Final Evaluation of the Republic of Moldova–United Nations Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development 2018-2022

Elinor Bajraktari and Sorin Hadârcă

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Agencies, Funds and Programmes
AYTG	Adolescents and Youth Thematic Group
BOS	Business Operation Strategy
CBM	Confidence Building Measures
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CMT	Crisis Management Team
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
GEEW	Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
GTG	Gender Theme Group
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FE	Final Evaluation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoM	Government of Moldova
HR	Human Resource
IFI	International Financial Institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JWP	Joint Work Plan
M&E TWG	Monitoring & Evaluation Technical Working Group
MARDE	Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment
MECR	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MHLSP	Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics

NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECD DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
OMT	Operations Management Team
PFSD	Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RECP	Resource Efficient Cleaner Production
RG	Result Group
SC	Steering Committee
SCORE	Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SERP	Socio-Economic Response Plan
SOP	Standard Operations Procedures
TF	Task Force
UN	United Nations
UNCG	UN Communications Group
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UNSDG	UN Sustainable Development Group
UNEG	UN Evaluation Group
UN RCO	UN Resident Coordinator Office
UN-SWAP	UN System-Wide Action Plan
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WB	World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the final evaluation of the Republic of Moldova–United Nations Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development (PFSD) 2018-2022, which is a medium-term strategic planning document that articulates the collective vision and response of the UN system to national development priorities and outlines the activities to be implemented by the UN in partnership with the Government of Moldova and in close cooperation with international and national partners. The PFSD is framed around four priority areas, each with a corresponding outcome, including governance, human rights and gender equality; sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth; environmental suitability and resilience; and inclusive and equitable social development. The evaluation assessed the achievement of expected results and the extent to which UN's contribution to the national development process under the PFSD 2018-2022 and its outcomes has been effective, coherent, sustainable, and cost-efficient.

The evaluation was conducted by a team of two independent experts who worked closely with the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO), UNCT and other UN structures in the country. The process was based on the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) criteria and definitions and followed norms and standards established by the UN Evaluation Group. The methodology consisted of mixed methods and involved the use of commonly applied evaluation tools such as documentary review, questionnaires, interviews, surveys, focus group discussions, information triangulation, analysis and synthesis.

A participatory approach was used for data collection, and formulation of recommendations and lessons learned. The evaluation engaged all UN agencies through individual questionnaires. 59 UN staff members (of whom 70% female) participated in an online survey organized for this evaluation. Similarly, 26 Government officials (of whom 70% female) participated in an online survey. Additionally, individual meetings with key Government institutions were organized by the evaluators. Also, focus group discussions were held with civil society organizations and development partners. Overall, the views of approximately 150 people, including members of the UNCT, UN staff, government officials, development partners, and representatives of human rights institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector, were captured in the evaluation process.

All possible efforts were made to minimize potential limitations to the evaluation process. A challenge encountered during the evaluation process was the inability of the evaluators to conduct field visits and have in-person interviews with key stakeholders due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To mitigate these limitations, the evaluation team made use of a number of data collection instruments to enable the engagement of greater number of stakeholders – the most crucial of these instruments were surveys with staff members from UN agencies and government organizations engaged in the implementation of activities with UN agencies.

The following is a brief summary of the evaluation's main findings along the five dimensions of relevance, effectiveness (including an overview of the impact), coherence, efficiency and sustainability.

Programme Relevance

With a solid history of cooperation with the Government of Moldova (GoM) and other national partners, the UN system has become a longstanding and dedicated development partner of Moldova. Moldova has benefitted from UN support in a number of important ways that are outlined in detail in this report. The UN is perceived in the country as a well-respected development partner which promotes international practices and standards, knowledge, and policy recommendations. UN staff members and Government officials engaged in this evaluation believe that the PFSD has been for the most part relevant to the country's priorities and has contributed to the coordination of the UN system in the country.

Developed in close consultation with GoM and other national partners and on the basis of the Agenda 2030 for the country, the PFSD adequately reflects the country's priorities. What adds to the PFSD's relevance is the fact that the UNCT has supported the development and subsequent updating of the National Development Strategy (NSD) "Moldova 2030". Also, the SDGs are well mainstreamed throughout the PFSD and its implementing instruments. Furthermore, UN's priorities are broadly defined in the PFSD document, which allows for the necessary flexibility to adapt to the changing needs of the country. This became evident at the onset of the COVID-19 crisis when the UN's response under the Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP) was effectively embedded in the existing PFSD framework. The COVID-19 response – both its health and more broadly the socio-economic dimension – has become a very relevant part of UN's work in the country. Other areas that should be reflected more prominently in the upcoming cooperation framework are anti-corruption, digitalization, rural development, green economy, infrastructure, migration, human rights, confidence building measures and capacity building, while ensuring alignment with national development priorities.

The PFSD has also been aligned with the UN's four programming principles, including leave no on behind; human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment; environmental sustainability; and accountability. A key feature of the work of the UN system in Moldova has been its significant focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged people – children, youth, Roma, women, persons with disabilities, people at social risk or with health challenges, persons in detention, smallholders, etc. Many agencies have prioritized poverty reduction. Such focus has enabled the UN to be largely compliant with the "no one left behind" (LNOB) principle. The PFSD has also addressed environmental sustainability and resilience concerns primarily through Outcome 3 and has promoted accountability through better use of evidence in the policymaking. However, there is room for improvement in how the UN addresses the issue of gender equality. Also, there is a need for a stronger engagement of civil society and the private sector at the level of the whole UN system – rather than with individual UN agencies.

The evaluation also identified challenges related to the relevance of UN's work in Moldova. Despite the flexibility of the UN's response in areas such as the COVID-19 crisis, there is insufficient synchronization between agency programmes and PFSD, with most agencies' programming cycles not aligned with the PFSD cycle. In addition, the work of several agencies, particularly regionally and headquarters-based, is guided by multi-country strategies with varying timelines.

Programme Effectiveness

Overall, the PFSD document is well-formulated and provides a comprehensive analysis of the country context, especially in the areas covered by UN interventions. The document identifies with clarity the country's development needs and priorities and outlines UN's strategic approach to addressing them. Although the PFSD document does not provide a detailed description of the formulation process, UN staff members and Government officials involved in the evaluation stated that national governmental and non-governmental partners were genuinely involved in the design of the framework.

The PFSD results framework is extensive and complicated to navigate. In particular, the number of output indicators is excessive and poses an onerous burden on the UNCT, and especially the results groups and the M&E group, in their efforts to track progress and report on achievements. Also, not all output indicators meet the SMART criteria[1] and some of the baselines and targets have not been fully defined. Furthermore, there is not always a good match between output indicators and the activities carried out under the JWPs, which makes the aggregation of results challenging. These challenges are further compounded by the lack of data on the indicators identified in the PFSD results framework, in particular sex disaggregated data.

The PFSD has been useful to report the efforts and achievements of the UN system in the country. A common framework has allowed the UN to consolidate multiple actions under the same umbrella. It has

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[1] The SMART criteria are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound.

also allowed the UN to share with partners the high-level priorities of the UN-GoM collaboration. However, the UN system should first strengthen its own data infrastructure, including data aggregation mechanisms, operability of the UN-Info system, definition of indicators, baselines, targets, etc. Training will be needed for this, which ideally should be organized jointly by the agencies and coordinated by the RCO. There is also a need to strengthen the capabilities of the joint results groups to identify and analyse outcome and output indicators, plan interventions, etc. Agencies should seek to the extent possible to coordinate and harmonize their assessment and evaluative initiatives.

With regards to the achievement of planned results, out of the 26 PFSD outcome indicators, 8 indicators (31%) had been met or exceeded and another 8 indicators (31%) were partially met as of the end of 2020, in the context that another two years were left for the implementation of the current PFSD. Outcome level indicators measure results at the country level and, as such, any improvements are due to the work of all development actors, including government, UN agencies, development partners, CSOs, private sector, etc. At the output level, 58% of output targets had been either met or exceeded. An additional 17% of targets were partially met at the time of the evaluation, amounting to a total of 76% of outputs targets where progress was significant. As has been noted above, a certain level of impact has been possible thanks to contributions by the UN system in the areas of governance, human rights and gender equality; sustainable, equitable and inclusive economic growth; environmental sustainability and resilience; and inclusive and equitable social development.

The following is a broad overview of progress made under the PFSD, focusing on a few major contributions, while drawing attention to areas which require further attention. More details regarding activities under each priority area are provided in the report.

In the area of governance, human rights and gender equality, the UN system has strengthened the capacity of national human rights institutions, government, CSOs and mass media to monitor, report and act on systemic human rights issues. The number of advocacy campaigns, alternative reports by CSOs to the UPR and CEDAW and legislation tackling the sexual and reproductive rights and the rights of children is above targets. There has also been an increase in the implementation rate of recommendations of human rights treaty bodies thanks to the support of the UN system.

In the area of gender equality, there is a strong indication that women's political empowerment has progressed. An increase in the proportion of women elected or appointed to public office, particularly in the Parliament, can be traced to the quotas introduced in the Electoral Code promoted and supported by the UN. In the same vein, women survivors of violence have better protection and access to essential services as a result of improved legislation on ending violence against women in line with international standards. Under the COVID-19 support area, nearly 600 women and girls from Moldova, including women from the Transnistria region of the Republic of Moldova[2], women and girls affected by violence, women survivors of violence, women migrants, women with disabilities, women with children with disabilities, received immediate support to cope with stress and benefited from strengthened general and specialized services due to the provision of essential services made available with the UN support.

An important achievement was the improvement of the rights to fair trial for vulnerable groups. Although only a marginal improvement in perceptions was targeted, the actual number of women, people from rural areas, unemployed, people of Roma ethnicity and people belonging to sexual or religious minorities who trust the judicial system has doubled. There has also been improvement in trust of government institutions due in part to the work of the UN in support of institutions, although the values for the outcome indicator fluctuate with changes on the political front. Improvements have been visible in indicator values measuring corruption, thanks in part to the work of the UN with the National Anticorruption Centre in the

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[2] The term Transnistria region will be used to refer to the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova throughout the report.

implementation of the anti-corruption strategy and awareness raising activities in this area although comparable data in the last few years has been lacking.

The availability of SDG indicators has significantly increased, with important advancements made in the availability of SDG data – a result directly attributable to the support provided by the UN to NBS. Moldova has also improved its population statistics by aligning its methodology to the international one and revising for the first time in 30 years the usual resident population. This has led to a subsequent revision of all other statistical indicators and re-classification of the country income group to upper-middle income country.[3]

In the area of sustainable, equitable and inclusive economic growth, positive results were reported with regards to the number of companies that benefit from improved business advisory support and enhanced access to sustainable local development and inclusive labour markets. The Moldova's rank in the World Bank's Doing Business Report also improved as did the country's performance on the Global Competitiveness Index. Although the complexity of these indicators does not allow for the attribution of results directly to the UN, the organization has undertaken multiple activities aimed at improving the business environment in the country over the past years. At the same time, progress was slower than anticipated in terms of women's economic empowerment. The gender pay gap has increased from 13,2 to 14% instead of decreasing to 10% as expected.

The situation is somewhat better with regards to developing skills to help youth transition successfully from school to gainful employment. Although several related output indicators were not met and others were partially met, the proportion of young people in the "Not in Education, Employment, or Training" (NEET) group diminished from 29.2 to 26%, which is better than the planned decrease to 26.8%. The decrease has been more significant among men and in rural areas, with targets being exceeded at the disaggregated level, and the target for urban areas has been met. A decrease in this indicator has also been observed among women, but the target still remains to be met. At the same time, progress on increasing employment is still lagging behind.

In the area of environmental sustainability and resilience, achievements were made in increasing the surface areas of pasture, forest and water ecosystems that are sustainably managed by local public authorities. The proportion of districts applying climate resilient practices increased with the support of the UN from 18% to 23% since the beginning of implementation of the PFSD. Also, the targets were achieved with regards to the increase in the number of rural populations benefiting from climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures. The number of people in rural areas benefiting from sustainable land management practices has also increased since the beginning of implementation of the PFSD. At the outcome level, there was a remarkable increase in the share of renewables in the energy consumption from 14.2 to 28.7%. In part, the result can be traced back to UN efforts to promote biofuel and consolidate the domestic biomass market. However, due to the changes in the calculation methodology of this indicator the actual assessment of the increase in the share of renewables in the energy consumption is difficult.

One area which remains challenging is the engagement of private companies in environmentally friendly practices. Plans were made by UN agencies to build the capacity of manufacturing small and medium-sized enterprises for applying Resource Efficient Cleaner Production (RECP), as well as to facilitate the ecological value-chain and product innovation, yet no progress has been reported against those output indicators so far.

In the area of inclusive and equitable social development, there has been steady progress on most output targets. However, some strategic interventions failed to produce desired results at outcome level. Thus, the number of adolescents and young people who received peer-to-peer education on sexual and reproductive health and rights reached 34,700 against the programme target of only 12,000. Contrary to expectations, an increased number of youths involved in peer-to-peer education triggered a modest response at the outcome

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[3] World Bank, 2021. Country groups available here.

level: the adolescent birth rate per 1,000 women has marginally decreased from 32,1 in 2017 to 27,3 in 2020, which is significantly below the target of 20,8.

Another concern is with the share of households with children from poorest quintile receiving social assistance or child benefits. The output target is to have their share increased from 32 to 39%. Instead, it was 29.0% in 2019. Whereas low performance may be explained by the changes in Household Budget Survey methodology effective since 2019, targets should have been revised accordingly to gauge the impact of such changes. At the outcome level, increasing the proportion of households receiving social aid benefits also proved challenging. At the same time, the integration of children with disabilities in regular schools has improved over the last three years and the UN implemented several activities focused specifically on disability inclusion in schools to contribute to this result. The target for this indicator was met in 2019.

In addition, at increased concern is the rate of HIV mother-to-child transmission. The target established at the beginning of the PFSD implementation was 2%. However, the rate increased to almost 5% at the end of 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the HIV and tuberculosis (TB) early detection rates and HIV treatment adherence. This particular area and the health sector overall will require more attention moving forward as progress on the health indicators has been mixed and additional data will be needed to measure the results in this field.

Programme Coherence

Under the PFSD, UN agencies (both resident and regionally based ones) adopted the "Delivering as One" approach, which mandates joint planning, implementation and reporting. UN agencies are generally keen on stronger coordination and cooperation with each other. The quality of coordination and cooperation, however, depends on the incentives the agencies to engage with each other and the capacities and resources available to them. Larger agencies have capacities to participate in the coordination mechanisms. Smaller ones may be willing to engage but remain limited in their capacities for engagement. Some agencies displayed limited understanding of the gains of coordination, an indication of the need for greater information and awareness on the benefits of cooperation under the PFSD.

The performance of coordination mechanisms has been mixed. The Joint National-UN Steering Committee (JSC) has played a formal role in the implementation of the PFSD. Both the UN and the Government have been committed to convening the JSC once per year when feasible. The UNCT has met monthly to discuss issues of joint interest. Participation has been usually strong, and this was evident even in the way in which the UNCT group engaged with the activities of this evaluation. One weakness of UNCT meetings is that the focus is on information sharing (or updates) and less on substantive discussions of opportunities for joint programming, joint resource mobilization, etc. This is partly driven by the diversity of agencies which are interested in different topics. A new format for the UNCT meetings has been proposed to make the meetings more strategic and this format is currently being tested. The Results Groups have been mainly concerned with the development of JWPs, mostly based on individual agency activities, monitoring indicators and providing input for reporting. There is a need to engage RGs more effectively in joint programming. Substantive discussions are taking place within thematic groups. The proliferation of thematic groups has increased the coordination burden, making it necessary to streamline and optimize this plethora of groups. Also, RCO capacities required for coordination are already stretched.

Cooperation and coordination among agencies have been more focused on information sharing and less targeted at the establishment of collaborative arrangements based on complementarities. In general, collaboration between the agencies is usually not coming from a common reading of the PFSD but from concrete opportunities for financing, joint actions and common interests. For the agencies, the most essential planning tools are their own planning frameworks, agreed with their line ministries and other counterparts. Nevertheless, the number of joint programmes and initiatives has been impressive, especially considering the small size of the country. The RCO has played an increasingly important role in encouraging UN agencies to become involved in joint programming.

Programme Efficiency

The PFSD document envisaged the development of a joint Resource Mobilization and Partnerships Strategy (RMPS). The strategy was not produced until 2020, with formal approval by UNCT occurring in 2021. It was developed in close consultation with the UNCT and presents the UN system with several options to strengthen partnerships and increase resources available for UN programmes by leveraging additional financing for SDGs. Given the significant delay, the RMPS has not yet been a relevant tool in the current programme cycle. Most of the actions identified in the strategy will likely not be implemented in the current cycle due to the limited time remaining till the end of the cycle.

Total expenditure under the PFSD has amounted to US$ 87 m, representing about 56% of the total expenditure (US$ 156) envisaged in the PFSD document. This corresponds to the 60% of the programme timeline that had elapsed to the point of this evaluation (end of 2020). Over one-quarter of available resources were directed towards SDG 16 and another quarter were directed in roughly equal parts towards SDGs 5 and 8. Approximately 10% of resources were directed towards SDGs 3 and 9 each. Around 4-6% of resources were directed towards SDGs 6, 7 and 13. About 3% of resources were directed towards SDG 17. The remaining 10% of resources were directed towards the other seven 7 SDGs. Attention is needed by the UNCT to ensure the accuracy of the financial information. As part of its accountability to the public, beneficiaries and donors, the UN system should track on a continued basis the financial resources it has mobilized and expended in Moldova. Going forward, the UN should establish a sound process for the collection of financial information from the agencies, its storage and analysis and effective reporting.

The evaluation identified several challenges related to operational procedures of UN agencies. Government officials were critical of the time lapse between reaching an agreement on a specific intervention and the actual launch of that intervention. While in some cases, the delays are related to resource mobilization, the inception phase of many interventions is too long and often a result of delays in the recruitment process. Several concerns were also raised with regards to lengthy and complicated procedures for the recruitment of consultants, especially local consultants. Also, the frequent change in RCO's leadership has contributed to some delays, such as the preparation of the RMPS.

By contrast, the procurement system employed by UN agencies was held up by government counterparts for its efficiency. This has been particularly the case during the COVID-19 response which necessitated quick access to much needed medical supplies and equipment.

Programme Sustainability

Due to its recent reclassification as an upper-middle-income country, Moldova may experience a decline in development funds. At the same time, core funding from the UN agencies has remained limited and insufficient to meet the demand that the agencies face for their services. For the three years in question, government co-financing has amounted to a total of about US$ 14.5 m across all outcome areas and has been primarily generated by UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA. Co-financing is a positive factor of sustainability because it indicates not only genuine interest from government counterparts, but also places the respective activities on more sustainable foundations. Going forward, given Moldova's upper-middle-income status and potential decline in ODA associated with that status, co-financing may become an important source of funding for UN activities. On the basis of existing experience, government co-financing and partnerships with IFIs and the private sector could be pursued more systematically and could become an integral part of UN's resource mobilization strategy.

A challenge to the sustainability of UN-supported initiatives is that government entities often fail to scale them at the national level. Crucial for the scaling up of pilots is that their design include a clear plan for what is expected from the pilot initiative and how they are expected to be replicated. Another challenge is that information about pilots and replication is not easily available. More information on this will be useful not only for the UN, but also for national partners and donors. Weak policy implementation (of what exists

on paper) is another significant challenge for the sustainability of UN's work. This tends to be the case especially when Government partners lack capacity for implementation. Going forward, UN agencies need to address the capacity of Government partners for implementation. Implementation also necessitates actions plans that spell out specific actions to be undertaken to ensure implementation. Implementation also requires funds to carry out the required activities. Actions have to be linked to specific budget allocations from the public budget.

With regards to engagement of non-governmental partners, although civil society and the private sector have been enabled to play a role in the current cooperation framework, there is potential for greater and more systematic engagement with both these actors. There are also opportunities for a greater role of the UN in development effectiveness by further supporting the Government in improving its development coordination capabilities.

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The COVID-19 crisis presented significant challenges for the UN system in Moldova, as for all other development actors in the country. However, it also created an opportunity for the UN agencies to rally together in response as one body – a real embodiment of the "One UN" approach. As has been noted in this report, UN's response was developed on the basis of extensive research on the impacts of COVID-19 across a range of areas of direct interest to the UN. These initiatives undertaken in response to COVID-19 represent not only good examples of a quick and collective response by the UN system as a whole, but also provide good foundations for the development of the upcoming UN development cooperation framework, and more importantly its implementation in an integrated fashion.

This evaluation provided an opportunity for drawing some important lessons from the experience of the UNCT with the current programme which may be used in the development of the new cooperation framework. The following are a couple of key lessons identified in the course of this evaluation.

Lesson 1: A key lesson that can be drawn from the experience of the UNCT in this programme cycle is that close cooperation between UN agencies can emerge when the right incentives for cooperation are in place. In this case, the onset of the COVID-19 crisis and the clear guidance from HQ, coupled with the availability of rapid funding, created the right incentives for the agencies to rally together under the coordination of the RCO and produce a strong SERP and a range of other assessments that provide solid foundations for developing a synchronized and well-coordinated response in the upcoming programme cycle. The structure of funding is a critical factor in rallying UN agencies to work together. The fragmented nature of UN funding is a serious shortcoming that impedes joint implementation. However, the COVID-19 crisis served as a rallying factor for UN agencies by combining joint funding with a joint purpose for the UN agencies. Going forward, it will be important to maintain this spirit of cooperation and extend it to the planning and implementation of the new programme.

Lesson 2: Another lesson that may be drawn from this evaluation is that more coordination mechanisms is not necessarily better. UNCT in Moldova has been very active in creating new inter-agency coordination groups – and that effort deserves praise. However, too many groups become cumbersome for coordination and they defeat the purpose of their establishment. What is more important than the number of coordination mechanisms is having a structure that is lean and agile and that does not impose on the agencies' high transaction costs (especially for agencies with a limited number of staff in the country). Going forward, it will be important for the UNCT to streamline the existing coordination infrastructure by identifying groups that could be merged or repurposed to operate more efficiently.

Based on the analysis presented in this report, this evaluation report provides the following recommendations for the consideration of the PFSD stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION 1
Streamline the intervention logic and the results framework

1.1 For the upcoming CF, UNCT and GoM should develop a less complicated and well-defined results framework, with baselines and targets to ensure better measurements of UN contribution to the results.
Selected indicators will require reliable longitudinal data and disaggregation by sex, age, location (rural/urban), etc. The outcome levels indicators should be aligned to the SDG nationalised indicators. The number of output indicators should be pared to a manageable level and meet the SMART criteria.

1.2 UNCT should strengthen the capabilities of the joint results groups to identify and analyse outcome and output indicators, plan interventions, etc.
UNCT should organize joint trainings on RBM matters, which could be coordinated by the RCO.

1.3 UN agencies should seek to the extent possible to coordinate and harmonize their assessment and evaluative initiatives.

1.4 The UNCT should establish a sound monitoring process for the financial flows and ensure effective financial reporting.
As part of its accountability to the public, beneficiaries and donors, the UN system should track on a continued basis the financial resources it has mobilized and expended as a whole. The UN should establish a sound process for the collection of financial information from the agencies, its storage and analysis and effective reporting. The UN-INFO provides a good platform for achieving this. The RCO should monitor the process on a continuous basis and provide the necessary training to the UN agencies based on the challenges they encounter.

RECOMMENDATION 2
Strengthen inter-agency cooperation

2.1 The UNCT should review existing inter-agency coordination structures with a view to streamlining the joint groups and strengthening their performance.
All agencies should engage more effectively with the joint coordination mechanisms – they should allocate the necessary resources and staff time to the UN coordination process. Streamline the coordination architecture of inter-agency thematic groups that currently exist. Redesign the joint structures to allow for the participation of government counterparts in the joint structures. Assess options for engaging civil society more effectively with the results groups and/or the thematic groups.

2.2 Agencies should interact, communicate and collaborate more effectively on the planning process.
The UNCT should redesign the mandate and functionality of the Results Groups to enable them to engage more effectively with planning and joint programming as opposed to monitoring and reporting. Their role in planning should be strengthened to ensure that planning under the PFSD is not done as the sum of agency plans, but as a process that consolidates and integrates the efforts of the agencies. The number of annual meetings of result groups could increase to allow for more focus on planning.

2.3 The RCO role in the planning process needs to be enhanced so as to contribute to the harmonisation of planning and facilitate communication and flow of information among UN agencies on planning matters.

The RCO should also keep track of agencies' planning processes and timelines, provide regular updates to agencies and identify opportunities for inter-agency consultations. The RCO could also facilitate a more harmonious alignment of UN planning processes with government planning approaches at the sectoral and national levels.

2.4 The UNCT should promote joint programming by identifying and institutionalizing incentives for the agencies to engage in joint programmes.
RCO could supplement this process with training for agency staff on modalities and approaches of joint programming. The UNCT should promote a higher degree of awareness among UN staff members about the UN reform and its implications for joint delivery – i.e. key elements of the reform, its objectives, what it means for cooperation and joint implementation on the ground, etc. The RCO is well-positioned to facilitate this process through targeted training. The UNCT should organize team-building activities at the UN level with participation of multiple agencies, mixed teams etc.

RECOMMENDATION 3
Enhance programmatic moving forward

3.1 The joint UN-GoM response to the challenges that have emerged from the COVID-19 crisis should be central to and fully embraced by the upcoming cooperation framework.
PFSD's JWPs and SERP became two parallel processes in 2020, with SERP taking a prominent role in programming. In the new cooperation framework, the UNCT should fully integrate the two streams into one framework under a single strategic document with a single results framework.

3.2 The UNCT, in cooperation with the GoM, should explore joint support for national partners in the key areas identified by stakeholders of this evaluation and as a result of the analysis of performance under the current PFSD.
Specifically, the following areas of support identified by key stakeholders should be given consideration: anti-corruption, digitalization, migration, job creation, national capacity building, human rights, healthcare, environmental sustainability, rural development, green economy and infrastructure as well as areas for which progress has been limited under the PFSD, while ensuring alignment with national development priorities. Further, consideration should be given for increasing support for SDGs 4, 5, 10, 12 and 15, as well as SDGs 2 and 11 based on agencies' comparative advantages. Although resources have been directed towards SDGs 6, 7 and 9, they have been concentrated in a handful of activities, hence further consideration should be given to these SDGs as well.

3.3 In the upcoming CF, the UNCT should mainstream gender across programmes through targeted interventions and resource allocations.
UNCT should consider a twin track approach to GE in the next UNSDCF: 1) A separate result area focusing on GM in policy making and budgeting, including strengthening institutional mechanisms to GE; and 2) Mainstreaming gender equality perspective across all the priority thematic areas, in line with CEDAW recommendations as well as the GE scorecard recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 4
Step up resource mobilization

4.1 Results Groups should track the implementation of the Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy.

4.2 The UNCT should implement a more coordinated approach towards resource mobilization.
Agencies should approach resource mobilization in a more coordinated fashion by being more cooperative with each other under the PFSD framework. RCO should step up its role in coordinating resource mobilization among agencies by ensuring that agency efforts are harmonized and not creating overlaps.

4.3 The UNCT should seek to diversify and strengthen its partnerships for financing development work.
Government co-financing should be pursued more systematically at the level of the UNCT and should become an integral part of UN's resource mobilization strategy. UNCT should also explore joint implementation opportunities with IFIs active in the areas covered by the PFSD to leverage their resources.

RECOMMENDATION 5
Step up engagement with the civil society and private sector

5.1 The UNCT should strengthen its engagement with civil society.
It will be important to have a more coherent approach at the UN level, across agencies, for how support to civil society, especially capacity building assistance, is designed and delivered. The UN should explore the harmonised approach to channel the support to build the capacity and network of civil society. The UNCT should explore possibilities for engaging the civil society more systematically in the UN joint coordination structures and make greater efforts in consulting civil society in UN-led processes.

5.2 The UNCT should step up its engagement with the private sector to ensure that private sector resources are deployed more effectively towards the solution of development problems.
Options for engagement include further identifying potential partners among private companies with strong social responsibility, building new partnerships with environment-friendly private companies, further using partnerships with private companies to promote women's empowerment, including though WEP, and promoting the PPP model in the public sector.

RECOMMENDATION 6
Strengthen tracking of pilots and focus on policy implementation

6.1 The UNCT should track the performance of pilots over time – the lessons they generate during the piloting stage and the extent to which they get replicated and scaled up.
As part of the monitoring system, the UN should seek to track pilot initiatives over time and after a pilot's lifetime. The UN should document more effectively results, lessons, experiences, and good practices and share them more widely.

6.2 The UNCT should take a more systematic approach to policymaking by paying particular attention to the issue of using evidence in policy drafting and implementation.
Policy development should be clearly linked to public budgets. The UN should also strengthen the systems that track policy implementation results, rather than inputs/outputs and assess more rigorously the sustainability of achievements. The UN should support the implementation capabilities of the government and not act as a substitute for government' shortcomings in implementation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Moldova, in close partnership with the Government of Moldova (GoM), decided to conduct a final evaluation of the Republic of Moldova–United Nations Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development (PFSD) 2018-2022, which is a medium-term strategic planning document that articulates the collective vision and response of the UN system to national development priorities and outlines the activities to be implemented by the UN in partnership with the Government of Moldova and in close cooperation with international and national partners. This report captures the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

1.1 Overview of evaluation objectives and scope

The evaluation assessed the achievement of expected results and the extent to which UN's contribution to national development under the PFSD 2018-2022 has been effective, coherent, sustainable, and cost-efficient. The specific objectives of the evaluation included the following:

- Assess the performance of the PFSD 2018-2022, its strategic intent, objectives and outcomes contained in the results framework, including the UNCT contribution to such results against the criteria of relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, coherence, support of transformational change, and conformity with the cross-cutting principles of gender equality, human rights and environmental sustainability;
- Assess the extent to which the United Nations in Moldova has been successful in achieving the PFSD 2018-2022 outcomes as a contribution to national development priorities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Assess whether the strategic intent, principle and spirit of the PFSD 2018-2022 has been taken forward by UN entities and identify the factors that have affected the ability of the United Nations to deliver integrated policy and programme actions;
- Generate evidence and lessons learned based on the assessment of the current performance of outcomes and outputs that, inter alia, can be used to accelerate the implementation of the current PFSD in its remaining months of implementation;
- Provide a set of actionable recommendations based on credible findings to be used for organizational learning and identify lessons learned and good practices that will inform the new cooperation framework cycle, bearing in mind the new guidance on the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and the goals of the ongoing reform.

The evaluation examined progress made in the implementation of the PFSD during the 2018 – 2020 period and provides an assessment of the UN agencies' joint contributions towards national priorities and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[4] The evaluation was comprehensive, focusing on the activities, achievements and results of all UN agencies, funds and programmes (AFPs) operating in Moldova. The evaluation was designed and conducted to support greater learning about what works, what does not work and why in the context of the PFSD. It provides an independent assessment of the achievements, the challenges and the lessons learned from the PFSD implementation by the cooperation of the GoM and the UN. In spite of the fact that there are two more years before the finalisation of the current PFSD, the assessment is intended as a final evaluation so that the main findings and recommendations may feed into the next planning cycle. No mid-term review has been undertaken before this evaluation by the UNCT.

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[4] Based on the Government Decision no. 117 of 12 August 2021 on the restructuring of the central public administration several ministries were reorganized. Given that this evaluation primarily covers the period of 2018-2020, it will use the names of ministries as known prior to the reorganization.

The examination of the PFSD 2018-2022 programming principles, including leave no one behind, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, sustainability and resilience, fell also under the scope of the evaluation. Particular attention was given to assessing the extent to which commitments undertaken in the PFSD 2018-2022 to focus on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups have been achieved. Attention was also given to the United Nations' response to the COVID-19 crisis in Moldova in the context of implementation of the PFSD 2018-2022. In this regard, the results achieved under the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan (SERRP) were assessed and links with the PFSD 2018-2022 outcomes were analyzed.

Throughout the evaluation report main finding and recommendations were stylised to inform the elaboration of the next PFSD and support the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) in the design and implementation phase. At the same time, part of the recommendations which relate to efficiency and sustainability may prove to be valuable to individual UN agencies which are encouraged to improve their performance by addressing the shortcomings. Finally, the report aims to inform the Government and other implementing partners about what worked well and less well in the current PFSD format and what are the areas that require further attention.

1.2 Overview of the evaluation methodology

The evaluation was conducted by a team of two independent experts who worked closely with the UNRCO, UNCT and other UN structures in the country. The process was based on the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) criteria and definitions and followed norms and standards established by the UN Evaluation Group. The methodology consisted of mixed methods and involved the use of commonly applied evaluation tools such as documentary review, questionnaires, interviews, surveys and focus group discussions. The information collected using these different tools was analysed, synthetised and also triangulated to ensure the validity and reliability of findings.

A participatory approach was used for data collection, and formulation of recommendations and lessons learned, with the participation of a wide range of stakeholders being ensured. The evaluation engaged all UN agencies through individual questionnaires, responses to questionnaires being secured from 17 agencies, which represents three-fourths of all agencies working in the country. An individual questionnaire with the RCO was also conducted. An online survey of UN staff, which was completed by 59 staff members, out of which two-thirds were women, further informed the evaluation. Reponses to individual questionnaires and the staff survey were supplemented through the organization of individual interviews with key agency representatives and staff.

Government officials and representatives of human rights institutions, CSOs, development partners and the private sector were among the external stakeholders consulted during this evaluation. More specifically, 26 government officials, out of which two-thirds were women, participated in an online survey, representing the views of 17 public entities, which were taken into account in the development of the evaluation report. Additionally, individual meetings with key government and human rights institutions were organized by the evaluators.[5] The participation of civil society organizations, including organizations representing the interests of various vulnerable groups but also the private sector, and development partners was ensured through the organization of focus group discussions with their representatives.

Overall, the views of approximately 150 people, including members of the UNCT, UN staff, government officials, development partners, and representatives of human rights institutions, civil society organizations

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[5] All data for this evaluation was collected prior to the reorganization of the central public administration from August 2021. Hence, the document will use the names of ministries as known prior to the reorganization when referring to the entities of the respondents whose opinions informed this evaluation.

and the private sector, were captured in the evaluation process. The views of stakeholders obtained through primary data collection, were supplemented with information collected from secondary sources, which included background documents on the national context, national strategies and policies, UNCT documents and agency programme and project documents, annual work plans, reports, assessments and other relevant documents.

All possible efforts were made to minimize potential limitations to the evaluation process. A challenge encountered during the evaluation process was the inability of the evaluators to conduct field visits and have in-person interviews with key stakeholders due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To mitigate these limitations, the evaluation team made use of a number of data collection instruments to enable the engagement of greater number of stakeholders – the most crucial of these instruments were surveys with staff members from UN agencies and government organizations engaged in the implementation of activities with UN agencies. A more detailed description of the evaluation scope, purpose, objectives and methodology is described in this report's Annex I.

1.3 Report structure

The following chapter of this report provides a description of the country context in which the PFSD has been implemented. The third chapter provides a broad overview of the PFSD, focusing on planned results, coordination mechanisms and stakeholders. The fourth chapter presents the report's main findings and consists of five parts corresponding to the standard evaluation dimensions: relevance, effectiveness (including an overview of the impact), coherence, efficiency and sustainability. The fifth chapter summarizes the main conclusions drawn from the experience of the PFSD. The last (sixth) chapter provides a set of recommendations for the consideration of the UN and its partners. Additional information supporting the arguments made throughout the document is provided in the annexes attached to this report.

2. SITUATION ANALYSIS

2.1 Political context

Since independence, Moldova has continuously experienced shifts in the political orientation and limited administrative capacity of public institutions. Moldova's political forces have fluctuated between seeking stronger ties with Russia and prioritizing European integration. In 2009, the country started on a path towards closer ties with the EU. As a result, in 2014, the European Union and Moldova signed an Association Agreement, which, among other things, created a "Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area", opening the European market to Moldovan goods and services.

Previous parliamentary elections took place in the first half of 2019. Election results left the country without a clear majority, leading to a period of uncertainty as the parties were unable to form a coalition. A constitutional crisis followed, with two competing governments - one that was in place before the elections and another one that was created by a surprise coalition following the elections - claiming legitimacy and control. Although the constitutional crisis was eventually resolved in favour of the newly created government, changes on the political front continued to affect the country. The new government lasted less than six months, being replaced by the end of the year.

The political context continued to change rapidly in 2020. The year was marked by shifts in the Parliament and presidential elections. The presidential elections brought a change to the configuration of forces in the country, with the presidency, on one hand, and the Government and Parliament, on the other hand, being driven by diverging interests. The year ended with the resignation of the Prime Minister and the entire cabinet and the swearing in of a caretaker Prime Minister and government. Failure to appoint a new Government led to the dissolution of Parliament with snap elections held in July 2021. A pro-European party (formerly lead by the current President) won the vast majority of seats in the new Parliament and a new government was formed in August 2021.

As a result of political volatility, institutional development has stagnated in the last five years. As can be seen in the table below, key governance indicators have not changed substantially for Moldova in the last five years. In some areas, such as rule of law, regulatory quality, and voice and accountability, the country has experienced regress.

Table 1: Moldova's Key Governance Indicators

World Bank Governance Indicators Estimate of Governance (ranges from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance)			
Governance Indicators	**Baseline (2014)**	**Most Recent Value (2019)**	**Direction**
Voice and Accountability	0.01	-0.09	Regress
Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism	-0.16	-0.38	Regress
Government Effectiveness	-0.42	-0.38	Progress
Regulatory Quality	0.02	0.01	Regress
Rule of Law	-0.25	-0.37	Regress
Control of Corruption	-0.85	-0.62	Progress
Freedom House			
Governance Indicators	**Baseline (2016)**	**Most Recent Value (2021)**	**Direction**
Political Rights Rating	3	3	No Change

World Bank Governance Indicators Estimate of Governance (ranges from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance)			
Governance Indicators	**Baseline (2014)**	**Most Recent Value (2019)**	**Direction**
Civil Liberties Rating	3	3	No Change
Aggregate score for the Electoral Process	10	9	Regress
Aggregate score for the Political Pluralism and Participation subcategory	11	12	Progress
Aggregate score for the Functioning of Government subcategory	4	5	Regress
Aggregate score for the Political Rights category	25	26	Progress
Aggregate score for the Freedom of Expression and Belief subcategory	11	12	Progress
Aggregate score for the Associational and Organizational Rights subcategory	8	8	No Change
Aggregate score for the Rule of Law subcategory	7	6	Regress
Aggregate score for the Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights subcategory	9	9	No Change
Aggregate score for the Civil Liberties category	35	35	No Change
Transparency International			
Governance Indicators	**Baseline (2015)**	**Most Recent Value (2020)**	**Direction**
Corruption Perception Index	Score: 33 Rank: 102	Score: 34 Rank: 115	

Source: World Bank, Freedom House, Transparency International.

2.2 Key socio-economic challenges

In addition to political instability and institutional stagnation, Moldova faces several other daunting challenges. As reflected in Table 2 below, which shows the country's performance against several socio-economic development indices, Moldova's Human Development Index (HDI)[6] increased steadily over the past years and stood at 0.75 in 2019, placing the country in the high human development group of countries. However, the value is below the average for countries in this group and below the average for countries in the Europe and Central Asia developing region.

Table 2: Selected indices for Moldova's socio-economic development[7]

Year	Human Development Index	Inequality-adjusted HDI	Gender Development Index	Gender Inequality Index	Multidimensional Poverty Index
2015	0.736	0.661	1.014	0.237	0.04[8]
2016	0.738	0.662	1.013	0.227	
2017	0.743	0.666	1.013	0.219	

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[6] The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living.
[7] UNDP, 2020. Available here.
[8] The figure is for 2012, which is the latest available for this index.

| 2018 | 0.746 | 0.669 | 1.013 | 0.214 | |
| 2019 | 0.750 | 0.672 | 1.014 | 0.204 | |

Source: UN Human Development Reports

Moldova remains one of the poorest countries in Eastern Europe. Although recently reclassified by the World Bank as an upper-middle income country[9] based on the new demographic realities, social transfers still make up a significant share of household income. The middle-class layer is still thin, and many households, especially in rural areas, remain vulnerable to economic shocks which could push them back into poverty. Poverty rates continue to remain high. The absolute poverty rate was 25.2% in 2019 and increase further to 26.8% in 2020 against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic that hit the country at the beginning of last year. Likewise, extreme poverty shifted slightly upwards from 10.7% in 2019 to 10.8% in 2020. In 2020, increases in the level of extreme poverty were more pronounced in urban settlements (up to 5.1% from 3.6% in the previous year), which is likely a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moldova is facing significant challenges from large-scale outmigration, decreased fertility rates and an increased share of older people. From 2015 to 2021, Moldova's resident population decreased by 8.7 per cent (from 2,844,673 in 2015 to 2,597,107 in the beginning of 2021[10]). These demographic dynamics have led to an average annual population decline of 1.6 per cent over the mentioned period, which is a continuation of a much longer negative trend, posing significant challenges for the country's demographic situation and its future socio-economic development. Furthermore, according to UNFPA data, the population is projected to continue to decline by between 0.6 per cent to 1.6 per cent annually until 2035.

Access to good quality healthcare is challenging, particularly for vulnerable groups and those living in rural areas. This negatively affects health outcomes for the population and contributes to lower life expectancy compared to their European countries. Nevertheless, access to mandatory health insurance has been continuously improving in recent years.

Deterioration of human capital has become a major concern for the country's competitiveness. Key challenges are population ageing, brain drain, labour market skills mismatch, and the suboptimal quality of education. Furthermore, Moldova's economy is dependent on remittances to spur consumption. Nevertheless, foreign direct investment (FDI) has steadily grown and Government investment in infrastructure has become more significant. While the Government has made progress in removing policy failures that trap Moldova in a cycle of migration and jobless growth, much remains to be done.

Shortcomings in Moldova's investment climate negatively affect the profitability of businesses and, consequently, the prospects of attracting foreign investment and export promotion. Among key challenges are business over-regulation, poor respect of property rights, high risks of businesses expropriation, and the creation of monopolies, notably for export and distribution of agro-based products (by licensing and regulation), as a result of which Moldovan farmers get depressed farmgate prices.

The environmental situation in Moldova worsened during the past 10 years in terms of emissions of CO_2, quality of drinking water, volume of municipal waste and consumption of fuelwood. Although, the targets on the use of renewables in energy consumption has been already achieved by Moldova due to the use of biomass used for heating purposes (28% of the gross energy consumption against the target of 20%), the capacities to use solar and wind are very limited. Also, Moldova has already transposed the most important pieces of the European legal framework on energy efficiency[11]. While the labelling and eco-design frameworks are almost fully in place (the government approved secondary legislation in 2016), the greatest challenge now is to implement the Law on Energy Efficiency and the Law on Energy Performance of

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[9] World Bank, 2021. Country groups available here
[10] NBS, 2021. Available here.
[11] Directive 2012/27/EU on Energy Efficiency, Directive 2006/32/EC on Energy Services, the directives on Energy Labelling and Eco-design, and Directive 2010/31/EU on Energy Performance of Buildings

Buildings. The economy's energy intensity is three times the EU average, yet there have been notable achievements, such as a 29% reduction in the energy intensity indicator for 2016-2018.[12]

Climate change is having a significant impact on agriculture, affecting people's livelihoods. Agriculture is the main pillar of the Moldovan national economy and the main source of livelihoods in rural areas, engaging about a fourth of the active population of the country. Besides being a low productivity sector, with under-developed rural infrastructure and poor access to markets, it is highly dependent on natural factors. Extreme weather events, particularly droughts, have had devastating effects: the country has experienced a severe drought in 2020, which, together with the economic impact of COVID-19 has worsened the economic situation of the farmers. The annual economic loss caused by natural disasters was 3.5–7% of GDP and in some instances even higher.[13] While the cost of climate adaptation measures is relatively high, the cost of inaction is higher. Besides the adverse effects linked to global warming that are difficult to mitigate, Moldova is facing challenges related to unsustainable use of resources: deforestation, inefficient waste management and land pollution, degradation, as well as increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

The legal and institutional build-up in Moldova for the respect and protection of human rights is more or less compliant with international standards and some advancements in this respect in the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights have been achieved over the past years. However, the country continues to face some significant human rights issues, in particular, grave concerns were expressed by UN human rights monitoring bodies on torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment in the context of criminal investigations, low rate of criminal investigations into allegations of torture, su6b minimum standard conditions of detention in places of deprivation, and gender-based violence. Additionally, the Republic of Moldova continues to be a country of origin for trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour.[14]

Prevalence of corruption in the public sector is another area of concern[15] as are issues related to the administration of justice and equality before courts and to a fair trial, including by minorities[16], women[17], people with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.[18] Intersecting forms of discrimination and limited access for rural women[19], Roma[20], people with disabilities[21] and other vulnerable groups to education, health care and other public services and the lack of a comprehensive legal framework criminalizing hate crimes and the prosecution of incidents of hate speech have also been documented and noted.[22] Many of these concerns were also raised in the latest US Department of State report on Human Rights Practices.[23]

Social cohesion is fragile according to the UN Moldova Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index (SCORE)[24]. High rates of migration and resultant brain drain, negative attitudes towards women, and poor social tolerance continue to impact on overall social cohesion, as does the Transnistrian conflict.

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[12] IEA (2020), Moldova energy profile, IEA, Paris https://www.iea.org/reports/moldova-energy-profile
[13] World Bank (2016), "Moldova: Paths to Sustained Prosperity, A Systematic Country Diagnostic"
[14] CAT, Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Republic of Moldova (CAT/C/MDA/CO/3), 2017; CRC, Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic report of the Republic of Moldova (CRC/C/MDA/CO/4-5), 2017.
[15] CESCR, Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Republic of Moldova (E/C.12/MDA/CO/3), 2017.
[16] CERD Opinion under article 14 of the Convention, concerning communication No. 60/2016*, ** CERD/C/103/D/60/2016, 2021
[17] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of the Republic of Moldova (CEDAW/C/MDA/CO/6), 2020.
[18] Report of the Working Group on the UPR of the Republic of Moldova (A/HRC/34/12-Moldova), 2016.
[19] Ibid.
[20] CERD, Concluding observations on the ten and eleven periodic reports of the Republic of Moldova (CERD/C/MDA/CO/10-11), 2017.
[21] CRPD, Concluding observations on the initial report of the Republic of Moldova (CRPD/C/MDA/CO/1), 2017.
[22] CERD, *supra* note 19.
[23] Moldova - United States Department of State (2021)
[24] Center for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development, Moldova Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index, 2018. Available here.

As shown in Table 2 above, Moldova's Gender Development Index has remained steady over the past years and the Gender Inequality Index has been on positive trend since 2015. Table 3 below shows a range of indicators related to Moldova's Gender Equality Index, including the latest data from NBS were available. The data is also reflected in Figure 1 further in this report.

Table 3: Gender Inequality Index Related Data[25]

HDI rank	Gender Inequality Index		SDG 3.1 Maternal mortality ratio	SDG 3.7 Adolescent birth rate	SDG 5.5 Share of seats in Parliament	SDG 4.4 Population with at least some secondary education		Labour force participation rate	
	Value 2019	Rank 2019	(deaths per 100,000 live births) 2019	(births per 1,000 women ages 15–19) 2020	(% held by women) 2021	(% ages 25 and older) 2019		(% ages 15 and older) 2020	
						Female	Male	Female	Male
90	0,204	46	15.4	27,3	39.6	96,6	98,1	36,1	45,1

Source: NBS Gender Inequality Index (2020)

The country has made numerous international and national commitments to promote gender equality and empower women, among else by ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and various ILO conventions. Since the adoption in 2006 of Law No. 5 on Equality of Opportunities for Men and Women[26], a series of national strategies and action plans have promoted gender equality. By 2016, a law[27] on temporary measures introduced a 40% gender quota in cabinets and electoral lists, provisions for paternity leaves, and bans on sexist advertising. However, the implementation of these provisions remains limited. As can be seen in the figure below, women in Moldova still face discrimination and inequality in the social, political and economic spheres and as a result they encounter specific education and labour market barriers. Moreover, their representation in politics and decision-making processes remain below international benchmarks.

According to UN Women, violence against women in Moldova is serious and widespread. A 2011 study on Violence against Women in the Family[28] commissioned by the UN and conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics found that 63 per cent of women experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence from their husband or partner and one in 10 experienced economic violence at least once. Rural, elderly and separated or divorced women had the highest rates of multiple types of violence. Even though the Family Code provides clear legal equalities between the responsibilities and rights of partners, there are marked inequalities in the division of parenting responsibilities and support of children's education. Women are expected to perform the majority of unpaid household and family related care work. A 2016 International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) survey[29] found that decision-making, regarding long-term investments, were decided alone by men in one out of three cases, with women making decisions about immediate household expenditures and childrearing.

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[25] Based on Gender Inequality Index (GII) data and NBS data. Available here and here. The HDI rank, GII value and rank, and education data are from the GII website. The date for the maternal mortality ratio, adolescent birth rate and labor force participation rate are from NBS. The share of seats in Parliament is based on the latest Parliament elections and derived from the data available on the website of Moldova's Parliament. Available here.

[26] Law No. 5 on Equality of Opportunities for Men and Women. Available here.

[27] Available here.

[28] The study on Violence against Women in the Family. Available here.

[29] The IMAGES Survey. Available here.

Figure 1: Gender Equality Indicators
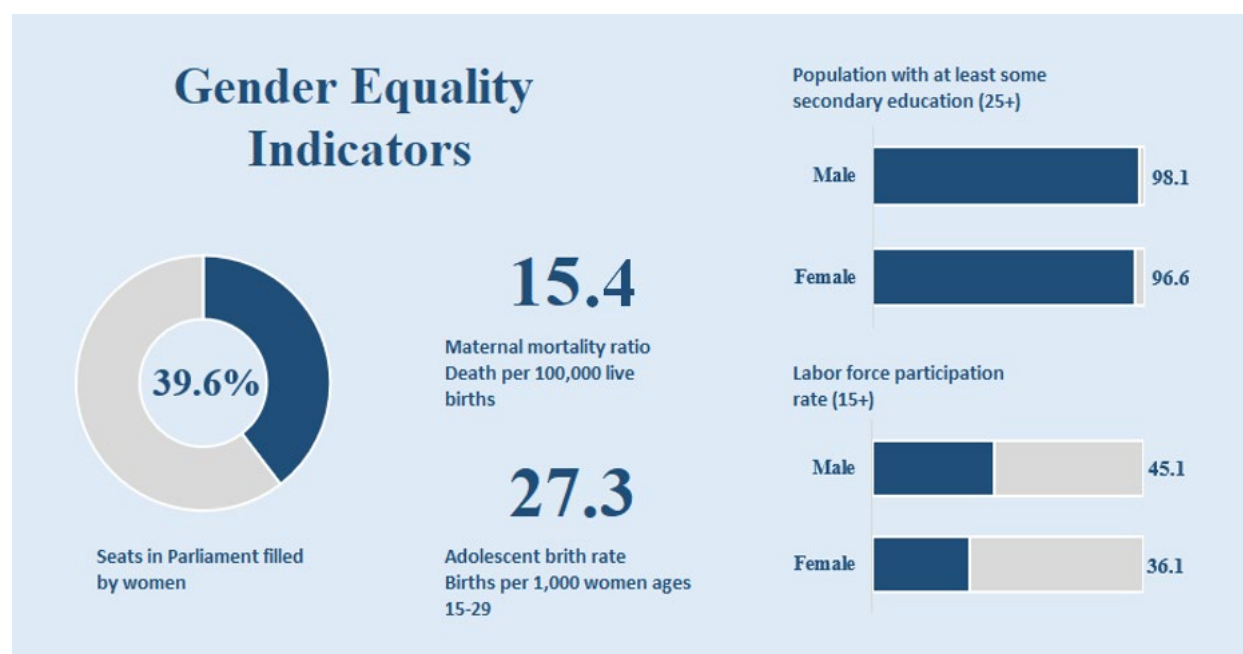
2.3 State of the Sustainable Development Goals

In September 2015, along with the other 192 member states of the United Nations, Moldova endorsed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since then, the country has embarked on a process of nationalization and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the support of the United Nations. The global goals have been placed at the foundation of the new National Development Strategy 'Moldova 2030', which provides a strategic vision for the trajectory of the country's socio-economic development for the years to come and is based on a set of priorities focused on the quality of life of the population. The strategy has been approved by the Government and is currently awaiting approval from the Parliament. If approved, this document will serve as a strategic benchmark for all national, regional and local policies, and is aimed at achieving the SDGs and ensuring that no one is left behind in the process.

The Government presented its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum in July 2020 based on the assessment of progress achieved by the county in the implementation of the SDGs[30]. The formulation of the VNR was supported by the United Nations. The VNR highlighted significant progress towards the achievement of SDGs 1, 8, 13 and 17 and moderate progress towards the achievement of SDGs 2, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11. Although efforts were undertaken to realize development outcomes across all social areas, there has been less noticeable progress towards the achievement of SDGs 4, 6, 10, 12, 15 and 16.

VNR was further complemented by a Youth Report,[31] which highlighted major problems that young people of Moldova face in their lives, including girls, youth with disabilities, young people from rural areas and Roma population. The Youth Report was developed by the National Youth Council in consultation with young people from all over the country. The main messages from young people were incorporated in the Moldova VNR under each chapter in separate boxes called "Youth Voices".

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[30] Moldova Voluntary National Review, Progress Report 2020. Available here.
[31] National Youth Council, 2020. Available here.

In parallel to the VNR process, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) developed a revised list of nationalized SDG indicators[32] and assessed the existing data gaps in measuring progress towards SDGs. The revised list of indicators, together with the associated data, was used to complete the VNR analysis. This work will guide all future data initiatives aimed to support the achievement of SDGs.

2.4 COVID-19 Pandemic

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the beginning of 2020 laid bare the weakness and inequalities of the socio-economic system. The fragility of the health system, for example, became rapidly apparent. The pandemic overwhelmed health services at all levels, put extreme pressure on the health workforce, deepened the financial needs of the health system and affected health supply chains and procurements. The weak capacity of the education system to adapt and transition to remote teaching, which especially affected vulnerable children and young people, was also accentuated, as was the unpreparedness of social services to cope with an emergency of such proportions.

The COVID-19 pandemic also exposed several populations at risk to additional socio-economic marginalization. To this end, UNCT has identified several vulnerable groups at high risk of being left behind and at the same time suffering from multiple vulnerabilities during the emergency.[33] Specifically, the most affected groups are Roma; persons affected by and living with HIV and AIDS; women who have experienced domestic violence; older people[34]; persons with disabilities; single mothers; women with several children; and people with chronic diseases. In addition, UN assessed the COVID-19 impact on gender roles[35] which highlighted that during the lockdown women took on the most demanding work in the household and that care responsibilities have isolated and will isolate even more the women in the time of pandemic. Also, domestic violence during lockdown has also become a cause for concern for about half of the population, reflected in a 30% increase in the domestic violence-related emergency calls during the first 5 months of 2020[36]. At the same time, men have been affected by the pandemic crisis to a larger extent in terms of wage-related vulnerability.

The economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic was unprecedented. During the lockdown period which lasted several months in 2020, many businesses had to seize sales and production while maintaining personnel. Changes in the consumption patterns further affected profits and turnover. According to estimates, due to COVID-19 more than 30 thousand Moldovans lost their jobs and local businesses missed US$4.8 billion in sales.[37] Micro, small, and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs), which account for 71% of the value added and employ 60% of the workforce in Moldova's economy, were badly hit. Most MSMEs have reported declines in sales, of up to 75-100% and only a third had enough liquidity to cover three months of operations.

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[32] The revised indicators are included in the draft government decision that can be accessed through the following link: https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/142.pdf. Further information on the process is available at https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=30&id=6535

[33] Social and Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in the Republic of Moldova: A Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA). Available here.

[34] According to the Assessment of COVID-19 Pandemic Risks for Older Persons in the Republic of Moldova, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a number of significant changes and effects on the population, especially on older people. Thus, in addition to the direct health risks, the pandemic increased the risks related to the social isolation, material and mental well-being, position on the labor market, abuse and neglect, and access to the health services for older persons. The analysis is available here.

[35] Assessment of COVID-19 impact on gender roles. Available here.

[36] COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan

[37] COVID Matrix prepared by the Economic Council to the Prime-Minister. Available here.

3. PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

3.1 PFSD Document and Theory of Change

The United Nations in Moldova operates under the "Deliver as One" (DaO) modality, as requested by the Government in 2011. The work of the United Nations in Moldova is guided by the Republic of Moldova–United Nations Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development (PFSD) 2018–2022. The document was developed through a participatory process and articulates the collective vision and response of the United Nations system to national development priorities and activities to be implemented in partnership with the Government of the Republic of Moldova and in close cooperation with international and national partners and civil society.

The overarching vision embraced by partners is that by 2030 the Republic of Moldova will be a country free of poverty and corruption with reduced inequalities and strengthened social inclusion and cohesion so that no-one is left behind, a country where human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, the rule of law, environmental sustainability and the well-being of the population are promoted and respected. The vision is supported by a Theory of Change (ToC) which in a nutshell states the following: "*If the challenges and bottlenecks withholding the social and economic development of the Republic of Moldova will be addressed by strategic interventions supported by UN agencies, then strategic outcomes will be achieved in four priority areas leading towards a positive impact in terms of improved well-being of people of Moldova, in particular of the most vulnerable, in a just and equitable society, in line with international human rights standards and Vision 2030.*" In line with the ToC, the PFSD document is framed around four priority areas, each with a corresponding outcome, all closely aligned with the SDGs and targets. The graphical representation of ToC is provided in Figure 2 below.

As has been emphasised under each of the strategic outcomes, the main beneficiaries (right-holders) of the PFSD are "the people of Moldova, in particular of the most vulnerable". The PFSD recognizes that the work of the UN in Moldova would not be possible without the engagement, support and contributions of its many different partners (duty-bearers). The two main categories of stakeholders are: 1) implementing partners, which include Government institutions at the national and local levels, civil society organizations, private sector companies; and 2) financing partners, which encompass bilateral and multilateral donors all contribute to the implementation of the UN PFSD 2018– 2022.

Under the PFSD, the Government has the primary responsibility and accountability for achieving the planned PFSD outcomes. The UN contributes policy advice, in accordance with international norms, standards, and best practices, and helps with build capacity at national and local levels, including through technical assistance, procurement support and support for infrastructure implementation – both within and beyond Government institutions – to strengthen the implementation and monitoring of national strategies, policies and plans. Other national partners, including civil society organizations, think tanks, academia and the private sector, support the implementation of the document along with development partners, that are also key contributors to the implementation of PFSD activities.

The estimated budget for the implementation of the PFSD is $156,700,000. This includes $9,770,000 from regular or core resources of the UN and $33,754,000 from non-core or extrabudgetary resources from bilateral, multilateral and private sources. The total estimated funding gap was $113,176,000 at the time of the development of the PFSD. The estimated resource requirements included in the PFSD are indicative and are reviewed and updated as part of the annual planning processes.

Figure 2: PFSD Theory of Change
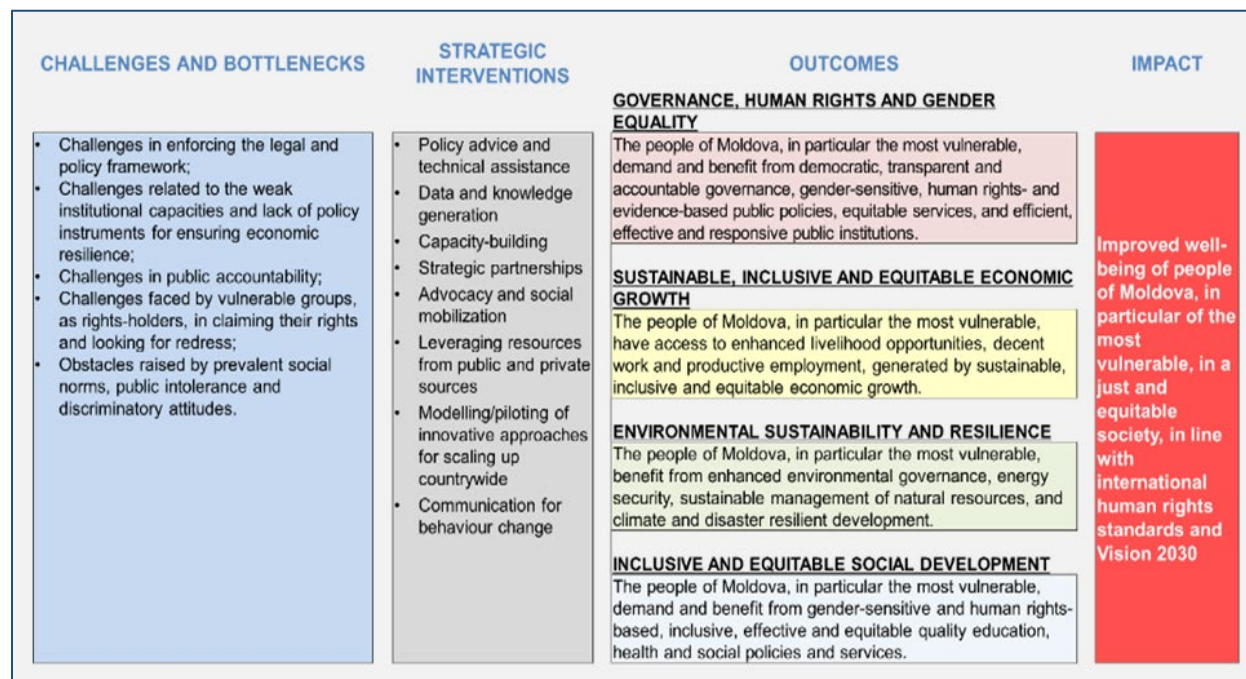
The graphic representation of the ToC does not provide full details as to how the impact and outcomes will be achieved (except by providing a typology of activities), which corresponds with the intention to keep the document at strategic level. Thus, in order to fully grasp the intervention logic, ToC should be analysed in conjunction with the JWPs which operationalise the PFSD. Seen as whole, each of the four outcomes outlined in ToC is supported by 4-5 outputs which are to be achieved through the implementation of concrete activities, which address the challenges and bottlenecks identified in ToC.

3.2 UN Development System in the Country

The UN development system in the country includes a total of 23 UN funds and programmes, specialized agencies and other UN entities, of which ten are resident entities and 13 are regionally or headquarters based. The UN entities working in Moldova will be commonly referred to as agencies throughout this report. Eighteen of the 23 agencies signed the PFSD at the beginning of the programme cycle. Another five agencies committed to contributing to the achievement of the outcomes outlined in the document in the course of its implementation. A Resident Coordinator Office coordinates the efforts of the agencies operating in Moldova to ensure the provision of efficient and effective assistance to the country in line with the PFSD. The World Bank and IMF are also part of the UN development system in the country, but their work is not covered by this evaluation given that they are not signatory to the PFSD.

The figure below shows the UN development system in the country including all agencies that are signatory to the PFSD. Annex VIII summarizes the main areas of activity for the UN agencies operating in Moldova and specifies the PFSD outcomes to which each agency is primarily contributing. The overall contribution of the UN system in the country is reviewed in the "Effectiveness" section of this report under the sub-section "Main Contributions".

Figure 3: UN Development System in the Country


3.3 UN Coordination Mechanisms in the Country

Coordination among UN agencies and national partners in the context of the PFSD has taken place through a number of mechanisms and structures that have facilitated the implementation of the programme. The coordination infrastructure under the PFSD document is shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 4: Implementation Arrangements
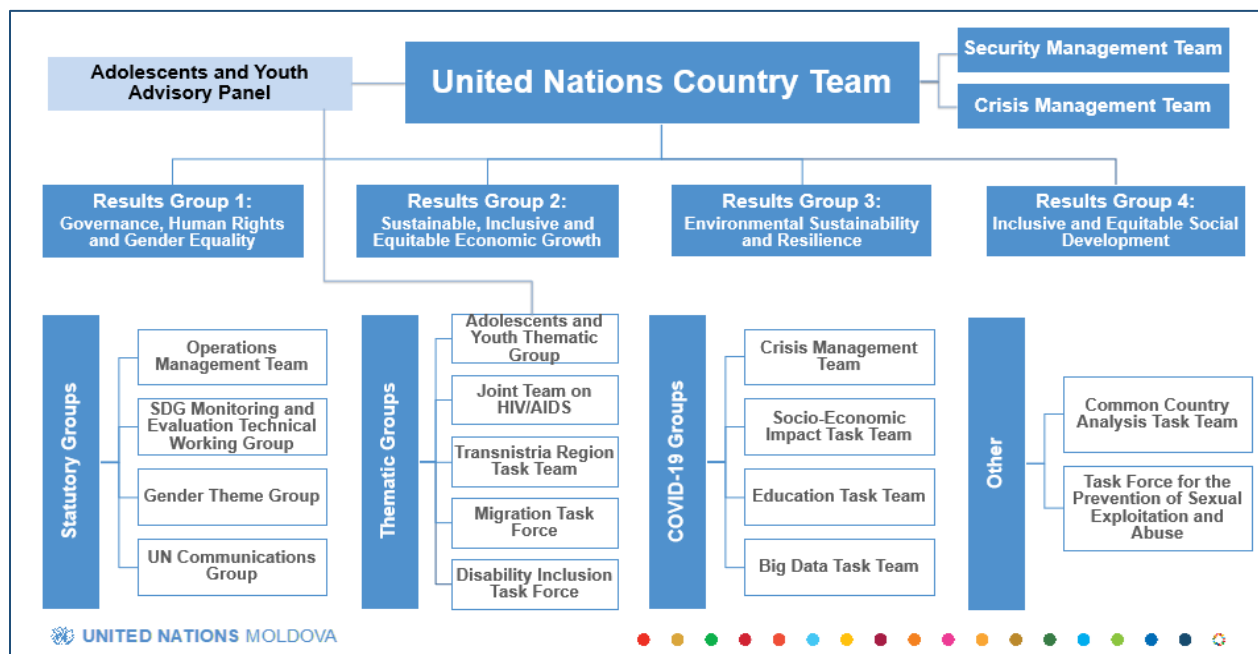
Joint Steering Committee – The overall strategic direction of the PFSD is provided by the Joint National – United Nations Steering Committee (JSC), co-chaired by the Prime Minister and the United Nations Resident Coordinator.[38] Other members include the Secretary General of the Government and representatives of several ministries. United Nations AFPs are represented on a rotational basis based on Results Group chairpersonship. The JSC provides strategic guidance and oversight during the implementation of the PFSD to ensure alignment with national priorities. The committee meets on an annual basis to review progress made towards the implementation of the PFSD.

UN Country Team – The provisions of the PFSD are transposed into practice by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), which includes 23 signatory United Nations AFPs. The UNCT has the overall responsibility for coordination and operational management of the programmes and activities of the United Nations in Moldova, including the PFSD. The UNCT is chaired by the Resident Coordinator and is composed of the heads of agencies operational in the country, working as a team under the principles of mutual accountability set out in the UNSDG Management and Accountability Framework for the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System.

- *Inter-agency Groups* – The work of the UNCT is supported by several inter-agency working groups, including four Results Groups (RGs), the Operations Management Team (OMT), the United Nations Communication Group (UNCG), the SDG Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Working Group (SDG M&E TWG), and the Gender Theme Group (GTG). RGs are the main mechanisms for coordinated and collaborative planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the PFSD. Each RG covers one priority area of the PFSD associated with a corresponding outcome.
- **OMT** provides leadership on the implementation of a coordinated, efficient, and effective common operational support agenda at the country level. OMT is guided by a joint Business Operations Strategy, which provides a strategic, medium-term focus on common United Nations operations in support of enhanced programme delivery.
- **UNCG** serves as a coordination mechanism that ensures that agency communication is complimentary and cost-effective. The group provides recommendations to the UNCT on communication issues and identifies opportunities for collaboration and innovation to increase the visibility and impact of United Nations programmatic work.
- **SDG M&E TWG** contributes to strengthening the capacity of the UN to manage for results and provides technical support to the UNCT and RGs in all planning, monitoring and evaluation-related matters. More specifically, the SDG M&E TWG supports the UNCT and the RGs in planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluating the implementation of the PFSD and assists the UNCT in efforts supporting the accelerated implementation of SDGs.
- **GTG** ensures that commitments on gender equality and gender mainstreaming translate into action throughout UN' work in Moldova.

The PFSD is operationalized through a set of joint work plans. These documents include the partnership framework outputs and all related key development contributions delivered jointly or by individual entities, with a view to maximizing synergies and avoiding duplication. The plans also identify the resources that are required and available for the implementation of the key activities as well as the existing funding gaps. The UNCT in Moldova has developed two plans under the PFSD 2018-2022 – a biennial plan for 2018-2019 and a yearly plan for 2020 – and is in the process of finalizing its third joint work plan for 2021 under the current partnership framework.

Resident Coordinator Office – The RCO has coordinated the operationalization and execution of the PFSD. In the current programme cycle, the RCO has focused on the following priorities: i) Policy and Programme

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[38] The Joint National/United Nations Steering Committee was established by Government Decision No. 87 on 12 July 2016.

Coherence; ii) SDG Advisory and Advocacy; iii) Communications, Outreach, Advocacy and Partnerships, iv) Results Based Management and v) Business Harmonization.

3.4 UN COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan

In 2020, the UNCT developed the UN COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP) as an intermediate offer of support to the country in its efforts to address the unprecedented challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of the response and recovery plan was to anchor the socioeconomic response to COVID-19 firmly in the national COVID-19 response and long-term development plans, and to leave no one behind.

SERP was developed based on the UN global framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 and is complimentary to the PFSD. Like the PFSD, SERP was endorsed by the Prime Minister. The SERP included a portfolio of actions and projects to the value of US$106 m and was developed based on the results of 26 socio-economic assessments conducted by the UN on the impact of the pandemic and related measures. The plan identified several vulnerable groups at high risk of being left behind and at the same time suffering from multiple vulnerabilities during the emergency as outlined below.

Box 1: Vulnerable Populations Identified by the UNCT[39]

- Women, including survivors of domestic violence, single mothers and women with pre-school-aged children
- Older persons
- Returning migrants and migrants under informal working conditions, asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons
- Persons in prison and other detention facilities
- Front line workers (health care workers first)
- Ethno-linguistic minorities, including the Roma community
- Persons with disabilities, and persons with mental health conditions
- Children, adolescents, and youth, especially girls and young women including those in institutions and youth not in employment, education and training (NEET youth)
- Adults and children in institutionalized settings (e.g. persons in psychiatric care, drug rehabilitation centres, old age homes, and institutions for persons with disabilities)
- Groups that are particularly vulnerable and marginalized because laws, policies and practices do not protect them from discrimination and exclusion (e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people)
- People in extreme poverty, unemployed, seasonal workers, persons facing insecure and informal work and incomes, including as a result of loss or decline of income from remittances, or returning from abroad following the loss of job or income
- Small farmers, rural workers in informal and formal markets, and other people living in remote rural areas as well as urban informal sector and self-employed who depend on the market for food
- Persons affected and living with HIV and AIDS and other people with pre-existing and/or chronic medical conditions
- Persons who use drugs and persons who are undergoing drug dependency treatment
- Freelancers and small entrepreneurs

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[39] The list is not presented in any particular order. The list is available here and also in the SERP available here.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

This report's findings are organized in the following four sections: i) **Relevance** (the extent to which the PFSD has been relevant to the country's priorities and needs); ii) **Effectiveness** (whether the PFSD has contributed towards development results for the country), including an overview of the impact of the UN work in the country; iii) **Coherence** (whether the implementation of the PFSD has been coherent); iv) **Efficiency** (whether the delivery of PFSD results has been efficient); and, v) **Sustainability** (whether PFSD results are sustainable).

4.1. RELEVANCE

The assessment of PFSD's relevance is conducted against the following four criteria:

- Alignment with and responsiveness to national priorities;
- Flexibility and responsiveness to COVID-19 crisis;
- Perceptions of the value of UN Contributions;
- Compliance with UN's four programming principles.

4.1.1. Alignment with and Responsiveness to National Priorities

The UN is a longstanding and dedicated development partner of Moldova. It has a solid history of cooperation with GoM and other national partners. Moldova has benefitted from the UN support in a number of important areas that will be outlined further in this report. The UN is perceived in the country as a well-respected development partner which promotes international practices and standards, knowledge, and policy recommendations.

The PFSD was developed in consultation with the Government and other national partners. As such, it reflects the country's priorities. Further, Moldova's key development challenges were identified through the Country Common Assessment (CCA) process which was conducted rigorously. Although since the conduct of the CCA progress has been made in several areas, the most crucial challenges still remain relevant as evidenced by the Common Country Analysis undertaken by the UN in Moldova in 2020[40]. The COVID-19 crisis has certainly exacerbated those challenges and revealed additional weaknesses in the health and education systems, as well as in the country's preparedness for crises. However, as evidenced by interviews with national counterparts, the challenges identified in the PFSD document continue to be relevant.

The PFSD was developed on the basis of the SDGs, aiming to contribute to the realisation of Agenda 2030 in the country. Each PFSD priority was designed to support the Government in achieving specific SDGs and is linked to the relevant SDGs. This is also reflected in the results framework that clearly states the SDGs that are being targeted under each outcome and with each indicator being tagged with the related SDG indicators. The Joint Work Plans (JWPs) follow a similar logic, with each activity linked to the respective SDGs to which it contributes. Hence, SDGs are mainstreamed throughout the PFSD and its implementing instruments. The table below shows the relationship between PSDF outcomes and SDGs.

Table 4: Alignment of PFSD Outcomes with SGDs

PFSD OUTCOMES	SDGs
Outcome 1 The people of Moldova, in particular the most vulnerable,	• SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; • SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries;

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[40] UN Moldova, Common Country Analysis 2020, https://moldova.un.org/en/122198-un-common-country-analysis-republic-moldova-2020

demand and benefit from democratic, transparent and accountable governance, gender-sensitive, human rights- and evidence-based public policies, equitable services, and efficient, effective and responsive public institutions.	• SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; • SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.
Outcome 2 The people of Moldova, in particular the most vulnerable, have access to enhanced livelihood opportunities, decent work and productive employment, generated by sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth.	• SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere; • SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; • SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; • SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; • SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; • SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation; • SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries; • SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; • SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; • SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.
Outcome 3 The people of Moldova, in particular the most vulnerable, benefit from enhanced environmental governance, energy security, sustainable management of natural resources, and climate and disaster resilient development.	• SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; • SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; • SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; • SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; SDG 6: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all; • SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all; • SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation; SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; • SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; • SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; • SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat

	desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss; • SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.
Outcome 4 The people of Moldova, in particular the most vulnerable, demand and benefit from gender-sensitive and human rights-based, inclusive, effective and equitable equality education, health and social policies and services.	• SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere; • SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; • SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; • SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; • SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries; • SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; • SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

Source: UNRCO

Under the PFSD, the UNCT supported the development and subsequent updating of the National Development Strategy (NSD) "Moldova 2030" in line with SDGs. The updated document has been approved by the Government and sent to Parliament for ratification. The alignment of both the PFSD and "Moldova 2030"[41] with SDGs ensures that both frameworks are built around the same principles and priorities and aim to achieve the same goals. PFSD is also well-aligned with the Government's Action Plan for 2020-2023[42] and sectoral Government strategies and programmes, which, to a large extent, represent the implementation framework for the 2030 Vision. Numerous other policy documents were/are developed with UN support under the PFSD in the fields of human rights, statistics, social protection, health, disaster risk management, anticorruption, employment, migration, youth development, education, agriculture and rural development, etc.

It should also be noted that UN's priorities are broadly defined in the PFSD document, which allows for the necessary flexibility to adapt to the changing needs of the country. This became evident at the onset of the COVID-19 crisis when the UN's response under Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP) was effectively embedded in the existing PFSD framework (the following section of this report will provide a more detailed discussion of the UN's response to COVID-19).

Despite the flexibility of the UN's response in certain areas such as the COVID-19 crisis, there is insufficient synchronization between agency programmes and PFSD, with most agencies' programming cycles not aligned with the PFSD cycle. Several agency country programmes were already under implementation when the current PFSD was designed, and a few others were developed during the implementation of the PFSD but extend beyond the period covered by the document. In addition, the work of several agencies, particularly regionally and headquarters-based, is guided by multi-country strategies with varying timelines. Figure 4 below illustrates the degree of alignment of programming cycles based on country programmes or country-specific work plans.

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[41] "Moldova 2030" has been endorsed by the Government and is pending approval by the Parliament.
[42] GoM, Government Action Plan for 2020-2023, https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/pag_2020-2023.eng__0.pdf

Figure 5: PFSD and Agency Programming Cycles
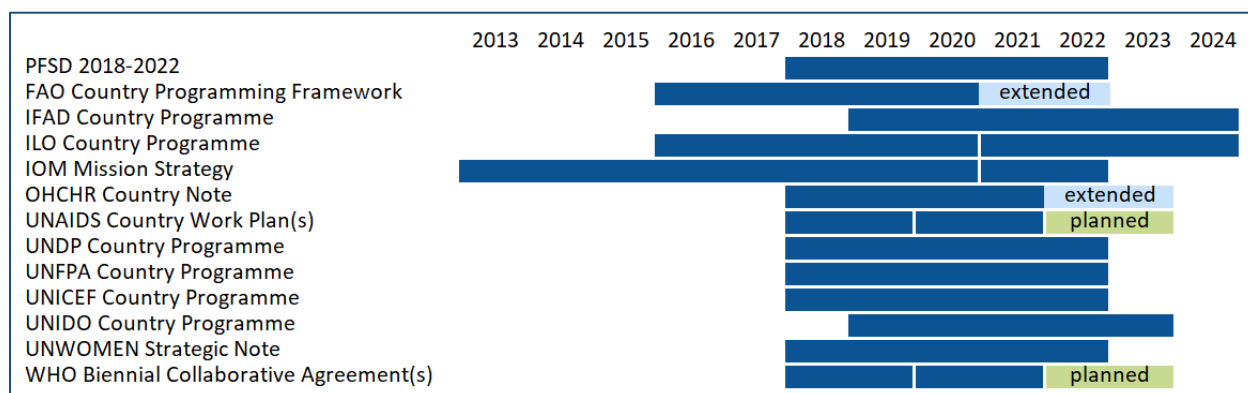
Evaluation participants, including UN agencies and Government officials, identified a few key areas that have increased in relevance during this cycle and that should be reflected more prominently in the upcoming cooperation framework. Unsurprisingly, one area is the COVID-19 response – both its health dimension and more broadly the socio-economic response based on the foundations laid out in SERP. Other areas identified by UN agency representatives involved in this evaluation where the new cooperation framework could strengthen its engagement and response to national priorities are anti-corruption, digitalization, migration, human rights, confidence building measures and capacity building. Government officials responding to the evaluation survey highlighted human rights, healthcare and environmental sustainability as forthcoming priorities, along with job creation, migration, rural development, green economy and infrastructure.

4.1.2. Flexibility and Responsiveness to the COVID-19 Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic affected nearly all programme and project planning and implementation processes, requiring the UN to adjust in a very short time to a new working environment. Certain activities had to be postponed. The quality of some interventions, especially of those related to capacity-building and policy development, suffered because of the lack of face-to-face contact and other limitations associated with the new online delivery modes.

Conceptually, the PFSD document proved to be broad enough to allow for the flexibility needed to meet the unforeseen needs arising from the COVID-19 crisis. This view is shared by a majority of UN staff members surveyed by this evaluation – about 86% of survey respondents agreed that "the PFSD has been flexible enough to respond to the changing context in Moldova, especially in light of COVID-19".

The following is a brief overview of UN's response in Moldova.

- *Operational Response* - At the operational level, the UNCT quickly activated the Crisis Management Team (CMT), composed by the Head of Agencies including the EIB, EBRD, IMF, and the World Bank, to strengthen coordination around the crisis response.[43] In addition to the CMT, three additional inter-agency thematic groups were established to coordinate the response.[44] In person meetings were cancelled and measures were taken to postpone activities or implement them through online communications. An internal policy document was developed regarding remote working. Technological solutions were identified for coordination and meetings (e.g. Teams, Zoom, etc).[45]

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[43] The team was created on 26 February 2020 and includes the UNCT as well as WB, EBRD, EIB, and the IMF. The team is focused on inter agency information sharing, situation updates, security management, medical, and duty of care issues.

[44] Socio-Economic Impact Task Team, Education Task Team and Big Data Task Team.

[45] For example, the UNCT has now a functional Teams platform where all joint documents are placed.

- *Health Response* – The medical/health content was led by WHO. Shortly after the start of the crisis, the UNCT conducted an assessment of needs in the health sector. One of the first steps in the health response was the monitoring of the epidemiological situation and advocacy for donor contributions. The UN prepared weekly situation reports with information about the epidemiological situation, as well as information about the agencies support to the country, [46] which, among many other actions, included support for the development of the country's COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan and the National COVID-19 Vaccination Plan that transposed international framework documents, allowing for a coordinated set of actions and need-based assistance. WHO led the health component of crisis communications, working closely with the UNCG to disseminate and coordinate additional messages on COVID-19. On vaccination-related communications, UNICEF and WHO represented the UNCT in the National Committee responsible for implementation of the National Immunisation Plan.

- *Programmatic Response* - At the programme level, the most important achievement was the formulation of the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP)[47], which benefited from the contribution and expertise of UN agencies through the leadership and coordination of the RCO and the technical leadership of UNDP on formulation and consolidation. The plan built on an extensive assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on various socio-economic dimensions. It identified priorities for the UN system in Moldova and outlined a joint portfolio of programmes. Moldova's SERP is a well-elaborated plan that has received recognition from Executive Office of the UN Secretary General. The box below provides a more detailed overview of SERP. In addition to SERP, the UN system supported the conduct of extensive research related to COVID-19. During 2020, the UNCT produced 13 Policy Briefs, 8 Thematic Briefs and 24 Impact Assessments, including a UNDP/UNFPA comprehensive socio-economic impact assessment that among other of the mentioned documents informed SERP's development. As a response to COVID-19, OHCHR facilitated the establishment of the NGO Task Force on COVID-19 and Human Rights which was joined by 56 NGOs from across Moldova, including from the Transnistria region and Gagauzia. An assessment conducted in the context of the NGO Task Force contributed to informing four successful COVID-19 related funding proposals, targeting the most vulnerable and marginalized in Moldova, including in the Transnistria region.[48]

Box 2: Moldova's SERP

> In June 2020, the UN system in Moldova developed the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP) based upon the United Nations global framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. SERP was updated in September 2020 and endorsed by the Prime Minister. SERP included a portfolio of actions and projects to the value of US$106 m and was developed based on the results of the above-mentioned assessments conducted by the UN on the impact of the pandemic and related measures. The plan identified more than 13 groups as most vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic. Moldova's SERP was singled out as a good example by a review of UN COVID-19 responses conducted by the Executive Office of the UN Secretary General.[49]

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[46] The UN-supported COVID-19 dashboard has received nearly 2.5 million views.

[47] https://covid19response.un.md/files/Moldova%20Covid-19_FINAL.pdf

[48] The proposals focused on providing critical support (i.e., food packs, protective equipment and disinfectants, and other essential good, such as hygienic products) and information about COVID-19 prevention measures to vulnerable populations, including vulnerable women and children, and empowering older persons to overcome social isolation through transfer of knowledge and skills in using digital devices to better cope with the pandemic, as well as mainstreaming human rights and human rights based approach to initial and on the job training of social workers.

[49] The review titled "*Early Lessons and Evaluability of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF*" noted key strengths of Moldova's SERP "*Easy to read, good infographics, comprehensive analysis based on multiple assessments, with a well–articulated response in a program portfolio, including important reprogramming efforts from different partners. Clear linkages with national development goals and the National Plan. Strong focus on Human*

Moldova's SERP exhibits a strong focus on gender equality with a clear analysis of the extent women have been more severely impacted by the pandemic than men, including through differential impacts on health (and health services), more severe employment impacts and heightened levels of domestic violence. It also highlights the particular vulnerabilities of youth, women, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV and survivors of gender-based violence and includes data on the impact of COVID-19 on overall social cohesion in Moldova. Two vulnerable groups given particular emphasis are the prison population and the Roma population in rural areas. The Moldova SERP is also one of very few which has integrated Human Rights indicators into the monitoring framework.

- The SERP process engaged with the Government of Moldova from the beginning and was supported at the highest levels of government;
- The SERP process was transparent with each UNCT member able to view the investment projects proposed by all members and to track resources mobilized from development partners and, thereby, limiting overlap and competition for resources;
- Development partners were able to have a transparent view of the flow of external resources to UN entities which aided in coordination of their efforts to re-programme resources to the COVID-19 emergency; and,
- For many within and outside the UNCT, the SERP was the first and is still the only comprehensive plan for the national response to the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

SERP is complementary to the PFSD. Each of the five SERP pillars is linked to the corresponding PFSD outcomes. In 2020, the work of the agencies to contribute to the SERP was reported in separate JWPs for convenience purposes and facilitate reporting, but activities could have been also reported under the corresponding JWP outputs. Funding from multiple activities under the PFSD JWPs (around $500,000) was redirected towards COVID-19 activities, demonstrating the complementarity of the two documents. In 2021, JWPs integrated the COVID response as well as the contribution to other PFSD outcomes. Resource mobilization has been consistently tracked and has been shared with all UN agencies. Additionally, a SERP website has been developed, providing accessible and transparent information on SERP financing. As of January 2021, almost US$ 20 m were channelled by donors through the UN to support the Government in the response.

The RC has represented the UNCT and ensured coordinated support to the COVID-19 response by maintaining frequent contacts with the Prime Minister. A number of thematic interagency task forces were activated to ensure coordination (socio-economic TF, education TF). The RC also led monthly meetings with more than 80 Development Partners in which WHO provided updates regarding the epidemiological situation and the Government was able to share key needs and updates. Joint monitoring of SERP has been conducted on a quarterly basis towards a number of indicators.

4.1.3. Perceptions of the Value of UN Contributions

The relevance of the PFSD was also assessed on the basis of perceptions of the stakeholders engaged by this evaluation. From the perspective of UN staff members, the PFSD is for the most part relevant and has contributed to the coordination of the UN system in the country. About 93% of the 59 agency staff members[50] who participated in the anonymous survey organized for this evaluation responded that "*the PFSD has adequately reflected Moldova's national needs & priorities*". Similarly, all government officials responding to the evaluation survey agreed that the PFSD has adequately reflected national needs and

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Rights and gender perspectives." The review also noted that the Moldova SERP includes clear links to both the UNDAF outcomes and systematically covers the SDGs.

[50] See this report's Annex VII for a summary description of the UN staff members who responded to the survey organized for the evaluation.

priorities. Furthermore, more than 95% of UN agency respondents stated that "*the PFSD has addressed the needs of women, children and the most vulnerable groups in Moldova*". Similarly, among government officials who responded to the evaluation survey there is strong consensus that the PFSD has addressed the needs of women, children and the most vulnerable groups. Further, 95% of the 59 UN agency staff participating in the survey responded that "*the PFSD has been relevant to the work of my agency*", while about 96% of government officials surveyed stated that the PFSD has been relevant to the work of their organizations. So, clearly, when it comes to the PFSD as a framework of cooperation, there is broad agreement among UN staff members and government officials that the PFSD has been relevant to country needs, needs of vulnerable groups and the work of individual agencies.

However, when it comes to the practical effects of the PFSD on the way UN agencies work together in Moldova, the degree of agreement is less significant among UN staff members. About 32% of survey respondents from the UN agencies do not think that "*the PFSD has created a clearer division of labor among UN agencies in Moldova*". Nevertheless, about 83% of respondents agree that "*the PFSD has created complementarities among UN agencies in Moldova*". Similarly, about 82% of survey respondents from the UN agencies believe that "*the PFSD has contributed to improved synergies in the achievement of results between UN agencies*". About 82% think that "*the agency I work for frequently uses the PFSD document to plan its activities*". So, from the perspective of UN staff members, the PFSD is used by the agencies and has enabled complementarities and synergies.

From the perspective of government counterparts, 85% of respondents believe that "*the UN System has created complementarities/harmonization among UN agencies in Moldova*". For GoM, the framework is relevant and a useful instrument of coordination for the UN system and between the UN and GoM. However, the fact that government officials were not envisaged to participate in the PFSD structures such as the results groups (as will be seen further in this report) and as a result are not participating in these structures suggests that the relevance of the framework may not be fully understood or appreciated by these counterparts. This may not be related to the actual results of the cooperation, as the government counterparts who participated in the survey for this evaluation highlighted concrete results and contributions of the UN system in Moldova, but their perceptions could also relate more directly to the cooperation with the individual agencies with which they work more directly. Going forward, for the PFSD (and especially for the new cooperation framework) to become a solid instrument of coordination and cooperation among the UN agencies and with the GoM counterparts, it will be important to have a much more dynamic engagement of all relevant government counterparts with the process.

Another factor that will strengthen the relevance of the cooperation framework in the future will be a stronger and systematic engagement of civil society at the level of the whole UN system – rather than with individual UN agencies. Although there is a large number of consultative processes with CSOs that have been organized for certain processes, the avenues for the engagement of local civil society with the PFSD structures have been limited. Consultations with civil society could be more intensive. Their views and opinions are not sufficiently reflected in the joint planning, implementation and reporting activities. Another area that will similarly require greater attention in the upcoming programme is the involvement of the private sector. Although the UNCT has made some progress in involving private sector companies in its activities (e.g. Orange, Moldcell, Metro, Endava, Premier Energy, etc.), there is potential for channelling their contributions more effectively towards the country's development objectives. Harnessing the private sector to contribute to the development process does not preclude them from pursuing profits, but it makes their contributions more aligned with the country's key priorities and creates public-private synergies that have the potential of being beneficial for all. This engagement will be discussed further in the sustainability section of this report.

4.1.4. Compliance with UN's Four Programming Principles

UN's pledge to leave no one behind is underpinned by a set of programming principles[51] that provide the normative foundation for the PFSD. The following is a brief discussion of how the UN system in Moldova has promoted these principles in its current programming cycle.

Leave No One Behind

A key feature of the work of the UN system in Moldova has been its significant focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged people – children, youth, older persons, Roma, women, persons with disabilities, people at social risk or with health challenges, persons in detention, smallholders, etc. Many agencies have prioritized poverty reduction. Such focus has enabled the UN to be largely compliant with the "*no one left behind*" (LNOB) principle.

To channel the necessary support to vulnerable groups in a coordinated fashion, the UNCT has established a range of inter-agency structures, which have been listed in the "Programme Overview" section. In addition, the OHCHR has established an NGO Task Force on COVID-19 and Human Rights composed of CSOs with the aim of consultations and identification of the needs of vulnerable groups. The Common Country Analysis[52] conducted by the UN in 2020 also demonstrates a strong integration of the "*leave no one behind*" principle in the UN work.

The LNOB principle has been promoted through targeted and dedicated interventions or by mainstreaming it in general activities. While the coverage of activities is solid (roughly 1/3 of PFSD output indicators are related to marginalized groups), the extent to which such targeted interventions have been successful is another matter. There are numerous examples of output targets met or exceeded, particularly with regard to the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education; assistance for victims of gender-based violence or victims of human trafficking. There has been a material improvement in the perceptions of women, rural population, unemployed, people with disabilities and people belonging to ethnic, religious or sexual minorities about their right to fair trial. However, in spite of UN's capacity building efforts, underrepresented groups have been able only to a limited extent to initiate advocacy or service-delivery initiatives on their own.

The targeting of vulnerable groups has been improved through the achievements made jointly by the UN and Government in the area of statistics. To this end, the UN has supported the National Bureau for Statistics (NBS) to develop statistical tools (methodologies, questionnaires, surveys) for the production of disaggregated data required for monitoring of national and sectorial policies and improve its capacity to manage 'big data' by upgrading its IT systems. According to the NBS, at the time of the nationalization of the SDGs, 50% of indicators were not fully available either at the general or disaggregated level.[53] Since then, the NBS, with the support of the UN, has worked on improving the availability of SDG data and engaged in the revision of SDG targets, with positive results. Stakeholders share the view that the improvement in the availability of PFSD and SDGs indicators in a disaggregated form has improved the targeting by UN and Government programmes of vulnerable groups, especially in areas such as human rights, employment, access to public services, risk of marginalization, gender-based violence, etc. Despite significant improvements made, the availability of statistics and access to disaggregated data in certain areas remains a challenge. The main reason for this is the shortage of staff dedicated to the production of statistics, and in particular SDG indicators.

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[51] UNDG-UNDAF-Companion-Pieces-1-Programming-Principles.docx
[52] UN Common Country Analysis, 2020. Available here.
[53] GoM and UN Moldova, Report on the Nationalization of Indicators for Sustainable Development Goals, https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/SDG/docs/Indicators_ONU_EN.pdf

The COVID-19 response has also had an adequate focus on vulnerable groups. This was ensured by the extensive number of assessments conducted to inform the formulation and implementation of SERP. These assessments are listed in the box below. As noted previously, the UN was able to identify several vulnerable groups at high risk of being left behind and at the same time suffering from multiple vulnerabilities during the emergency (see Box 1 of this report for a list of these groups). The implementation of the COVID-19 response has focused on infection prevention and control, access to immunization programmes, protection of human rights, digitalization of public services, etc.

Box 3: COVID-19 Assessments Conducted by UNCT in Moldova

Health first assessments
- Needs Assessment of the Health System in Moldova to respond to the COVID-19 crisis
- Rapid assessment of front-line workers' needs in non-health related public agencies (police, border police, penitentiaries, Transnistria Region)
- Rapid assessment for organizations supporting people living with HIV
- COVID-19 Intra-Action Review
- Pulse survey on continuity of essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic
- COVID-19 Behavioural Insights Study

Protecting people assessments
- Rapid assessment for organizations supporting vulnerable people – NGO Task Force on Human Rights and COVID-19
- Assessment of the impact of the COVID–19 crisis on women
- Rapid assessment of the needs of women affected by gender-based violence and of the systemic response to cases of violence
- Rapid gender assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the Roma population
- The impact of COVID-19 on women's and men's lives and livelihoods in Europe and Central Asia: Preliminary results from a Rapid Gender Assessment
- Implications of COVID-19 for people who use drugs
- Issues of families with children and child rights protection professionals in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Rapid diaspora survey on the impact of COVID-19 on plans and the socio-economic situation of Moldovan migrants abroad
- Assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons
- Implications of COVID-19 on older people in Moldova
- Implications of COVID-19 on young people in Moldova

Economic impact assessments
- Survey-based assessment of the impact of COVID-19 induced economic crisis and changes in non-tariff measures to contain the pandemic on micro, small and medium enterprises
- Assessment on the impact of the crisis on female-owned enterprises
- Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 on Remittances and Coping Mechanisms of Families with Children in Moldova
- Assessment of the COVID-19 crisis policy responses in Moldova. Effects and needs for further inclusive recovery
- Implications of COVID-19 on the intergenerational economy, based on national transfer accounts
- Needs assessment and evaluation of the impact of COVID-19 on MSMEs
- Republic of Moldova – bracing for domestic and external COVID-19 shocks
- The emerging social and economic impact of COVID-19

Multisectoral assessments
- Socio and Economic Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Vulnerable Groups and Economic Sectors in the Republic of Moldova
- Study on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on returning migrants and vulnerable families affected by the decrease of remittances, employing Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) methodology
- Impact of COVID-19 on Human Rights in the Republic of Moldova
- Socio-economic impact of Covid on people living with HIV, pregnant women and children

Social cohesion assessments
- Survey to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on social cohesion

In the 2020 "Youth2030 Scorecard" assessment, the UNCT received a green mark in seven of the 27 indicators – with the other 20 being yellow or red. Notable achievements were made in the area of COVID socio-economic response and recovery plans, which includes a focus on youth, as well as in the field of strengthening government capacity to enhance for youth-related policies, investments in youth-led solutions, embedding the youth dimension in the PFSD and the JWPs. Moreover, it was established that the UNCT has adequate coordination architecture and capacities to implement Youth 2030 Agenda. Recently, the UNCT has created an Adolescents and Youth Advisory Panel (AYAP) to serve as a bridge between the United Nations in Moldova and local youth organizations in the UN's efforts to reach out to a wider youth audience in Moldova in the course of SDG agenda implementation. The AYAP is also expected to work as a mechanism for the UN in Moldova to maintain dialogue with young people, empower youth organizations and networks and seek their opinion on strategic actions and to better address the needs of young people, as well as facilitate the promotion and implementation of the SDGs in Moldova. The UN has also implemented a Diversity Internship Programme for people from underrepresented groups. The programme, implemented under the leadership of OHCHR and in close coordination and with the participation of other UN agencies, aims to support the inclusion and acceptance of people with less chances of employment and career growth, as well as to encourage other organizations and institutions to follow the UN example and offer similar opportunities.

Notwithstanding the achievements, UNCT has to step up knowledge exchanges and improve communications and advocacy regarding youth. Also, there were noticeable gaps regarding the operational aspects of PFSD implementation, in particular Business Operations Strategy (BOS), resource mobilisation and transparency of youth results. There is room for improvement in terms of HR Management – by engaging with young people, increasing their share in UNCT staffing and offering quality internships.

UNCT conducted a Disability Scorecard assessment in 2020. From the 14 indicators included in the scorecard, UNCT missed on 4 and is meeting or approaching the requirements on the remaining 10 indicators[54]. Through the scorecard, it transpired that disability inclusion is not sufficiently mainstreamed in UNDAF/CF or equivalent documents outcomes/results areas, although there are a number of output indicators directed at PwDs as part of the 'vulnerable group of population'. Also, a coordination mechanism for disability inclusion within the UNCT was established, guided by the 2019 UN disability Inclusion strategy to support Agenda 2030 and the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), with an aim to strengthen UNCT advocacy, coordination and monitoring of disability inclusion in both the programmatic and operational areas of work. The task force became a fully-fledged group as part of the existing coordination mechanisms in 2021.

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[54] According to the UNCT Disability Inclusion Scorecard for 2020, the indicators 3, 4, 12 and 13 were missed, whereas indicators 1, 6, 8, 10 and 11 approach the requirements. The remaining indicators 2, 5, 7, 9 and 15 meet the requirements.

HR practices were found to not be disability-inclusive, although some UN agency have non-discrimination provisions which encourage hiring of PwDs. Moreover, the capacities for disability inclusion are underdeveloped – based on the information in the Disability Inclusion Scorecard, there is no training and learning resources on disability inclusion available to UN staff at the level of the UNCT as a whole (although such training and resources may be available at the level of individual agencies). The UNCT has already taken steps to address some of the weaknesses identified through the Disability Scorecard, with the creation of the Disability Inclusion Task Force being an example of an action taken in response to the Scorecard findings. The UN has also made efforts to improve accessibility and increase the enrolment of PwDs among proper staff and improve availability of agency-specific resource materials and training manuals on disability inclusion, that has been updated taking into consideration the protracted crisis situation such as COVID-19. The remaining gaps, however, will need to be addressed in the next PFSD planning cycle.

Another crucial dimension of the UN's work in Moldova that has ensured that no section of the population is left behind independently of the socio-political circumstances is the work in the Transnistria region. Despite the challenges related to the political situation around the Transnistria region, the UN has been present in it with a range of activities. While multilateral negotiations have proceeded in the 5+2 format[55] at the political level, UN interventions have focused on confidence building measures aimed at improving contacts between the communities on both sides of the Nistru river as well as on improving the human rights situation on the left bank. Participants to this evaluation acknowledged that the Confidence Building Measures (CBM) programme has positively contributed to the settlement process, and some human rights gains were achieved. The dialogue with the *de facto* structures on the left bank has focused on tackling emergency issues, addressing human rights concerns and issues and building trust among the residents on both banks of the river. Furthermore, thanks to the UN's engagement with local de facto structures and civil society on the left bank, its population has benefitted from a dedicated treatment by the UN under the COVID-19 response.

To coordinate agency activities in the Transnistria region, the UNCT has established the Transnistria Region Task Team. The Task Team facilitates the sharing of information, lesson learned and good practices and aims to ensure a coordinated approach by all UN agencies undertaking activities in the Transnistria region. UNCT has also developed the "*One UN Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in the Transnistria Region*" as an instrument of joint engagement in the area of human rights.

Human Rights, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

<u>Human Rights</u>

Although human rights are mainstreamed throughout the PFSD, they are addressed more specifically under Outcome 1, which is dedicated to Governance, Human Rights and Gender Equality. At the institutional and policy level, the UN has supported key human rights institutions – in particular, the Ombudsperson's Institution (People's Advocate). This institution consults on a regular basis with OHCHR and has benefitted from its technical assistance, as well as support from UNDP and UNICEF i.e. Child Rights Ombudsperson. With the support of UN, the National Human Rights Action Plan (HRAP) encompassing the recommendations from the International Human Rights Mechanisms was adopted by the Parliament in 2018. The plan established the National Human Rights Council, a high-level inter-branch body that monitors the implementation of state policy in the field of human rights, as well as compliance with international human rights treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party.

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[55] Besides Tiraspol representatives on the left bank and the chief negotiator and sectoral experts from Chisinau, OSCE, Ukraine, Russian Federation (as mediators), United States and European Union (as observers) participate in the negotiations

The UN, in particular OHCHR, has also supported the engagement of the state authorities, civil society and rights-holders with the International Human Rights Mechanisms, including processes related to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), etc. UN agencies have facilitated the integration of human rights principles in the formulation of the draft "Moldova 2030" and have facilitated the engagement of the Ombudsperson's Institution in the process. Moreover, the institution plans to integrate SDGs in its next strategic development plan. However, national stakeholders pointed out that support provided by UN agencies to human rights institutions has been fragmented, with limited inter-agency coordination at the country level. The engagement of UN agencies, besides OHCHR, in this area has been primarily project-based.

In support of human rights, the UN has organized key events and awareness raising campaigns. The Human Rights social media awareness raising campaign "*Recover better together – Human Rights for All*" targeted youth, media professionals and CSOs, state authorities and development partners and reached more than 100,000 people. The "*16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence*" campaign reached over 15,000 people with messages dedicated to women survivors of gender-based violence. The online "*UNiTE to End Violence Against Women*" campaign was reported to have reached a total of over 2 million people.

With regards to the perceptions of PFSD stakeholders, a significant number of UN staff and development partners involved in this evaluation believe that the UN has played an important role in the promotion of human rights. For example, more than 90% of the respondents of the survey with UN staff agreed with the statement that "*the PFSD has adequately incorporated human rights as a cross-cutting principle*". This was one of the highest agreement rates in the survey. As for government officials responding to this evaluation's survey, 88% agreed that the PFSD has adequately incorporated human rights as a cross-cutting principle in the activities of the UN agencies. When broken down in the rights of specific vulnerable groups, the response of UN staff members is more diverse. For example, about 86% staff members thought that "*the PFSD has adequately incorporated gender equality as a cross-cutting principle*". About 85% believed that "*the PFSD has adequately incorporated the rights of children/youth as a cross-cutting principle*". And about 73% of respondents thought that "*the PFSD has adequately incorporated the rights of PwDs as a cross-cutting principle*". As for government officials responding to the evaluation's survey, 84% agreed that the PFSD has adequately incorporated gender equality and right of children and PwDs as a cross-cutting principle.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Gender equality is another key principle that underpins the PFSD. As in the case of human rights, gender equality is not only mainstreamed throughout the PFSD, but also addressed more specifically under Outcome 1. A range of activities under the PFSD have targeted gender equality and the main results are summarized in the section "Main Achievements" of this report. The overall conclusion is that UN activities have successfully advanced women's political rights by investing in their capacities at the local level and by promoting the minimum threshold for women's representation in the political parties' lists. However, it was expected that the mix of strategic interventions designed to stimulate women's economic empowerment will contribute to the reduction of the Gender Pay Gap from 13,2% to 10%. This outcome was not met, as the Gender Pay Gap has actually increased to 14,1%, which signals the need to further invest in women's career and entrepreneurial skills and continue to promote gender equality principles in the private sector.

The PFSD document includes gender sensitive outcome and output indicators that are used to track progress on gender equality. Gender markers are used in the development of the JWPs. A quick analysis of the 2018-2019 and 2020 JWPs shows that around 45% of the activities included in the plans have gender equality as a principle or significant objective, with approximately 50% of the planned resources being directed to such activities. A similar analysis for the 2020 JWP activities based on the assigned gender markers was conducted by RCO and the results were shared with the JSC and the GTG/UN Women. A GTG retreat was organized during the current cycle, which included gender-related capacity building activities.

However, there is room for improvement in how the UN addresses the issue of gender equality. The UNCT-SWAP Gender Scorecard analysis found that gender aspects are well reflected in PFSD's three outcome areas and to a limited degree under the fourth outcome (environmental sustainability and resilience). Sex disaggregated data is used for monitoring to the extent that it is available – although UNCT supports the NBS to produce more disaggregated data on national and sub-national level for the purpose of the SDG monitoring. Although gender parity among UN staffing is observed, UNCT has not agreed yet on a joint mechanism for monitoring gender parity. Similarly, the Business Operations Strategy (BOS) does not include gender-specific actions and indicators. Although the GTG is well coordinated and functional, UNCT needs to strengthen its capacities for gender mainstreaming and establish a financial target for GEEW within the JWPs.

Environmental sustainability and resilience

The PFSD has addressed environmental sustainability and resilience concerns primarily through Outcome 3. At the policy level, the Government has benefitted from FAO's support, although work in this priority area has involved other UN agencies, including UNDP, UNEP, UNECE and UNIDO. About 65% of UN staff members responding to this evaluation's survey stated that "*the PFSD has adequately incorporated environmental sustainability as a cross-cutting principle*".

The UN has promoted land degradation neutrality and sustainable forest management. As a result, the capacity of LPAs and farmers from selected districts has been improved in climate-smart agriculture practices and land degradation prevention and national agency Moldsilva increased capacity to conduct the data collection and assessment activities for the first forestry inventory.

UNDP has promoted environmental sustainability, mainly by promoting alternative sources of energy, supporting sustainable local development and increasing environmental awareness. To this end, increased use of biofuel has helped Moldova raise its share of renewables in total energy consumption. Nevertheless, the country's GHG emissions have not decreased and public and residential buildings have not been rehabilitated in terms of energy consumption as planned. Local authorities have improved their capacities to apply sustainable management practices of pasture, forest and water ecosystems, which is corroborated by evidence regarding sustainably used/managed surface areas. Yet, the number of people benefitting from sustainable land, pasture and forest management practices has only marginally increased. This could be also the result of population decline.

In terms of DRR, central and local authorities have improved capacities to integrate adaptation and mitigation to climate change into development plans and implement practices to reduce population's vulnerability. The Government has been supported with recommendations for strengthening policy and institutional frameworks related to the DRR system in agriculture. Yet, it is too early to say whether such plans have translated into tangible benefits for the population. To this end, a five-fold increase in the number of rural populations benefiting from climate change adaptation and DRR measure was reported under the PFSD, yet a simple headcount of the population living in the areas covered by improved development planning is a very raw approximation of the real number of beneficiaries. The agricultural sector remains vulnerable to climate conditions as signal by the severe draught in 2020 which brought the agricultural output down by 27%.[56] The capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment to address the effects of the drought was consolidated through provision of assistance in assessment of damages to the agriculture sector. Also, it is premature to assess PFSD performance in terms of resource efficient cleaner production and ecological production innovation, although activities were planned for the 2020 JWP by UNIDO and UNEP.

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[56] Data from the National Bureau of Statistics.

Accountability

The UN system has contributed to the strengthening of accountability in the broader public sector. This has been achieved through a range of activities by various agencies that will be outlined in the "Main Achievements" section of this report. At the highest level, the UN has supported elected representatives (Parliament) in holding the executive government accountable. This is the so-called *political accountability* and is the channel through which citizens hold the government accountable through the representatives they vote for. The UN has also supported a range of independent institutions such as the judiciary, Ombudsperson, media and civil society in holding the executive branch of government accountable. This is the so-called *horizontal accountability*. Also, within the executive, the UN has contributed to the capacity of the political leadership of the government to hold the bureaucracy accountable, and vice-versa the capacity of the bureaucracy (civil servants) to hold the political leadership accountable. This is the so-called *bureaucratic accountability*. The UN has also promoted "*social accountability*" by supporting citizen initiatives that hold public officials directly accountable. This has happened typically at the grassroots level where there has been direct interaction between citizens and public officials.[57] Although UN's support for strengthening public accountability has not been provided in a systematic and coordinated way across all accountability channels mentioned above – and for obvious reasons, given the fragmented financing and agency-based approach through which delivery is carried out – the contribution in strengthening these dimensions of accountability has been meaningful, especially in the dimensions of social accountability and bureaucratic accountability where there has been greater engagement by the agencies.

Another way in which the UN has promoted accountability under the PFSD has been through better use of evidence in the policymaking. In this regard, the UN has supported governmental bodies, and in particular NBS, to collect and disseminate disaggregated data at the national and sub-national level. In 2019, NBS was able to estimate the population with usual residence and, for the first time, to estimate international migration. Moldova was among the first countries to adopt the Agenda 2030. The Government has submitted a Voluntary National Review on SDG implementation in 2020. Despite progress made in this area, as has been previously noted, the availability of disaggregated data remains a challenge, especially at sub-national level. This has been identified as a major constraint in the elaboration of local development plans.

Within the timeframe for PFSD implementation there were local and parliamentary (in 2019), presidential (in 2020) and snap parliamentary elections (in 2021). The UN system has supported the democratization of the electoral process by strengthening the capacity of Central Electoral Commission to organize and monitor election. Also, due to the fact that the last two elections coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, UN supported the implementation of safety measures by informing the citizens about the rules of conduct on the election day and equipping the polling stations with necessary materials.

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In summary, the PFSD has been relevant to national priorities and the country's needs. There are, however, certain challenges that should be considered in the upcoming programme cycle, such as the lack of synchronization between agency programmes and PFSD and the need for a nimbler approach to adjusting the programme framework to reshuffled government priorities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on PFSD implementation, requiring flexibility and adaptation. For all the challenges presented by the crisis, it has created an opportunity for the UN agencies to rally together in response as one body – a real embodiment of the "One UN" approach. UN's response was developed on the basis of extensive research on the impacts of COVID-19 across a range of areas of direct interest to the UN. SERP was exemplary – well-formulated, action-oriented, costed, timely, evidence-based and well-coordinated by RCO. The COVID-19 response was guided by the "leave no one behind" principle, focusing on the needs of vulnerable populations. Solidarity by development partners provided an opportunity to mobilise

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[57] In this relationship, public officials provide citizens with services, and citizens engage with the governance process and demand accountability from the relevant officials.

additional resources for SERP's implementation. PFSD's JWPs and SERP became two parallel processes in 2020. In 2021, SERP overshadowed the PFSD implementation. In the new cooperation framework, the two streams will need to be fully integrated into one framework.

A key feature of the work of the UN system in Moldova has been its significant focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged people – children, youth, Roma, women, persons with disabilities, people at social risk or with health challenges, persons in detention, smallholders, etc. Many agencies have prioritized poverty reduction. Such focus has enabled the UN to be largely compliant with the "*no one left behind*" (LNOB) principle. The PFSD has also addressed environmental sustainability and resilience concerns primarily through Outcome 3 and has promoted accountability through better use of evidence in the policymaking. However, there is room for improvement in how the UN addresses the issue of gender equality. Also, there is a need for a stronger engagement of civil society and the private sector at the level of the whole UN system – rather than with individual UN agencies.

4.2. EFFECTIVENESS

This section presents an assessment of the effectiveness of the work of the UN system under the PFSD. The first part provides a quick assessment of the design of the programme. The second part provides a discussion of the way in which the UN system measures, tracks and reports results. The third part provides a broad overview of UN's major contributions in each of the PFSD outcome areas.

4.2.1. Programme Design

Overall, the PFSD document is well-formulated and provides a comprehensive analysis of the country context, especially in the areas covered by UN interventions. The document identifies with clarity the country's development needs and priorities and outlines UN's strategic approach to addressing them. The document also provides a succinct description of the institutional arrangements for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the PFSD. During the implementation stage, most of these arrangements have turned out to be as they were envisaged in the document – including key structures such as the JSC, result groups, etc.

The PFSD document does not provide a detailed description of the formulation process, making it difficult to assess the extent to which national governmental and non-governmental partners were genuinely involved in the design of the framework. From the perspective of UN staff members, the formulation of the PFSD was participatory and open to external partners – 80% of UN staff members responding to the evaluation survey stated that "*the PFSD was planned in a participatory fashion between UN agencies, Government bodies and non-governmental stakeholders*". About 76% of government officials responding to the evaluation survey agreed that the PFSD was planned in a participatory fashion between UN agencies and Government bodies.

PFSD's ToC, as revealed by the analysis of the evaluators and evidenced in a workshop organized for this evaluation, could have been further developed and refined to reflect more clearly the links between the challenges faced by the country, planned strategic interventions, expected outcomes and impact. The PFSD document includes a results framework envisaged to enable the UN system to measure and track results at the national level on a regular basis. The results framework constitutes the basis on which the PFSD results groups have developed joint work plans (JWPs) for each outcome area. The framework is not only extensive, but also complicated to navigate - it consists of 4 outcomes, 26 outcome indicators, 19 outputs and 93 output indicators. Table 5 below shows an analysis of the number of indicators, baselines and targets in the results framework.

As can be seen from the table, all 26 outcome indicators have defined baselines and targets. However, out of a total 93 output indicators, 86 (or 92%) had a defined baseline established at the beginning of the PFSD, with the development of the first JWPs, or at the time of development of subsequent JWPs and 90 (or 97%) had a defined target.[58] Two observations can be drawn from this analysis in the table. First, for a framework of this importance, it will be essential for the UNCT to develop a complete results framework, with all baselines and targets determined and defined upfront in alignment with the country's SDG framework. Second, the current number of output indicators is excessive and poses an onerous burden on the UNCT, and especially the results groups and the M&E group, in their efforts to track progress and report on achievements.

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[58] JWPs have been flexible documents with relevant indicators being maintained in subsequent JWPs and new ones defined as new areas of work emerge. Hence, not all indicators were developed at the beginning of the PFSD and not all continued to be tracked throughout the implementation of the PFSD. Once no further activities related to an indicator are planned, the indicator is discontinued or "put on hold".

The evaluation team also conducted a quick assessment of the quality of PFSD output indicators. The assessment did not delve into a deep analysis of the quality of each indicator, as it would take too much space and divert the thrust of the report. But, as shown in Annex IX, a quick assessment of the output indicators on the basis of the standard SMART criteria[59] revealed that only 72 indicators fully meet the SMART criteria. The other 18 have shortcomings in at least one dimension of the SMART criteria – the most common weakness is in the "Measurable" dimension.

Furthermore, there is not always a good match between output indicators and the activities carried out under the JWPs, which makes the aggregation of results challenging. The analysis of the framework showed that a "*perfect match*" exists for slightly more than half of the outputs (58%). In a few cases, output indicators are not sufficiently supported by activities. For example, under Output 1.1, the existence of disaggregated data on adolescent sexual and reproductive health does not follow directly from any of the listed activities or at least the link is not evident between the indicator and the activities listed. Similarly, in 2020 JWPs, under Output 2.1, there is no activity that specifically targets building of new partnerships between businesses which generate new jobs and improve livelihoods.

Table 5: Analysis of Outcome and Output Indicators

Outcome/Output	No. of Indicators	Defined Baselines	Defined Targets
Outcome level			
Outcome 1	7	7	7
Outcome 2	6	6	6
Outcome 3	5	5	5
Outcome 4	8	8	8
Total	**26**	**26**	**26**
%		**100%**	**100%**
Output level			
Output 1.1	7	7	7
Output 1.2	4	4	4
Output 1.3	9	9	9
Output 1.4	7	6	7
Output 1.5	6	6	6
Output 2.1	6	6	6
Output 2.2	3	3	3
Output 2.3	5	5	5
Output 2.4	5	5	5
Output 3.1	4	4	4
Output 3.2	4	4	4
Output 3.3	4	4	4
Output 3.4	3	0	3
Output 3.5	3	0	0
Output 4.1	7	7	7
Output 4.2	7	7	7
Output 4.3	3	3	3
Output 4.4	3	3	3
Output 4.5	3	3	3
Total	**93**	**86**	**90**
%		**92%**	**97%**

Source: Authors' calculations

Also, the number of activities which are not specifically captured by any of the output indicators is quite large – roughly 30%. Understandably, many such activities are the result of programme adjustments in the health sector (Output 4.1), which took place without a proper revision of the output indicators. But not all activities that go beyond the listed output indicators can be justified by the emergency. For example, under Output 1.3, there are activities that aim at enhancing democracy in Moldova through inclusive and transparent elections, enhancing electoral integrity and so on, which cannot be linked to a particular indicator. Activities which are not linked to output indicators are also present under Outputs 1.5, 2.1, 4.3 and 4.5.

In 2021, under the leadership of the RCO, the RGs performed a detailed review of progress made on PFSD indicators, which involved the examination of each indicator and compared the achieved results against established targets. The review resulted in the adjustment of some targets to ensure a more effective monitoring of progress under the PFSD.

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[59] SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely.

The challenges with indicators, baselines and targets noted above are further compounded by the lack of data on the indicators identified in the PFSD results framework, in particular sex disaggregated data. These limitations create inconsistencies in reporting, which consumes a lot of time for validation and adjustments to reach consistency. Data availability and collection is a challenge, especially at the outcome level due to the lack of national data and/or changes in the methodologies of data collection and analysis.

In this regard, NBS, with the support of the UN, has revised the population number based on the international definition of usual residence and for the first time developed accurate estimates of international migration. In 2020, NBS initiated the process for establishing a statistical population register that will transform the data collection, analysis and dissemination by making better use of available administrative data and supporting the Government in monitoring a series of SDGs. The UNCT has also supported NBS in the evaluation of the previous strategy and the development of the new one, development of the Multidimensional Poverty Index, ad-hoc module of Household Budget Survey,[60] etc., along with support for line-ministries.

Furthermore, the GTG has reviewed the PFSD indicators as part of the UNCT SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard and has developed several recommendations to address the identified gaps (included in the Scorecard Action Plan). An action item was included in the GTG Action Plan for 2021 as a response to the recommendations. The recommendations related to the adjustment of indicators will be addressed in the upcoming cooperation framework, considering that the development of the new framework is starting soon.

For the upcoming development cooperation framework, UNCT and GoM should identify a smaller number of more meaningful and better-defined indicators which are directly related to the activities of the UN system. A reduced number of outputs and output indicators will make the monitoring process more manageable. It will also be important to select indicators for which there is reliable data and that can thus be tracked and have a baseline. It will also be essential to identify indicators that can be disaggregated, not only by gender, but also by other key demographics (given PFSD's focus on vulnerable groups).

The UN is also well-positioned to continue its support for the Government's efforts to improve national data systems. This work should include not only NBS, but also other key agencies which have a role in the data generation business. Quality data can be used not only to ensure better targeting of interventions and monitoring of results of UN's work, but will also contribute to improving the availability and quality of data in the country. Given the gaps in data availability, UN support for the generation of statistics will have a strong positive effect on the policy making process.

The UN system should first strengthen its own data infrastructure, including the coordination and data aggregation mechanisms across, operability of the UN-Info system, definition of indicators, baselines, targets, etc. Training will be needed for this, which ideally should be organized jointly by the agencies and coordinated by the RCO.

4.2.2. Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

The discussion of PFSD's design and results framework in the previous section leads to the discussion of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes put in place by the UNCT to track the implementation of the PFSD and report on achievements made jointly by the agencies.

<u>M&E and Reporting System</u>

The PFSD structures that play a key role in the M&E process are the RGs and the SDG Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Working Group (hereinafter referred to as the M&E group), both operating under the leadership of chairing and co-chairing agencies, with coordination support from the RCO. RGs are

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[60] An ad-hoc module of HBS was implemented by NBS with the support of UNDP and WB in 2020 to assess the effects of the pandemic.

primarily focused on the collection and sharing of data, tracking of indicators and preparation of annual PFSD reports. They are also engaged with the tracking of SDGs and capacity building initiatives at the level of the UN. The M&E group has been more involved in quality assurance.

Participants of this evaluation shared different views about the respective roles of the RGs and M&E group, indicating a lack of clear understanding about the division of labour between these groups. UN agencies suggested that the M&E group should be strengthened, especially its coordination function across M&E systems of individual agencies. The challenges related to the way the results framework is set up and tracked point to the need for further training for M&E group members.

The UNCT and RCO, with the involvement of the SDG M&E TWG, track the achievement of PFSD indicators on an annual basis. Results are updated as part of the annual reporting process in UN-INFO. The system automatically assigns a status for each indicator based on the level of achievement. In the context of COVID-19, the UNCT has been reporting on a quarterly basis on the SERP global indicators, with the RCO coordinating the process and submitting the information through the UN-INFO system. The reports are available online.[61]

The PFSD has been useful to report the efforts and achievements of the UN system in the country. A common framework has allowed the UN to consolidate multiple actions under the same umbrella. It has also allowed the UN to share with partners the high-level priorities of the UN-GoM collaboration. For the current PFSD, UNCT has organized an annual review process focused on the results achieved during the year, including coordination results and tracking the indicator progress, tracking of PFSD expenditures, identifying lessons learned and key implementation constraints, etc. Attention has been given to progress made in enhancing internal coherence, effectiveness and efficiency.

For all the strengths of the monitoring and reporting mechanisms put in place by the UNCT in Moldova, there are also some challenges pointed out by participants to this evaluation.

- The automated UN-INFO has still to become fully effective. This is a global system that is designed at headquarters and over which the RCO has limited influence. In 2020, the system was revamped and UNCT transitioned to the new version (labelled UN INFO 2.0). The new system does not yet have all the functionalities in place to allow for easy tracking of progress under the PFSD.
- PFSD monitoring activities included in the PFSD M&E Plan have not been adequately costed, which has created some challenges as some of these activities are based on stand-alone surveys conducted by the UN and other organizations and not incorporated into national statistics.
- Some agencies find the PFSD reporting requirements burdensome, especially in the case of smaller agencies with one or two staff dedicated to Moldova. This points to the need for better alignment and coordination of reporting procedures between the agency and UN levels. Such coordination should be facilitated by the M&E group.

Data Collection and Analysis Processes

The coordination of data collection and reporting among 23 agencies is challenging, with delays occurring in the provision of inputs and with some agencies not providing inputs in the process, even when individual reminders are sent by the RCO. The UN INFO global planning, monitoring and reporting system in place before May 2021 was not user friendly and required multiple rounds of training and extensive guidance. A new UN INFO 2.0 global system was introduced in May 2021, which required further training and guidance. Although easier to use, the new system is still under development and has some shortcomings, many of which are outside the control of the UNCT to address. For example:

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[61] https://covid19response.un.md/en/content/plan-monitoring

- The system does not allow yet for the information to be downloaded, an important function when plans need to be submitted for approval to RGs. Hence, the information from the plans needs to be manually transferred to Excel, field by field, for each activity and indicator;
- The options for sorting or visualizing data at the aggregate level are still in development;
- The use of the Common Budgetary Framework (CBF) section is not intuitive, with many agencies failing to provide disaggregated financial information;
- The list of implementing partners has been created by combining the lists from individual countries from the previous system, with users now including partners from other countries under the Moldova JWPs given the similarity in names of certain institutions, which creates inconsistencies;
- Similar issues exist in regard to the list of contributing partners with certain partners being included under several different names in the system (e.g. SDC and Swiss Development Cooperation), which also creates inconsistencies, etc.

Furthermore, there is insufficient capacity at the level of agencies, especially smaller ones, to report results at the outcome/output level and link activities to actual changes in behaviour/norms. Activity level reporting remains more of a norm, although attempts have been made to enhance the quality of reporting.

Finally, progress on some outcome indicators cannot be tracked and certain indicators required adjustment. The results framework incorporated indicators from surveys and studies which were conducted by external institutions. As some institutions discontinued conducting the survey, data collection and thus monitoring of the results became difficult. In other cases, methodologies for indicators changed which affected the comparability of data and hence forced the adjustment of indicator targets or baseline and targets as well. Although not ideal, this allowed the UNCT to track progress for "problematic" indicators at least to some extent.

4.2.3. Main Achievements

This section provides an assessment of the level of achievement of PFSD results at the point of this evaluation on the basis of the PFSD's results framework. Further, this section provides a broad overview of the main contributions of the UN mainly at the output level in each area identified in the PFSD document. This section's narrative was constructed on the basis of PFSD annual reports and input from UN agencies.

Although the implementation process was still ongoing at the time of this evaluation, tangible results had already been achieved at the outcome level. However, it should be noted here that the achievements at the outcome level cannot be directly and solely attributed to the UN. Outcome level indicators measure results at the country level and, as such, any improvements, or lack thereof, are due to the work of all development actors, including government, UN agencies, development partners, CSOs, private sector, etc., and the broader context.

Based on data made available for this evaluation by the RCO, out of the 26 outcome indicators monitored under the PFSD, 8 indicators (31%) had been met or exceeded and another 8 indicators (31%) were partially met as of the end of 2020, in the context that another two years were left for the implementation of

Figure 6: Achievement of Outcome Targets
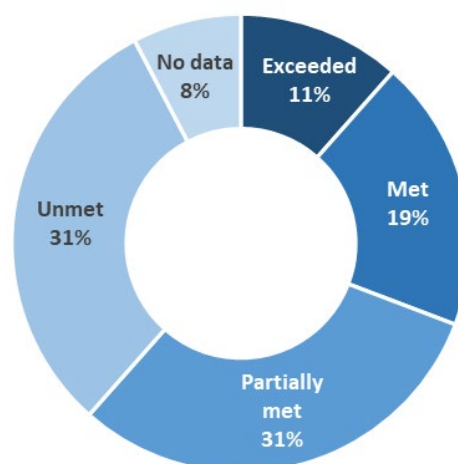
the current PFSD.[62] The likelihood of the achievement of the other 10 indicators by the end of 2022 is uncertain, in part because, for some indicators, the underlaying data is missing, preventing the objective assessment of progress. In addition, the COVID-19 crisis might have also affected the performance in certain areas. The outcome level results are illustrated in Figure 6 above.

Table 6 below shows an analysis of the achievement of output targets at the time of this evaluation (end of 2020). Based on this data, 58% of output targets had been either met or exceeded. An additional 18% of targets were partially met at the time of the evaluation, amounting to a total of 76% of outputs targets where progress was significant. Progress was less visible or absent in the case of 17% of indicators, and for another 6% of indicators, data was missing. The details of the contribution of the UN system to the development results pursued under the PFSD follow.

Table 6: Analysis of the Achievement of Output Targets

Output	Exceeded	Met	Partially met	Unmet	No data
Output 1.1	1	3	1	1	1
Output 1.2	3	0	1	0	0
Output 1.3	1	4	3	1	0
Output 1.4	2	2	2	1	0
Output 1.5	1	1	1	2	1
Output 2.1	3	2	1	0	0
Output 2.2	0	1	2	0	0
Output 2.3	1	1	1	2	0
Output 2.4	2	2	0	1	0
Output 3.1	0	2	0	2	0
Output 3.2	1	2	0	0	1
Output 3.3	1	1	2	0	0
Output 3.4	0	0	0	3	0
Output 3.5	0	0	0	0	3
Output 4.1	0	6	1	0	0
Output 4.2	1	3	1	2	0
Output 4.3	0	2	1	0	0
Output 4.4	0	2	0	1	0
Output 4.5	0	3	0	0	0
Total	17	37	17	16	6
%	18%	40%	18%	17%	6%

Source: Authors' assessments

Contributions of UN system

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[62] In order to establish the effectiveness of reaching the outcomes, target values were considered to be 100% and the baseline and latest available indicators were calibrated as a percentage of the target value. Average values were used for disaggregated data. Respectively, when the targets were 'exceeded' when the percentage value of the latest indicator significantly outperformed the target (e.g., more than 150%). Likewise, the targets were 'met' when the percentage value of the latest indicator was close to or above the target (e.g., more than 95%). Conversely, targets were 'not met' when the latest indicator went into a direction that is opposed to the targeted value or remained unchanged.

This section describes in broad terms the main contributions of UN agencies mainly at the output level in each area identified in the PFSD document, including the COVID-19 response. A part of the narrative provided in this section was constructed based on the annual reporting that was available and the input that UN agencies provided for this evaluation. More information is available from the PFSD annual reports.

1) Governance, human rights and gender equality

Despite the challenging political situation and the COVID-19 crisis, the UN system supported the most vulnerable to demand and benefit from democratic, transparent and accountable governance, gender-sensitive, human rights- and evidence-based public policies, equitable services, and efficient, effective and responsive public institutions.

Democratic governance was promoted by enabling citizens to participate more effectively in decision-making processes. The assistance provided in 2018 to the Centre for Continuous Electoral Training (CICDE) in the delivery of an inclusive, human-centred and gender-sensitive civic education programme contributed to this result. The programme reached over 340,000 direct and 1,700,000 indirect beneficiaries, including young people, older persons, women from vulnerable groups, people with disabilities, ethno-linguistic minorities and citizens from the diaspora, contributing to the inclusiveness of the electoral process. Local elections were supported in 2019 through innovative tools, modernized IT systems, improved legislation and electoral education activities. To facilitate the monitoring of political party financing, a dedicated module developed with the UN support, was integrated into the information system of the Central Electoral Commission. Also, in order to ensure the inclusiveness of electoral processes for people with disabilities, an accessibility survey at more than 650 polling stations throughout the country was carried out.

The UN played a key role in supporting the organization of the 2020 presidential elections and strengthening the electoral processes. An online system developed with the support of the United Nations and offering real-time data on voter turnout was accessed by 1.9 million users during the election. The submission of financial reports by political parties through an online system mentioned above, became mandatory, contributing to the transparency of political party finance. The inclusiveness of the electoral processes was further promoted through the development and dissemination of electoral education materials adapted to people with disabilities and linguistic minority groups. A bilingual online application with information about the electoral process aimed at voters living abroad reached 86,700 people in 99 countries during the presidential election.

Women's participation in the decision-making was significantly strengthened. In 2018 and 2019, more than 2,000 women, including women with disabilities, Roma women and young women, were given the tools to become more politically active and advocate for their rights. Approximately three-quarters of those women were reached through women's political clubs established with UN support. In addition to the above, about 440 women elected or appointed to public office participated in various capacity-building programmes on gender equality implemented by the UN and over 100,000 women were reached through the online workshop series "Women in Elections".

Furthermore, advocacy efforts supported by the UN resulted in the approval of an amendment to the electoral legislation that provides for the inclusion of at least four candidates of either gender for every 10 places on the party lists. As a result, six Roma women and six women with disabilities were elected to local offices. Overall, the representation of women increased at all levels of government at the local and national level, with more women becoming mayors, local councillors and district councillors following the local elections organized in 2019, whereas 40 women become members of Parliament following the snap elections in 2021.

Along with the afore-mentioned, **youth participation in the decision-making was advanced** through the support provided to the National Youth Council of Moldova in the development of youth-friendly guidelines for meaningful engagement in education, school life and beyond. In order to facilitate the implementation of the National Strategy for Youth Sector Development, the UN supported 11 districts in the planning and development of local youth action plans. Districts were also supported in the evaluation of the budget expenditures for the youth sector as part of a capacity-building programme for local public authorities. To further enhance the youth contribution towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, a youth-friendly web page dedicated to the SDGs was integrated into the U-Report platform, helping youth to learn more about this important topic and related activities. In continuation of these efforts, the National Youth Council of Moldova was supported in 2020 to organize a national campaign aimed at providing young people with adequate skills and enabling their participation in policy processes. The campaign reached more than 1,000 young people and resulted in the development of a robust youth report, with the findings being mainstreamed into the Voluntary National Review.

More accurate and disaggregated data is available for policymaking at central and local levels. With the support of the UN, NBS has started to produce a revised population number and to estimate international migration by applying an international definition of usual resident population.[63] NBS was also prepared to help effectively monitor progress towards the achievement of the SDGs. Furthermore, the UN supported the national statistical system in the collection and analysis of data in specific fields, with some notable results. For example, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection and the NBS were supported to conduct the most comprehensive demographic survey, Generations and Gender Survey, to help address demographic challenges in Moldova. An *ad hoc* household budget survey module was also implemented by NBS with the support of the UN, and its results were analysed, including in combination with new types of data, to help assess the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the population.

Central and local public authorities became better prepared to mainstream gender equality in public policies as a result of several capacity-building activities. In 2018, training supported by UN was attended by 50 gender focal points from seven public institutions. The internal policies, norms and practices in two central public authorities, namely the Ministry of Defence and the General Police Inspectorate, and six local governments became more gender-sensitive following the piloting of a gender equality award, which recognizes the achievement of gender equality standards in specific areas of work. In 2019, over 1,000 civil servants from central and local public authorities acquired additional knowledge and skills regarding the development and implementation of gender-responsive policies, as a result of their participation in capacity-building activities supported by the UN. Subsequently, 220 representatives from the peace and security sector improved their skills on how to assess public policies from a gender-responsive budgeting perspective after their participation in UN supported capacity-building activities implemented in 2020. The National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security[64] was effectively implemented and contributed to an increased awareness about the values and principles of gender equality and gender non-discrimination among 400 security and defence personnel from the central and local levels. The implementation of the action plan also resulted in the approval of a legal amendment that allows military personnel to take a 14-day paternity leave.

In order to curb corruption UN contributed to strengthening institutional and individual capacities of government officials and CSOs and sensitized the wider audience with regard to integrity standards. To this end, the UN worked with the National Anticorruption Centre on the development of methodological guidance on corruption risk management as part of the implementation of the National Integrity and Anticorruption Strategy 2017– 2020. Over 100 civil servants responsible for monitoring the

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[63] Furthermore, NBS, with the support of the UN, has initiated the development of a statistical population register that will transform the statistical system into a register-based one, relying on available administrative data and improving the accuracy and availability of population and migration data at the national and local levels.
[64] UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security (2000)

effective implementation of the strategy at the central and local levels strengthened their capacity on evidence-based monitoring and reporting. CSOs also strengthened their capacities in the field. Also, UN developed a tool for reporting on the implementation of the National Integrity and Anticorruption Strategy, now used by 34% of reporting institutions. Several additional online tools were also implemented, including a tool aimed at increasing transparency in public procurement and a tool for the submission of whistle-blower protection requests to the Ombudsperson. Furthermore, several awareness-raising campaigns aimed at promoting integrity standards reached about 1,5 million people through social media, television and training activities.

Significant results were achieved in the field of human rights protection. In 2018, following technical advice from UN, the Office of the Ombudsman was recognized as an "A" status national human rights institution by the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. Also, the National Human Rights Action Plan 2018–2022 was approved by Parliament.[65] In 2019, the staff of the Permanent Human Rights Secretariat and representatives of the Ministry of Justice, Parliament and local authorities were trained in human rights-based policy analysis and familiarized with best practices in setting up and operating mechanisms for human rights implementation, coordination, monitoring and reporting. A study visit as well as numerous other trainings provided for a strengthened capacity which, among others, allowed national human rights institutions to advocate successfully with the authorities for the approval of four policy and regulatory documents brought positive changes in the field of right to social protection, labour rights, linguistic accessibility of public information and human-rights based approach in governmental strategic planning. Two online platforms were launched with UN support: the Human Rights Monitoring Platform (including CSOs, National Human Rights Institutions and state authorities)[66] that helps track progress on the implementation of recommendations received from the UN Human Rights Mechanisms; and the Platform for Gender Equality[67], which enables people to report gender-based discrimination, gender-based violence, sexist speech and violence against women in elections. Support provided to the Child Rights Ombudsperson to ensure independent child rights monitoring duly reflected in regular annual reports and thematic ones.

As a result of advocacy efforts supported by the UN, **people vulnerable to discrimination and all forms of violence received better representation of their rights.** To this end, a new referral and assistance service was established in the Transnistria region, contributing to the provision of a comprehensive array of quality services, including psychological and legal counselling, to thousands of victims of domestic violence. On a policy level, the National Strategy on Prevention and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence 2018–2023, which was developed with the support of the UN, became effective in 2018, ensuring better protections for victims of gender-based violence. Furthermore, with UN support, over 1,500 women, including women with disabilities, living and affected by HIV and Roma women, increased their knowledge and skills in regard to exercising their rights to essential services regarding gender-based violence.

The implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child[68] was advanced through enhanced knowledge in the field among child rights professionals and the review by the National Council for Child Rights Protection of 25 draft legal documents with the support of the UN. The monitoring of progress towards the implementation of the CEDAW was also strengthened, with the submission of four shadow reports to the respective human rights treaty body in 2019 following training of 32 CSOs. In 2020, there

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[65] The Plan provides for the establishment of a monitoring and coordination mechanism, the National Human Rights Council, which is chaired by the Prime Minister. The Council was created through a Government Decision in 2019. Since its creation, two meetings of the National Human Rights Council have been organized and conducted with UN support.
[66] Platform for monitoring international human rights
[67] ~~Platform for Gender Equality~~ https://gender.monitor.md/
[68] Convention on the Rights of the Child

were already 16 CSOs that actively participated in the CEDAW review process, having been supported by the UN to submit alternative reports to the Committee. Consecutively, the National Human Rights Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, met for the first time ever in a working session to review the recommendations from the sixth periodic CEDAW report issued to the country in 2020 and the series of measures for implementation of CEDAW recommendations were approved.

Furthermore, as a result of UN support, persons living with HIV in Moldova and in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova have the right to adopt children.[69] The UN technical support was essential in ensuring political will and community involvement in the approval of the required documents on both banks. Health regulations on in vitro fertilization were amended with UN support to ensure access of women living with HIV under clearly defined conditions. People living with HIV have equal rights to exercise the right to work, after the mandatory HIV testing before at employment was excluded from legal norms in the Transnistria region.

Access to justice has improved for the people in need, including children. During 2018, the National Institute of Justice adopted a training methodology based on simulations and case studies, contributing to the training of future judges and prosecutors. Over 250 police officers on both banks of the Nistru river improved their knowledge and skills on interacting with HIV-vulnerable groups following specialized training. The capacity of judges and prosecutors to administer human trafficking cases was also improved. In addition, rehabilitation and education services in prisons were strengthened in alignment with minimum international standards. A therapeutic community with a capacity of 23 residents became functional in one prison, and eight inmates are already benefiting from the newly available rehabilitation services.

In 2018 the first Barnahus-type child-friendly hearing room in Moldova was set up with the help of the UN to minimize the contact of children participating in legal proceedings with the justice system. More than 350 professionals, including police officers, teachers and health and social workers, were trained and are now able to document, assist and refer cases involving child victims or witnesses of violence, exploitation and trafficking. To improve the rehabilitation and social reintegration of child offenders, a mandatory probation programme for children in conflict with the law was successfully piloted in five districts during 2019.

Access to free legal aid has been improved as a result of the digitalization of the service request process. Since the digitalization of the process in the middle of 2020, 82% of legal aid requests have been submitted online. The capacity of the criminal justice system to function remotely was further strengthened through the refurbishment and equipment with videoconference systems of multipurpose rooms in prisons in four locations. The measure was especially important in the context of COVID-19.

Progress has been made in ensuring a human rights-based approach in the process of evaluating the developments, challenges and setting up the priorities in the field of human rights. With UN support, the Permanent Human Rights Secretariat organized extensive and inclusive consultations on the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan and the national report for the 3rd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review. In 2021, ten thematic consultations with the participation of representatives of CSOs were conducted. Furthermore, rights holders, including those from underrepresented groups, continue to be empowered for conducting advocacy actions to promote their rights. For example, parents of children and youth with disabilities, members of the Resource Group of Parents of Children and Youth with Disabilities supported by the UN, initiated and conducted advocacy and awareness raising campaigns

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[69] Despite the humanitarian nature of the problem and the progress achieved in promoting the rights of people living with HIV, the subject regarding the adoption of children in the Transnistrian region remains to be a sensitive one. There were registered many procedural violations on individual cases of adoption in the region and all related issues being discussed at the level of experts within the Working Groups on social issues and humanitarian aid between Chisinau and Tiraspol.

and activities oriented on advancing the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[70] Additionally, as part of their advocacy efforts, the Resource Group submitted complaints to the Equality Council.

2) Sustainable, equitable and inclusive economic growth

The economic situation in the Republic of Moldova has deteriorated sharply against the backdrop of COVID-19 pandemic, having a strong impact on incomes, jobs and livelihoods of the most vulnerable people. Nevertheless, the results achieved by UN system in the first two years of implementation of PFSD together with adjustments made in the third year diminished the negative impacts, so that the people of Moldova, in particular the most vulnerable, have access to enhanced livelihood opportunities, decent work and productive employment generated by sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth.

Systemic changes have been supported to ensure equal access to decent work, including for the most vulnerable. The new Law on Employment Promotion and Unemployment Insurance approved in 2018, established the necessary framework to increase employment opportunities and create better life prospects for both women and men, including for those belonging to marginalized groups. To this end, two public employment programmes with a focus on subsidized employment and workplace adaptation were piloted in 2019 and have already enhanced employment and income prospects for over 100 people in need. The programmes supported the implementation of the afore-mentioned law and the National Employment Strategy 2017–2021.

To foster better employment opportunities for women and equal pay for equal work, two draft laws, on the incorporation of pay transparency principals into the national legislation and on the promotion of alternative childcare services, were developed in 2020 with UN technical assistance. The legal and policy framework on labour migration was also strengthened. A set of laws were amended by the Parliament to provide for more clearly regulated private recruitment processes in order to improve the protection of labour migrants. The UN also provided support for the technical assistance and institutionalization of the Labour Market Observer. Furthermore, a new national reintegration programme for returning migrants was initiated by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection and the Bureau for Diaspora Relations with UN technical and capacity-building assistance. In addition, the mechanism for the recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired by migrants through non-formal and informal means was successfully piloted by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and prepared for scaling-up to facilitate the legal employment of returned migrants.

The institutional framework promoting access to labour was further strengthened with support of the UN agencies. Piloting with UN support of the first local employment partnership platform, an innovative model for the engagement of local stakeholders in the identification and promotion of inclusive local solutions for better jobs and youth employment prospects, resulted in the creation and formalization of over 260 jobs and the preparation for launch of more than 100 start-ups in sectors with job-creation potential. Overall, approximately 670 individuals, including persons at risk of exclusion, have directly benefitted from the opportunities afforded by the initiative, and another approximately 1,000 community members are expected to benefit indirectly. Also, sectoral skills committees, established to enhance and streamline collaboration between employees and employers for the development of technical vocational education and lifelong learning of specialists according to labour market demands, also became better

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[70] An on-line campaign #10yearsCRPDinMoldova was conducted to highlight the impact of CRPD implementation on the life and rights of persons with disabilities, as well as the need for advancing the implementation of the Contention. The campaign culminated with an on-line event on the ratification of the OP to CRPD with the participation of more than 70 representatives of state authorities, National Human Rights Institutions, CSOs, persons with disabilities and families of persons with disabilities during which the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection highlighted the commitment for the ratification of the OP in 2021.

prepared to address skill-mismatches and asymmetric labour marker information. From 2019 onwards, they benefit from an e-learning platform that allows them to share knowledge and communication within and across sectors.

To enhance access to employment opportunities and match employers with job-seekers, starting in 2020 a human-centred model of public employment service has been applied in Chisinau, where the largest public employment office is located. The model, introduced with the support of the United Nations, was used to provide assistance to about 7,000 people searching for a job and about 3,000 employers in 2020 alone. Access to decent jobs was further promoted through a local employment partnership that was established during the year with assistance from the UN.

The economic empowerment of women was further advanced through the implementation of PFSD. In 2018, approximately 500 private companies started to conduct self-assessments of their approaches to gender equality and to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement in the field. Also, more than 1,450 women and girls from various groups enhanced their knowledge and skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics – all of which are traditionally male-dominated – by participating in training and mentoring activities supported by the UN. As a result, seven start-ups in the area of information and communications technology were initiated in 2018, all owned by women.

The Women's Empowerment Principles were promoted within the private sector, with 30 companies being consulted on integrating these principles. As a result of a partnership with the Moldova Association of ICT Companies, approximately 500 girls and women improved their skills in software development by participating in the first National IT Training Programme in 2019. Several of them have already successfully started their own IT projects, obtained jobs or gained other opportunities in the field. Another nearly 400 girls, including 60% from rural areas, increased their knowledge of IT career paths.

The increasing access of vulnerable women to employment opportunities remained a priority for the United Nations in 2020. Over 40 women entrepreneurs, including from underrepresented groups enriched their entrepreneurial knowledge and skills through a mentorship program financed by the UN and several other partners. In addition, 50 women and girls, of which one third identified as survivors or witnesses of gender-based violence, benefited from full scholarships to strengthen their ICT skills. Moreover, 200 women and girls graduating from the third edition of a national ICT programme for women and girls and nearly 600 women and girls became members of a network and a hub for women in ICT created with the support of the UN. Furthermore, during the first half of 2021, 90 women entrepreneurs and young girls affected by the COVID-19 pandemic enhanced their financial literacy skills through online self-education and peer-to-peer networking as well enhanced their business knowledge to access new livelihoods through a start-up pre-acceleration program in STEM implemented with UN support.

Closing down the labour skills mismatch, especially with regard to youth, remains a top national priority. In connection with this, the UN has promoted local employment partnerships, thus bringing together public, private and civil society actors to improve labour market opportunities, and allowing nearly 300 people not in employment, education or training (NEET) to receive support to develop their skills and knowledge, as well as to gain access to resources and employment opportunities during the year. The exposure of young people to entrepreneurship training, mentoring and small grant facilities resulted in the establishment of 50 start-ups in the apiculture and handicraft sectors.

The delivery of a skills-building programme among youth was also successfully piloted during 2019, with workers and specialists from a youth centre being trained in the efficient application of the UPSHIFT methodology, which is an approach aimed at empowering young people by providing them with the skills and resources they need to identify and address problems within their communities. The launch of the UPSHIFT programme, organized together with a social impact workshop, brought together about 70 participants. Following a one-month period of training, programme participants developed several social

impact project proposals, out of which six were selected for continuing mentoring and seed funding. This activity continued in 2020 when, over 100 young people, participating in a dedicated edition of the UPSHIFT programme, co-created solutions aimed at helping young women and men affected by COVID-19. Out of this programme, 12 social ventures were selected for implementation and provided with seed funding. Around 2,000 young people from 12 localities indirectly benefited from the implementation of the selected ventures.

In order to bring down the development gap between small areas and the rest of the country, UN system contributed towards bridging diaspora and local communities. The capacities of multiple public authorities to promote the transfer of know-how from abroad were enhanced, with approximately 250 mayors and local migration focal points being trained during 2018 in the field of diaspora, migration and development, and becoming better prepared to integrate migration aspects in their work. Equipped with new knowledge and tools, 38 communities implemented 55 collaborative local development projects with the active engagement of migrants, maximizing the positive aspects of migration and demonstrating that migration can serve as an opportunity for local development. The model of engaging migrants in local development through hometown associations was expanded and consolidated in 2019. A total of 44 community development projects were implemented by hometown associations, in partnership with local governments and with the active participation of approximately 5,000 migrants. As part of measures aimed at increasing trust between people on both sides of the Nistru river, another 11 community infrastructure projects, comprising 14 infrastructure sites, have been selected for implementation and are currently under development. The model was institutionalized in 2020, with UN support, into a government-led programme, DAR 1+3, implemented for the first time in 2020. The further engagement of the diaspora in local development resulted in the implementation of another 88 small-scale interventions, which became possible due to the efforts of 90 diaspora members who offered their skills and professional knowledge to serve their communities of origin.

3) Environmental sustainability and resilience

A severe draught considerably affected the agricultural sector in Moldova in 2020, when the economy was already deeply hit by the pandemic. This highlighted the need for disaster risk reduction measures and sustainable use of land and water resources. Remarkably, under this priority area, several new UN agencies joined in so that the people of Moldova, in particular the most vulnerable, could benefit from enhanced environmental governance, energy security, sustainable management of natural resources, and climate and disaster resilient development.

As a result of increased awareness, green economy, sustainable use of natural resources, need to preserve the biodiversity are steadily becoming a centrepiece for sustainable country development. To raise awareness about biomass and renewable energy among the general public, multiple events and media field trips were organized in 2018 and several news and success stories on the topic were widely disseminated, including through online means, reaching thousands of people. Over 200 young people participated in the events, joining the approximately 25,000 children who increased their knowledge about renewable energy and energy efficiency through initiatives supported by the UN over the years. In 2019, the "Climate Box" education programme, which includes various targeted activities for pupils aged seven to 16 years old, was developed to be used in geography, biology, physics, science and ecology education classes. Over 170 teachers from 155 schools, along with 3,100 pupils, have tested the course. In addition, the youth potential to generate new solutions for improving urban mobility and reducing CO_2 emissions was explored during an urban mobility hackathon. The event brought together approximately 100 young people, who generated multiple solutions for the remodelling of the public transport network in the capital.

In response to increased public awareness, policymakers felt the need to strengthen their capacities and tools to tackle environmental issues. The guide on the implementation of the Law on Strategic Environmental Assessment and the related capacity-building strategy were finalized in 2018 with UN

technical assistance, which contributes to the better integration of environmental considerations into the preparation of policies, plans and programmes. Recognizing the value of data in tracking and tackling environmental risks, the UN continued to support the country in fulfilling international monitoring and reporting commitments in the field. To this end, a workshop on the development of national gridded air pollutant emission inventories in accordance with international requirements was conducted. 2019 saw the completion of a unique transboundary diagnostic analysis of water security and the sustainable use of the Nistru river[71]. The document represents the first part of the Nistru River Basin Management Plan. The analysis supported the government in decision-making on the most important water source for the country.

Also in 2019, a two-year integrated action plan to ensure the implementation of SDG targets and indicators related to agriculture and food systems was approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment with technical assistance from UN agencies. The draft Disaster Risk Management Strategy was revised and is now better aligned with the Global Agenda 2030 and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, including addressing the gender equality aspects in the environmental issues. Recommendations for the improvement of policy and institutional frameworks have been developed within a comprehensive analysis of the disaster risk reduction system in agriculture. In addition, the first Forestry Inventory was developed with UN support in cooperation with the national agency for forestry "*Moldsilva*".

Sustainable use of energy, land and water resource is paramount at local level. The expansion of renewable energy at the local level was promoted in 2018 through the provision of training opportunities to over 300 municipal leaders and managers of public institutions as well as 125 biomass boiler operators. In addition, three vocational schools integrated courses into their curricula to train future biomass boiler operators and energy plant specialists, and to ensure the availability of adequate skills and capacity on the local market.

In the field of sustainable pasture management, and in response to the continuously declining biodiversity in the country, the UN facilitated the development and approval of biodiversity-friendly local urban development plans in four communities and district spatial plans in two districts, covering a total area of 204,137 hectares. In addition, 2,000 men and women in rural communities learned to apply innovative approaches and gained valuable knowledge in sustainable agriculture by participating in field days and farmer field schools, as well as by visiting demonstration sites.

In 2019, UN supported local farmers from five districts to put in place water management infrastructure and disaster risk reduction measures. The UN also helped introduce innovative and environmentally friendly technologies on berry production. Around 50 smallholding farmers have benefited from these technologies. At the same time, three pilot communities were helped to develop local environment plans.

In spite of the pandemic, capacity building at local level continued in 2020. Representatives of local public authorities and 150 farmers from two districts strengthened their knowledge and skills in climate-smart agricultural practices and land degradation prevention. In addition, approximately 250 local officials and civil society representatives increased their knowledge of integrating climate adaptation and disaster risk management priorities into local development planning. Also, UN supported ten rural communities in building their irrigation infrastructure by providing necessary equipment for irrigation to smallholder farms. Overall, the proportion of districts applying climate resilient practices increased from 18 in 2016 to 23 in 2020.

4) <u>Inclusive and equitable social development</u>

Even before the eruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, UN system was heavily engaged with the national partner in the social sector, providing technical advice to the decision-makers as well as direct support to

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[71] The Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis for the Dniester River Basin issued - Dniester (dniester-commission.com)

the people in need. The challenges presented by the pandemic escalated the level of assistance and required an emergency response beyond PFSD. However, noteworthy results were achieved by UN system in this priority area, so that the people of Moldova, in particular the most vulnerable, demand and benefit from gender-sensitive and human rights-based, inclusive, effective and equitable quality education, health and social policies and services.

Implementation of the national policy documents in the health sector was thoroughly supported by UN agencies. More specifically, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection and the National Agency of Public Health were effectively supported in the implementation of the National Immunization Programme 2016–2020 and the associated Communication Strategy 2017-2020. The procurement of 1,5 million doses of vaccines and vaccine-related products in the framework of assistance provided by the UN was made in the following year. In 2018 the National Programme on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights 2018–2022, developed with the needs of vulnerable groups in mind, was launched with the help of the UN, making Moldova one of the first countries in the region to implement such a programme. The implementation of the document facilitated access to sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning services and contraceptives for all groups, particularly the most vulnerable ones. Family planning services were further strengthened through the development and implementation of an online learning platform[72], that resulted in the certification between 2018-2020 of over 800 health professionals in the field of family planning. Furthermore, approximately 30,000 students improved their health education, including those related to sexual and reproductive health, and 37,700 young boys and girls gained knowledge on the topic through peer-to peer education by the end of 2020.

Also at the policy level, a draft National Health Sector Development Strategy 2030 was developed in 2019 based on a comprehensive and participatory assessment of the previous strategy in the field. The first Strategic Plan for the Agency for Medicines and Medical Devices was also developed, and the Development Strategy of the National Insurance Company was updated, both in line with international standards. The draft National HIV/STI and TB Prevention and Control Programs, as well as the draft of the National Plan for International Health Regulation Implementation and the National Plan for Combatting and Preventing Antimicrobial Resistance were developed with UN agencies' support.

Strengthening the capacity of medical staff in line with international standards remained an overarching priority. In the health sector, multiple standards and protocols were revised and new ones developed based on the results of several assessments aimed at improving the quality of sexual and reproductive healthcare, mother and child care and a series of capacity building activities were conducted in 2018-2020 to facilitate the adequate implementation of the new standards and protocols. As a result, in 2018 alone, about 900 nurses and doctors across the country, including in the Transnistrian region, became better prepared to provide quality care to pregnant women, infants and children under the age of three.

Four sets of new regulations, clinical protocols and standards were developed in 2018-2020 for family doctors and gynaecologists in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the regulation on ensuring vulnerable groups with contraceptives, a standard on organizing and functioning of cervical screening cervices, a standard on organising and functioning of HIV prevention services among key populations, and a standardized protocol on the clinical management of rape, including provisions on its applicability including in the context of emergency situations and humanitarian settings. In 2020, a new antenatal care standard and neonatal protocols for pregnant women and new-borns, aligned with the latest international guidelines, were also developed with the UN support and approved for implementation in the Transnistria region.

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[72] Virtual Contraceptive Consultation (ViC) Moldova Platform

In 2020, capacity building activities increased the knowledge and skills of 3,000 more health professionals, along with 550 family doctors and nurses which increased their knowledge and skills on different aspects of child and adolescent health.

HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment services were also strengthened during PFSD implementation. 2018 saw the practical application of a new algorithm for early HIV prevention detection, alignment of testing guidelines and clinical protocols with the most recent international recommendations, and implementation of capacity building initiatives, including on the left bank of the Nistru river. Approximately 100 persons from key populations were enrolled in HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis in only six months of 2019, compared to two enrolments in 2018, due to the implementation of an innovative, community-led approach to service delivery. The number of people covered also doubled in 2020. In addition, about 500 HIV patients from the Transnistrian region were provided with lifesaving antiretroviral treatment from domestic resources in 2018 and all patients (100%) on the first-line regimen got the ARV treatment in 2019 covered from the budgetary resource, ensuring the sustainability for this life-saving service.

With regards to programme beneficiaries, due to the efforts of the United Nations, in 2020 they were consulted for the first time by the central government on the specific gender-related concerns and priorities that were included in the draft National Programme on the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections 2021–2025. In addition, nearly 60 people living with HIV, sex workers, drug users and men who have sex with men improved their understanding of the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS through tailored training sessions. Furthermore, 135 healthcare professionals and civil society representatives have improved their knowledge on the HIV preventions services for key populations. In connection with this, the standard on organizing and functioning of the HIV prevention services in key populations was developed with UN support and approved in 2020, and 1,093 professionals were capacitated to apply its provisions.

Access to quality education by all children, including those from vulnerable groups, received proper attention through the PFSD implementation. During 2018, the UN secured funding from the Global Partnership for Education to conduct an education sector analysis (ESA), which was completed in 2019.[73] The ESA had specific implications for inclusive education as an evaluation of the implementation of the Programme for Development and Inclusive Education 2011–2020 was undertaken as part of the exercise. The findings of the evaluation, which were discussed at the Annual National Conference on Inclusive Education – attended by about 200 representatives of Parliament, central and local authorities, school managers, teachers, parents, children and development partners – paved the way for the development of the new National Programme on Inclusive Education, which is further supported.

On a more practical level, at least 170 Roma boys and girls were supported to attend school during 2019. The inclusion of children with severe disabilities in education was also advanced, with nearly 150 education specialists being trained to apply newly developed guidelines in the field. An analytical review on the governance of early childhood education was also carried out, contributing to evidence-based policymaking in the field. To this end, UN supported the government in the development of funding schemes in this field. Seven funding schemes were developed as a result, out of which two were endorsed by a cross-sectoral working group and recommended to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research for piloting. In addition to the funding schemes, a methodological note on the use of the funding formula for kindergartens,

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[73] The key findings and recommendations from the ESA served as a basis for the development and costing of a new long-term Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2021-2030, including the long-term Education Strategy, mid-term Programme and Action Plan 2021-202 and Simulation Models. The ESP outlines a long-term vision based on the ESA and is linked to the National Development Strategy 'Moldova 2030', the SDG nationalized agenda, the EU Association Agreement priorities focusing on quality of teaching and teachers, education environment, learning outcomes and competencies aligned to the labor market.

and financial management training for kindergarten staff, were developed and delivered to over 140 mayors, accountants, procurement specialists and preschool managers from seven districts in 2019.

In the following year, Guidelines for intersectoral collaboration for the inclusion of children with severe disabilities in education were successfully tested. In the process, 161 professionals were trained and engaged in intersectoral collaboration, and 51 children with severe disabilities were included in education. Furthermore, the capacity of 190 preschool managers, educators, psychologists and speech therapists in three districts for the application of child-centred methodology was strengthened, resulting in the better inclusion in the education process of children with disabilities and Roma children in the respective communities.

Throughout PFSD implementation UN system continued to support young girls and boys, in particular through capacity building of the youth centres. In 2018, the staff of 22 youth centres enhanced their skills through training in strategic management, youth budgeting and outreach. As a result, more than 1,000 young people benefited from related outreach activities. For the first time in Moldova, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, in partnership with the UN, organized a national conference to disseminate and exchange good practices, strategies and lessons learned on reshaping youth policies and addressing the needs of disadvantaged youth. In addition, a mid-term review of the National Strategy on Youth was conducted in 2018 and a final evaluation in 2020, providing recommendations for the new strategy.

In 2019, the youth centres were equipped with a set of materials that has improved their institutional operational capacity and has enabled them to provide better services to young people. Youth centres were also assessed from the perspective of accessibility for young people with disabilities. As a result, seven of them were pre-selected to be made accessible. In addition, the synergies between the work of youth centres and schools created opportunities for the development of 26 youth initiatives in different areas, including ecology, youth rights, youth civic engagement and vocational orientation, among others, which were implemented with the UN support.

Ending violence against women and children remained a priority for the UN and significant efforts were made in the course of PFSD implementation. An analysis of the compatibility of national legislation with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention[74] was completed in 2019 and the first steps towards the ratification of the document were taken. The procedures for addressing gender-based violence by social workers and health professionals were improved in line with international standards. In 2020, the UN system supported several initiatives, including the establishment of a data-collection mechanism on gender-based violence through the health system, the development of standard operating procedures for intersectoral response to violence against women and the opening of a regional support centre for survivors of domestic violence in the Gagauzia region. Effective assistance to 95 victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation was also provided. Furthermore, the prevention of violence against women and child abuse was advanced during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign, which reached over 470,000 persons.

5) Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the implementation of PFSD in 2020. There are numerous examples of adjustments made to the programmes to reflect the new reality. To name just a few, UN has equipped the voting polls with sanitary equipment during the presidential elections in November 2020; submission of legal aid requests was fully digitized with UN support; 450 small entrepreneurs were supported by UN to move their business online; social assistance payments to families with children doubled as a result of a microsimulation run by UN at the request the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social

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[74] Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

Protection etc. Needless to say, most of the training and sensitization events planned for 2020 were conducted remotely. Besides these timely and necessary adjustments to PFSD implementation, UN system was at the forefront of emergency response, starting with the very early stages, when it supported the Government to develop the COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan. To ensure a harmonized approach to the provision of COVID-19 support by UN AFPs, the UNCT developed the COVID-19 SERP soon thereafter. The main UN system contributions fall into three categories, which merit a closer examination.

UN provided emergency support to the healthcare system to cope with the challenges of COVID-19. In this context, the UN system supported the needs assessment efforts of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, helping the institution use monthly planning rather than rely on ad hoc procurements to increase the predictability and quantity of supplies. Laboratory testing capacity was also gradually increased, from around 100 to over 5,000 tests per day, including as a result of a laboratory assessment conducted to evaluate national capacities for testing and supply of public health laboratories with test, consumables, reagents and lab devices. Testing capacity was further boosted with the implementation with the UN support of antigen rapid diagnostic tests in several settings

Also, the UN system helped protect the health and safety of front-line workers through the direct procurement and delivery of protection and medical equipment, as well as of other essential supplies. Overall, the UN agencies procured, with funding from its partners, more than 2 million surgical masks, 170,000 body shields, 3,700 thermometers, 93 ventilators and 380 oxygen concentrators, among other items. These procurements helped 50,000 staff working in health facilities and many others.

In addition to the above, the UN system supported the development of clinical protocols on COVID-19 and the training of medical professionals on the application of those protocols. The continuity of essential health services was also ensured, with about 4,000 health care workers being trained in the provision of care in the context of COVID-19, including 80 trained health professionals from Perinatal Health Centres from all over the country on the preventive measures to combat the transmission of infection and protect the healthcare personnel and pregnant women, triage of cases and care of pregnant women with Covid-19, clinical management of severe complications caused by COVID-19 infection in pregnant women, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV in the context of COVID-19, with healthcare personnel being also equipped with personal protective equipment in the 2020-2021 period, including 200 health professionals from 41 Youth Friendly Health Centres from all over the country and 150 health professionals from 47 Reproductive Health Cabinets and Centre for Reproductive Health and Medical Genetics, who have insured the continuity of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare in the COVID-19 context.

Access to COVID-19 vaccine was also facilitated with UN support. This resulted in the delivery of the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccines in early 2021 through the COVAX facility. Preparatory efforts for the arrival and distribution of vaccines involved the implementation of two major assessments, a vaccine introduction readiness assessment and a cold supply chain assessment, as well as the development of a national vaccination plan.

Amidst the proliferation of fake news regarding COVID-19, dissemination of reliable information to wider audience was paramount. The support provided by UN system to health authorities on risk communication allowed the latter to reach the public with useful information about the pandemic in a timely manner, identify threats and fake news about the virus at an early stage and adjust their messaging to the general population and to targeted groups. To inform the public and all interested parties of the evolution of the pandemic, a public dashboard that enabled the real-time monitoring of COVID-19 cases in the country[75] was launched in March 2020. The real-time monitoring platform reflects several indicators, including the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, number of people who have recovered, number of

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[75] Covid19 Moldova Dashboard (arcgis.com)

deaths, data being disaggregated by age, sex, geographical location, date of case registration, stipulating also the confirmed cases among pregnant women, young people etc, which allows evidence-based decision making.

The platform had more than 2 million views by the end of the year. Besides this, UN played a vital role in ensuring voters health and safety during the presidential elections in November 2020. A campaign implemented by the United Nations, in partnership with the Central Election Commission, reached over 1.2 million people with information about the voting process. The prepared materials explained in a user-friendly manner the main rules and procedures to be followed by voters on the election day in the context of the pandemic. Of no lesser importance was the needs to understand the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the vulnerable people. UN made use of 25 assessments in order to develop the SERP and tailor its response in such way that the focus on gender equality and human rights is preserved and that particular vulnerabilities faced by women, youth, older adults, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV, migrants and other disadvantaged groups are taken into account.

Lockdown measures had tremendous impact on education, having that neither teachers and pupils, nor training materials were adapted to distance learning. In this regard, UN system provided assistance to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research to develop special guidelines and regulations for the organization of learning processes in the context of COVID-19. Subsequently, nearly 40,000 managerial, teaching and non-teaching staff from schools and preschools were trained in the guidelines developed. Water and sanitation supplies were also procured and delivered to all 2,600 schools and kindergartens in the county. Furthermore, online training was organized for more than 10,000 managerial and teaching staff on positive parenting for early childhood development during the pandemic and the recovery period, which helped them to provide support to over 100,000 young children through online counselling with parents and caregivers. Additionally, about 98,000 adolescents and young people, as well as nearly 285,000 teachers and parents, were reached through a psychological assistance programme designed to help them cope with the effects of the pandemic.

4.2.4. Overview of the Impact of UN's Work

The following is a broad overview of progress made under the PFSD, focusing on a few major contributions, while drawing attention to areas which require further attention. Further details regarding activities under each priority area are provided in the next section of the report.

In the area of governance, human rights and gender equality, the UN system has strengthened the capacity of national human rights institutions, government, CSOs and mass media to monitor, report and act on systemic human rights issues. The number of advocacy campaigns, alternative reports by CSOs to the UPR and CEDAW and legislation tackling the sexual and reproductive rights and the rights of children is above targets. There has also been an increase in the implementation rate of recommendations of human rights treaty bodies thanks to the support of the UN system.

In the field of gender equality, there is a strong indication that women's political empowerment has progressed. An increase in the proportion of women elected or appointed to public office, particularly in the Parliament, can be traced to the quotas introduced in the Electoral Code promoted and supported by the UN. In the same vein, women survivors of violence have better protection and access to essential services as a result of improved legislation on ending violence against women in line with international standards. Under the COVID-19 support area, nearly 600 women and girls from Moldova, including women from the Transnistria region, women and girls affected by violence, women survivors of violence, women migrants, women with disabilities, women with children with disabilities, received immediate support to cope with stress and benefited from strengthened general and specialized services due to the provision of essential services which were made available with the UN support.

An important achievement was the improvement of the rights to fair trial for vulnerable groups. Although only a marginal improvement in perceptions was targeted, the actual number of women, people from rural areas, unemployed, people of Roma ethnicity and people belonging to sexual or religious minorities who trust the judicial system has doubled. There has also been improvement in trust of government institutions due in part to the work of the UN in support of institutions, although the values for the outcome indicator fluctuate with changes on the political front. Improvements have been visible in indicator values measuring corruption, thanks in part to the work of the UN with the National Anticorruption Centre in the implementation of the anti-corruption strategy and awareness raising activities in this area although comparable data in the last few years has been lacking.

The availability of SDG indicators has significantly increased, with important advancements made in the availability of SDG data – a result directly attributable to the support provided by the UN to NBS. Moldova has also improved its population statistics by aligning its methodology to the international one and revising for the first time in 30 years the usual resident population. This has led to a subsequent revision of all other statistical indicators and re-classification of the country income group to upper-middle income country.

In the area of sustainable, equitable and inclusive economic growth, positive results were reported with regards to the number of companies that benefit from improved business advisory support and enhanced access to sustainable local development and inclusive labour markets. The Moldova's rank in the World Bank's Doing Business Report also improved as did the country's performance on the Global Competitiveness Index. Although the complexity of these indicators does not allow for the attribution of results directly to the UN, the organization has undertaken multiple activities aimed at improving the business environment in the country over the past years. At the same time, progress was slower than anticipated in terms of women's economic empowerment. The gender pay gap has increased from 13,2 to 14% instead of decreasing to 10% as expected.

The situation is somewhat better with regards to developing skills to help youth transition successfully from school to gainful employment. Although several related output indicators were not met and others were partially met, the proportion of young people in the "Not in Education, Employment, or Training" (NEET) group diminished from 29.2 to 26%, which is better than the planned decrease to 26.8%. The decrease has been more significant among men and in rural areas, with targets being exceeded at the disaggregated level, and the target for urban areas has been met. A decrease in this indicator has also been observed among women, but the target still remains to be met. At the same time, progress on increasing employment is still lagging behind.

In the area of environmental sustainability and resilience, achievements were made in increasing the surface areas of pasture, forest and water ecosystems that are sustainably managed by local public authorities. The proportion of districts applying climate resilient practices increased with the support of the UN from 18% to 23% since the beginning of implementation of the PFSD. Also, the targets were achieved with regards to the increase in the number of rural populations benefiting from climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures. The number of people in rural areas benefiting from sustainable land management practices has also increased since the beginning of implementation of the PFSD. At the outcome level, there was a remarkable increase in the share of renewables in the energy consumption from 14.2 to 28.7%. In part, the result can be traced back to UN efforts to promote biofuel and consolidate the domestic biomass market. However, due to the changes in the calculation methodology of this indicator the actual assessment of the increase in the share of renewables in the energy consumption is difficult.

One area which remains challenging is the engagement of private companies in environmentally friendly practices. Plans were made by UN agencies to build the capacity of manufacturing small and medium-sized enterprises for applying Resource Efficient Cleaner Production (RECP), as well as to facilitate the ecological value-chain and product innovation, yet no progress has been reported against those output indicators so far.

In the area of inclusive and equitable social development, there has been steady progress on most output targets. However, some strategic interventions failed to produce desired results at outcome level. Thus, the number of adolescents and young people who received peer-to-peer education on sexual and reproductive health and rights reached 34,700 against the programme target of only 12,000. Contrary to expectations, an increased number of youths involved in peer-to-peer education triggered a modest response at the outcome level: the adolescent birth rate per 1,000 women has somewhat decreased from 32,1 in 2017 to 27,3 in 2020, which is significantly below the target of 20,8.

Another concern is with the share of households with children from poorest quintile receiving social assistance or child benefits. The output target is to have their share increased from 32 to 39%. Instead, it was 29% in 2019. At the outcome level, increasing the proportion of households receiving social aid benefits also proved challenging. At the same time, the integration of children with disabilities in regular schools has improved over the last three years and the UN implemented several activities focused specifically on disability inclusion in schools to contribute to this result. The target for this indicator was met in 2019.

In addition, at increased concern is the rate of HIV mother-to-child transmission. The target established at the beginning of the PFSD implementation was 2%. However, the rate increased to almost 5% at the end of 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the HIV and tuberculosis (TB) early detection rates and HIV treatment adherence. This particular area and the health sector overall will require more attention moving forward as progress on the health indicators has been mixed and additional data will be needed to measure the results in this field.

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In summary, the current number of output indicators is excessive and poses an onerous burden on the UNCT, and especially the results groups and the SDG M&E TWG group, in their efforts to track progress and report on achievements. The UNCT should develop a complete results framework, with all baselines and targets determined and defined upfront in alignment with the country's SDG framework. Care should be taken to identify sound indicators that meet the SMART criteria. For the upcoming development cooperation framework, UNCT and GoM should identify more meaningful and well-defined indicators which are directly related to the activities of the UN system. It will also be important to select indicators for which there is reliable data and that can thus be tracked and have a baseline. It will also be essential to identify indicators that can be disaggregated, not only by gender, but also by other key demographics (given PFSD's focus on vulnerable groups). The UN system should first strengthen its own data infrastructure, including data aggregation mechanisms, operability of the UN-Info system, definition of indicators, baselines, targets, etc. Training will be needed for this, which ideally should be organized jointly by the agencies and coordinated by the RCO. There is also a need to strengthen the capabilities of the joint results groups to identify and analyse outcome and output indicators, plan interventions, etc. Agencies should seek to the extent possible to coordinate and harmonize their assessment and evaluative initiatives.

With regards to the achievement of planned results, based on data available from the RCO, out of the 26 PFSD outcome indicators, 8 indicators (31%) had been met or exceeded and another 8 indicators (31%) were partially met as of the end of 2020. Outcome level indicators measure results at the country level and, as such, any improvements are due to the work of all development actors, including government, UN agencies, development partners, CSOs, private sector, etc. At the output level, 58% of output targets had been either met or exceeded. An additional 17% of targets were partially met at the time of the evaluation, amounting to a total of 76% of outputs targets where progress was significant. As has been noted above, a certain level of impact has been possible thanks to contributions by the UN system in the areas of governance, human rights and gender equality; sustainable, equitable and inclusive economic growth; environmental sustainability and resilience; and inclusive and equitable social development.

4.3. COHERENCE

The PFSD was motivated by the need to strengthen the coherence of UN operations in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation as a whole with all resident and non-resident agencies working together under a joint cooperation framework with GoM. This section provides an assessment of the coherence with which the PFSD has been coordinated, planned and implemented.

4.3.1. Quality of Coordination under the PFSD

With PFSD's approval and the Government's formal endorsement of it, UN agencies (both resident and regionally based ones) adopted the "*Delivering as One*" approach, which mandates joint planning, implementation and reporting. This was one of the main motivations behind the recent UN reform and restructuring of the institution of the UNRCO. As the programme overview section of this report has described, the institutional foundations for effective coordination among UN agencies and between the UN and GoM are in place under the PFSD framework. The question is how these structures are operationalized and utilized by the UN agencies and their counterparts in the country. This question will be at the centre of this section of the report. The focus of the assessment here will be on the quality of coordination and cooperation in the framework of the PFSD.

Interviews conducted for this evaluation indicated that UN agencies are generally keen on stronger coordination and cooperation with each other. The quality of coordination and cooperation, however, depends on the incentives the agencies to engage with each other and the capacities and resources available to them. Larger agencies have capacities to participate in the coordination mechanisms. Smaller ones may be willing to engage but remain limited in their capacities for engagement. Because of the relatively small size of the agencies in Moldova, often the same people participate in multiple interagency groups, which could pose a challenge in terms of time available from them to contribute. Not all agencies have dedicated staff with time available for interagency coordination and this represents a challenge that should be addressed. Some agencies displayed limited understanding of the gains of coordination, an indication of the need for greater information and awareness on the benefits of cooperation under the PFSD.

The following is an overview of the main findings related to the operation of the joint structures based on the information collected for this evaluation.

Joint Steering Committee

The Joint National-UN Steering Committee (JSC) has played a formal role in the implementation of the PFSD. Both the UN and the Government are committed to convening the JSC once per year when feasible. When the JSC meets, it is chaired by the Prime Minister and the RC. The participation of the Prime Minister demonstrates the importance that the Government assigns to the process. Although the JSC is expected to meet once per year as part of the annual review process, in the current PFSD cycle it has officially convened only twice - once in 2018 (June) and a second time in 2020 (October). The JSC did not meet in 2019 because of political instability, a constitutional crisis and frequent changes in the Government. In 2021, a JSC meeting was planned for June, but had not occurred yet at the point of this evaluation. The early Parliamentary elections of July 2021 made the timing unfavourable. The JSC meeting may take place later in 2021, once the new Government settles in, coordination arrangements are agreed and a suitable time is identified.

The topics discussed in JSC meetings include progress made by UNCT in achieving the results outlined in the PFSD during the previous year, as well as the activities planned for the year in which the meeting is organized. Additional items are added to the agenda as needed. In 2018, the Government made a presentation on progress on the approval of the National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030". In 2020, the UNCT COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan (SERP) was presented.

UNCT

The UNCT meets in monthly meetings to discuss issues of joint interest. Participation is reported to be usually strong and this was evident even in the way in which the UNCT group engaged with the activities of this evaluation. Generally, UNCT meetings are used for agency updates, updates on the country context, including COVID-19 updates since 2020, updates on joint exercises and processes (PF planning, PF reporting, scorecards, reporting to human rights treaty bodies, support to the VNR process, support to Moldova "2030", development of the Common Country Analysis, and other joint analyses tools), etc. One weakness of UNCT meetings is that the focus is on information sharing (or updates) and less on substantive discussions of opportunities for joint programming, joint resource mobilization, etc. This is partly driven by the diversity of agencies which are interested in different topics. A new format for the UNCT meetings has been proposed to make the meetings more strategic and this format is currently being tested.

Results Groups

RGs have been active in the preparation of JWPs and reporting, providing the necessary inputs for plans and annual reports, including via direct correspondence. Specific dates for RG meetings were not readily available as RGs do not keep meeting minutes. They each met once in 2021 (May), twice in 2019 (June and October), and once in 2018 (June). Based on calendar records, RG2 met one more time in December 2018 and RG3 met one more time in April 2020. In all cases, the RGs met to discuss planning or reporting issues, except for the RG2 meeting at the end of 2018 for which no records are available. Despite not meeting in 2020, RGs conducted their work online and participated in planning and reporting processes, with chairs circulating messages to members and coordinating/checking inputs.

RGs' major contributions are related to planning and reporting processes. The development of JWPs by the RGs allows for a comprehensive process of joint programming, facilitating communication with government counterparts and development partners. Similarly, the contributions of RGs to annual reporting allow for the development of a single document that shows the work and results of the entire UN development system on the ground and for the communication of results in a consolidated fashion to government, development partners and the general public.

UN agencies think that the number of RGs is sufficient for ensuring coordination. However, their effectiveness could be improved. Joint programming mostly happens outside of these groups. The progress made on joint programming by the UNCT cannot be attributed directly to the results groups or any of the PFSD joint structures.

Inter-agency Thematic Groups

The UNCT has established a large number of inter-agency groups (full list is provided in the programme overview section of this report). Some of these groups are mandated under the PFSD and some are created on an ad hoc basis. Some of these thematic/technical groups are more active than others and produce better outcomes. The more active ones reflect the areas in which cooperation/coordination is relatively strong. The GTG, Migration TF, Transnistria Regions TF, Education TF, SDG M&E TWG and HIV/AIDS TF have been the most active groups. UNCG, OMT and CCA TF have also been active and have produced positive results in joint operations, joint communication and joint analysis. The UNCG implements a few large joint communication campaigns on an annual basis. OMT has managed to achieve cost savings for agencies and greater efficiencies in hiring/procurement processes. The CCA TF was instrumental in the development of the latest Common Country Analysis.[76] The box below provides a more detailed overview of some of the achievements of these groups.

The COVID-19 response was maybe one of the best examples of coordination displayed by the UNCT so far under the current PFSD cycle. The UNCT was very effective in establishing a number of joint structures

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[76] The CCA had 22 contributing agencies (including regionally based ones) and was highly inclusive.

for the coordination of the work of the agencies in different areas. The COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response and Recovery TF as well as the Education TF have been among the most effective joint groups in 2020. Also, the support UNCT provided to the Government on the development of the Moldova 2030 strategy, the elaboration of the VNR, including youth voices, the nationalization of SDG indicators, and the strengthening the National Statistical System was well-coordinated. These areas of work brought the whole or a great part of the UNCT together and provide good examples for how greater coordination and coordination could be achieved in other areas going forward.

Box 4: Role of Inter-Agency Groups in Moldova

> In the case of the COVID-19 response, coordination including through the COVID-19 SERR TF and UNCG, helped agencies avoid overlaps and have a common message. In the field of HIV/AIDS all efforts were coordinated though the TF working in the field with agencies implementing complementary activities. The group itself is built around the joint project on HIV/AIDS and also Joint UBRAF Country Envelope; also members of Joint Team on HIV/AIDS are active within Technical Working Group on HIV/AIDS of the National Coordination Council of TB/HIV. The CCA TF ensured coordination on joint analysis, the result of its work being a document that could be used by all agencies to inform their programming, the GTG coordinated campaigns on gender equality, gender analysis (currently in the form of a comprehensive gender assessment), and work on gender mainstreaming of policy documents, which benefit all agencies and which agencies would not be able to take on individually or which would be less impactful if implemented individually.
>
> The work in support of NBS with the development of its next strategy started at the level of the SDG M&E Group with several agencies (6) expressing interest in moving this work forward. The support would have not been possible at all without agencies coming together and joining efforts and resources to move the process forward. The OMT has produced cost savings for the UNCT on the operations front: effective cooperation on procurement, human resources and information and communications technology at the level of the UNCT resulted in cost savings of approximately $120,000 annually.

Agency representation in these groups is consistent and strong. However, these groups encounter challenges as well. For example, the lack of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) at the HQ level, especially in the communications area, generates challenges regarding the use of the "UN Moldova" logo as opposed to the UN agencies' logos. Although the UNCG in Moldova has endorsed its own SOP (also approved by the UNCT), still questions about the use of the "UN Moldova" logo get raised, which gets in the way of the "Delivering as One principle".

For all the benefits of the joint coordination structures outlined above, their number has escalated (especially those not mandated under the PFSD and the ones related to COVID-19 which are expected to be phased out under the new cooperation framework) and many stakeholders think that there is a need for rationalizing them. They reported examples of overlaps, especially in terms of the areas covered by these groups, as well as their roles and responsibilities. There is a need for a systematic examination of all existing groups with a view to streamlining an optimizing the overall functioning of the coordination infrastructure.

UN Resident Coordinator Office

Another key PFSD coordination structure is the UNRCO, which has played an important role in ensuring stronger coordination with GoM and among UN agencies. In addition to its regular coordination functions, the RCO played a crucial role in the development of the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan, its monitoring and implementation, as well as resource mobilization to fund the plan. The RCO has also led the production of regular COVID-19 situation reports for development partners and has maintained a data set of COVID-19 statistics in the country, which is updated daily.

The RCO has 11 staff, including 6 core staff members, 2 advisors, 1 local peace and development officer, 1 special assistant and 1 procurement, finance and administrative assistant, + 1 UN Volunteer (working distantly). The table below summarizes the staffing capabilities of the RCO at the time of this evaluation.

Core Staff	Non-core Staff
1. Head of RCO (core, in office) 2. Communications and Advocacy Officer (core, in office) 3. Partnerships and Development Finance Officer (core, in office) 4. Economist (core, in office) 5. Data Management and Results Monitoring Officer (core, in office) 6. Executive Associate (core, in office)	1. Procurement, Finance and Administrative Assistant (based on funding availability, in office) 2. Peace and Development Officer (based on funding availability, in office) 3. Human Rights Advisor, also head of OHCHR (based on funding availability, in office) 4. Online UN Volunteer (as needed, in office) 5. Peace and Development Advisor (based on funding availability, vacant since April 2021, currently being recruited) 6. Special Assistant to the RC (based on funding availability, vacant since August 2020, recruited and expected to take office later in the year)

The core capacities of the RCO are insufficient to carry out all the duties and responsibilities assigned to staff. Although, following the UNDS reform, the capacities of the RCO were strengthened, the responsibilities and expectations for the RCO also increased. For example, the Common Country Analysis became an annual process to be implemented with internal capacities, the implementation of two new scorecards (on youth and disability inclusion) on an annual basis became a requirement, reporting on the gender scorecard on an annual basis also became a requirement, as did the development and implementation of a UNCT plan for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, the Integrated Management System was revamped to include additional questions and a different format, and the UN INFO planning and reporting system was updated, with the adjustment to the new system being time-consuming. Although not quantifiable, requests for various types of inputs from DCO seem to also have increased, and the creation of new regional and global structures that involve the participation of RCO staff limit their availability for other tasks. At the same time, some functions previously fulfilled by UNDP, particularly related to finance, procurement and administration, were transferred to RCO. On top of everything, the COVID-19 crisis further stretched the capacity of the RCO in its effort to coordinate the emergency and recovery efforts. To cope with the duties and responsibilities of the RCO, some temporary solutions have been identified and implemented, such the hiring of a procurement, finance and administrative assistant and the identification of funding and recruitment of a special assistant to the RC. These solutions, however, are temporary and depend on funding availability. The RCO also relies on the support of online UN volunteers where possible and feasible.

4.3.2. Coordination of UN System on SDGs

Currently, there are no organizational structures dedicated to the SDGs in the country. A National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development was established in 2016 by the Government. This council was chaired by the Prime Minister and included all members of the Cabinet at that time, as well as a few other government officials, representatives of the academic community, trade union confederation, employers' confederation, congress of local authorities, etc. The council also included the RC as an observer. This council met only once in 2017 to discuss the report on adapting the 2030 Agenda to the national context. The council has not met since then.

Discussions were initiated in 2019 to reactivate the National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development to oversee the VNR process. However, in the end, the option was considered sub-optimal given the level of officials involved. The process was managed directly by the State Chancellery and a separate structure was created to oversee the process, the VNR Coordination Council, which included ministry representatives at the level of state secretaries and general secretaries of the ministries and representatives from the Presidency, Parliament, central and local public authorities, civil society, private sector, mass media and academia.. The council included all UN agencies as observers. The RC and UN agency representatives actively participated in the meetings of the council, with the VNR process being implemented with the support of the UN.

The Government of Moldova participated for the first time in the VNR process and presented its results at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum in July 2020. The State Chancellery led the process from the side of the Government, being in constant communication with the focal points from the UNDP and RCO and coordinating all related activities with them, and vice-versa. From the UN side, UNDP and RCO took the lead in the process, but the effort was joint, with multiple agencies contributing financial resources and technical assistance in the review. Under the VNR process, NBS developed a revised list of nationalized SDG indicators and assessed the existing data gaps in measuring progress towards SDGs. The revised list of indicators, together with the associated data, was used to complete the VNR analysis. The revision process was supported by the UN and was the result of a long-lasting partnership between the UN and NBS and a joint UN project that aimed to strengthen the capacity of NBS. The report was developed in a participatory and inclusive manner.[77] In order to contribute to the implementation of VNR recommendations, the UN has been supporting the State Chancellery in organizing a post-VNR policy dialogue (in a series of seven that are expected to be organized on the topics of Inclusion, Digitalization, Competitiveness, SDG Financing, Data, Climate Change and Social Cohesion).

Role of RCO in SDG Processes in the Country

The RCO took the lead coordination role in several key processes related to the adoption and achievement of SDGs in the country, namely in coordinating the support to the nationalisation of SDGs, development of Moldova 2030, and the development of the VNR. All of these processes were large inter-agency undertakings. The RCO worked closely with the technical leads on these processes and ensured the participation of all other interested agencies. The RCO also kept all agencies informed of the processes. In the case of the VNR, for example, the RCO was the lead on coordination, while UNDP took the technical lead. The RCO was responsible for gaining the commitment of agencies to participate in the process, coordinating contributions (financial and technical assistance), ensuring that the pulling of funds through UN-to-UN agreements, hiring the consultants, coordinating agendas with the SC, sharing drafts with agency focal points and collecting comments/suggestions, inviting agencies to VNR-related events, coordinating the joint communication on the topic, developing/releasing communication materials, etc.

The RCO also contributed financially to the process, supporting the development of the VNR and the organization of a VNR lab. RCO continued to lead post-VNR processes and is currently organizing post-VNR dialogues together with the State Chancellery. All of these processes have involved technical leads. In the case of the VNR, UNDP ensured the overall technical lead, UNICEF and UNFPA lead on the youth consultations and report, individual agencies ensure the technical lead on individual VNR dialogues. Furthermore, all agencies were involved in these processes, with all key steps coordinated with agency

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[77] Public consultation included 5 main sessions – one for each theme of the report – as well as a public consultation session with the development partners. Final consultations were held to discuss and validate the main findings, recommendations and the way forward. In parallel, the National Youth Council of Moldova was supported to conduct the national "Youth for Sustainable Development Goals" campaign, which resulted in a complementary report presenting the opinions of young people regarding the implementation of the SDGs. A VNR Lab was established to share Moldova's experience in the elaboration of the report.

focal points and communication on events/documents shared with the entire UNCT. Beyond these processes, the RCO has supported the achievement of SDGs through all its functions.

4.3.3. Programme Planning and Implementation

This section examines the way in which UN agencies have planned and implemented jointly under the PFSD (M&E and reporting were reviewed in the previous section). The degree to which agencies are capable of planning and implementing jointly is an indication of efficiency due to lower transactions costs for both agencies and counterparts, avoidance of overlaps, better sharing of practices and lessons, greater specialization and better use of comparative advantages, etc.

<u>Joint Planning</u>

UN agencies engaged by this evaluation identified the PFSD as a reference document for most of their programmatic work. However, drawing references to the PFSD when developing programme documents is not a strong indicator of alignment given that the PFSD framework is too broad (as was discussed in previous sections). In general, collaboration between the agencies is usually not coming from a common reading of the PFSD but from concrete opportunities for financing, joint actions and common interests. For the agencies, the most essential planning tools are their own planning frameworks, agreed with their line ministries and other counterparts. Furthermore, the agencies' programming timeframes as reflected above in the report overlap with each other and the PFSD, creating to a patchwork of plans that are not synchronized. Moreover, JWP components (activities, indicators and targets) are generally selected by individual agencies based on their own programmes rather than through a joint effort. This approach creates a siloed planning process, with individual agencies focused more on their own "country programme documents" and demands from their own headquarters than opportunities for joint delivery. Although not all activities and not even most activities need to be joint, as single agency work is just as valid as joint work, the planning process itself could benefit from a more joint approach. Another complicating factor is the fact that different government counterparts have their own planning processes which are not aligned with the agencies' planning approaches, further reinforcing siloes in the planning process. This is certainly a global challenge that applies to all UN programmes across the world.

Under these conditions, meaningful harmonized planning at the level of the PFSD is challenging. Complementarities could be strengthened to enable agencies to fully implement their mandate while working together. Participants of this evaluation pointed out the need for a greater role by the RGs on planning and, particularly, joint planning, rather than just monitoring and reporting, which is the case currently. Despite the structural challenges noted above, there are opportunities for improvement and stronger coordination in the planning process. At a fundamental level, the UNCT should promote a higher degree of awareness among UN staff members about the UN reform and its implications for joint delivery. The RCO is well-positioned to facilitate this process through some targeted training. Further, the agencies should interact, communicate and collaborate more effectively on the planning process. The role of results groups in planning should be strengthened to ensure that planning under the PFSD is not done as the sum of agency plans, but as a process that consolidates and integrates the efforts of the agencies. The number of annual meetings of result groups could increase to allow for more focus on planning. The RCO should become more involved in the facilitation of communications and flow of information among UN agencies on planning matters. The RCO should also keep track of agencies' planning processes and timelines, provide regular updates to agencies and identify opportunities for inter-agency consultations. The RCO could also facilitate a more harmonious alignment of UN planning processes with government planning approaches at the sectoral and national level. Also, agency staff mentioned the need for team building initiatives at the level of the UN, which could be organized by the RCO.

Joint Implementation

Overall, cooperation and coordination among agencies is more focused on information sharing and less targeted at the establishment of collaborative arrangements based on complementarities. Joint programmes show where cooperation among agencies is stronger on a programmatic level. Such programmes are implemented in the fields of human rights (particularly in the Transnistria region), prevention of HIV/AIDS, gender equality, strengthening of the National Statistical System, migration and local development, and climate change. In the current programme cycle, there has been increasing cooperation among agencies, especially during the formulation of CCA background papers and COVID-19 response.

Annex X shows the list of 21 joint programmes and initiatives in the current PFSD cycle. In relative terms, compared to other UNCTs, the number of joint programmes and initiatives is impressive, especially considering the small size of the country. The following are some key examples of joint programmes in the current PFSD cycle.

- UNDP has initiated a project under the Common Chapter on strengthening the Parliament's role in achieving a better gender equality in Moldova that was joined by UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women to address gender equality and needs of vulnerable groups that were strongly affected by COVID-19 pandemic. Although the agencies contribute modest core resources, the project marked a new phase in partnership with the Parliament on gender equality issues after a long pause caused by elections and following political tensions in the Parliament.
- IOM, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNDP and UNODC are implementing a Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in Transnistria Region. The program intends to foster commitment for human rights-oriented reforms in general and particularly in the area of disability, child's rights, Roma, rights of people living with and affected by HIV, rights of prisoners, and people in prisons, vulnerable women and rights of people who use drugs, facilitating the establishment of multidimensional cooperation, cross-river knowledge exchange and development based on best practices existing on both banks.
- FAO, IOM and ILO, with the support from SDG Fund, were engaged in the development of a project proposal on the establishment of Climate Change and Innovation Fund (CIIF) aimed at streamlining financing to address SDG agenda 2030 (among others, jobs creation, climate change adaptation and sustainable development) and to redirect remittances towards income-generating activities. Although the developed proposal was ultimately unsuccessful, the initiative laid the foundation for the future cooperation of the involved agencies on a topic that stands at the intersection of climate change and migration, which has been previously unexplored by the UNCT in Moldova and demonstrates an interest for innovation among UNCT members.
- UNDP, WHO, UNODC, UNFPA, UNICEF are implementing the UN Joint plan on HIV under the UBRAF (UNAIDS Unified Budget, Responsibility and Accountability) Framework.
- UNFPA and OHCHR are implementing a joint programme that targeting intergenerational dialogue and human rights mainstreaming into the university curricula.

It should also be noted that the agencies have attempted a larger number of other joint programmes, which have not materialized because of the lack of funding – these include initiatives in the area of SDG financing, integrated social protection, road safety, WASH in rural schools, and modernization and digitalization of the educational offer, among others. As can be seen from the table, the joint programmes have involved a multitude of agencies and covered a variety of thematic areas. Opportunities for more joint programming lie ahead in the area of COVID-19 response (which has already been the focus of UN's work in 2020 and 2021), and the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP) identifies many opportunities for multi-agency engagement, with more the one third of implemented and planned activities being joint initiatives. Although only a handful of the COVID-19 activities that have been implemented or are under implementation are joint in nature, more than three fifths of the planned ones are joint. In addition, even single-agency COVID-19 activities have been, generally, planned through a joint process.

The RCO has played an increasingly important role in encouraging UN agencies to become involved in joint programming. During 2020, the RCO has supported the UNCT in joint programming and resource mobilization by assisting with the development and drafting of about 14 joint projects proposals that were submitted to different donors and calls for proposals. Nine of these proposals were accepted and funded with a total amount of US$ 3.7 million. This is an outstanding achievement on the joint delivery front.

The UNCT has also developed a Joint Communications Strategy (2018-2022). Although it was designed at the same time and for the same period as PFSD, it was not fully aligned to the priorities of the PFSD. Consequently, in 2020, the RCO together with the UNCG updated the strategy to contribute to the achievement of the priorities set by the PFSD and presented it for approval to the UNCT. Based on the Communications Strategy, every year the UNCG under the leadership of RCO develops a Joint Communication Plan that includes all joint activities to be implemented by the UNCT. The plan includes an estimated budget needed for the envisaged communications. Both the plan and budget are presented to the UNCT for endorsement and contribution from each member of the UNCT to the common communication budget. This process allows focusing on the priorities of UNCT for the year to come in terms of communication and visibility and aligning them with the PFSD. So far, all planned activities have been successfully implemented. Also, the GTG has developed an action plan to implement the findings of the UNCT SWAP Gender Scorecard.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

In summary, RGs have been mainly concerned with the development of JWPs, mostly based on individual agency activities, monitoring indicators and providing input for reporting. There is a need to engage RGs more effectively in joint programming. Substantive discussions are taking place within thematic groups. The proliferation of thematic groups has increased the coordination burden, making it necessary to streamline and optimize this plethora of groups. Also, RCO capacities required for coordination are already stretched.

Cooperation and coordination among agencies have been more focused on information sharing and less targeted at the establishment of collaborative arrangements based on complementarities. In general, collaboration between the agencies is usually not coming from a common reading of the PFSD but from concrete opportunities for financing, joint actions and common interests. For the agencies, the most essential planning tools are their own planning frameworks, agreed with their line ministries and other counterparts. Nevertheless, the number of joint programmes and initiatives is impressive, especially considering the small size of the country. The RCO has played an increasingly important role in encouraging UN agencies to become involved in joint programming.

4.4. EFFICIENCY

The PFSD was motivated by the need to lower transaction costs and improve efficiencies under a joint cooperation framework with GoM. This section provides an assessment of the efficiency with which the PFSD resources has been mobilized and executed.

4.4.1. Resource Mobilization and Budget Execution

Resource Mobilization

The PFSD document envisaged the development of a joint Resource Mobilization and Partnerships Strategy (RMPS). The strategy was not produced until 2020, with formal approval by UNCT occurring in 2021.[78] The strategy was developed in close consultation with the UNCT. The strategy presents UNCT with several options to strengthen partnerships and increase resources available for UN programmes by leveraging additional financing for SDGs. The strategy outlines UN's commitments to abide to several principles and approaches in the process of joint resource mobilization and partnership building. The agreed upon principles are meant to streamline resource mobilization efforts, bring about greater efficiency and coordination and avoid unnecessary competition among agencies. The UNCT has developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for internal preparation of concepts and submission of project proposals when and if UNCT decides to apply to announced calls or other funding opportunities. The RMPS places the RGs in the driver's seat of strategy implementation. The RGs are responsible for resource mobilization, joint programming, monitoring and, where relevant, evaluation of the strategy. Given the significant delay, the RMPS has not yet been a relevant tool in the current programme cycle. Most of the actions identified in the strategy will likely not be implemented in the current cycle due to the limited time remaining till the end of the cycle.

Budget and Expenditure

Table 7 summarizes the PFSD Common Budgetary Framework for the period 2018-2020. As can be seen from the table, in 2018 the UN agencies collectively spent US$ 34.7 m, which was in line with the planned budget for the year (US$ 33.8 m). In 2019, the UN agencies collectively spent US$ 17.5 m, which was above the projected available resources (US$ 15 m) but below the planned budget for the year (US $33 m). In 2020, the total amount spent under the PFSD was US$ 24.4 m. This was about 80% of the US$ 30.5 m budgeted for the implementation of PFSD at the beginning of the programme cycle. However, another US$ 10.8 m was mobilized and spent under the COVID-19 SERP in 2020,[79] which brings the total amount spent by the UN system on activities included in both the regular annual joint workplans and the COVID-19 SERP to US$ 35 m. Overall, in the period 2018-2020 UN agencies have spent collectively an amount of US$ 76.6 m under regular programming and an additional US$ 10.8 m under SERP, which amount to a total of US$ 87.4 m. This represents about 56% of the total expenditure (US$ 156) envisaged in the PFSD document. This corresponds to the 60% of the programme timeline that had elapsed to the point of this evaluation (end of 2020).

As can be seen from Table 7 (below), the expenditure picture at the agency and output level is very diverse, with certain agencies/outputs outperforming expectations and others underperforming. In terms of the

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[78] The preparation of the strategy was already late before COVID-19 set in, but due to substantial work on the production of the SERP and the associated resource mobilization plan (almost US$ 20 m in 2020 for COVID-19), it was delayed from Q4 2020 to Q1 2021.

[79] As the pandemic evolved, a substantial part of UNCT activities and funding were diverted to COVID-19 related projects. In this context, the policy briefs developed on COVID-19 impact, response and recovery policies also contain several measures and elements of new financing mechanisms meant to respond to COVID impact and challenges, i.e. digital investments opportunities/portals for MSMEs, creation of partnerships with the business sector on Industry 4.0 initiatives to help Government leverage investments into digital infrastructure and innovative solutions, promotion of digitalization of public services, identification of financing instruments for green development, etc.

structure of expenditure, the first two outcome areas have seen largest expenditure. The table also shows the dominant role of UNDP in total expenditure, with UNICEF and IOM playing a major role in outcome area 4. Also, the table shows a decline in regular expenditure at the UN-level in 2019. The situation improved in 2020, however expenditures did not reach the 2018 level if the SERP-related expenditure, reflected in Table 8, is not taken into account. Based on the preliminary 2021 JWPs, expenditures are expected to return to 2018 levels. However, the UNCT should closely monitor this indicator moving forward, given observed fluctuations which may negatively affect results. Outcome 3 has consistently been underfunded or affected by implementation issues that have not allowed for the expenditure of funds as envisaged, with Outcome 1 also requiring further resource mobilization efforts.

The distribution of funding by SDG area is uneven. As reflected in Figure 7, over one-quarter of available resources were directed towards SDG 16 and another quarter were directed in roughly equal parts towards SDGs 5 and 8. Approximately 10% of resources were directed towards SDGs 3 and 9 each. Around 4-6% of resources were directed towards SDGs 6, 7 and 13. About 3% of resources were directed towards SDG 17. The remaining 10% of resources were directed towards the other seven SDGs.[80]

Analysing the data reflected in Figure 7 in conjunction with the information on the state of achievement of SDGs reflected in Figure 8 below, as reported in Moldova's Voluntary National Review, provides an understanding of how resources allocated under the PFSD have matched SDG needs. A significant share of resources has been directed towards SDG 16 and a moderate amount (relative to the overall budget) has been directed towards SDG 6, matching the need for strengthened support in these two areas. Considerable resources have also been directed towards SDGs 3, 5, 7 and 9 for which only moderate progress has been registered so far. However, consideration needs to be given to increasing support for SDGs 4, 10, 12 and 15, as well as SDGs 2 and 11 based on agencies' comparative advantages given the needs in these fields. Although resources have been directed towards SDGs 6, 7 and 9, they have been concentrated in a handful of activities, hence further consideration needs to be given to these SDGs as well.

Table 9 (below) shows the main development partners of the UN agencies that have provided the main funding for the activities under the PFSD. As can be seen from the table, sources of funding are well-diversified among a large number of bilateral and multilateral donors. IOM, UNDP, UNICEF and WHO stand out for a well-diversified funding base. The top five sources of funds in terms of the amount of resources made available for the implementation of the PFSD according to the information in JWPs are the EU, Sweden, Switzerland, the US and core funding. The distribution of resources by SDGs for the top five streams of funds is reflected in Figure 9 below, which also shows a diversity of areas supported.

It should be noted here that the aggregate figures presented in this section are based on totals provided by the agencies. Not all agencies report expenditure figures, which means that the amounts for all years may be higher. Furthermore, the provided information does not entirely match the information reported under JWPs, with

Figure 7: Distribution of UN Expenditure

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[80] SDG 14 is not relevant to Moldova.

discrepancies being especially significant for the 2018-2019 JWPs. Efforts have been made to address the mismatch in 2020. However, further attention is needed to this issue to ensure the completeness of JWPs and accuracy of the financial data, especially given that the JWP information is now made public on several UN websites and portals. As part of its accountability to the public, beneficiaries and donors, the UN system should track on a continued basis the financial resources it has mobilized and expended in Moldova. Going forward, the UN should establish a sound process for the collection of financial information from the agencies, its storage and analysis and effective reporting. The UN-Info provides a good platform for achieving this. The RCO should monitor the process on a continuous basis and provide the necessary training to the UN agencies based on the challenges they encounter.

Figure 8: State of Achievement of SDGs[81]

Figure 9: UN Expenditure by Top 5 Sources of Funding and SDGs

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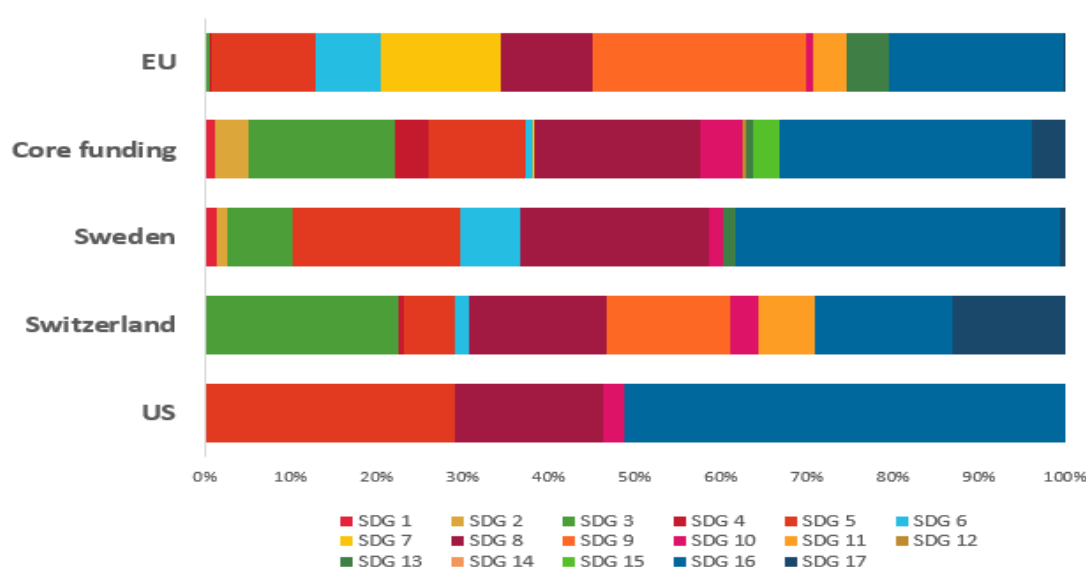
[81] Based on Moldova's Voluntary National Review.

Table 7: 2018-2022 PFSD Common Budgetary Framework[82]

Priority Area/ Outcome	Agency	2018		Indicative amount spent in 2018 in thousand US$*	2019		Indicative amount spent in 2019 in thousand US$*	2020		Indicative amount spent in 2020 in thousand US$***	Government Co-Financing Total for 2018-2020
		Indicative budget 2018 in thousand US$			Indicative budget 2019 in thousand US$			Indicative budget 2020 in thousand US$			
		Available	Funding gap		Available	Funding gap		Available	Funding gap		
Priority 1 area/outcome: Governance, human rights and gender equality	IOM	0	4,329	28	0	4,329	61	0	4,329	453	
	OHCHR	350	100	97	100	100	119	100	100	446	
	UN Women	450	700	708	450	700	701	450	500	991	
	UNDP	5,000	0	13,859	2,000	2,500	4,500	0	4,000	3,710	5,847
	UNFPA	80	100	120	80	100	289	80	100	58	467
	UNHCR	300	0	264	300	0	282	300	0	417	
	UNICEF	250	350	640	250	450	465	250	450	556	
	UNODC	210	350	10	180	300	50	160	200	-	
	FAO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	98	
	WHO	2	0	252	2	0	-	2	0	-	
	Total outcome 1	**6,642**	**5,929**	**15,977**	**3,362**	**8,479**	**6,467**	**1,342**	**9,679**	**6,729**	**6,314**
Priority 2 area/outcome: Sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth	ILO	50	50	213	50	50	573	50	50	340	
	IOM	0	1,000	0	0	1,000	0	0	1,000	89	
	ITC	200	0	-	200	0	160	200	0	150	
	UN Women	120	200	580	120	200	502	120	200	581	
	UNCTAD	80	300	-	80	300	102	80	300	-	
	UNDP	4,000	2,000	9,191	4,250	2,000	4,147	1,250	4,000	9,599	2,067
	UNECE	0	0	0	50	50	0	0	0	5	
	FAO	0	0	0	0	0	225	0	0	8	
	UNICEF	0	0	309	30	80	102	0	0	204	
	UNIDO	0	56	5	0	56	35	0	56	35	
	Total outcome 2	**4,450**	**3,606**	**10,298**	**4,780**	**3,736**	**5,846**	**1,700**	**5,606**	**11,011**	**2,067**
Priority 3 area/outcome: Environmental	FAO	600	1,000	368	600	1,000	378	600	1,000	120	247
	IAEA	170	0	252	80	0	-	0	0	358	
	UNDP	3,572	2,748	1,930	4,772	1,548	616	0	6,320	2,296	96
	UNECE	0	0	33	50	50	50	0	0	71	

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[82] COVID-19 SERP CBF is included in a separate table.

Priority Area/ Outcome	Agency	2018			2019			2020			Government Co-Financing Total for 2018-2020
		Indicative budget 2018 in thousand US$		Indicative amount spent in 2018 in thousand US$*	Indicative budget 2019 in thousand US$		Indicative amount spent in 2019 in thousand US$*	Indicative budget 2020 in thousand US$		Indicative amount spent in 2020 in thousand US$***	
		Available	Funding gap		Available	Funding gap		Available	Funding gap		
sustainability and resilience	UNEP	50	0	-	50	0	-	50	0	-	
	UNIDO	200	0	5	0	0	200	0	0	200	
	Total outcome 3	**4,592**	**3,748**	**2,588**	**5,552**	**2,598**	**1,244**	**650**	**7,320**	**3,045**	**343**
Priority 4 area/outcome: Inclusive and equitable social development	IAEA	66	0	775	44	0	-	0	0	354	
	ILO	10	0	53	10	0	0	10	0	-	
	IOM	400	1,335	1,365	0	1,735	1,140	0	1,735	83	
	OHCHR	300	100	116	100	100	81	100	100	94	
	UN Women	100	100	549	100	100	592	100	100	934	
	UNAIDS	90	50	90	40	50	54	150	50	211	
	UNDP	300	0	200	200	250	0	0	250	131	
	UNFPA	320	100	797	320	100	752	320	100	758	843
	UNICEF	250	500	1,530	250	500	1,249	250	500	688	4,870
	UNODC	100	500	110	0	300	90	0	200	78	
	WHO	200	0	208	200	0	-	200	0	323	
	Total outcome 4	**2,136**	**2,685**	**5,793**	**1,264**	**3,135**	**3,958**	**1,130**	**3,035**	**3,654**	**5,713**
	TOTAL UNPFSD	**17,820**	**15,968**	**34,657**	**14,958**	**17,948**	**17,515**	**4,822**	**25,640**	**24,439**	**14,437**

*Expenditure information as reported by agencies, otherwise based on JWPs.
Source: UNRCO

Table 8: COVID-19 SERP CBF

Priority Area/ Outcome	Agency	Indicative budget 2020 in thousands US$		Indicative amount spent in 2020 in thousands US$
		Available	Funding gap	
Pillar 1	UNICEF	0	0	0
	UNDP	941	0	54
	UNAIDS	17	0	17
	UNODC	23	0	11
	IAEA	98	0	98
	UNFPA	80	0	80
	WHO	6,103	0	6,503
	IOM	357	0	357
	UNRCO	32	0	32
	Total pillar 1	**7,651**	**0**	**7,152**
Pillar 2	IOM	99	0	99
	OHCHR	56	0	55
	UNFPA	425	0	425
	UN Women	590	0	496
	UNICEF	1,675	0	175
	Total pillar 2	**2,845**	**0**	**1,250**
Pillar 3	ILO	541	0	49
	UNDP	294	0	294
	UNECE	40	0	40
	Total pillar 3	**875**	**0**	**383**
Pillar 4	UNECE	20	0	17
	UNDRR	30	0	30
	UNICEF	938	0	1,788
	UN Women	269	0	114
	Total pillar 4	**1,257**	**0**	**1,949**
Pillar 5	UNRCO	6	0	6
	ILO	250	0	0
	UNODC	53	0	53
	Total pillar 5	**309**	**0**	**59**
TOTAL COVID-19 SERP		**12,937**	**0**	**10,793**

Source: UNRCO

Table 9: Contributing Partners

Legend: yellow = regular JWP; light blue = COVID-19 JWP; diagonal (yellow/blue) = both regular and COVID-19 JWP.

	FAO	IAEA	ILO	IOM	ITC	OHCHR	UN Women	UNAIDS	UNCTAD	UNDP	UNECE	UNEP	UNFPA	UNHCR	UNICEF	UNIDO	UNODC	WHO	UNDRR
Core funds	yellow	both	blue	yellow		both		both	yellow	both	both		both	yellow	both		blue	both	blue
Austria							blue			yellow			yellow		yellow			yellow	
BMG													yellow					yellow	
Denmark										yellow									
ENDAVA										blue			yellow						
ESPDG															yellow				
Estonia										blue									
European Union				both		yellow	yellow	both		both	yellow		yellow		both			yellow	yellow
GAVI																			
GCF	yellow																		
GEF	yellow									yellow									
Germany																		both	
GPE															blue				
India-UN Development Partnership Fund													yellow						
Japan							blue												
Korea																			
MDTF									yellow										
Moldova										yellow			yellow						
Montreal Protocol												yellow							
Netherlands				blue						yellow			yellow					both	
Norway				both						yellow									
Russia																			
Soros										blue									
Slovak Republic										yellow									
Sweden				yellow		both	both	yellow					yellow		yellow		yellow		
Switzerland				yellow						both					yellow			yellow	
UBRAF										yellow					both			yellow	
UHC Partnership																			
UN SG TF				blue			blue								blue			blue	
UNICEF MTSP WaSH															yellow				
UNICEF TCPF															yellow				
UNICEF TEF															yellow				
United States				yellow						yellow					both				
United Kingdom				both						both									

Legend:
- yellow — regular JWP
- light blue — COVID-19 JWP
- diagonal — both regular and COVID-19 JWP

Source: UNRCO

4.4.2. Operational Efficiencies

During interviews with Government officials and focus group discussions with civil society representatives and donors, several challenges were identified with regards to operational procedures of UN agencies.

Government officials were critical of the time lapse between reaching an agreement on a specific intervention and the actual launch of that intervention. While in some cases, the delays are related to resource mobilisation, interviewees reported that the inception phase of many interventions is much too long and often a result of delays in the recruitment process. Several concerns were also raised with regards to lengthy and complicated procedures for the recruitment of consultants, especially local consultants. From the participants' perspective, implementation delays are counterproductive in the backdrop of political instability, resulting in further postponement of some key reforms supported by the UN.

Civil society representatives corroborated in this regard by pointing out the lack of capacities to respond to calls for proposals as a serious challenge in engaging with UN agencies' work. This points to the need for greater capacity building support for the CSOs on the part of UN agencies on operational issues in order to increase the number and quality of proposals.

Another challenge identified in this evaluation has been the number of RC changes in this cycle. The first RC was in office when the PFSD was developed and continuing serving under the current programming cycle until April 2019. An acting RC was in place from April 2019 to October 2019. The current RC has been serving from October 2019 to present. The lack of a stable RC has affected certain processes such as the delay in the development of a resource mobilization strategy.

By contrast, the procurement system employed by UN agencies was held up by government counterparts for its efficiency. Due to the international character of operations and access to the global marketplace, evaluation participants praised the quality/price ratio ensured through UN procurement, a fact which was confirmed by financing partners during the focus group discussion. This has been particularly the case during the COVID-19 response which necessitated quick access to much needed medical supplies and equipment. Evaluation participants also noted that UN procurement has stimulated local production through prioritized sourcing of local goods.

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In summary, although an important instrument of join delivery, the RMPS has not yet been a relevant tool in the current programme cycle due to its late preparation. Total expenditure under the PFSD has amounted to a total of US$ 87 m, which represents about 56% of the total amount of expenditure (US$ 156) envisaged in the PFSD document. This corresponds to the 60% of the programme timeline that had elapsed to the point of this evaluation (end of 2020). As for operational efficiencies, delays in the recruitment process affect the quality of delivery. Also, the frequent change in RCO's leadership has contributed to some delays, such as the preparation of the RMPS.

4.5. SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a flexible concept that may be assessed in various ways. The agencies engaged in this evaluation believe that some of the changes they have introduced in partnership with their national counterparts have been sustained, particularly those supported by legislative acts. The collaborative approach has been maintained through most projects and has promoted sustainability. Some agencies reported preparing exit strategies at the end of their projects in close consultation with national counterparts to ensure that there is continuity for the actions started under the project. Overall, many of the achievements reviewed in the "Main Contributions" section of this report have been sustained over time.

However, there are several aspects of sustainability that require greater attention from the UN system as a whole. In the rest of this section, the focus will be on two key factors of sustainability: i) sustainability of programme funding; and, ii) meaningful engagement of partners.

4.5.1. Sustainability of Funding

The limited availability and sustainability of development finance for the country emerged as one of the main challenges identified by participants of this evaluation. Due to its recent reclassification as an upper-middle-income country, Moldova may experience a decline in development funds. At the same time, core funding from the UN agencies has remained limited and insufficient to meet the demand that the agencies face for their services.

Despite these challenges, there are opportunities and good examples related to financing. Table 7 in the Efficiency section summarized the co-financing provided by the Government for joint activities with UN agencies. For the three years in question, government co-financing has amounted to a total of about US$ 14.5 m across all outcome areas and has been primarily generated by UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA. Co-financing is a positive factor of sustainability because it indicates not only genuine interest from government counterparts, but also places the respective activities on more sustainable foundations. Going forward, given Moldova's upper-middle-income status and the potential decline in ODA associated with that status, co-financing may become an important source of funding for UN activities. On the basis of existing experience, government co-financing could be pursued more systematically and could become an integral part of UN's resource mobilization strategy.

Going forward, the UN system needs to expand its financial capacity to respond to the demands of national partners for support and expertise. Partnerships with IFIs and private sector financing were identified by respondents as an opportunity that should be further pursued. The UN should also explore in a systematic and well-coordinated fashion opportunities for partnerships with IFIs. Key potential partners in the region could be the EIB, EBRD and possibly the WB. UN agencies in countries in the region such as Ukraine and Armenia have created some good examples of implementation of IFI loans. The UN should also explore more systematically additional partnerships with the private sector. Different models and incentives that have worked elsewhere could be explored for this.

4.5.2. Engagement of Government Partners

The engagement of the GoM with the UN under the PFSD framework is a key factor of the sustainability of the latter because government ownership of joint activities ensures the durability of the results. The Government's focal point for the PFSD in the current programme cycle has been the State Chancellery. In 2018, the responsibility for the general coordination of foreign assistance was transferred to the Ministry of Finance, including (from 2019) the coordination of technical assistance.[83] Accordingly, the State Chancellery requested the Ministry of Finance to take over the coordination of the UN portfolio, including

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[83] GD 377/2018 on the regulation of the institutional framework and the mechanism of coordination and management of external assistance and GD 458/2019 on measures to improve the efficiency of such mechanisms.

the development of the new PFSD 2023-2027.[84] By a mutual agreement with the Ministry of Finance, the State Chancellery remained the main government counterpart for the PFSD evaluation. The letter also remained responsible for national policy coordination processes.

According to the survey with government officials answered by 26 civil servants, the majority of government entities engage in project implementations and benefit from capacity building activities and support in policy formulation. Although staff turnover in the public sector is often mentioned by government counterparts as a concern for the sustainability of results, institutional memory is relatively strong. Around 50% of surveyed officials have engaged with UN agencies for more than 5 years and another third between 2 and 5 years.[85] Also, according to the survey, 70% of civil servants recognize that the PFSD promotes ownership of UN programmes by the Government and 78% considered that PFSD results are sustainable given the financial resources mobilized so far.

In interviews and focus group discussions, the sustainability of UN programme results was occasionally questioned. In particular, participants noted that government entities often fail to scale nation-wide the initiatives that are piloted with the support of the UN. This was mentioned by the UN agencies and financing partners alike, but also acknowledged by the Government officials. The basic assumption behind pilots is that successful initiatives will be replicated, scaled up and institutionalized. The idea is that UN agencies are not in the business of themselves solving problems, but helping national counterparts identify feasible solutions to development challenges. Crucial for the scaling up of pilots is that their design include a clear plan for what is expected from the pilot initiative and how they are expected to be replicated. Another challenge is that information about pilots and replication is not easily available. More information on this will be useful not only for the UN, but also for national partners and donors.

The UN has contributed to the development of a range of policies across key sectors. The most important contributions were outlined in the section on UN's "Main Contributions". Effectuating changes in formal policies or laws is important for sustainability, because they create obligations for governmental and societal actors. But just a law or policy is often not enough - what ultimately matters is getting those laws and policies implemented effectively. While many laws and policies are already in place – and some of them of good quality – not everything gets fully implemented. The lack of implementation is a great challenge for the sustainability of UN's work. This tends to be the case especially when Government partners lack capacity for implementation. A particular challenge is implementation in so-called "cross-cutting" areas.[86] Participants of this evaluation noted that line ministries that were unaffected by the public sector reorganisation in 2017[87] seem to have better implementation capabilities. Going forward, UN agencies need to address the capacity of Government entities for implementation. Implementation also necessitates concrete actions plans that spell out specific actions to be undertaken to ensure implementation. Implementation also requires funds to carry out the required activities. Actions have to be linked to specific

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[84] In fact, the UN has been the only development partner in Moldova for whom the government focal point has been the State Chancellery and not the Ministry of Finance.

[85] There is clearly a degree of self-selection bias in the survey, as Government officials most exposed to work of UN agencies might have been more willing to answer the survey.

[86] For example, in the area of gender equality the following challenges persist: mismatch between existing national commitments on Gender Equality (GE) set in the Law n. 5/2006 et seq amendments and the national strategy on GE, lack of integration of those priorities in the national processes of policy making and budgeting, the lack of effective institutional mechanisms for the implementation of these commitments (Government committee on GE was suspended in 2017 and not re-established), as well as lack of financial commitments/contributions for their implementation.

[87] Seven ministries were liquidated in 2017 with their mandates being absorbed by the remaining nine ministries. Additional burden in three ministries which 'benefitted' from new mandates (specifically the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment) was not matched by staff increases and their capacities deteriorated. Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure also acquired new mandates in the field of information technology and communication and road infrastructure, however, the drop in the level of capacity was not evident there.

budget allocations from the public budget. Thus, policy making needs to be linked to the public financial management system, which necessitates engagement with budgeting processes and the Ministry of Finance.

Overall, to address the challenge of sustainability, the UN should track the performance of pilots over time – the lessons they generate during the piloting stage and the extent to which they get replicated and scaled up. As part of the monitoring system, the UN should seek to track pilot initiatives over time and after a pilot's lifetime. The UN should document more effectively results, lessons, experiences, and good practices and share them more widely. The UN should take a more systematic approach to policy-making by paying particular attention to the issue of implementation. Policy development should be clearly linked to public budgets. The UN should also strengthen the systems that track implementation results, rather than inputs/outputs and assess more rigorously the sustainability of achievements. The UN should support the implementation capabilities of the governments and not act as a substitute for governments' shortcomings in implementation.

4.5.3. Engagement of Non-governmental Partners

Civil Society

The UN system in Moldova has been open to the engagement of CSOs in its activities. More than one-third of UN activities in 2020 involved CSOs as - partners. The activities that included these organizations as partners mainly focused on the promotion of gender equality and human rights, youth empowerment, active ageing, ending violence against women and children, strengthening the justice system, child protection and health education. In addition to the engagement of CSOs in programme implementation, UN agencies consult CSOs when developing their plans, programmes (e.g. SERP, CCA, Gender Assessment, ToC on disability inclusion, UNRPD proposal, Migration Trust Fund proposal, etc.) and advocacy interventions. During the COVID-19 emergency response, the UN actively engaged CSOs on project identification and preparation. For the elaboration of the Common Country Analysis CCA, more than 36 CSOs were engaged and contributed with relevant information to identify key barriers and challenges vulnerable groups are facing. With their support, the UNCT was able to identify 13 vulnerable groups. For the elaboration of the ToC on disability inclusion, the UNCT conducted consultations with CSOs to understand barriers in five key areas.

Beyond these consultations, there are no formal structures for the engagement of the UNCT as a whole with CSOs. One isolated example is the AYAP which was established by the UNCT in 2020 to serve as a bridge between the UN and the local youth organizations in the UN's efforts to reach a wider audience of young people. The UNCT is expected to meet with AYAP twice a year to discuss AYAP's work plan and hear about their development priorities. However, for a broader and more systematic engagement of civil society with the UN system in Moldova it will be necessary to establish more formal and solid structures of engagement. One suggestion that was provided by civil society representatives participating in interviews for this evaluation was for the UNCT to enable the participation of civil society representatives in RG meetings either as members or as observers. Such a step will enrich the quality of the discussions in these groups and will also generate more effective coordination with this important section of the development community in the country.

Private Sector

Another important section of the society that plays a crucial role in the country's development process is the private sector. Although the UNCT has made some progress in involving private sector companies in its activities (e.g. Orange, Moldcell, Metro, Endava, Premier Energy, etc.), the overall engagement of the private sector by the UN system under the UNPDF has been limited to 20 or so initiatives. One area where the UN has focused in its engagement with the private sector in this cycle has been the promotion of Women's Empowerment Principles. The UN and the Chamber of Commerce selected five companies in 2020 for the promotion of gender-responsive family policies. Additionally, ICT companies were included

in initiatives aimed at promoting the engagement of women and girls in STEM. Also, in spite of several successful partnerships aiming to promote environmentally-friendly practices in the private sector, others have failed to materialise in the current PFSD cycle. In particular, plans are in place to improve the capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises in applying Resource Efficient Cleaner Production, as well as to facilitate the ecological value-chain and product innovation.

Challenges remain in the engagement of the private sector in the PFSD implementation, especially when it comes to large initiatives. First, the private sector is generally weak and has limited financial capacity to contribute to social or environmental causes. As such, it does not represent significant potential as a source of funding for the UN programme. Furthermore, about 40% of business operations are estimated to be in the "shadow economy", with sustainable development and other "non-core" principles not being a priority for them. Political instability has created a lack of confidence and interest in the private sector on impact investing. There is also a lack of capacity, both in GoM and the private sector, for engagement in public-private partnerships and a lack of financial incentives and regulations for capital flows in support of development activities. Furthermore, there is an absence of incentives for companies to engage in sustainable business practices. Another factor is insufficient awareness of the opportunities for the private sector to engage in the implementation of the SDG agenda.

For all these challenges, the involvement of the private sector should get greater attention in the UN's next development cooperation framework – both in terms of making businesses more "friendly" to the sustainable development agenda and also tapping on private sector resources for development programming. The UN and GoM should identify ways for channelling the resources and contributions of the private sector more effectively towards the country's development objectives. A key instrument for engagement with the private sector is the joint resource mobilization and partnerships strategy that was developed and approved by UNCT recently. The strategy outlines several options for engaging the private sector that can be explored further. It also outlines internal mechanisms for the UNCT to engage in joint programming and partnerships building, including with the private sector. It will also be important for the UN to work with the GoM on the creation of incentives for private sector engagement in development activities. One option that could be considered as a way of furthering partnerships with the private sector could be PPP schemes and strengthening the capacities of governmental and non-governmental actors to engage with them. The Global Compact could be another platform for furthering the engagement of companies in sustainable development initiatives at the country level.

4.5.4. Engagement of Development Partners

Moldova's development partners play a key role in financing the country's development initiatives. UN agencies are key implementers of development projects financed by bilateral and multilateral development agencies. Based on the JWP data, between 2018-2020, approximately 80% of budgeted resources for the implementation of the PFSD represented the contributions of development partners.

The UN system is also a key contributor of development effectiveness and coordination in the country. The UN system engages with Development Partners (DPs) through the monthly DPs' Meetings which are formally chaired by the UN RC and the WB Country Manager. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the DP meetings became an important platform for the donor community to discuss the rapidly evolving situation on the ground and coordinate the response efforts. Key government representatives were invited to the meetings to ensure that efforts were coordinated across government, donors and UN agencies.

In addition to the DP meetings, the RCO has supported the government in identifying the needs of the country in the context of the pandemic, facilitated the matching of those needs with donor resources by sharing the list of needs broadly with the donor community, and created a system to monitor procurements of equipment and supplies across partners. At the strategic level, donor coordination has taken place through bilateral discussions between the RC and heads of development offices in the country. At a technical level, coordination has also been ensured by the development coordination officers, based on their areas of

responsibility. For example, the Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Officer has engaged with donors as part of the coordination of Multi Donor Trust Fund processes.

The UNCT has opportunities for a greater role in development effectiveness. The UN system can further support the government in improving its coordination capabilities. With the transfers of development effectiveness responsibilities from the State Chancellery to the Ministry of Finance, there is an opportunity to assist the Ministry of Finance in strengthening its capabilities in this area. Furthermore, in their respective sectors, the agencies can play a major role in the coordination of development assistance, taking into account existing coordination platforms.[88] There are also opportunities for stronger cooperation with the IFIs in the areas covered by the PFSD to ensure complementarity and greater development impact.

<p align="center">*   *   *</p>

In summary, the Republic of Moldova is bound to experience a decline in donor interest due to the country's high-middle-income status. At the same time, core funding from the UN agencies has remained limited – as in all other countries with a UN programme. Government co-financing has been a good example of sustainable funding in this programme cycle, but the agencies will have to further diversify their funding base through partnerships with IFIs and the private sector.

A challenge to the sustainability of UN-supported initiatives is that government entities often fail to scale them at the national level. Crucial for the scaling up of pilots is that their design include a clear plan for what is expected from the pilot initiative and how they are expected to be replicated. Another challenge is that information about pilots and replication is not easily available. More information on this will be useful not only for the UN, but also for national partners and donors. Weak policy implementation (of what exists on paper) is another significant challenge for the sustainability of UN's work. This tends to be the case especially when Government partners lack capacity for implementation. Going forward, UN agencies need to address the capacity of Government partners for implementation. Implementation also necessitates actions plans that spell out specific actions to be undertaken to ensure implementation. Implementation also requires funds to carry out the required activities. Actions have to be linked to specific budget allocations from the public budget.

With regards to engagement of non-governmental partners, although civil society and the private sector have been enabled to play a role in the current cooperation framework, there is potential for greater and more systematic engagement with both these actors. There are also opportunities for a greater role of the UN in development effectiveness by further supporting the Government in improving its development coordination capabilities.

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[88] At the request of development partners, the work of sectoral councils was relaunched in line with GD 458/2019. However, sectoral councils and the Development Partners' Forum (organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance) have not convened on a regular basis because of the COVID-19 pandemic and political instability. However, the Ministry of Finance has been coordinating development cooperation activities bilaterally and has been participating in the Development Partners Meetings organized by the UN and the WB.

5. CONCLUSION

This PFSD evaluation has assessed key aspects of the collective effort of the UN system in Moldova and its national counterparts towards the achievement of the country's development priorities and SDGs. The report provides a summary of the UN's main achievements in the country and key challenges encountered by the UN system and its partners have.

As far as relevance is concerned, the PFSD has been relevant – it has been aligned with national priorities and responsive to the country's needs. One main feature of the PFSD has been its focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups – children, youth, older people, migrants and refugees, Roma, women, persons with disabilities, people at social risk or/and with health challenges, vulnerable farmers, etc. Such focus has enabled the UN to be largely compliant with the "LNOB" principle that underpins the work of the UN globally. The PFSD has also been responsive to the country's changing context and situation. UN's current programme cycle coincided with the global COVID-19 crisis. As everywhere, the pandemic has had a profound impact for Moldova and, as such, it has shaped the latter part of the UN programme and will continue to shape it for years to come. The UN was quick in identifying emerging priorities through the SERP, whose formulation was approached by the agencies as a genuinely collective exercise undertaken under the UNCT framework, rather than as an exercise by individual agencies. The plan was based on multiple assessments of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, conducted through a vulnerability lens. SERP was exemplary – well-formulated, action-oriented, costed, timely, evidence-based and well-coordinated by RCO. The COVID-19 response was guided by the "leave no one behind" principle, focusing on the needs of vulnerable populations. Solidarity by development partners provided an opportunity to mobilize additional resources for SERP's implementation.

As far as effectiveness is concerned, the UN has provided significant contributions in the respective outcome areas of governance, human rights and gender equality; sustainable, equitable and inclusive economic growth; environmental sustainability and resilience; and, inclusive and equitable social development. More than 60% of outcome targets set at the beginning of the programme have been either fully or partially achieved. In the area of governance, human rights and gender equality (Outcome 1) PFSD implementation was highly effective with all the outcome targets being achieved fully or partially. At the same time, in the area of sustainable, equitable and inclusive economic growth (Outcome 2) and in the area of inclusive and equitable social development (Outcome 4), the effectiveness was lower, with only half of the targets being achieved fully or partially. Lagging behind is the area environmental sustainability and resilience (Outcome 3) where only 40% of the targets where achieved. This report has provided a broad overview of the achievements and challenges in the respective outcome areas. Going forward, the UNCT needs to strengthen the data infrastructure, including data aggregation mechanisms, operability of the UN-Info system, definition of indicators, baselines, targets, etc. There is also a need to strengthen the capabilities of the joint results groups to identify and analyse outcome and output indicators, plan interventions, etc.

With regards to coherence, the performance of inter-agency coordination mechanisms has been mixed. While individually UN agencies maintain good cooperation with their national partners, cooperation at the UNCT-GoM level needs to be further strengthened. The challenges of joint implementation as "One UN" are significant. Most of them result from structural challenges that are global in nature and go way beyond what is under the control of the UNCT in Moldova. However, achieving incremental improvements in joint coordination within the boundaries of what is possible given the present set up of the global system is important. Some important steps have already been taken to strengthen inter-agency cooperation, especially with strengthening of the RCO, the development of the coordination infrastructure and some high-profile joint programmes that have been profiled in this report. However, there remain untapped opportunities for strengthening inter-agency cooperation which can be tapped more effectively. Going forward, RGs should engage more effectively in joint programming. The proliferation of thematic groups has increased the

coordination burden, making it necessary to streamline and optimize this plethora of groups. Also, RCO capacities required for coordination are already stretched.

With regards to efficiency, the total expenditure under the PFSD has amounted to US$ 87 m, representing about 56% of the total expenditure (US$ 156) envisaged in the PFSD document. This corresponds to the 60% of the programme timeline that had elapsed to the point of this evaluation (end of 2020). Several challenges related to the operational procedures of UN agencies remain. One is the prolonged procedure for the launching of projects by the agencies. While in some cases, the delays are related to resource mobilization, the inception phase of many interventions is too long and often a result of delays in the recruitment process. Several concerns were also raised with regards to lengthy and complicated procedures for the recruitment of consultants, especially local consultants. Also, the frequent change in RCO's leadership has contributed to some delays. By contrast, the procurement system employed by UN agencies was held up by government counterparts for its efficiency.

With regards to sustainability, key challenges facing UN agencies are the potential downward trend of ODA available for Moldova due to its upper-middle-income status and core funding of UN agencies. To address these challenges, government co-financing and partnerships with IFIs and the private sector could be pursued more systematically and could become an integral part of UN's resource mobilization strategy. Another challenge to the sustainability of UN-supported pilot initiatives is the failure to scale them at the national level. The lack of a clear plan for scaling up is often the main reason for such failures. Weak policy implementation (of what exists on paper) is another significant challenge for the sustainability of UN's work. Going forward, UN agencies need to focus more on the capacity of Government partners for scaling and implementation. Scaling up and implementation necessitate actions plans that spell out specific actions to be undertaken to ensure implementation. They also necessitate funds, with specific actions linked to specific budget allocations from the public budget. With regards to engagement of non-governmental partners, although civil society and the private sector have been enabled to play a role in the current cooperation framework, there is potential for greater and more systematic engagement with both these actors. There are also opportunities for a greater role of the UN in development effectiveness by further supporting the Government in improving its development coordination capabilities.

The COVID-19 crisis presented significant challenges for the UN system, as for all other development actors in the country. However, it also created an opportunity for the UN agencies to rally together in response as one body – a real embodiment of the "One UN" approach. As has been noted in this report, UN's response was developed on the basis of extensive research on the impacts of COVID-19 across a range of areas of direct interest to the UN. These initiatives undertaken in response to COVID-19 represent not only good examples of a quick and collective response by the UN system as a whole, but also provide good foundations for the development of the upcoming UN development cooperation framework, and more importantly its implementation in an integrated fashion.

This evaluation also provides an opportunity for drawing some important lessons from the experience of the UNCT with the current programme. The following are a couple of key lessons from the perspective of the evaluators.

Lesson 1: A key lesson that can be drawn from the experience of the UNCT in this programme cycle is that close cooperation between UN agencies can emerge when the right incentives for cooperation are in place. In this case, the onset of the COVID-19 crisis and the clear guidance from HQ, coupled with the availability of rapid funding, created the right incentives for the agencies to rally together under the coordination of the RCO and produce a strong SERP and a range of other assessments that provide solid foundations for developing a synchronized and well-coordinated response in the upcoming programme cycle. The structure of funding is a critical factor in rallying UN agencies to work together. The fragmented nature of UN funding is a serious shortcoming that impedes joint implementation. However, the COVID-19 crisis served as a rallying factor for UN agencies by combining joint funding with a joint purpose for the UN agencies.

Going forward, it will be important to maintain this spirit of cooperation and extend it to the planning and implementation of the new programme.

Lesson 2: Another lesson that may be drawn from this evaluation is that more coordination mechanisms is not necessarily better. UNCT in Moldova has been very active in creating new inter-agency coordination groups – and that effort deserves praise. However, too many groups become cumbersome for coordination and they defeat the purpose of their establishment. What is more important than the number of coordination mechanisms is having a structure that is lean and agile and that does not impose on the agencies' high transaction costs (especially for agencies with a limited number of staff in the country). Going forward, it will be important for the UNCT to streamline the existing coordination infrastructure by identifying groups that could be merged or repurposed to operate more efficiently.

The following section of this report presents several key recommendations for the attention of UNCT. These recommendations are derived from discussions with stakeholders engaged in the course of this evaluation and are meant to strengthen coordination and collaboration within the UN family and between the UN and national partners. Some of them are framed in broad terms, leaving it to the UNCT to find the most suitable models and approaches for their operationalization.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evidence, analysis and findings presented throughout this report, this evaluation provides the following recommendations for the consideration of the UN agencies and their counterparts (governmental and non-governmental).

RECOMMENDATION 1
Streamline the intervention logic and the results framework

1.1 For the upcoming CF, UNCT and GoM should develop a less complicated and well-defined results framework, with baselines and targets to ensure better measurements of UN contribution to the results.
Selected indicators will require reliable longitudinal data and disaggregation by sex, age, location (rural/urban), etc. The outcome levels indicators should be aligned to the SDG nationalised indicators. The number of output indicators should be pared to a manageable level and meet the SMART criteria.

1.2 UNCT should strengthen the capabilities of the joint results groups to identify and analyse outcome and output indicators, plan interventions, etc.
UNCT should organize joint trainings on RBM matters, which could be coordinated by the RCO.

1.3 UN agencies should seek to the extent possible to coordinate and harmonize their assessment and evaluative initiatives.

1.4 The UNCT should establish a sound monitoring process for the financial flows and ensure effective financial reporting.
As part of its accountability to the public, beneficiaries and donors, the UN system should track on a continued basis the financial resources it has mobilized and expended as a whole. The UN should establish a sound process for the collection of financial information from the agencies, its storage and analysis and effective reporting. The UN-INFO provides a good platform for achieving this. The RCO should monitor the process on a continuous basis and provide the necessary training to the UN agencies based on the challenges they encounter.

RECOMMENDATION 2
Strengthen inter-agency cooperation

2.1 The UNCT should review existing inter-agency coordination structures with a view to streamlining the joint groups and strengthening their performance.
All agencies should engage more effectively with the joint coordination mechanisms – they should allocate the necessary resources and staff time to the UN coordination process. Streamline the coordination architecture of inter-agency thematic groups that currently exist. Redesign the joint structures to allow for the participation of government counterparts in the joint structures. Assess options for engaging civil society more effectively with the results groups and/or the thematic groups.

2.2 Agencies should interact, communicate and collaborate more effectively on the planning process.
Redesign the mandate and functionality of the Results Groups to enable them to engage more effectively with planning and joint programming as opposed to monitoring and reporting. Their role

in planning should be strengthened to ensure that planning under the PFSD is not done as the sum of agency plans, but as a process that consolidates and integrates the efforts of the agencies. The number of annual meetings of result groups could increase to allow for more focus on planning.

2.3 The RCO role in the planning process needs to be enhanced so as to contribute to the harmonisation of planning and facilitate communication and flow of information among UN agencies on planning matters.
The RCO should also keep track of agencies' planning processes and timelines, provide regular updates to agencies and identify opportunities for inter-agency consultations. The RCO could also facilitate a more harmonious alignment of UN planning processes with government planning approaches at the sectoral and national levels.

2.4 The UNCT should promote joint programming by identifying and institutionalizing incentives for the agencies to engage in joint programmes.
RCO could supplement this process with training for agency staff on modalities and approaches of joint programming. The UNCT should promote a higher degree of awareness among UN staff members about the UN reform and its implications for joint delivery – i.e. key elements of the reform, its objectives, what it means for cooperation and joint implementation on the ground, etc. The RCO is well-positioned to facilitate this process through targeted training. The UNCT should organize team-building activities at the UN level with participation of multiple agencies, mixed teams etc.

RECOMMENDATION 3
Enhance programmatic moving forward

3.1 The joint UN-GoM response to the challenges that have emerged from the COVID-19 crisis should be central to and fully embraced by the upcoming cooperation framework.
PFSD's JWPs and SERP became two parallel processes in 2020, with SERP taking a prominent role in programming. In the new cooperation framework, the two streams will need to be fully integrated into one framework under a single strategic document with a single results framework.

3.2 The UNCT, in cooperation with the GoM, should explore joint support for national partners in the key areas identified by stakeholders of this evaluation and as a result of the analysis of performance under the current PFSD.
Specifically, the following areas of support identified by key stakeholders should be given consideration: anti-corruption, digitalization, migration, job creation, national capacity building, human rights, healthcare, environmental sustainability, rural development, green economy and infrastructure as well as areas for which progress has been limited under the PFSD, while ensuring alignment with national development priorities. Further, consideration should be given for increasing support for SDGs 4, 5, 10, 12 and 15, as well as SDGs 2 and 11 based on agencies' comparative advantages. Although resources have been directed towards SDGs 6, 7 and 9, they have been concentrated in a handful of activities, hence further consideration should be given to these SDGs as well.

3.3 In the upcoming CF, the UNCT should mainstream gender across programmes through targeted interventions and resource allocations.
UNCT should consider a twin track approach to GE in the next UNSDCF: 1) A separate result area focusing on GM in policy making and budgeting, including strengthening institutional mechanisms to GE; and 2) Mainstreaming gender equality perspective across all the priority thematic areas, in line with CEDAW recommendations as well as the GE scorecard recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 4
Step up resource mobilization

4.1 Results Groups should track the implementation of Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy.

4.2 The UNCT should implement a more coordinated approach towards resource mobilization.
Agencies should approach resource mobilization in a more coordinated fashion by being more cooperative with each other under the PFSD framework. RCO should step up its role in coordinating resource mobilization among agencies by ensuring that agency efforts are harmonized and not creating overlaps.

4.3 The UNCT should seek to diversify and strengthen its partnerships for financing development work.
Government co-financing should be pursued more systematically at the level of the UNCT and should become an integral part of UN's resource mobilization strategy. UNCT should also explore joint implementation opportunities with IFIs active in the areas covered by the PFSD to leverage their resources.

RECOMMENDATION 5
Step up engagement with the civil society and private sector

5.1 The UNCT should strengthen its engagement with civil society.
It will be important to have a more coherent approach at the UN level, across agencies, for how support to civil society, especially capacity building assistance, is designed and delivered. The UN should explore the harmonised approach to channel the support to build the capacity and network of civil society. The UNCT should explore possibilities for engaging the civil society more systematically in the UN joint coordination structures and make greater efforts in consulting civil society in UN-led processes.

5.2 The UNCT should step up its engagement with the private sector to ensure that private sector resources are deployed more effectively towards the solution of development problems.
Options for engagement include further identifying potential partners among private companies with strong social responsibility, building new partnerships with environment-friendly private companies, further using partnerships with private companies to promote women's empowerment, including though WEP, and promoting the PPP model in the public sector.

RECOMMENDATION 6
Strengthen tracking of pilots and focus on policy implementation

6.1 The UN should track the performance of pilots over time – the lessons they generate during the piloting stage and the extent to which they get replicated and scaled up.
As part of the monitoring system, the UN should seek to track pilot initiatives over time and after a pilot's lifetime. The UN should document more effectively results, lessons, experiences, and good practices and share them more widely.

6.2 The UN should take a more systematic approach to policymaking by paying particular attention to the issue of using evidence in policy drafting and implementation.
Policy development should be clearly linked to public budgets. The UN should also strengthen the systems that track policy implementation results, rather than inputs/outputs and assess more rigorously the sustainability of achievements. The UN should support the implementation capabilities of the government and not act as a substitute for government' shortcomings in implementation.