences sector are included in this year's review, although this Major Programme was also included in three crosscutting evaluations. These evaluations assessed initiatives that contribute to ER 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 as well as SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 13 – Climate Action, SDG 14 – Life below Water, SDG 15 – Life on Land, and SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals.

ER 5: Member States Member States have developed UNESCO– designated sites as learning sites for inclusive and comprehensive approaches to environmental, economic and social aspects of sustainable development strengthened management of natural resources towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets related to biodiversity and climate change resilience
and
ER 6: Member States gave strengthened management of natural resources towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets related to biodiversity and climate change resilience

63. The terms of reference for the corporate evaluation of the Man and the Biosphere Programme identify both ER 5 and ER 6 as Natural Science Programme Expected Results to which it contributes, and the evaluation confirms that in the 39 C/5 budget, the programme was allocated US$ 847,703 for ER5 and US$ 988,880 for ER6. This intergovernmental programme aims to support a scientific basis for improved relationships between people and their environments at global level, facilitating human livelihoods and equitable sharing of benefits while safeguarding natural and managed ecosystems. Its core is the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, which brings together 701 Biosphere Reserves from 124 countries.[32] The corporate evaluation assessed the first four years of progress on the 2015 to 2025 MAB Strategy,[33] providing ample evidence of the Programme's contributions to these two ERs. According to the evaluation:

- The Strategy and Action Plan and its holistic approach are highly relevant in the current global context, addressing factors such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, and the international drive towards sustainable development. It is

32 As of mid-2021, the figures were 714 Biosphere Reserves in 129 countries

33 The strategy is operationalized through the Lima Action Plan (LAP), endorsed at the 4th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves and adopted at the 28th MAB ICC session in 2016.

highly relevant to Member States' needs, especially in Africa and Arab States, and makes important contributions to the SDGs, especially SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 13 – Climate Action, SDG 14 – Life below Water, SDG 15 – Life on Land, and SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals.

- National stakeholders feel the MAB has had positive effects on communities inside the Biosphere Reserves, but few see results outside the reserves, and monitoring information is insufficient to fully determine the level of achievement.
- The Programme has made very efficient use of limited human and financial resources to achieve significant results, largely by capitalizing on collaboration and synergies with partners within and beyond UNESCO. Still, resource constraints hinder the Programme's ability to generate greater visibility and mobilize external funding.
- Many elements for sustainability are in place through environmental awareness-raising, training, and support for local empowerment and job creation, but positive effects and highly dependent on context, including the involvement and commitment of local and national actors, which are often still limited.
- The MAB Strategy does not apply a gender lens, but gender equality is considered to the extent possible in line with UNESCO's GEAP II. Stakeholders expressed mixed views on Programme benefits for women and girls.
- Many stakeholders feel MAB could have significant benefits for Indigenous peoples, but fewer perceived it as benefiting the poorest groups and people with disabilities.
- Increased communication, outreach, and partnerships for greater visibility, synergies, resource mobilization are needed to further strengthen the Programme's contributions.

ER 7: Member states have strengthened their response to water security challenges towards the achievement of water-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets and other targets from relevant international water agendas
and
ER 8: Member States have improved policies and increased institutional and human capacities for water security through scientific cooperation

64. *The Design and Testing of a Multipurpose (Transboundary) Groundwater Monitoring Network (Albania and Montenegro)* project is financed by the Global Environment Facility and implemented by UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme (IHP). In alignment with the Drin CORDA Process, which emerged from the Drin Dialogue coordinated by the Global Water Partnership Mediterranean (GWP-Med) and UNECE, the project designed and piloted a groundwater monitoring network in the Extended Drin River Basin in Albania and Montenegro to provide relevant Albanian and Montenegrin authorities with tools and experience to implement systematic monitoring of their shared groundwater resources. The lack of such data and related capacities hindered efforts to reconcile socioeconomic growth in the region with the protection of environmental values. The evaluation provides evidence confirming the initiative's contribution to ER7 and ER 8 as well as SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation.

65. The project, which ran from February 2018 to October 2020, was well adapted to national policies, needs, and stakeholder priorities. Design and management arrangements strengthened international coordination as well as local ownership, with good sustainability prospects based on the direct involvement of authorities at all levels and the transfer of needed tools and capacities. Nonetheless, the evaluation considered that it was too early to assess the extent of project contributions to joint management of shared water resources in the region.

66. All performance indicators related to these ERs in UNESCO's 40 C/5 are gender-responsive and linked to both qualitative and quantitative assessment criteria. They include reference to women's participation in relevant processes as well as to the integration of inclusive and gender-responsive approaches. However, the evaluation contained no analysis of this element beyond noting that women participated in technical teams.

4.3. Major Programme III – Social and Human Sciences

67. Five evaluations covering very diverse SHS programming were included in this review. Another five evaluations designated as crosscutting included contributions from this sector. These evaluations assessed initiatives that contribute to ER 2, 3, and 4 as well as SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being, SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 5 – Gender Equality, SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities, and SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

ER 2: National institutional and human capacity strengthened at all levels to generate, manage, and apply knowledge for inclusive, equitable development that is based on ethical values in human right

68. *Promoting Intercultural Dialogue and a Culture of Peace in South-East Asia through Shared Histories* project sought to foster peace education via new ways of learning and thinking about South-East Asian identities and cultures, with a focus on common histories. The project successfully supported the development of an alternative form of history education, contributing to ER 2 as well as SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being, SDG 4 – Quality Education, and SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. It supported students in developing a healthy understanding of their neighbouring countries, raising awareness of different perceptions of the past, and nurturing the acceptance of diverse perspectives. The project actively contributed to Global Priority Gender Equality and addressed the Priority Group Youth through the promotion of gender inclusiveness of training and lessons as well as lessons on equity. Although not designed to contribute to other Major Programme Areas, the synthesis identified a potential contribution of this initiative to the Culture Sector.

69. The decentralized evaluation of this project highlighted its deep engagement with regional, national, and local stakeholders and noted that it adopted appropriate governance arrangements which contributed to its successes. Key members of the UNESCO in-country and national teams played critical roles in mobilizing the project and engaging with teachers to respond to the circumstances and needs of each school. The project successfully developed a set of materials that can be used in classrooms to promote peace education and new ways of thinking about and teaching, history.

70. The evaluation found that it has had significant impacts on the knowledge, capacity, and learning of students, teachers, in-country teams, and other project partners. However, it also found that partnerships between historians and educators could have been stronger; teachers needed to play a central role in developing activities and translating content to make it manageable for their classrooms. Language differences and differing implementation schedules also meant that pilot countries could not capitalize on innovations elsewhere or share learnings early in the piloting process. Therefore, the evaluation recommended that an accessible reporting and communication system be developed to allow ongoing feedback and a means for feedback to be assessed and incorporated as appropriate.

71. The *Inclusão de Pessoa com Deficiência. Ampliando conhecimento, aperfeiçoando mecanismos de promoção, formulação e implantação de Politicas Publicas de Acessibilidade*[34] project is the only one of the initiatives covered by an evaluation this year which deals specifically with the issue of inclusion of persons with disabilities.[35] Through a Technical Cooperation Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Brazil, this ongoing US$ 1.9 million project was launched in 2009 to support relevant state actors with knowledge and tools for collection, systematization, analysis, monitoring, evaluation, and training of public and civil society partners in relation to practices and policies for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. This involved creation of tools such as an accessibility rating scale, studies, collection of good practices in policymaking, training, technical meetings, social communication strategies, and more. Although the evaluation provided limited insights into the quality of outputs or analysis of output to outcome pathways, it provided evidence of contributions to ER 2 and SDG 4 – Quality Education and SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities. The evaluation observed that the project responded in a relevant manner to the lack of knowledge, information, and data on accessibility.

72. Over the ten years covered by the evaluation (2009 to 2018), planned activities were adjusted, increasing the focus on knowledge products and reducing efforts to create technologies and articulate policy and practice. One major activity – creating an Observatory on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Accessibility in Brazil – was dropped, while plans to restructure the National Information System for persons with disabilities were de-prioritized. This appeared to reflect

34 English translation: The Inclusion of People with Disabilities – Expanding Knowledge, Improving Mechanisms for the Promotion, Formulation, and Implementation of Public Accessibility Policies.

35 This evaluation was completed in 2019 but included in the 2020/21 review since it was not available for last year's synthesis.

changing priorities in government. Key strengths of the project were networking and knowledge exchange, although contributions were found to be scattered and difficult to identify due to relatively weak knowledge management. The evaluation concluded that the sustainability of outcomes related to government capacity on accessibility will depend partly on efforts to organize and consolidate the knowledge that has been generated to facilitate access and sharing.

ER 3: Youth-led action enabled, from local to global level, to address societal challenges and consolidate peace

73. UNESCO's MTS 2014-2021 identifies Youth as a crosscutting priority, observing that young people, and especially young women, "carry the greatest burden of change across the world." Recognizing the importance of initiatives with young people to advance peace and development in their societies and globally, UNESCO has an Operational Strategy on Youth. The MTS highlights three interlinked approaches enabling young people to advance SO6, which addresses inclusive social development and intercultural dialogue: (a) policy formulation and review with the participation of youth, (b) capacity development for the transition to adulthood, (c) civic engagement, democratic participation, and social innovation. The two SHS initiatives considered here, which contribute to ER 3, are important vehicles for youth action, aligned in different ways with these objectives and approaches.

74. *The International Centre of Martial Arts for Youth Development and Engagement under the Auspices of UNESCO is one of seven* UNESCO Category 2 Centres established in the Republic of Korea. The evaluation notes that in addition to contributing to SHS ER 3, it contributes to SDG 4 – Quality Education and SDG 5 – Gender Equality through research and knowledge-sharing, capacity building, North-South Cooperation, and by serving as a clearinghouse on martial arts. The International Centre of Martial Arts (ICM) also provides employment in the field of martial arts to youth in less privileged areas of the world. The evaluation provides evidence of the ICM's positive contributions to youth-led action to address societal challenges and consolidate peace.

75. ICM activities are, for the most part, aligned with UNESCO's priorities and objectives, although the concept of North-South cooperation through martial arts remains vague for some stakeholders. The evaluation found that ICM's M&E activities require support, noting that it is unclear to what extent outcomes are being measured. A solid communication strategy that emphasizes the added value of operating as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre could increase the visibility and outreach of the Centre, thereby strengthening its results.

76. ICM contributes to Global Priority Africa by engaging young women and men in sub-Saharan Africa in traditional martial arts activities, but although some ICM projects target the African continent, this is not a particular focus. The evaluation recommended more collaboration and partnerships in Africa, especially with organizations or experts in martial arts. The ICM UNESCO agreement also addresses gender equality, and the centre provides opportunities for women and girls to participate in martial arts, often considered a male-dominated field. In 2020, the ICM was selected as a candidate for the UNESCO's Women and Girls' Education Award. However, gender equality has not taken up as a priority by ICM decision-makers.

77. The final evaluation of *Appui à la résilience des jeunes face aux conflits sociopolitiques au Burundi*[36] assesses another SHS programme that contributes to youth-led action for peace and social development, as well as to SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Originally planned for October 2018 to March 2020 and subsequently extended to September 2020, this initiative is a joint programme implemented in 17 communes across Burundi by a consortium of three UN agencies, coordinated by UNFPA, with partners including the Ministry of Youth, the Ministry of the Interior, and other public entities and NGOs. UNFPA, UNESCO, and UNICEF each had responsibility for different aspects of the project, including community-based initiatives to help young people access safe and reliable information and build knowledge and skills, with the aim of fostering more constructive perceptions of the past and countering polarizing discourse. The project design envisioned work with young people within communities, complemented by work with leaders and at policy level.

78. The evaluation found that this project generated some very positive results, particularly at community level, where it was well-adapted to the local setting and fostered youth ownership. Policy uptake was less successful, and the evaluation recommended greater focus on this area in future similar initiatives, noting its importance for sustainability. Changes in the behaviour and capacity of young people suggest the project made progress on strengthening solidarity, social cohesion, and resilience, but such results are fragile given that underlying

36 English translation: Support to the resilience of youth facing sociopolitical conflict in Burundi.

socioeconomic problems remain. The project was weakened by inadequate coordination among the partners (discussed in Section 3.1 of this report), which undermined plans to offer participants a unified "package" of complementary partner contributions. Failure to integrate youth networks fostered through the project into existing community structures also limited sustainability.

79. With respect to Global Priority Gender, the evaluation found that although the project did not adopt a gender-responsive, strategic approach to peacebuilding it promoted equal participation of young men and women in activities such as network committees and income-generation. It recommended that future similar initiatives should address gender and leadership to support more effective involvement by women and girls in community processes.

ER 4: Member States' commitments to the global agendas in favour of inclusive, sustainable and peaceful societies demonstrated through targeted advocacy campaigns and awareness-raising initiatives

80. Another UNESCO SHS initiative that contributes to ER4 was assessed in the *Evaluation of the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture (2015-2020)*. This prize is awarded yearly to two laureates, one in an Arab country and one in a non-Arab country, and aims to foster cross-cultural understanding and promote Arab culture. It contributes to Strategic Objective 6 of UNESCO's MTS 2014-2021, namely, "Supporting inclusive social development, fostering intercultural dialogue for the rapprochement of cultures and promoting ethical principles" and SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. Overall, the evaluation was positive, noting the value of the Prize in developing and communicating Arab culture throughout the world, promoting intercultural dialogue, and supporting global peace, although this could be strengthened by strategically communicating a clear narrative about the Prize. Financial management of the Prize is sound, and the integrity of the jury process was confirmed, although the evaluation observed that UNESCO's rules and procedures constrain its capacity to use the Prize as an opportunity to "reach out to tap into the living universe of Arab arts and culture."

81. As mentioned in Section 3.3, future editions of the Prize could more dynamically link the Prize and its laureates with other parts of UNESCO, like-minded institutions, and the broader arts and culture world to provide greater visibility and impact. The evaluation also suggested that consideration be given to linking the Prize to additional UNESCO objectives by prioritizing nominees whose cultural or artistic endeavours have a clear empowerment and change dimension. With respect to gender equality – and diversity more broadly – efforts have been made to reach out to younger candidates and achieve a better gender balance in nominees. However, female recipients are still underrepresented.

4.4. Major Programme IV – Culture

82. Six evaluations from this sector, including the corporate evaluation of *Action to Protect Culture in Emergencies*, were reviewed for this year's synthesis report. The sector was also represented in an additional five evaluations classified as crosscutting. These evaluations assessed initiatives that contribute to ER 1, 4, 5, and 6 as well as SDG 1 – No Poverty, SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 8 – Decent Work, SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities, SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption, SDG 13 – Climate Action, SDG 14 – Life below Water, SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, Strong Institutions, and SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals.

ER 1: Tangible heritage identified, protected, monitored, and sustainably managed by member states in particular through the effective implementation of the 1972 convention

83. *The Flanders/UNESCO Trust Fund for the Support of UNESCO's Activities in the Field of Heritage* was a roughly US$ 2.4 million cooperation mechanism between the Government of Flanders and UNESCO that supported a portfolio of fifteen projects with a focus on Africa, the Marine World Heritage Program, Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Southern Africa, several projects responding to emergency situations in Iraq and Syria, and the high profile #Unite4Heritage project. The long-term nature and flexibility of the mechanism, implemented between 2014 and 2020, was found to be a model approach for supporting UNESCO activities on heritage safeguarding and conservation. Projects under the cooperation mechanism contributed not only to ER 1 but also CLT ERs 4, 5, and 6.[37] Specifically:

37 ER 4: Underwater cultural heritage identified, protected and sustainably managed by Member States, in particular through the wide ratification and effective implementation of the 2001 Convention; ER 5: Culture protected and cultural pluralism promoted in emergencies through better preparedness and response, in particular through the effective implementation of UNESCO's cultural standard-setting instruments; ER 6: Intangible cultural heritage identified and safeguarded by Member States and communities, in particular through the effective implementation of the 2003 Convention.

- The mechanism was found to be effective in delivering positive outcomes for the conservation and safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage, with most projects achieving or surpassing their objectives. (A small number of projects were either discontinued or did not implement all their planned activities.)
- The cooperation mechanism and its fifteen projects were found to be aligned with several SDGs including SDG 1 – No Poverty, SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities, SDG 13 – Climate Action, SDG 14 – Life below Water, SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, Strong Institutions.
- Most of the projects involved effective partnerships, and several were able to access significant additional funding and support.
- Sustainability – and in some cases replication – of project results was ensured in many of the projects by institutionalizing project activities within relevant government partner agencies and initiatives, working with and empowering local communities and institutions, and building the capacity of key people and institutions through focused training.
- Gender equality was considered within the agreement and projects aimed for gender balance in activities, but this was sometimes difficult since participants were usually selected by beneficiary countries or organizations. Improvements could be achieved by addressing gender equality and human rights more comprehensively in design and implementation, with more support for staff who are not specialists in these areas.
- Seven of the fifteen projects supported UNESCO's Global Priority Africa. Although the mechanism had a geographic focus on Southern Africa, it did not specify the funding allocation for projects in the focus area. The evaluation recommended that future agreements broaden the geographic focus to include projects in other African countries.

84. Implemented between December 2015 and June 2020, the *Central Africa World Heritage Forest Initiative (CAWHFI)* project was funded by the European Union. It aimed to improve the sustainable management of natural resources in the Congo Basin and strengthen protection of the region's exceptional biodiversity through the implementation of the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Project activities sought to strengthen a network of protected areas and connecting forest landscapes covering more than 250,000 square kilometres in the Cameroon-Gabon-Central African Republic-Republic of Congo transboundary forest area. This initiative contributes to Strategic Objective 7 of the MTS 2014-2021, "Protecting, promoting and transmitting heritage." It also falls under Global Priority Africa, addresses the needs of LDCs and Indigenous people, and aligns with SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities, SDG 13 – Climate Action, SDG 15 – Life on Land, SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals.

85. The evaluation confirms that the initiative has contributed to this ER, with evidence indicating that CAWHFI's support has been a catalyst for improved synergy among diverse conservation actors around the Tri-National Sangha landscape. UNESCO's international status and neutrality has reinforced this role. The programme has also strengthened collaboration between conservation agencies and Indigenous peoples, but Indigenous peoples' marginalization and the destruction of their traditional environment continues.

86. Neither the evaluation nor the project appear to have incorporated gender equality or rights-based approaches, although potential entry-points are evident and the Programme is committed in the 40 C/5 budget to mainstreaming gender into all its work.

87. *UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Sites in Europe* also contributed to this ER as well as being aligned with SDG 4 – Quality education, SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 8 – Decent Work, SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities, and SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption. This was a pilot for mobilizing sites around sustainable tourism as an engine for socioeconomic development. The decentralized evaluation of this initiative noted that while sustainable tourism was not a priority for the participating sites at the outset and they initially showed limited engagement and buy-in, by the end of the project the sites had met development goals and benefited from increased visibility, opportunities for co-design with the private sector, and engagement with other stakeholders. All planned outputs were achieved despite initial delays, and there was progress towards outcomes, with sites empowered to make sustainable tourism a reality through strengthened capacity to identify relevant policy levers, tap into local expertise, and address the private sector.

88. Project management experiences varied greatly across the sites. Some noted a top-down approach, limited engagement and information-sharing, and little sense of ownership, while others described smooth communication leading to a strong sense of ownership. Looking to the future, sites were enthusiastic at the prospect of

building on relationships formed with other sites and adopting a more coordinated approach, but cooperation within and across the sites remains to be developed to ensure sustainability. The evaluation noted various options for building on project achievements, especially in terms of continuing the momentum and using marketing and communications to connect with the public, across sites, and with decision-makers, influencers, and media at national and European levels to strengthen sustainable tourism for sustainable development.

89. Neither the evaluation nor, apparently, the project addressed gender equality issues, although the project's work in governance and awareness-raising on sustainable tourism would have offered entry-points for considering both gender equality and rights.

ER 5: Culture protected and cultural pluralism promoted in emergencies through better preparedness and response in particular through the effective implementation of UNESCO's cultural standard-setting instruments

90. UNESCO's work on protecting culture and promoting cultural pluralism in emergencies is aligned with SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 5 – Gender Equality, SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities, SDG 13 – Climate Action, SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, and SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals. It is also aligned with the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the 2015 Strategy for Reinforcing UNESCO's Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict, which acknowledged the need for to strengthen UNESCO's institutional and operational capacities to respond to attacks against culture in armed conflicts. The strategy provides a framework for efforts including improvements in rapid response capacities at HQ and the development of new methodologies for assessing the cultural needs of displaced communities. In 2020, UNESCO commissioned a corporate evaluation of its various initiatives to protect culture in emergencies, including its six Culture Conventions and related programmes. This was complemented by a decentralized evaluation of the *Protecting Cultural Heritage and Diversity in Complex Emergencies for Stability and Peace*.

91. The corporate *Evaluation of UNESCO's Action to Protect Culture in Emergencies found* that key actors consider the Organization to be well-placed to catalyze collective action, mobilize funds, coordinate responses, and identify needed technical interventions in this area. However, several persistent operational challenges affect its work. Important learning from the evaluation includes the following:

  UNESCO met or exceeded almost all its 2018 and 2019 targets in relation to the 39 C/5 ER5 reporting framework, but the absence of an overall theory of change or results framework for culture in emergencies creates challenges for designing programmes that lead to long-term change and monitoring is primarily at output level. Activities, associated targets, and expected evidence are guided by the key performance indicators found within ER5, which does not detail output to outcome pathways.

- UNESCO effectively integrated culture into international security frameworks and strategies and made significant progress on putting cultural protection on the military agenda. The Organization has also played an effective central role in culture-related post-disaster needs assessments at the international and inter-agency level.
- Insufficient in-house resources to support this work and a lack of operational deployment mechanisms for quick response are missing. Persistent challenges, including limited regular programme funding, multiple and confusing funding modalities, and heavy administrative processes, offer mixed messages to stakeholders and Member States about the priority UNESCO gives to emergency work and, if not addressed, could undermine UNESCO's credibility in this area.
- Effective partnerships with key organizations in the field of emergencies have been established, but partners state that as UNESCO becomes increasingly involved in emergency interventions, more communication with UNESCO over roles and responsibilities would be welcome to avoid duplication and competition and ensure resources are used efficiently.
- Inclusion of women, youth, and other disadvantaged groups is no longer simply a box-ticking exercise as it often was in the past. Progress is especially notable in preparedness and early-recovery work where there is more time available to address these issues; however, UNESCO staff in the field seek greater clarity on what a human rights-based approach entails.

92. *Protecting Cultural Heritage and Diversity in Complex Emergencies for Stability and Peace* is the first collaboration in the field of cultural heritage between UNESCO

and the EU's Instrument Contributing to Peace and Stability (ICSP), implemented between October 2017 and September 2019. The project aimed to reduce the vulnerability of populations whose culture and heritage is targeted or affected in complex emergencies, with interventions in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen, and a global component coordinated by the Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Unit in Paris. The evaluation found that the project provided a relevant response to increasing attacks on culture in armed conflicts in the MENA region. The project design focused on communities affected by war and took a human rights-based approach to cultural conservation.

93. According to the evaluation, UNESCO offered numerous comparative advantages linked to its technical expertise and reputation, field presence, mandate and support from Member States, neutrality, and technical and operational partnerships with local and international entities. However, implementation was hampered by significant delays related to issues in UNESCO HQ, staffing difficulties, donor requirements, and the instability and conflict in locations where the work took place. Consequently, targets and budget absorption plans were only partially achieved. Nevertheless, a wide array of results related to tangible heritage protection in Yemen and Libya were produced, and the partnerships established in Yemen were especially robust and sustainable. Although gender equality was not incorporated at the design stage, the project sought to address gender issues during the latter stages of implementation.

ER 6: Intangible cultural heritage identified and safeguarded by Member States and communities in particular through the effective implementation of the 2003 convention

94. The *Final Evaluation of the Development of Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs in West Bengal to Support Intergenerational Transmission of Rural Craft and Performing Arts* offered detailed evidence of how this 2016-2019 project, funded by the Government of West Bengal's Department of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises and Textiles, contributed to this ER and aligned with SDG 1 – No Poverty, SDG 5 – Gender Equality, SDG 8 – Decent Work, and SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities. Implemented through a partnership of UNESCO and the NGO Contact Base in 19 districts, and involving over 12,000 local cultural practitioners, the project sought to revive, safeguard, and transmit across generations a multitude of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) expressions, as well as equipping traditional artists to build sustainable cultural enterprises to enhance livelihoods.

95. Drawing on the "Art for Life" approach of Contact Base and capitalizing on the comparative advantage UNESCO enjoys by virtue of its prestige and global reach, the project sought to mobilize practitioners to collectively identify the challenges and needs faced by their ICH expressions; improve their ICH knowledge and skills in collaboration with master practitioners; provide basic skills on safeguarding and promoting ICH, including entrepreneurial skills; create opportunities for practitioners to interact with the wider public; raise public awareness of West Bengal's wealth of rural ICH; and link practitioners to government schemes to support their socio-economic needs to support their livelihood and social empowerment.

96. The evaluation found that project priorities closely matched those of beneficiary communities, being highly contextualized to each region and art form and rooted in an initial mapping of local ICH needs. Most intended outputs were delivered on schedule, largely thanks to effective matching of dedicated, skilled, and enthusiastic Contact Base expertise with the appropriate arts, crafts, and communities in the field, leading to strong, trusting relationships combining research, training, and accompaniment. Community leaders expressed high levels of satisfaction with their inclusion in decisions relating to training, capacity building, and project management in their locations, and West Bengal government representatives were also satisfied with the project, and their involvement in decision-making.

97. According to the evaluation, communications with UNESCO's New Delhi office were less consistent, exacerbated by turnover of core personnel midway through the project. At times, UNESCO expressed concerns about the balance between ICH safeguarding and livelihoods dimensions of the project, but the project demonstrated robust linkages between these and the importance of ICH revitalization to support cultural entrepreneurship and tourism as a strategic tool for sustainable development.

98. The evaluation considered how the project addressed gender. While women's participation traditionally varies across ICH expressions, the project sought to provide opportunities for women in all its activities. In the performative arts, especially, efforts were made to break down gender barriers. The evaluation found evidence that in many cases the project empowered women with improved income, recognition, and mobility.

4.5. Major Programme V – Communication and Information

99. Two evaluations from this sector were reviewed for this year's synthesis report: the corporate evaluations of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and of Action to Revitalize and Promote Indigenous Languages within the Framework of the International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL). The latter is discussed in section 4.6 with the crosscutting and thematic evaluations. The Communication and Information (CI) sector was also represented in an additional five evaluations classified as crosscutting. These evaluations assessed initiatives that contribute to ER 2, 3, 4, and 6 as well as, SDG 4 – Quality Education; SDG 5 – Gender Equality; SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation; SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities; SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities; SDG 13 – Climate Action; SDG 14 – Life below Water; SDG 15 – Life on Land; SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, Strong Institutions; and SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals.

ER 2: Member States have benefited from enhanced media contributions to diversity, gender equality and youth empowerment in and through media; and societies are empowered through media and information literacy programmes and effective media response to emergency and disaster

100. UNESCO's work in the thematic area of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) directly contributes to ER 2 through over a decade of efforts by the CI Sector in a constantly evolving field that has gained increasing national and global recognition. UNESCO has become the lead agency supporting countries to harness MIL to address and empower citizens and institutions in the twenty-first-century knowledge society. The MIL thematic area is highly responsive to UNESCO's Global Priority Africa and its Youth and LDC Priority Groups, which are fully integrated into the overall strategy for the thematic area and addressed through sound efforts, actions, and results. MIL demonstrates high potential to address Global Priority Gender Equality, with a number of gender-based assessment approaches and incipient interventions. However, more could be done to systematically address gender equality and enhance gender-responsive and gender-transformative interventions.

101. The corporate evaluation of UNESCO's MIL efforts commissioned in 2020 found that the Organization can claim significant achievements through the work of the Section responsible for MIL. UNESCO is considered a "global intellectual lead" in the area by Member States and multilateral organizations. However, the Organization's current strategies, priorities, and status do not position MIL as a core area for contribution to SDG s, despite alignment with SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 5 – Gender Equality, SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities, and SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. The evaluation cites many challenges to realizing MIL's full potential, including low financial, human, and logistical resources. Moreover, limited integration into knowledge management processes within UNESCO leading to limited internal awareness and communication related to MIL across Sectors and the UNESCO family. The evaluation found that:

- For several decades, MIL has been providing answers to questions about citizen's rights and critical engagement with information and media content. Over the past ten years, Member States have become increasingly aware of risks related to potential misuse of information, especially in the context of the digital age, with information quickly, globally, and easily accessible through new means of communication such as social media.
- Strategic decisions are required regarding MIL's priority level within the Organization and the allocation of resources for MIL work from a holistic and interdisciplinary perspective. The evaluation found such decisions are needed to optimally position this strand of work to contribute to the 2030 Agenda through a wide range of topics, such as data privacy and big data, media, and freedom of expression.
- In addition, an enhanced focus on the linkage between MIL and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), disinformation, life-long learning, and artificial intelligence approaches, as well as an enhanced focus on disadvantaged groups as well as a more consistent approach to advancing gender equality and inclusion through MIL, would allow the Organization to retain and expand its intellectual and foresight role in MIL.
- UNESCO's work on MIL includes several successful examples of inter- and intra-sectoral work that reflect the crosscutting and fluid nature of MIL. However, organizational barriers remain a challenge. The MIL evaluation observed that more interdisciplinary cooperation will only be entirely possible when the organizational and budgetary structures reflect it formally.

4.6. Corporate Services – Knowledge Management and Information Systems

102. *Digitizing our Shared UNESCO History was* UNESCO's first large - scale digitization operation, initiating the digitization of archives with a significant risk of wear and tear and important historical value. The project is considered a success in view of its novelty and the amount it achieved within a relatively short timeframe. Despite the technical difficulties involved, the project achieved most of its objectives in terms of digitization, publication, and quality, with a large part of the collection now digitized and published. Safeguarding the selected archives promotes UNESCO's heritage and highlights evidence of international cooperation, increasing awareness of the existence and significance of archives. This project contributed to UNESCO's Corporate Service Division of Knowledge Management and Information Systems (KMI) ER 1, "Programme delivery enhanced through better use of institutional memory, knowledge management and innovative ICT solutions" and was found to align with SDG 4 – Quality Education.[38]

103. A decentralized evaluation of this project conducted in early 2020 recognized its achievements but noted that it would have benefited from stronger coordination within UNESCO, particularly regarding knowledge of the collection, harmonizing metadata with existing databases, and greater mobilization of the different services involved in the project (financial services, purchasing, the office in charge of relations with donors, and management in connection with the final use of the archives). The evaluation suggested that future phases should include a longer start-up period to ensure proper preparation and indexing of documents, accurate and robust requests for proposal and contracts to ensure appropriate operational control for the Organization, and a project team with adequate staffing capacity to support the collection and digitization of archives.

38 Although not conceived under a sectoral ER, the synthesis notes that, through its efforts to preserve archives of important historical value, this initiative also potentially contributes to the CI MLA 2 "*Building knowledge societies through ICTs by enabling universal access to and preservation of, information and knowledge.*"

4.7. Intersectoral cooperation and interdisciplinary themes

104. In response to Member States' calls for synergies and holistic solutions to address sustainable development challenges, and in line with the multidisciplinary approach of the 40 C/5 Programme and Budget, UNESCO increasingly seeks greater integration across its work and structures. Several programmes, mandates, and initiatives have capitalized on the collective strength of UNESCO's Sectors and adopted a more intersectoral, crosscutting approach. Three evaluations in 2020 covered intersectoral cooperation initiatives and interdisciplinary themes. In addition, two covered crosscutting themes relevant to all Sectors – namely, the evaluation of Global Priorities Gender Equality and Africa.

Evaluation of the Action to Revitalize and Promote Indigenous Languages (IYIL)

105. As the leading agency for the International Year and under the responsibility of the CI Programme Sector, UNESCO played a key coordination role in the *Action to Revitalize and Promote Indigenous Languages within the Framework of the International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL)*, facilitating the development of knowledge societies and promoting respect for cultural and linguistic diversity and universal access to information. The Organization's work during the IYIL addressed Global Priorities Africa and Gender Equality as well as Youth, LDCs, and Indigenous Peoples Priority Groups. However, the corporate evaluation of this work found that the level of prioritization was mixed; 66 percent of activities carried out under the IYIL umbrella included participation of Indigenous Peoples; 30 percent of initiatives showed evidence of gender mainstreaming; and only five percent directly supported Priority Africa. The Action Plan contributed to CI ER 4 *"Capacities of Member States strengthened, through the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes, and of the Information for All Programme (IFAP) and the related normative framework"* and aligned with SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities and SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. According to the evaluation:

- UNESCO played a key role in raising awareness on the critical loss of Indigenous languages and their positive value and meaning to Indigenous peoples and

humanity. However, clear strategic direction was lacking in the Action Plan, compounded by the lack of a meaningful results framework or clear theory of change; consequently, there was limited monitoring and possibilities to realize the planned actions.

- UNESCO was asked to lead the Year within existing resources. This meant that UNESCO's portfolio of activities had to be retrofitted to the Action Plan rather than being guided by it. UNESCO had to find creative solutions and dedicate space for Indigenous language programming within activities, budgets, and staffing that had already been planned. There were significant imbalances between Programme Sectors, which tended to work predominantly in silos.
- UNESCO's key strengths in coordinating the IYIL2019 were found in the Organization's expertise, dedicated staff, multisectoral mandate, and the convening power that brought together diverse stakeholders.
- UNESCO is uniquely positioned as the lead agency to preserve, revitalize, and promote Indigenous languages. The International Decade of Indigenous Languages, for which UNESCO has been designated lead UN agency, provides the Organization with an opportunity to consolidate the results and build upon the lessons learned during IYIL2019.

Evaluation of Youth Empowerment: Media and Information Literacy a Response to Prevent Hate and Violent Extremism

106. *Youth Empowerment: Media and Information Literacy a Response to Prevent Hate and Violent Extremism* was a two-year project building on UNESCO's previous Support to Media in Jordan and implemented as part of the EU's Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace. The Programme crosscut the CI and SHS sectors, contributing to the focus of CI ER 2 on youth and Member State empowerment and to SHS ER 3[39] on youth-led action and in alignment with SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. In 2020, a decentralized evaluation was conducted which found the project highly effective in engaging students in MIL to prevent hate and violent extremism in their communities.

107. The evaluation noted that UNESCO and other implementing partners' close involvement in project activities contributed to the engagement and motivation of project participants. The project's interactive teaching styles also contributed to strengthened knowledge acquisition by students and teachers alike – although the evaluation observed that students' knowledge of social media and other forms of technology, which is often far greater than their teachers', and should be considered when designing the teaching methodology. Integrating MIL into national curricula in Jordan was considered an excellent step towards country-wide awareness of MIL concepts and the evaluation recommended that future MIL programming in Jordan should be seen as a complement to the MIL education offered in public schools by the Ministry of Education. Moreover, recognizing that sustained MIL can only be achieved through sufficient geographical coverage, the evaluation also recommended that the project be scaled to additional schools and students.

108. Although gender equality was not systematically addressed, the evaluation noted some gender barriers to participation and suggested that raising awareness through flyers, promotional videos, and other means could increase acceptance of MIL and allow for more girls and vulnerable groups to participate. Five student participants also produced a broadcast of thirty episodes on human rights, gender, and hate speech.

Evaluation of Malaysia Funds-in-Trust (MFIT) projects

109. *Malaysia Funds–in–Trust (MFIT)* was a nine-year framework agreement between the Government of Malaysia and UNESCO (also known as the UNESCO-MUCP/MFIT) to support South-South Cooperation (SSC). The UNESCO-MUCP/MFIT involved all of UNESCO's five sectors, with the greatest proportion of funds allocated to Education and the least to CI. The projects contributed to several ERs[40] and priorities, including Global Priority Africa, Gender Equality, LDCs, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). According to them mechanism's 2020 evaluation, stakeholders considered UNESCO-MUCP/MFIT a visionary model for transforming support to developing countries and establishing a platform to promote SSC. The evaluation also found that it had achieved several of its intended goals, despite facing many challenges that, to some extent, hindered success. Challenges and gaps were identified in communication and exchange of information, administration, and finance. The evaluation found that:

- MUCP/MFIT can serve as a model for replicating SSC and supporting global agendas. Attention to SSC, SDGs, and UNESCO C4 from the planning stage was a key driver for realizing the various goals, targets, and priorities contained in these

39 CI ER 2: Member States have benefited from enhanced media contributions to diversity, gender equality and youth empowerment in and through media; and societies are empowered through media and information literacy programmes and effective media response to emergency and disaster; SHS ER 3: Youth-led action enabled, from local to global levels, to address societal challenges and consolidate peace

40 ED ER 1. 2, 3; SC ER 1, 2, 7; SHS ER 2, 4; CLT ER 1; and CI ER 3 and 6 in the 40 C/5 Programme and Budget

programme pieces. However, in some projects, inadequate communication with national project beneficiaries during the design phase led to interventions that did not serve the most urgent needs.

- Inadequate checks and balances in project management led to implementation deficits, delays, and several project-level budget changes, which hindered the overall success of this initiative.
- By reviewing and enhancing the efforts within UNESCO for sharing information, expanding and sustaining the networks that have been created, and developing a modality for sharing lessons among projects to improve the intersectionality and intersectoral programming, UNESCO could overcome the communication disconnect that challenged project implementation and success.
- While the mechanism addressed Global Priority Gender Equality and gender equality was integrated in the design of MFIT-funded initiatives, the extent to which it was integrated into implementation is less clear. 76 percent of evaluation survey respondents stated that gender was integrated into their project, but gender mainstreaming in implementation was less apparent.

Evaluation of Enhancing a Gender Responsive Film Sector in the Maghreb-Mashreq Region

110. *Enhancing a Gender Responsive Film Sector in the Maghreb-Mashreq Region* was a regional project funded by the EU and implemented by a UNESCO-led consortium to improve the image and conditions of women in the film sector in specific MENA countries.[41] The project cut across the CI and CLT Sectors and contributed to CI ER 2 and CLT ER 7,[42] several SDGs,[43] and Global Priorities Gender Equality and Africa. The decentralized evaluation of the project found it was successful overall, generating evidence to support advocacy in this area, creating linkages amongst partners and participating organizations, raising the visibility of the issues, opening spaces for women in the industry to exchange experiences, and raising men's awareness of gender and film.

111. Looking toward the future, the evaluation noted opportunities to capitalize on the project's regional and multidimensional approach by compiling lessons learned and recommendations, such as the importance of using technology and social media in future projects to guarantee the sustainability of relationships. An important lesson was the need to consider target countries' political contexts at the design phase and be prepared to adapt strategies in case of unexpected changes.

Evaluation of UNESCO's Operational Strategy for Priority Africa

112. To operationalize the Organization's long-standing Global Priority Africa, and in response to a recommendation of the 2012 IOS evaluation of Priority Africa, UNESCO's General Conference adopted an eight-year Operational Strategy for Priority Africa (OSPA) in 2013. The OSPA crosscuts all five of UNESCO's Sectors,[44] thus aligns with a number of SDGs and contributes to Global Priority Gender, and the Youth, Indigenous Peoples, and LDCs Priority Groups through its six flagship programmes. While "Coordination and monitoring of action to benefit Africa" are crosscutting across all Programme Sectors the two specific Expected Results with relevant performance indicators and targets are defined in the 40 C/5

113. A corporate evaluation was commissioned in 2020 to assess the OSPA's effectiveness and inform the design of the next iteration of the Strategy. While the Strategy was found to be relevant and overwhelmingly stakeholders found it a necessary and effective mechanism, some MS did not perceive effects of this prioritization on the Continent. The evaluation highlights the following findings and associated recommendations:

- There is a disconnect between the ambitions of the OSPA and its implementation. This has mainly been attributed to insufficient integration of OSPA objectives into UNESCO's overarching strategic frameworks (namely its Programme and Budget – C/5) and limited understanding of implementation responsibilities, hindering OPSA's uptake by the Programme Sectors charged with implementing it. The evaluation recommended that UNESCO address these issues by delivering an awareness process for all programme staff on Global Priority Africa and their expected contributions.

41 Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia.

42 CI ER 2: Member States have benefited from enhanced media contributions to diversity, gender equality and youth empowerment in and through media; and societies are empowered through media and information literacy programmes and effective media response to emergency and disaster; CLT ER 7: policies and measures to promote the diversity of cultural expressions designed and implemented by member states in particular through the effective implementation of the 2005 convention.

43 SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 5 – Gender Equality, SDG 6 – Clean Water, SDG 9 – Industry and Innovation, SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities, SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities, SDG 13 – Climate Action, SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, and SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals.

44 Culture, Social and Humanitarian Sciences, Natural Science, Communication and Information, and Education

- The flagships, which were intended to be an intersectoral implementation modality, are insufficiently understood as part of sectoral work. Thus, the evaluation recommended that UNESCO develop a limited number of concrete, focused, operational flagship programmes embedded in sectoral or intersectoral C/5 programmes with allocated budgets, strong results frameworks with SMART indicators, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and with Gender and Youth integrated as relevant.

Evaluation of UNESCO's Global Priority on Gender Equality

114. Gender Equality (GE) has been a global priority for UNESCO since 2008, clearly featured in the Organization's current MTS, Programme, and Budget Documents. The Organization employs a dual approach for implementing Gender Equality: gender mainstreaming in all programmes and activities and gender-specific programming. Global Priority GE institutionalizes gender across all of UNESCO's five sectors via the Division for Gender Equality, GEAPs, Gender Focal Point Network, the dedicated Section for Inclusion & GE in Education (ED/IGE), use of Gender Equality Markers, training, gender audits, and the "Friends of Gender Equality" group. While the Global Priority Gender Equality cuts across all Programme Sectors, "Coordination and monitoring of action to implement gender equality" is also covered separately under three specific Expected Results with relevant performance indicators and targets defined in the 40 C/5. It also contributes to SDG 5, "*Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"* and is aligned with SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities, SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities, SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, and SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals.

115. In 2020, the IOS produced a corporate evaluation assessing the implementation of UNESCO's Priority Gender Equality. The evaluation found that the Organization has progressed in institutionalizing this Global Priority and has implemented many programmes, projects, and partnerships with a focus on GE across Sectors and regions. The evaluation highlighted the following findings and associated recommendations:

- UNESCO's centrally located Division for Gender Equality is considered best practice, and UNESCO does well in having a network of Gender Focal Points in place and recently launching a new mandatory e-learning.
- To improve future results, UNESCO should invest more in planning and reporting tools for GE, as well as systematic monitoring, evaluation, and learning. The evaluation also recommends clarifying and further strengthening the gender equality architecture and culture and continuing to develop UNESCO as a gender-responsive organization and gender-friendly model workplace.
- An ambitious gender architecture has been put into place, but clarity could be improved, especially regarding roles, responsibilities, and communication and collaboration structures, as well as expanding resources for coordination and management of strategic initiatives and support to Programme Sectors and Field Offices.

116. The evaluation identified the following five areas for improvement, linked to its nine specific recommendations for enabling the move from "ambition to action" with respect to the Global Priority Gender Equality:

- Clear and strong institutional architecture for integrating and implementing gender equality;
- Strong Gender Focal Points in Division and Field Offices, supported by networking, capacity building, time allocation and management support, as well as adequate regional gender expertise and collaborative structures;
- Coherent and modern gender-responsive organization and gender equality culture
- Integrated and harmonized processes and tools for planning, monitoring, reporting results; resource mobilization, allocation and tracking GE initiatives;
- Systematic monitoring, evaluation, learning, and communication of gender equality mainstreaming and gender equality-focused initiatives.

7. UNESCO performance against evaluation criteria

117. The OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact, recognized in *UNESCO's 2015 Evaluation Policy*, provide the most common standard for assessing initiatives in the development field and beyond. Most evaluations in this year's portfolio used at least some of these to frame their assessments, although their definition and use were sometimes variable.[45] Following is an overview of patterns in UNESCO performance on these criteria as they emerge from the evaluations reviewed. Relevance and coherence are considered together[46] and effectiveness is combined with impact, given the specialized requirements for assessing impact and since no impact evaluations, per se, were included in the portfolio.[47]

7.1. Relevance and coherence

Relevance – the extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with intended beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies[48]

Coherence – the consistency of UNESCO's policies and actions with those of its key constituencies and partners; for example, with Member States' development needs and priorities; and consistency with United Nations partners, particularly as it concerns issues of system-wide coherence

45 The two evaluations of UNESCO prizes included in the review used a slightly different standard set of criteria tailored for assessment of prizes as defined in the UNESCO Prize Strategy Overall Strategy for UNESCO Prizes, adopted by the Executive Board at its 171st session in 2005 (171 EX/19 and 171 EX/Decision 24).

46 While considered in UNESCO's Evaluation Policy as an additional criterion since 2014, "Coherence" was added in the OECD/DAC revised evaluation criteria only in 2019 and has not yet been fully adopted in evaluation practice, so the application of this criterion in this portfolio was even more variable than that of the other criteria.

47 Keeping in mind the limitations noted in section 1.5, the significance of this material should be weighted in consideration of the great variety in evaluation scope and object as well as the variable quality of the evaluations themselves.

48 This and following definitions are taken from UNESCO's 2015 Evaluation Policy.

118. These two criteria receive the most consistent positive assessments in the evaluations reviewed this year. By and large, stakeholders and beneficiaries from global to local levels considered UNESCO contributions relevant, addressing identified priorities and needs in significant and appropriate ways – despite challenges in implementation. UNESCO's international profile, prestige, neutrality, and networks all contributed to the relevance of its actions, as did its own and its partners' technical expertise. Stakeholders considered the diverse themes and problems addressed in UNESCO interventions timely and important. Contextualizing activities to local and institutional settings, as well as collaborative and participatory partnership and capacity-strengthening approaches, were also noted as positive factors for relevance. Nonetheless, issues in project management and communication sometimes undermined relevance.

119. UNESCO initiatives were also considered broadly coherent with other actors' policies and actions, despite challenges in delineating clear and complementary roles and responsibilities with UN partners, in particular in joint programmes. All but one SDG was identified as receiving either a primary or secondary contribution from the initiatives assessed this year. SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) were most heavily represented. UNESCO's work was also found to align with Member State policies and strategies and a range of international conventions and agreements. However, internal coherence was sometimes weak; many initiatives reviewed this year were not clearly linked vertically or horizontally to relevant internal frameworks across entities and strategies.

7.2. Effectiveness (and signs of impact)[49]

Effectiveness – the extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance

Impact - positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

49 Most evaluations conducted at UNESCO lack the resources to answer questions related to impact systematically and based on impact assessment methodology. Many seek to explore "pathways towards impact" based on a theory of change approach as the guiding framework.

120. The manner and depth in which the evaluations in this year's review assess effectiveness varies considerably. As in past years, many focussed heavily on outputs, with less attention to outcome-level changes. Except in corporate evaluations where these are more consistently applied, reference to programme theories of change, results frameworks, or performance indicators were also absent from many evaluations, but it was difficult to determine whether this reflected limitations in evaluation capacity or problems in programme design and monitoring. Some evaluations systematized assessments by producing qualitative or quantitative rankings or scores on achievements against planned results or targets, often focussed on activities implemented or outputs produced. While sometimes helpful in summarizing key findings, often these scores and ratings provide little meaningful information on the quality of results achieved or insight into output to outcome pathways.[50] Moreover, since they were not applied in standard ways or across all evaluations, they do not provide a basis for comparison or aggregation.

121. Nevertheless, many evaluations offered insights on the effectiveness of the interventions they covered and most addressed, to some extent, whether outcome-level changes had been achieved. Generally, assessments of effectiveness were positive, and achievements that could be classified at least at immediate outcome level were identified. Commonly, this involved changes resulting from improvements in knowledge, awareness, capacity, or attitudes of diverse kinds. Evidence of such changes was often anecdotal and unsupported by systematic assessment methods; however, many evaluations provided in-depth qualitative analysis to support their judgments. Effectiveness was often linked to mobilization of appropriate UNESCO expertise, direct engagement by UNESCO personnel with the project, and strong partner relationships. Some evaluations noted that while outputs were delivered, programming timelines were short relative to ambitions for medium to longer-term change. In summary, this year's synthesis suggests that UNESCO programming is usually effective within its remit, but work remains to better define, capture, and communicate results, based on more systematic mapping and tracking of the linkages from activity to output to outcome.

122. UNESCO initiatives aim to contribute to higher-level change that fosters peace and equitable, sustainable development through improved enabling environments in areas such as quality education, scientific research, inclusive social policy, and safeguarding natural and cultural heritage, as captured in the Organization's nine crosscutting Strategic Objectives. Identifying evidence of attributable change at this level is challenging, but some evaluations included reflections of this kind. Some mentioned indirect indicators of impact – for example, partial stabilization of wildlife populations in intensely protected areas like those covered by the central African forest protection project *(Patrimonie mondial forestier d'Afrique centrale)*. Others noted increased awareness among policymakers on themes covered by interventions, from global and regional through to national and local levels. However, no direct evidence was cited of UNESCO contribution to new legislation. Several evaluations noted that it was too early to draw conclusions about long-term benefits. Others pointed to auspicious signs such as improved resilience and social cohesion among young people in the Burundi community peacebuilding project *(Appui à la résilience des jeunes face aux conflits sociopolitiques au Burundi)*, or among rural people involved in the West Bengal, India ICH project *(Development of Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs in West Bengal to Support Intergenerational Transmission of Rural Craft and Performing Arts)*. However, these long-term changes are affected by many factors outside the scope of UNESCO work.

123. Some decentralized evaluations documented unintended results. For example:

- The evaluation of the *Youth Empowerment: Media and Information Literacy as a response to Prevent Hate and Violent Extremism* project noted improved student-teacher relationships, improved conflict resolution skills among students, increased engagement in other subjects in school or improved academic performance, higher self-esteem among students, students becoming more expressive, and schools with improved capacity to address online bullying. Students also actively shared the knowledge gained through MIL activities with their peers, families, and communities.
- The evaluation of *Promoting Intercultural Dialogue and a Culture of Peace in South-East Asia through Shared Histories* found several unanticipated outputs, including the development of web applications, collaboration with cultural institutions on exhibitions and activities, a school-to-museum initiative, and production of books for young children which aimed to promote broader engagement within the community.

50 The system of qualitative ratings and summaries provided in the corporate MIL evaluation is a notable exception which provided definite added value to the evaluation report.

7.3. Efficiency

Efficiency – a measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results

124. The evaluations examined a range of resource use and management issues, including M&E, coordination, and budgets. A few decentralized evaluations in this year's portfolio engaged in a detailed breakdown of budget allocations by activity, sometimes attempting to draw conclusions from this. Others made little reference to finances – in some cases presumably because they lacked the relevant information. Numerous evaluations emphasized that both financial and human resources were insufficient relative to expected results, and several alluded to the need for more strategic resource mobilization efforts. Many evaluations found budgets were implemented as planned and projects made appropriate use of resources to produce results in a timely fashion and were generally well-managed.

125. Delays or adjustments in implementation were often explained by issues beyond UNESCO's control, such as late funding disbursements from donors or political instability in programming locations. However, many evaluations observed that operational issues within UNESCO at large, including cumbersome administrative, financial, and M&E procedures, created bottlenecks affecting programme performance. Positive relationships with partners were often highlighted, but in a number of instances, coordination was challenging

7.4. Sustainability

Sustainability – the continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed

126. Sustainability was identified in last year's review as a challenging goal for UNESCO, as it is for many development actors, and the evaluations in this year's portfolio reinforced this. The insights provided on factors that promote sustainability are familiar. They include project duration (leading several of the evaluations to suggest that additional phases of programming are needed to consolidate results), meaningful connections with key partners (typically supporting capacities needed to sustain benefits in the future), strong ownership and well-contextualized approaches, and efforts to align project activities with national or broader policy frameworks to embed work in ongoing efforts by key actors at various levels.

127. Conversely, sustainability was undermined by uncertainties over future funding, limited involvement or ownership by local stakeholders, ad hoc capacity strengthening, obstacles to policy change, and lack of clear exit strategies.

8. Quality of UNESCO evaluation

128. The 29 evaluations in this review were assessed using the UNEG *Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports* (see Appendix 2). This is in line with the ongoing commitment of the IOS Evaluation Office to reinforce UNESCO's internal capacities in evaluation, as set out in the 2015 *UNESCO Evaluation Policy*. Annual assessment of the portfolio of decentralized evaluations assists in identifying areas of relative strength and weakness, allowing the Evaluation Office to target training and guidance, especially for the management of decentralized evaluations.

Innovating in Evaluation: A pilot exercise in Outcome Harvesting

In 2020, an internal UNESCO team, coached by consultants with expertise in Outcome Harvesting (OH), carried out an evaluation of IIEP-UNESCO's support to the education sector plans (ESPs) in Jordan and Guinea. Beyond generating relevant insights on IIEP's work on ESPs, the evaluation met its objective of exploring the usefulness of OH for assessing aspects of IIEP work, since this methodology is recognized as well-suited for identifying capacity development outcomes in complex and uncertain programme environments.

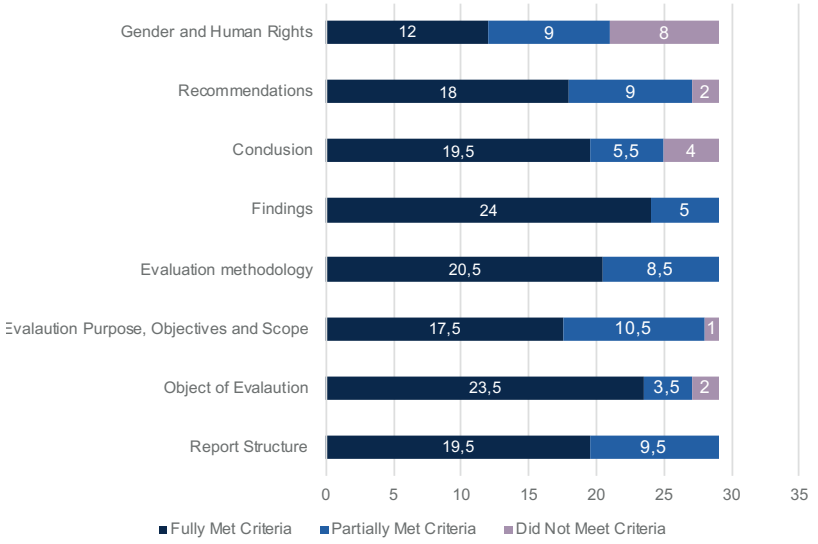
COVID-19 prevented in-person data collection, somewhat constraining the experiment, since OH relies heavily on interacting with stakeholders to gather their perspectives on key changes linked to an intervention. Nevertheless, the team concluded that OH facilitated documentation and analysis of the effects of IIEP work and provided a promising approach to learning about processes that can be difficult to monitor – as well as to uncover unintended effects.

Building on this innovative experience, in 2021 the Education sector's Capacity Building for Education (CapED) programme has launched an Independent External Evaluation of UNESCO's CapED Programme's country-level interventions in Lao PDR and Madagascar based on the outcome harvesting methodology. This evaluation will be presented in the 2022 Synthetic review.

In preparing for this evaluation, the BSP RBM Team facilitated the elaboration of retroactive theories of change for both countries by the CapED Team with involvement by the IOS/Evaluation ED focal point.

129. Nevertheless, many evaluations offered insights on the effectiveness of the interventions they covered and most addressed, to some extent, whether outcome-level changes had been achieved. Generally, assessments of effectiveness were positive, and achievements that could be classified at least at immediate outcome level were identified. Commonly, this involved changes resulting from improvements in knowledge, awareness, capacity, or attitudes of diverse kinds. Evidence of such changes was often anecdotal and unsupported by systematic assessment methods; however, many evaluations provided in-depth qualitative analysis to support their judgments. Effectiveness was often linked to mobilization of appropriate UNESCO expertise, direct engagement by UNESCO personnel with the project, and strong partner relationships. Some evaluations noted that while outputs were delivered, programming timelines were short relative to ambitions for medium to longer-term change. In summary, this year's synthesis suggests that UNESCO programming is usually effective within its remit, but work remains to better define, capture, and communicate results, based on more systematic mapping and tracking of the linkages from activity to output to outcome.

Figure 3: Evaluation Performance by UNEG quality assessment category [51]



51 One quality assessment for a corporate evaluation assigned both green (fully meets requirement) and yellow (partially meets requirement) for certain criteria. For these, 0.5 has been assigned as relevant to each.

130. UNESCO corporate evaluations undergo external quality assurance (QA) reviews prior to being finalized, providing the opportunity to revise and improve reports in line with the UNEG criteria feedback, which generally ensures a high quality of final reports. This does not usually occur for decentralized evaluations, which also may receive less – and less standardized – support and guidance. The proportion of programme or project budgets devoted to decentralized evaluations also varies considerably. For these reasons, the decentralized portfolio tends to be at a disadvantage compared to the corporate one, and this was considered in the quality review, which took a relatively generous view of how decentralized evaluations met requirements.

131. While many decentralized evaluations did not fully meet all the UNEG quality criteria, most offered adequate information on the initiatives they assessed. In particular, the assessment confirmed a relatively strong performance across all evaluations concerning the quality of the findings, which is viewed as a positive sign. Still, there is a need for more guidance and capacity, through strengthening the Evaluation Focal Points to ensure that the evaluation function meets quality standards and to ensure individual evaluations serve as robust tools for accountability and learning. Improved standardization across the UNEG criteria would also make evaluation reports easier to use, thus creating better conditions for uptake.

8.1. Areas requiring attention

132. The evaluations were weakest on incorporating gender and human rights. While corporate evaluations ranked better than decentralized ones in this area, two only partially met the requirement, and one did not meet the requirement. Eight of the twenty-two decentralized evaluations fully met the requirement and, even for those that met it, this was often a weak element, with gender issues addressed only in passing and superficially and human rights often entirely absent. (Figure 3 represents the numbers of this year's evaluations which fully met, partially met or did not meet the UNEG criteria related to gender equality and human rights.) This weakness also reflects limited attention to gender in the initiatives assessed; moreover, gender and human rights – apart from corporate evaluations – rarely seemed to be highlighted in evaluation terms of reference. This was not always easy to determine because many decentralized evaluations did not annex terms of reference or outlined their scope or evaluation questions in detail.

Figure 4: Evaluation Performance on Gender and Human Rights by number of reports (total 29)

133. Indeed, such basic elements were missing from many of the decentralized evaluations. The "report structure" criterion checks that reports follow a logical order and include standard metadata as well as annexes such as terms of reference, evaluation matrices, and results frameworks. Composite rankings in this area were acceptable but many decentralized evaluations were missing some of the most important of these elements, which made it challenging to determine the extent to which they fulfilled their terms of reference and to assess the reliability of their evidence or whether their evaluative judgements aligned with outcomes and indicators identified for projects. It was sometimes uncertain whether evaluators had been provided with some of these; where terms of reference were annexed, they did not always include evaluation criteria, questions, or information on results frameworks, indicators, or data availability.

134. Recommendations were another area of relative weakness for the decentralized evaluations. Several did not include recommendations, or if they did, they were extremely brief or general. In some cases, other parts of the evaluation reports included material that could have been used to develop useful recommendations, but this was not consolidated in a user-friendly manner in the appropriate section. Except for corporate evaluations, for which this is mandatory, reports did not include management responses.

135. These weaknesses in the evaluation portfolio point to a need for continued support to decentralized evaluation capacity. In addition to the ongoing efforts of the IOS Evaluation Office in providing technical support and quality assurance for a limited number of decentralized evaluations as well as training and guidance for UNESCO Evaluation focal points and evaluation managers,[52] a more systematic corporate quality assurance mechanism for terms of reference and inception reports, as well as for final evaluation reports, could improve the standard overall. In addition, more investment is required for a more active, formalized focal point network with regional focal points to provide more consistent support and quality assurance in each region.

8.2. Good practices in evaluation

136. Good practices in evaluation that emerged from the review constitute a learning resource for UNESCO's evaluation function. In addition to the pilot outcome harvest carried out by an internal IIEP team (see box above), examples of positive approaches taken by external evaluators include:

- The *Final Evaluation of the project: «Development of Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs in West Bengal to support intergenerational transmission of rural craft and performing arts (RCCH)»* adopted an anthropological and highly context-specific data collection approach which was well suited to the object of evaluation and provided rich insight into the ICH practices and the communities in which the project was carried out.
- Several evaluations, such as the *Evaluation of IIEP's Research Programme - 9th Medium-Term Strategy (2014-2017)*, the Evaluation of UNESCO's Global Priority Gender Equality, and the Evaluation of UNESCO's Work in the Thematic Area of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) reconstructed theories of change or results frameworks, in the absence of such, to guide their data collection and analysis.
- The decentralized Evaluation of *IIEP's Research Programme - 9th Medium-Term Strategy (2014-2017)*, the corporate evaluation of OPSA, and a handful of others, looked into and presented a comprehensive analysis of the findings and recommendations of past evaluations to provide context.
- Many evaluations had to adjust their methodologies, giving up field visits and in-person engagement with stakeholders, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, replacing this with virtual interviews, online surveys, and greater reliance on documentation. Several demonstrated good practice in pointing out gaps in data that resulted from this situation, and despite the challenge, most of the evaluations offered robust evidence.

52 In addition to the online training on evaluation management available to all UNESCO staff evaluation focal points had access to targeted capacity building through specialized webinars on topics such as retroactive theory of change for evaluation, the conduct of evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic, survey design and self-evaluation. The priorities for the decentralized evaluation function in 2021 include building of a repository of good practices and tools including Terms of Reference and quality checklists and making reports and recommendations more easily accessible on a new TEAMS portal. The capacity building will continue through webinars series and the delivery of regional refresher courses for focal points in the second half of 2021/early 2022.

8. Appendices

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Appendix I - Evaluation Reports Reviewed

Major Programme	Title of Evaluation	Evaluation Category	40 C/5 Expected Result
Education	Laboratorio latinoamericano de evaluación de la calidad de la educación	Corporate	ER1
	Consolidação da Rede de Escolas SESI como referência para a Educação Básica no Brasil	Decentralized	ER2
	Provision of TVET, On-the-Job Training, and Entrepreneurship Education to Youth Affected by the Syria Crisis in Jordan	Decentralized	ER2
	OpenEMIS Initiative	Decentralized	ER1
	Reforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Iraq	Decentralized	ER2
	Mid-term evaluation of Joint programme on empowering adolescent girls and young women through education	Decentralized	ER7
	Review of the second cycle of the UNESCO-Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum prize for outstanding practice and performance in enhancing the effectiveness of teachers	Decentralized	ER7
	Evaluation of IIEP's Research Programme - 9th Medium-Term Strategy (2014-2017)	Decentralized	ER1 & 10
Natural Sciences	Man and the Biosphere	Corporate	ER5 & 6
	External Evaluation of Design and testing of a multipurpose (transboundary) groundwater monitoring network (Albania & Montenegro) Project	Decentralized	ER7 & 8
Social and Human Sciences	The International Centre of Martial Arts for Youth Development and Engagement under the auspices of UNESCO	Decentralized	ER3
	Evaluation of the UNESCO- Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture (2015-2020)	Decentralized	ER4
	Evaluation finale: Appui à la résilience des jeunes face aux conflits ociopolitiques au Burundi	Decentralized	ER3
	Promoting Intercultural Dialogue and a Culture of Peace in South-East Asia through Shared Histories: Evaluation Report	Decentralized	ER2
	Inclusão de Pessoa com Deficiência. Ampliando conhecimento, aperfeiçoando mecanismos de promoção, formulação e implantação de Politicas Publicas de Acessibilidade	Decentralized	ER2
Communication and Information	Thematic area: media and information literacy (MIL)	Corporate	ER2
	Action to revitalize and promote Indigenous languages (IYIL)	Corporate	ER4 & crosscutting
Culture	Action to protect culture in emergencies	Corporate	ER5
	Patrimonie mondial forestier d'Afrique centrale (CAWHFI)	Decentralized	ER1
	Protecting Cultural Heritage and Diversity in Complex Emergencies for Stability and Peace	Decentralized	ER5
	The Support of UNESCO Activities in the Field of Heritage	Decentralized	ER1, 4, 5 & 6
	UNESCO cultural World Heritage sites in Europe	Decentralized	ER1
	Final Evaluation of the project: Development of Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs in West Bengal to support intergenerational transmission of rural craft and performing arts (RCCH)	Decentralized	ER6

Major Programme	Title of Evaluation	Evaluation Category	40 C/5 Expected Result
Intersectoral	Global Priority Gender Equality	Corporate	Crosscutting GE ER1, 2, 3 [53]
	Operational Strategy for Priority Africa	Corporate	Crosscutting AFR ER1, 2 [54]
	Youth Empowerment: Media and Information Literacy a Response to Prevent Hate and Violent Extremism	Decentralized	CI ER2 SHS ER3
	Final evaluation: Malaysia funds–in-trust (MFIT) projects	Decentralized	ED ER 1. 2, 3 SC ER 1, 2, 7, SHS ER 2, 4 CLT ER 1 CI ER 3 & 6
	Enhancing a Gender Responsive Film sector in the Maghreb-Mashreq Region	Decentralized	CI ER 2 CLT ER7
Corporate Services	Digitizing our shared UNESCO history	Decentralized	KMI ER1

53 While the Global Priority for Gender Equality cuts across all Programme Sectors, the "Coordination and monitoring of action to implement gender equality" has three specific ERs, with relevant performance indicators and targets defined in the 40 C/5.

54 While OSPA cuts across all sectors, the "Coordination and monitoring of action to benefit Africa" has two specific ERs, with relevant performance indicators and targets defined in the 40 C/5.

APPENDIX 2: QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF UNESCO'S EVALUATION REPORTS

The table on the next page summarizes performance of the 2020 and early 2021 corporate and decentralized evaluations against the UNEG quality criteria.

UNEG Score Legend

Fully meets UNEG Criteria	Partially meets UNEG Criteria	Does Not meet UNEG Criteria

Table 2: UNEG Quality Scores - Corporate Evaluations

Evaluation	Overall	Report Structure	Object of Evaluation	Purpose, Objectives, and Scope	Evaluation methodology	Findings	Conclusion	Recommen-dations	Gender and Human Rights
Action to protect culture in emergencies									
Global priority Gender Equality									
Laboratorio lationamericao de evaluacion de la calidad de la educacion									
The man and the biosphere (MAB)									
Thematic area: media and information literacy (MIL)									
Action to revitalize and promote Indigenous languages (IYIL)									
Operational strategy for priority Africa (OSPA)									

Table 3: UNEG Scores - Decentralized Evaluations

Evaluation	Overall	Report Structure	Object of Evaluation	Purpose, Objectives, and Scope	Evaluation methodology	Findings	Conclusion	Recommen-dations	Gender and Human Rights
Patrimonie monidal forestier d'afrique centrale (CAWHFI)									
Protecting Cultural Heritage and Diversity in Complex Emergencies for Stability and Peace									
The Support of UNESCO's Activities in the Field of Heritage									
UNESCO cultural World Heritage sites in Europe									
Digitizing our shared UNESCO history									
Consolidação da Rede de Escolas SESI como referência para a Educação Básica no Brasil *									
Provision of TVET, On-the-Job Training, and Entrepreneurship Education to Youth Affected by the Syria Crisis in Jordan									
OpenEMIS Initiative									
Reforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Iraq									
Mid-term evaluation of Joint programme on empowering adolescent girls and young women through education									
The International Centre of Martial Arts for Youth Development and Engagement under the auspices of UNESCO									
Youth Empowerment: Media and Information Literacy a Response to Prevent Hate and Violent Extremism									
Final Evaluation of the project: "Development of Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs in West Bengal to support intergenerational transmission of rural craft and performing arts (RCCH)"									
Malaysia Funds in trust									
Enhancing a Gender Responsive Film Sector in the Maghreb- Mashreq Region									

Evaluation	Overall	Report Structure	Object of Evaluation	Purpose, Objectives, and Scope	Evaluation methodology	Findings	Conclusion	Recommen-dations	Gender and Human Rights
Review of the second cycle of the UNESCO-Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum prize for outstanding practice and performance in enhancing the effectiveness of teachers									
External Evaluation of Design and testing of a multipurpose (transboundary) groundwater monitoring network (Albania & Montenegro) Project									
Evaluation of the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture (2015-2020)									
Evaluation finale: Appui à la résilience des jaunes face aux conflits sociopolitiques au Burundi									
Promoting Intercultural Dialogue and a Culture of Peace in South-East Asia through Shared Histories: Evaluation Report									
Evaluation of IIEP's Research Programme - 9th Medium-Term Strategy (2014-2017)									
Inclusão de Pessoa com Deficiência. Ampliando conhecimento, aperfeiçoando mecanismos de promoção, formulação e implantação de Políticas Públicas de Acessibilidade									

APPENDIX 3: SDG ALIGNMENT

The table below shows the main SDGs to which the initiatives covered in this year's synthesis contribute. This is based on assessment carried out as part of the preparation of the synthesis report. The table is an indication of alignment but does not indicate the extent of the contribution of the initiatives to the respective SDGs.

2020 Evaluations	SDG 1	SDG 2	SDG 3	SDG 4	SDG 5	SDG 6	SDG 7	SDG 8	SDG 9	SDG 10	SDG 11	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 14	SDG 15	SDG 16	SDG 17
Action to protect culture in emergencies				✓	✓						✓		✓			✓	✓
Global priority Gender Equality				✓	✓					✓	✓					✓	✓
Laboratorio latinoamericano de evaluación de la calidad de la educación				✓													
The man and the biosphere (MAB)				✓									✓	✓	✓		✓
Thematic area: media and information literacy (MIL)				✓	✓						✓					✓	
Action to revitalize and promote Indigenous languages (IYIL)										✓						✓	
Operational strategy for priority Africa (OSPA)				✓	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Patrimonie monidal forestier d'afrique centrale (CAWHFI)											✓		✓		✓		✓
Protecting Cultural Heritage and Diversity in Complex Emergencies for Stability and Peace											✓					✓	
The Support of UNESCO's Activities in the Field of Heritage	✓			✓							✓		✓	✓		✓	
UNESCO cultural World Heritage sites in Europe				✓			✓	✓			✓	✓					
Digitizing our shared UNESCO history				✓													

2020 Evaluations	SDG 1	SDG 2	SDG 3	SDG 4	SDG 5	SDG 6	SDG 7	SDG 8	SDG 9	SDG 10	SDG 11	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 14	SDG 15	SDG 16	SDG 17
Consolidação da Rede de Escolas SESI como referência para a Educação Básica no Brasil				✓													
Provision of TVET, On-the-Job Training, and Entrepreneurship Education to Youth Affected by the Syria Crisis in Jordan				✓	✓		✓								✓		
OpenEMIS Initiative				✓													
Reforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Iraq				✓													
The International Centre of Martial Arts for Youth Development and Engagement under the auspices of UNESCO				✓	✓												
Mid-term evaluation of Joint programme on empowering adolescent girls and young women through education			✓	✓	✓												
Youth Empowerment: Media and Information Literacy a Response to Prevent Hate and Violent Extremism															✓		
Final Evaluation of the project: "Development of Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs in West Bengal to support intergenerational transmission of rural craft and performing arts (RCCH)"	✓				✓			✓			✓						
Malaysia Funds-in-Trust				✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓			✓	✓
Enhancing a Gender Responsive Film Sector in the Maghreb- Mashreq Region					✓												

2020 Evaluations	SDG 1	SDG 2	SDG 3	SDG 4	SDG 5	SDG 6	SDG 7	SDG 8	SDG 9	SDG 10	SDG 11	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 14	SDG 15	SDG 16	SDG 17
Review of the second cycle of the UNESCO-Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum prize for outstanding practice and performance in enhancing the effectiveness of teachers				✓													✓
External Evaluation of Design and testing of a multipurpose (transboundary) groundwater monitoring network (Albania & Montenegro) Project						✓											
Evaluation of the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture (2015-2020)																✓	
Evaluation finale: Appui à la résilience des jeunes face aux conflits sociopolitiques au Burundi																✓	
Promoting Intercultural Dialogue and a Culture of Peace in South-East Asia through Shared Histories: Evaluation Report			✓	✓												✓	
Evaluation of IIEP's Research Programme - 9th Medium-Term Strategy (2014-2017)				✓													
Inclusão de Pessoa com Deficiência. Ampliando conhecimento, aperfeiçoando mecanismos de promoção, formulação e implantação de Políticas Públicas de Acessibilidade				✓						✓							

APPENDIX 4: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE CROSSCUTTING FINDINGS

1. UNESCO senior management appreciates the synthetic review of evaluations, which highlights a number of critical crosscutting findings and challenges. The UNESCO Programme Sectors and relevant entities have initiated relevant measures to respond to and implement specific recommendations addressed to them in the individual evaluations of the portfolio presented in this synthesis. However, the crosscutting challenges highlighted in the synthetic review are also addressed in an organization-wide effort and in the context of the strategic transformation and other organizational reform processes.

UNESCO's strong reputation and convening power are valued assets.

2. UNESCO's strong reputation and convening power are recognised and built upon as assets across all Programme Sectors and concerned crosscutting entities. In particular the Education Sector (ED) will continue to exercise its convening role in the areas examined in this evaluation, and beyond, across all its ER/output areas during the current and next biennia, as the global leader of SDG 4 with a strengthened global coordination mechanism.

3. The Social and Human Sciences Sector (SHS) has been scaling up its network of partners including knowledge partners, e.g., through ICCAR, research institutions and academia, youth networks and civil society. It has further reached out and secured partnerships with the private sector (e.g., LiiV group), in order to engage all relevant stakeholders and help further nurture and augment UNESCO's reputation and convening power.

4. The Culture Sector (CLT) will continue to pursue its unique mandate in the field of culture, building on its six Culture Conventions in view of the safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage and creativity, and exercising its convening role through its transversal programmes and global networks

5. UNESCO will also work to retain and strengthen its foresight function and its role as the "global intellectual lead" in the thematic area of media and information literacy and seek to involve even more stakeholders globally in this effort. UNESCO is also leveraging its convening power and reputation to ensure a multi-stakeholder approach to the planning, organization and implementation of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

Collaborative and participatory ways of working support effectiveness

6. This has been illustrated as a strength of UNESCO in a number of evaluations across all Programme Sectors. A key implementation strategy of the education programme is capacity development which fosters participation and ownership by national stakeholders and which will continue to be a core function for programme implementation.

7. The Natural Sciences Sector (SC) also confirms UNESCO's reliance on heavily specialized entities and partners facilitating the consultative approach and ownership building of its initiative as an added value of UNESCO.

8. SHS has been stepping up coordination and designed cost-effective, inclusive and coordination cost-reducing mechanisms in projects such as the partnership with the Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Foundation to strengthen the Arabic Language in UNESCO, the Fit for Life initiative or the Art Lab project, in order to enhance collaborative ways of working in support of effectiveness, across Sections within the Sector, across Sectors within UNESCO and between UNESCO and other UN agencies.

9. The Culture Sector (CLT) will continue to collaborate with its international experts and networks, as well as the Advisory Bodies of its Culture Conventions and key partner organizations in its fields of competence. Through the governance mechanisms of each Convention, CLT is also enhancing its consultative processes to ensure active and inclusive participation of all stakeholders notably civil society through the ResiliArt movement with a view to inform policy development.

10. The CI Sector will seek to mobilize partners and resources to strengthen the operations and reach of its partnership networks. For example, such efforts will be deployed in cooperation with the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Alliance, and collaborative activities will be expanded of the MILID University Network. Steps will also be taken to initiate and sustain cooperation between MILID and other UNITWIN/Chairs Networks. The International Decade of Indigenous Languages similarly relies on wide-ranging and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Promising opportunities for intersectoral collaboration continue to face challenges

11. Designed from an intersectoral perspective the new structure of the 41C/5 presents a major opportunity for Programme Sectors and other entities to scale up intersectoral collaboration. In order to address challenges through an interdisciplinary approach, intersectoral strategies on several key themes in the field of Education have therefore been developed with specific intersectoral outputs that have their own performance indicators and targets in the draft C/5.

12. As shown in the example of the evaluation of MAB's Lima Action plan, the MAB's holistic approach is the most widely acknowledged added value, and a unique asset of the Organization when dealing with environmental and societal issues. The deployment of its scientific intergovernmental and international programmes in many of the programmes ensures solidity and richness in scientific approaches. UNESCO has built on this already strong interconnectivity and complementarity among its mandates in the preparation of the draft 41 C/4 and 41 C/5.

13. Furthermore, SHS also made great efforts to engage more proactively with other programme sectors, especially in relation to the two global priorities. Other Sectors have been consulted widely on several global initiatives, namely the Roadmap against Racism and Discrimination, the Flagship against Gender Stereotypes, the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, the Art Lab for Human Rights and Dialogue, the Fit for Life Flagship Programme, the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy as well as the Slave Route Project and the work on youth (PVE)

14. The Culture Sector will also continue to reinforce intersectoral collaboration in the framework of the new 41C/5, which offers new opportunities for intersectoral work through its intersectoral programmes and related Outputs, notably in the fields of climate action, culture and education, the digital environment, and Indigenous Peoples. Intersectoral cooperation will also continue to be sought on sustainable cities, particularly through the UNESCO Cities Platform.

15. Media and information literacy, Indigenous languages and Artificial Intelligence, as well as key features of these thematic areas (including related global networks) are profiled more explicitly within UNESCO's upcoming strategic and operational documents, which will also serve to strengthen and render more effective intersectoral collaboration. In the field of MIL, related interdisciplinary working groups will be established to systemize, synergize, and sustain related actions, notably in the areas of education for sustainable development, Global Citizenship Education, intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity, youth empowerment and science literacy, across all Sectors.

16. Intersectoral mechanisms are important for joint programming but also for internal monitoring and knowledge sharing. All Sectors are participating in a large number of such Intersectoral Task Teams. Intersectoral Task Teams, working groups and other intersectoral mechanisms have already been set up to coordinate work in a number of crosscutting fields (for example: the Rights of People with Disabilities, Artificial Intelligence, Indigenous languages, Reviving the Spirit of Mosul initiative, SIDS, PVE, addressing Hate Speech, Climate Change). Within the framework of the organization of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, for which UNESCO is the lead UN agency, an Intersectoral Task Team was established in October 2020 and is co-chaired by the CI and CLT Sectors. It is mandated to ensure a multi-disciplinary and transversal approach to the organization of the International Decade, and is composed of 63 staff from across the Organization both in Headquarters and Field Offices.

17. Interdisciplinarity, one of the five RBM Principles, is also embedded across the RBM material developed by the BSP RBM Team (e.g., RBM Guiding Principles; RBM eLearning course; Project templates), practices and events in order to support Sectors overcome certain challenges highlighted in the synthetic review. Opportunities for interdisciplinarity and synergies are systematically brought forward and complemented with guidance, tools and support. In line with the 2030 Agenda, this also favours UNESCO engagement with the UN's whole-of-government, whole-of-society, and whole-of-UN approach.

18. Parallel to the efforts towards greater interdisciplinarity from a programmatic angle, UNESCO corporate services are exploring mechanisms and tools to facilitate and systematize intersectoral programme design, budgeting and reporting processes.

Joint initiatives leverage UN system synergy, but coordination can be difficult

19. UNESCO recognises the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework – UNSDCF as an opportunity for agencies to better ensure coherence, synergy and complementarity, in particular at county level. Despite some difficulties in coordination, the Education Sector is witnessing many good examples of

collaboration with other UN agencies both at global and country level, as also demonstrated in the synthesis report. The learnings from programme evaluations will be used to inform the design of new projects with the same nature in order to ensure smoother coordination across UN agencies at the central and field level.

20. Interagency collaboration has also been leveraged by SHS through several joint initiatives, which include the co-sharing of two global workstreams, e.g. "Leave No One Behind, Human Rights & the Normative Agenda" (co-led by UNESCO, OHCHR and WHO) and the "UN Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities" (co-led by UNESCO and OHCHR), as well as joint projects (Frontier Dialogue on addressing structural racial and ethnicity-based discrimination through COVID-19 Recovery Plans) and resource mobilization efforts. Collaboration is ongoing with UNDESA for the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, where UNESCO is developing tools for persons with disabilities to have access to services and information on rights and opportunities. Efforts are also being made through flagship initiatives, such as the UNESCO-IIEP joint project to strengthen the evidence base on intercultural dialogue and create data to be used to bolster common programming.

21. UNESCO is moreover one of the Commitment Makers in the Generation Equality Forum established by UN Women, France and Mexico in two Action Coalitions: on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality and on Economic Rights and Justice, with the aim to promote women in science and artificial intelligence; and to empower women creators and inclusive creative industries in Africa. UNESCO is also a Commitment Maker for Girls' Education and Achieving Gender Equality in and through Education as a cross-cutting theme to the six Action Coalitions of the Generation Equality Forum.

22. The Culture Sector (CLT) has been working to address coordination challenges in building synergies with other UN Agencies. Efforts will continue to be enhanced particularly through the UNESCO Inter-Agency Platform on Culture and Sustainable Development to amplify the cooperation dynamic with sister agencies across the UN system. In the framework of the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, UNESCO has been reinforcing dialogues with UN Agencies to strengthen international cooperation on culture and public policies. Building on the renewed partnership with the World Bank in 2017, CLT has continued to cooperate with the World Bank at the policy and operational level, recently launching two joint position papers respectively on 'Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery' (2018) and 'Cities, Culture and Creativity' (2021), which create synergies between UNESCO and World Bank teams operating on the ground through two operational frameworks (the CURE and CCC Framework) to support local decision-makers in integrating culture in post-conflict, disaster and urban crisis situations, and leverage culture and creativity for sustainable urban development and inclusive growth.

23. At the strategic level, UNESCO will seek to include and promote its mandate and key areas of expertise on the agendas of established inter-agency groups and mechanisms, such as the CEB, subsidiary committees and inter-agency meetings of high decision-making officials, in which UNESCO participates.

24. At an operational level, UNESCO will continue to lead inter-agency dialogues on issues under its lead. For example, such a dialogue around MIL was initiated during Global MIL Week 2020 with an aim to gradually promote MIL as a priority for United Nations Country Teams, within the framework of the UNSDCF, and of the agendas of relevant UN agencies, programmes and funds.

25. UNESCO will also continue participating actively in coordination efforts at the level of SDGs, such as the Global Alliance for SDG 16+, in cooperation with the UNESCO Office in New York. Such fora permit key interagency exchange on SDG monitoring and implementation. This resonates with Target 16.10 which highlights the importance of "public access to information," which in turn presumes MIL capacities as well as multi-lingual access.

26. The International Decade of Indigenous Languages provides ample opportunity to leverage UN system synergies - the Global Task Force for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages includes representatives from key UN indigenous mechanisms.[55] As well as from UN system entities: UNESCO, UNDESA and OHCHR.

27. In support of inter-agency initiatives, the BSP RBM Team continues to meaningfully contribute to harmonising the RBM approach, practices and tools within the UN System. After the work undertaken for the UNSDCF (which comprises a Results Framework in which both outputs and outcomes are collective) and for the revision of the OECD's trilingual Evaluation and RBM terms glossary, the team is now engaging in the review of the UN RBM Guide in line with the 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of UN system operational activities (QCPR).

55 The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Improved monitoring and evaluation is needed to better capture UNESCO's outcome level results and facilitate learning

28. As mentioned in the synthesis report the current monitoring and reporting system has shortfalls both for monitoring at the project level and at the Sector level. There are also weaknesses in the overall programme planning, monitoring and reporting cycle (including for aggregating results at Sector and Strategic Objective level) which need to be addressed at an organisational level.

29. UNESCO will design, integrate and implement improvements of its current M&E mechanisms and tools, as well as suggest new ones, to ensure its application among staff, facilitate cross-sectoral monitoring and evaluation for initiatives and interventions that contribute to cross-cutting goals and objectives. Further specific trainings will be devised and deployed across the Organization to support all staff in ensuring precise and effective M&E on all levels and stages of project management.

30. One of the measures taken by the Education Sector to address the lack of attribution and causal linkages between Expected Results and higher-level results and impact, is that, in addition to initiatives at individual programme and project level, it is embarking on an exercise to develop a global Theory of Change (ToC) for the education programme strategy. However, an institutional approach is required to put in place an adequate monitoring system and a more adapted programme planning cycle which also meets donor requirements.

31. The M&E imposed by certain normative instruments like MAB may indeed be cumbersome, such as for Biosphere Reserves, MAB Committees or other local actors. However, it is foreseen to reinforce, with available resources, their capacities, but also explore options for a more effective M&E for consideration by the Programme's governing bodies.

32. SHS is ensuring that ToCs are well defined in each project as are expected key outputs and related deadlines. Staff have been sensitized in this respect and guidance provided. Delivery-related processes are also being re-designed and improved in order to foster delivery and meet accountability needs. Feedback processes are also being deployed to foster staff's learning and objectives' sharing, and have staff deliver according to agreed upon expectations, timetables and output.

33. CLT will also continue to advance its efforts to strengthen synergies and enhance the monitoring processes of the six Culture Conventions and Recommendations.

34. The Theory of Change outlined during the corporate evaluation on media and information literacy will be further developed and deployed, to validate logical pathways towards results, particularly at the outcome level, and to identify the most suitable indicators for measuring the results of UNESCO's MIL work, including unexpected results that were so far not systematically captured in UNESCO's reporting and monitoring data. The same applies to the International Decade of Indigenous Languages and the need for SMART goals.

35. In order to provide support to Sectors, the 2020 RBM material was updated to provide more comprehensive and holistic guidance and practices on the different RBM areas including to favour dedicated resources for monitoring. Among other, it emphasises that Theories of Change are to be strongly anchored to the Organizational Results, to the UNSDCF, as well as to regional and international frameworks including the 2030 and 2063 Agendas. With the aim to better capture the complexity and richness of UNESCO's work at the outcome level, RBM guidance underscores the importance of defining quantitative performance indicators and related qualitative assessment measures (in both, results- as well as monitoring and evaluation frameworks), the need for disaggregating data and for establishing clear mechanisms and tools for measurement. Embedding 'Adaptive Management' is encouraged for better use of results information for learning, adaptation and decision-making, and specific methods, such as 'Outcome Harvesting' are being explored for monitoring purposes at outcome level.

36. Furthermore, within the limited resources, BSP RBM Team is pursuing capacity strengthening efforts through briefings, workshops, and webinars for Member States representatives and staff to ensure consistent and systematic use of the above guidance. Coaching support is also provided to favour the translation of RBM theory into practice, and a number of Thematic ToC and Results Frameworks are underway for Conventions and Intergovernmental Programmes.

37. To complement BSP's efforts and to continue strengthening M&E also from an evaluation perspective in terms of UNESCO's evaluation function and capacity, the IOS Evaluation Office is also pursuing its capacity-building initiatives through webinars series and the delivery of regional refresher courses for evaluation focal points. Increased networking, sharing of evaluation plans and reports, and building a repository of good practices, tools, templates and quality checklists including for Terms of Reference and inception reports remain among the priorities for the decentralized evaluation function. A recently established new TEAMS portal shall make reports and recommendations more easily accessible as a knowledge repository.

38. Furthermore, the Evaluation Office will continue to explore use of innovative tools and methods for capturing results at the outcome level, as well as explore additional sources of data, which can complement traditional evaluation sources, including big data and the analysis of social media. The potential benefits are cost-savings, the ability to get real-time data and increased participation and beneficiary feedback. Finally, as the Organization undergoes further transformation in operational and programmatic areas, IOS plans to follow the implementation of new initiatives closely on an observer basis and timely assess their progress and success as well as will seek that the knowledge and lessons learned resulting from evaluations will feed into programming and reform, among other through an increased focus on synthesis, and extraction of lessons and good practices.

Knowledge management and communication functions have more potential to support results and visibility

39. Efforts are being made across Sectors to ensure better knowledge management and communication. At the level of the Education sector, many of the thematic areas have established internal processes to share knowledge and information across different ED sector entities and learnings have been taken to develop methodologies and guidelines about institutionalising certain processes (see for example the Primer methodology for conducting Education Policy Reviews). The agile groups established within the sector have also been supporting these functions.

40. Many of the SC evaluations come up with recommendations about the need for communication strategies and awareness raising. It is a challenge for the Sector in general, because of lack of dedicated expertise and the very specific audience of highly technical projects.

41. SHS is improving its knowledge management by reinforcing this function in the sector, developing communication strategies, including social media-based communication and campaigns, and enhancing its active presence in media. It is further developing and deploying internal procedures aimed to improve communication and dissemination by design, and to improve internal (i.e., within UNESCO's) as well as external visibility and recognition.

42. CLT has improved its coordination with the Department of Public Information (DPI) through a dedicated unit: Cities, Communication and Events. Communication processes have been reinforced through a sectoral Communications Board to ensure the quality of all communication materials, as well as periodic joint coordination meetings with Field and Headquarters colleagues. In addition, the Sector distributes monthly newsletters tailored to different internal and external audiences including UNESCO Chairs, Category 2 Institutes, NGOs and private sector partners, as well as the UNESCO Tracker on Culture and Public Policy to enhance communication with Member States and the general public.

43. UNESCO will set up adequate systems to improve and support knowledge management across its fields of expertise, for example on media and information literacy, to capture and share information and lessons learnt at both HQ and Field Office's levels.

44. The IOS Evaluation Office also aims to further step up its communication efforts through the implementation of its Communication Strategy and more systematic targeting and monitoring of readership of its products. Attention will be paid to diversification by producing high quality visual reports, as well as other (shorter) communication products reaching wider audiences including through external evaluation networks and social media to strengthen its contribution to the global knowledge base.

Uncertainty remains on how to operationalize Global Priority Africa more effectively

45. The Africa Department (PAX/AFR) established the Operational Strategy for Priority Africa 2014-2021, to respond to the 2012 evaluation of Priority Africa, aiming at improving the operationalization of Global Priority Africa. The recent evaluation of the current Operational Strategy 2014-2021 showed that its 'value' was recognized by Member States, who described it as 'having a clear vision, accurately reflecting the breadth of UNESCO's mandate and aligned with the priorities and challenges of the continent'. The evaluation also recognized that the Strategy faced certain constraints as concerns its operationalization, in particular owing to its broad themes, and also because 'it was viewed as a separate objective, rather than being integrated in each Sector's objectives as defined in the C/4 and C/5'.

46. To further improve the effective streamlining and operationalization of the Strategy for Global Priority Africa and its flagship programmes in the 41 C/4 and subsequent C/5, the Africa Department (PAX/AFR) has initiated the elaboration of its new

Operational Strategy 2022-2029, by facilitating joint design and planning of new intersectoral flagships by Programme Sectors and Field Offices in Africa. This will involve also joint monitoring and reporting, and clear responsibilities assigned to specific Programme ADGs, with support from the relevant Multisectoral Regional Directors in Africa. This new approach that is built on joint ownership, is expected to effectively operationalize Global Priority Africa in the Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029.

47. The Education Sector has considerably reinforced its interventions in Africa and significant extrabudgetary projects are being implemented in Africa. Progress has also been made in improving the coordination and implementation of the SDG4 and the 2063 Agenda.

48. The SC Sector has decentralised twenty-nine percent of its regular programme funds to Field Offices in Africa so as to empower them to bring more incisive inputs and leverage more extrabudgetary funds. This has indeed led to many successful initiatives under innovative funding modalities notably in sub-Saharan Africa.

49. The Sector for Social and Human Sciences (SHS) will continue to build on, and consolidate gains made in implementing programmes in favour of Priority Africa across all thematic areas of its work. For instance, to respond to the Global Priority Africa, UNESCO, Metropolis Canada and the Canadian COVID-19 Social Impacts Network produced a report on the Impact of COVID-19 in Sub-Saharan Africa that put forward key policy recommendations to counter the consequences of the pandemic that has left the most vulnerable further behind.

50. SHS in cooperation with the Natural Sciences Sector and with financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) launched in 2021 the Project 'Strengthening Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Systems for Sustainable Development in Africa', in six pilot countries in Africa. SHS will also pursue the implementation of the 2nd Phase of the General History of Africa (GHA) project which responds to requests from AU Member States to develop pedagogical materials based on the GHA and to elaborate new volumes of the collection. Moreover, and to the extent possible, in all its project SHS is including an Africa-related component or paying attention in particular to Africa-related issues, in a view to mainstream Africa-related activities and have GHA become part and parcel of every project developed by SHS.

51. The Culture Sector (CLT) has enhanced its support to Member States across the African continent in implementing the Organization's standard-setting instruments and flagship programmes with a view to promoting culture and the creative economy as well as safeguarding heritage for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. CLT has been collaborating with the Africa Group and has launched a dedicated flagship programme in the framework of the draft 41 C/5 to support African Member States in World Heritage capacity building and nominations; the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property; and the promotion of return and restitution and museums, in the context of the 1972 Convention, the 1970 Convention and the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property (ICPRCP), respectively.

52. Programme Sectors will share information and lessons learnt to ensure the full integration of Global Priority Africa in strategies and operations. For example, the evaluation on MIL noted that the thematic area of media and information literacy had fully integrated Global Priority Africa in its overall strategy and operations. Proactive efforts will be made in the frame of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages to address the imbalance noted in the evaluations. The CI Sector will continue to actively integrate and contribute to Global Priority Africa across its programmes, projects and activities. CI is currently participating in the drafting of new Africa Flagship projects, whose formulation is led by PAX and Field Offices, to accompany the forthcoming draft Medium--Term Strategy (C/4) and is co-convener of one flagship project while assuring technical support to a total of three out of the four flagship project proposals.

UNESCO has advanced on gender equality, but more effort is needed, especially for transformative results

53. In order to provide greater support to Major Programmes, the Division for Gender Equality set up a Gender Equality Task Team in 2020 to work with colleagues to mainstream gender equality throughout the draft 41 C/4 and 41 C/5 and avoid "tick box" mainstreaming. The result is over 30 percent of performance indicators in the draft 41 C/5 deal directly with gender equality. Several outputs to promote gender equality were also formulated and are aligned with the new strategic outcomes and objectives of the draft 41 C/4. Following their adoption by the 41st session of the General Conference, a new M&E framework for gender equality will be designed and implemented. Action to adjust UNESCO's main reporting tools (e.g., SISTER)

has been taken to ensure that the future results of UNESCO's work to promote gender equality become more visible and financial investments more transparent. This mainstreaming approach addresses the conclusion of the IOS evaluation on inconsistencies between the separate Gender Equality Action Plan II (GEAP II), its results framework and baselines, indicators, and targets in 40 C/5.

54. A full management response to the IOS evaluation of global priority gender equality and its nine recommendations is presented in Document 212 EX/5.I.F. This includes information on strategic partnerships to promote gender equality (Global Education Coalition Gender Flagship) as well as initiatives to overcome the capacity challenges identified in the IOS evaluation. These include the launch of an online training programme for staff in English, French and Spanish as well as preparations for the creation of a Global Gender Experts Facility to support Sectors/Field Offices to advance the implementation of global priority gender equality in programming and enhance monitoring and documentation of good practices.

55. The Education Sector has a dedicated section on gender equality in and through education, as well as a separate ER during the past biennia. The section is developing a set of operational tools with guidance, resources and examples across the project cycle, including robust gender analysis to better support the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes that lead to systems change and more transformative programming on gender equality in and through education. These tools will be accompanied with training opportunities for ED staff. In addition, all new workplans are analysed from a gender perspective using the gender equality marker (GEM). In terms of publications, in ED, they all undergo a thorough gender analysis from the conception and development phase of manuscripts to the final products. The proposals are evaluated by internal teams, a gender focal point within the Education Sector, and the Gender Division in the Office of the Director General.

56. SC has also reinforced steadily its efforts to mainstream gender transformative initiatives including in its international and intergovernmental bodies, or flagship initiatives such as the UNESCO-L'Oréal for "Women in Science" Awards in life sciences, the Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD) programme, the Guerlain sponsored initiative, "Women for Bees". For the next Programme and budget cycle, further efforts will be put into cross fertilizing among different initiatives in the Sector to increase the impact of UNESCO mandate and initiatives in support to women in Science.

57. In collaboration with programme Sectors and Field Offices, SHS pursued efforts to strengthen the promotion of gender equality through targeted workstreams that will lead to transformative outcomes. These include: the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, which contains concrete action commitments to empower women to participate in AI research teams, in management of digital/AI companies, as well as to address gender stereotypes, sexism and gender bias in AI software; the establishment of a global Observatory on Women and Sport in Switzerland; the Transforming MENtalities Initiative, aimed to shift norms of masculinities worldwide through research, advocacy and capacity-building; and the Flagship Programme against Gender Stereotypes to transform mind-sets and eliminate biases at the root of gender-based violence and discrimination. As done in the case of Africa, gender-related considerations are taken into account and are included in every initiative developed or implemented by SHS, as it is through mainstreaming that gender-related considerations and action may become pervasive and contribute to positive change in this respect.

58. The Culture Sector will continue to support Member States in expanding the creative horizons of women and girls and empowering women as key actors in heritage preservation and safeguarding, as well as in the creative economy, in contribution to SDG 5 "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Actions will be delivered in the context of the implementation of its culture conventions and flagship programmes and through gender-transformative initiatives.

59. The CI Sector will further improve its efforts in deploying gender mainstreaming and devise gender-specific programming across its mandated areas of expertise, with particular focus on developing and supporting gender-responsive and gender-transformative interventions to support gender equality in the fields of freedom of expression, access to information, and digital transformation processes. Several key projects and activities are underway that will further boost the Sector's effort s in this regard, as the CI Sector remains firmly committed to contribute to this Global Priority. The CI Sector will also seek support from the Gender Equality Division in this regard. As regards MIL, gender-specific activities will be designed to support Member States in developing media and information literacy policies and strategies and in using the MIL Curriculum.

UNESCO's commitment to "leave no one behind" requires a sharper focus

60. UNESCO will place an enhanced focus on inclusive and participatory approaches in combination with strengthened contextual analysis to prepare for and accompany key interventions, with the particular aim to benefit those most in need, as is also reflected in the (draft) 41 C/4 and 41 C/5.

61. The education programme is fully committed to leaving no one behind as most of the work focuses on vulnerable groups and a significant portfolio of ED operational projects and technical support is operated in Least Developed countries. Also, this commitment is manifest in the work of the sector around monitoring and data (e.g., UIS disaggregated data, WIDE database with comparable education outcomes according to factors associated to inequality). ED also has a dedicated expected result on inclusion and a corporate evaluation is being conducted which will provide recommendations of how to institutionalize inclusion more formally into programmatic processes. In addition, UNESCO's education response to Covid-19 has been about ensuring that learning never stops even for those who could not access digital technologies. UNESCO with the World Bank and UNICEF also recently launched "Mission: Recovering Education 2021" which aims at bringing all children back to schools and recovering learning losses for all. The findings of the synthesis reports in relation to leaving no one behind may limit the overall picture since they depend only on few specific evaluations. The currently ongoing corporate evaluation of UNESCO Education Sector's work on inclusion is aimed at providing a more comprehensive picture.

62. In SHS a stronger focus was put on the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees, disadvantaged women and girls, through targeted projects (UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, Art Lab for Human Rights and Dialogue, Flagship against Gender Stereotypes, Handbook for the Inclusion of Migrants at City level). Also, as a modus operandi, attention to vulnerable groups was paid in all projects launched or to be launched.

63. The Culture Sector will continue to promote the role of cultural heritage and creativity for the achievement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups and Indigenous Peoples, notably through the UNESCO Intersectoral Task Team for the organization of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032, and the implementation of the related Global Action Plan, in the context of the inter-sectoral programme on "Promoting indigenous knowledge, culture and languages as a pathway to inclusion".

64. In the framework of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, specific efforts will be deployed to raise awareness on, involve and benefit marginalized and vulnerable groups. With regard to digital skills and media and information literacy for disadvantaged populations, UNESCO will continue empowering youth as a target group and potential partners and leaders. Partnerships will be explored around MIL in support of other disadvantaged groups, such as the elderly, migrants, and people with disabilities.

65. BSP RBM material, practices and events underscore the importance of inclusive and participatory approaches, for engaging freely, actively and meaningfully all stakeholders throughout the programme/project cycle (from design to implementation including monitoring, reporting and evaluation). Operationalization of Global Priorities and Priority Groups is a key feature of RBM. In collaboration with the respective experts in these areas, Gender Equality, Youth, Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), and the principle of Leaving No One Behind are consistently embedded including through the definition of quantitative performance indicators and related qualitative assessment measures. This is also in line with the UN Secretary-General's emphasis on the crucial role of high-quality, timely, and reliable data, which is to be disaggregated and supplemented with necessary contextual information as a precondition for success in delivering the 2030 Agenda. UNESCO staff are requested to disaggregate data by sex, age, dis/ability, income, race, ethnicity, migratory status, groups left behind or at risk of being left behind, profile, type, geographic location/area and other grounds where relevant. These measures will also ensure that relevant aspects will be adequately captured in the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of interventions.

COVID-19 restrictions have created challenges but also some opportunities

66. While the pandemic has put extreme pressure on education systems and has aggravated the pre-existing learning crisis, it has also created many opportunities for education globally and has reaffirmed its central role for societies at large. The Education Sector has capitalized on these opportunities to enhance partnerships (e.g., with the establishment of the Global Education Coalition), set joint priorities with other multilaterals and reposition education as a priority sector.

67. In SHS several opportunities were created since the COVID-19 crisis, allowing UNESCO to reach out to a larger audience, launch activities and events and build financial and knowledge partnerships to advance work and create new projects (e.g., Guerrand Hermes Foundation, Canadian Covid19 response initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa, the UNESCO Global Data Project on Intercultural Dialogue, Harvard University, UNESCO Chairs, Promundo, MenEngage, White Ribbon, and so on). The capacities of more than 5000 youth and teachers in understanding and fighting racism and discriminations were reinforced through the Master Class series, and 600 UN staff, educators, young leaders and representatives from ICCAR and civil societies benefited from the Story Circles methodology to build intercultural capacities in local communities. UNESCO's Network of Academic Chairs on intercultural and interreligious dialogue actively contributed to reflection on the socio-cultural impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly regarding its impact on intercultural relations and on racism and discrimination. A briefing on this topic was prepared and distributed widely in English, French, and Russian, and a series of blog posts were prepared around related topics and shared on the website of the Network, and through UNESCO's social media channels.

68. Notwithstanding the operational difficulties generated during the COVID-19 crisis, new opportunities have emerged, allowing the Culture Sector to reach its partners and civil society in particular, thanks to the increased use of digital technologies, including online tools and surveys, as well as to enable an inclusive way of working online. Statutory meetings, as well as other conferences and events, and capacity-building initiatives have evolved and adapted to accommodate online and hybrid modalities, which allow for greater flexibility and outreach in different regions.

69. UNESCO will harness lessons learnt from the COVID-19 crisis to improve the analysis and integration of risk management and mitigation in project management. The Organization will also leverage the opportunities brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, by improving its responsiveness to emergent needs of its Member States and partners. For example, as a result of the surge in online activity during the pandemic, there is a significant increase in Member States' requests for support in the area of media and information literacy to respond to risks such as disinformation, misinformation and hate speech online. MIL will be utilized as a potent tool to contribute to the global COVID-19 recovery and help citizens adapt to the "new normal" that practices a larger scale of remote learning and digital transformation. The CI Sector's actions in protecting freedom of expression and the transparency of online platforms, human-centred and ethical AI, as well as open solutions and open educational resources, will further feed into the Organization's overall efforts to leverage opportunities while addressing key challenges that result from the pandemic.

70. COVID-19 has accelerated expanding digitalization and remote work. These shifts are expected to transform organizations long after the pandemic and promise huge benefits, but they also present risks. IOS will continue to play an important role in providing assurance on the efficiency and effectiveness of programmatic delivery, internal controls and risk management in a rapidly changing world.

71. To take stock of long-term lessons learned at the institutional level resulting from the impacts and organizational responses to the COVID-19 crisis IOS is currently embarking on a dedicated advisory exercise. This advisory will assess the effect that COVID-19 has had in driving institutional and behavioural changes and identify threats and opportunities. It will focus on areas such as business continuity, risk management, staff health and well-being, the relationship between Headquarters and Field Offices, communications, and other operational efficiencies (e.g., adoption of new technologies, e-signatures, travel, meetings and conferences, amongst others). It will also take an evaluation perspective and assess aspects such as the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of UNESCO's programmatic response to the crisis.

APPENDIX 5: CONSULTANTS BIODATA

Melissa MacLean, PhD, a Senior Consultant at Le Groupe-conseil Baastel ltée, has over twenty years of experience in international development. Dr. MacLean has led, participated in, and provided quality assurance on numerous evaluations for UN, international organization, government, and civil society initiatives. Besides evaluation, she has supported clients in results-based management and developing monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems; gender analysis and mainstreaming; strategic planning and programme support; training and facilitation; and social science research. Dr. MacLean's thematic expertise includes decentralization and local government, democracy and political development, development policy and programming, gender equality and inclusion, network organizations, and women's leadership and empowerment. However, her work has covered many other sectors and themes, ranging from sustainable agriculture and climate change to sexual and reproductive health and women's economic empowerment. In recent years she has led or contributed to several initiatives related to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. She has often supported networks and coalitions with knowledge, research, policy development, and advocacy mandates through her evaluation, MEL, and research work. Dr. MacLean holds doctorate and master's degrees in Political Science from the University of Toronto.

Naomi Harris is an Evaluation Consultant at Le Groupe-conseil Baastel ltée with experience in international and rural development research, evaluation, planning, and implementation. Her thematic experience includes gender equality and social inclusion, climate smart agriculture, producer and financial cooperatives, migration, food security, rural development, rural and participatory planning, and fair trade and sustainable consumption. Ms. Harris holds a master's degree in Rural Planning and Development, with a specialization in International Development from the University of Guelph. Naomi has supported the development of M&E frameworks and other MEL and RBM tools, developed RBM learning content, supported evaluations of complex programmes, and conducted quality assurance reviews. She has worked collaboratively with stakeholders across sectors and regions in areas ranging from migration to disaster risk management and conservation.

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