

**UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK
FOR SERBIA (2016-2020)**

FINAL EVALUATION

Final Report

DR. RASTISLAV VRBENSKY

DR. MARIJA BABOVIC

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List of Acronyms

AP	Autonomous Province
BOS	Business Operating Strategy
CBGE	Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of Serbia
CEDAW	The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPD	Country Programme Document
CPE	Country Programme Evaluation
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DaO	Delivering as One
DPF	Development Partnership Framework
DRF	Development Results Framework
EC	European Commission
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EMG	Evaluation Management Group
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ESC	Evaluation Steering Committee
ET	Evaluation team
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse gases
GoS	Government of the Republic of Serbia
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPHS	Institute for Public Health of Serbia
JNSC	Joint National Steering Committee
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual and Intersexed
LSG	Local Self-Government
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MEI	Ministry of European Integration
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
MoAEP	Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection
MoERD	Ministry of Economy and Regional Development
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoLEVSA	Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs
MoME	Ministry of Mining and Energy
MP	A member of parliament
NAD	National Priorities for International Assistance
NAP	Republic of Serbia Plan of Action for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Improving and Promoting Gender Equality 2016-2020
NGO	A non-governmental organization

NPAA	National Programme for the adoption of the EU acquis
OECD DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PSSPDGE	Provincial Secretariat for Social Policy, Demography and Gender Equality
RBM	Result based management
RCO	Resident Coordinator Office
RFP	Request for proposal
RSPP	Republic Secretariat for Public Policies
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SILC	Statistics on Income and Living Condition
SIPRU	Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit
SORS	Statistical Office of Republic of Serbia
TBD	To be determined
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UFE	Utilization-Focused Evaluation
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
the UNCT	UN Country Team
the UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UNDOCO	UN Development Operations Coordination Office
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNW PP	UN Women Programme Presence Office
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VNR	Voluntary national report
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

The Government of the Republic of Serbia (GoS) and the United Nations Country Team in Serbia have jointly developed a medium-term strategic planning document **the United Nations Development Partnership Framework (DPF) for Serbia 2016-2020** that was finalized and signed on 30 May 2017. The DPF was signed by the Government of the Republic of Serbia and nineteen UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes active in the country. The framework articulates a collective vision and response of the UN development system to national development priorities and activities to be implemented in partnership with the GoS and in close cooperation with the municipalities, civil society, international partners, academia and private sector until 2020. The joint implementation of DPF was envisioned through the establishment of the Joint National Steering Committee (JNSC) for strategic guidance and oversight and five Results Groups (RGs) with the task of preparing and implementing 2-year joint work plans to be signed between the UN and GoS. The Theory of Change (ToC) was not explicitly presented in the DPF. The DPF intervention logic is based on the situation analysis depicting main developmental challenges in five priority areas: governance and rule of law, social and human resources development, economic development, growth and employment, environment, climate change and resilient communities and in the area of culture and development. The outcomes expected from cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the UNCT, international and civil society partners were grouped into five strategic pillars and nine outcomes that respond to country needs and make use of the UN's strengths.

The Development Partnership Framework Final Evaluation is an external, independent exercise aimed at generating an independent assessment of results, successes, challenges and lessons learned of DPF implementation to inform the stakeholders and feed into the next DPF programming cycle. The evaluation includes the overall results framework of the DPF 2016-2020 and its implementation instruments, specifically the Joint Work Plans. The DPF is evaluated against its contribution to the national development priorities, Agenda 2030/ SDGs implementation and the EU accession process. The evaluation also reviews the progress and impact achieved through the implementation of 'Delivering as One' elements and operating principle and pays special attention to the mainstreaming of the cross-cutting principles, namely human rights-based approach and gender equality.

The design of the evaluation process and the methodology was developed in cooperation with and approved by Evaluation Management Group (EMG). The design was based on the Evaluation ToRs, the UN DOCO guidelines as well as the evaluation criteria defined by OECD DAC and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation. The evaluation strongly drew on the findings of three country programme evaluations being simultaneously undertaken by UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA. The evaluation is based on the sets of key general and specific questions formulated along each evaluation criteria. These questions were further operationalized in the Evaluation Matrix. The more detailed explanation on the evaluation criteria with sets of relevant questions is presented in the Annexes 3 and 4.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

Overall, the **DPF is relevant and in line with both Agenda 2030/ SDGs and the country's needs and development priorities**. However, its effectiveness, impact and sustainability have been negatively influenced by i) the absence of explicit overarching Theory of Change, and ii) too broad prioritization (5 pillars and 9 outcomes), often not corresponding to the breadth, depth and comparative advantages of the UN system in Serbia. The work of the UN system is evidently relevant, but its multifaceted roles (advocacy, normative, policy advisory, provision of technical assistance and implementation) and their combination was often misunderstood and needs to be more clearly articulated and communicated to the partners. In response to the weaknesses of current framework, **the next UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework** should be i) rooted in an explicit Theory of Change and analyses of UN system comparative advantages, ii) concentrate on a limited number of pillars/outcomes (the assessment of UN performance around nine outcomes of current DPF provides important guidance in this respect), and iii) include a solid

monitoring and evaluation framework based on SDGs, and iv) to the extent possible include predictable funding framework. The Cooperation Framework needs to articulate the UN system multifaceted role in Serbia.

The UN system was instrumental and very effective in introducing and promoting Agenda 2030/SDGs through its advocacy and advisory/technical work in multiple areas of SDGs implementation. Moving forward, it **will need to clearly define its role in supporting SDGs nationalization**, amid growing interest of multiple development partners, in a way that accentuates the importance of full national ownership of the agenda. After an initial misperception, the EU accession and SDGs implementation processes are seen by most of the partners as complementary, synergistic and mutually reinforcing. The UN advocacy and technical work has significantly contributed to this understanding. The UN system work is seen as relevant for EU Accession, but its potential contribution to achieving its priorities is still insufficiently conceptualized and communicated to the Government, EU and other partners. **In the next Cooperation Framework**, the UN system needs to explicitly define and articulate its role in supporting both Agenda 2030/SDGs implementation and the EU accession process. The role should be multifaceted and include i) a strong normative and policy advisory function, ii) facilitation of reform processes, and iii) where requested by the Government or other partners, capacity development focused implementation.

EFFECTIVENESS

In majority of outcome areas, the DPF was implemented effectively, but there are differences in effectiveness between and within the DPF outcomes. The implementation was highly effective in the areas of human rights, gender equality, health, education, social protection, economic development, climate change and resilience, while it was somewhat less effective in the area of culture and rule of law. Effectiveness is higher when programmes and projects are aligned with national priorities, responding better to government needs, when equipped with sufficient and predictable funding and implemented through mutually supportive initiatives. The effectiveness is undermined when there is lack of support or ownership of the initiative by the government counterparts or other partners, lack of synchronization with the dynamics of national reforms, lack of funding or too ambitious or unrealistic objectives and targets. **The monitoring framework is not optimal.** It does not contain system of regular monitoring and reporting, and there is no centralized database of programmes/projects implemented by agencies, updated regularly. It suffers from several other weaknesses that limit the possibility to precisely assess the effectiveness and impact: i) 2020 targets are not always defined, ii) indicators are often too ambitious or inconsistent with the outcomes, and iii) data are not available for a number of indicators, particularly those that measure achievements at outcomes level. The number of indicators per output is disproportionate, the success of some outputs can be evidenced by one indicator, while other outputs have to pass a more difficult 'test' with more indicators. indicator framework is not sufficiently aligned with the SDG indicators.

Moving forward, the UN system should devise a strategy for engagement in the areas that are necessary to be reformed for sustainable development of Serbia, but which are not currently prioritized by the Government, where the reforms are slow, or there is formal commitment, but without essential implementation. **The next programming cycle** should carefully identify and differentiate areas of influence and impact of the UNCT and other stakeholders, especially the government, in order to be able to clearly measure UNCT achievements and contributions in the context of broader systems and processes. The new Cooperation Framework should be designed differently, not as a mosaic of individual agencies' programmes, projects and initiatives, but as a consistent intervention based on clear and coherent Theory of Change relevant for the specific national context of Serbia. Outcomes should be formulated in a way that more precisely and clearly defines the UNCT contribution to the specific area.

EFFICIENCY

The UN system management structure and division of roles and responsibilities was functional, and both enabled and encouraged coordination and collaboration. It was well conceptualized, but

there were gaps in practical implementation, especially in relation to the functioning of JNSC, result groups and linkages to the external development coordination mechanisms. The UN system was effective in adjusting its functioning to the emerging needs and priorities as shown in its efficient response to migration crises and natural disasters. The UN system was very successful in mobilizing additional resources for DPF implementation, and at the end of third year has already reached the targets set for the whole 5-year cycle.

The functioning of JNSC and its role in steering UN system activities should be intensified through its regular meetings, including an annual high-level UN-Serbia partnership event dedicated to strategic presentation of the results and planning for upcoming period. Appointment of JNSC membership should be based on the function. Linkages of the UN system to the external development coordination mechanisms should be re-evaluated and fine-tuned during the formulation of the next Cooperation Framework. The result groups should be kept practical, sector-oriented, and clearly connected to Sector Working Groups.

IMPACT

The impact of UN interventions varies between, but also within the outcomes in scope, strength, direction and targets. Evidence points to a relatively **high impact on processes**: reform of laws, policies, procedures, mechanisms, protocols, but lower effect on social groups and situation in different areas of society. Relatively **high impact** on processes is evidenced in the areas of human rights, gender equality, anti-discrimination and protection of women from violence. **Medium impact** is identified in providing new solutions for early and more inclusive education, local capacities for development, climate change and energy efficiency, while **lower impact** is found in the areas of health care system reforms, social protection that brings more equity and cultural aspects of development. **No impact** is recorded in the area of good governance and rule of law.

The impact can be increased by **investing more in monitoring and supporting implementation of regulations and policies that were reformed due to the UNCT contribution**. It is not sufficient for new solutions to be incorporated in laws or policies, these laws and policies have to be implemented more effectively. The UNCT should support this monitoring through both increasing government capacities to monitor and improve performance, but also through supporting independent monitoring by the civil society that should play more critical role at this stage of reforms. Innovative practices and services tailored to the needs of different groups, should be up-scaled vertically (through the national systems) and horizontally (in larger number of areas and local communities). The interventions should be planned realistically taking into account the current country context and focus on narrower, more streamlined areas with sufficient resources and more precisely defined and measured UNCT contribution.

SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of results **significantly vary between and within the outcome** areas depending on several key factors: i) integration of results in the system through mechanisms, laws, policies, services or practices, ii) capacities of relevant personnel to implement changes, iii) adequate resources, iv) and continuous international, governmental and independent civil society monitoring. Results in outcome areas in which DPF was effectively implemented, with recognizable positive impact and when scaled up, integrated into the system, implemented by personnel with adequate skills, equipped with sufficient resources and regularly monitored have relatively good prospects for sustainability have. This mainly applies to the results in outcome areas related to human rights and access to justice, gender equality, education, economic development and inclusive labour market and climate change and resilience. More questionable sustainability is identified in interventions that have lower impact, often despite the high effectiveness in implementation, due to the smaller scale of interventions, lack of scaling-up of existing results, insufficient funding, high fluctuation of personnel, low prioritization by the government, and lack of monitoring. This is visible in the outcome area related to health and social protection and to certain extent to culture, where results are relatively sustainable, but very narrow and with low impact. The

lowest chances for sustainability are in the outcome area related to rule of law and good governance, where there is almost no impact and results are fragile and often not safeguarded by exit or disengagement strategies. During the design of interventions, a **clear exit strategy** should be defined with different scenarios for ensuring of sustainability of results. As for the impact, the UN resources should be concentrated on fewer areas, with systematic approach to maintaining results through up-scaling, integration into the systems and long-term capacity-building of stakeholders.

UN COORDINATION AND DELIVERING AS ONE ('DAO')

UN coordination has been enhanced through systematic application of five 'Delivering as One' elements. Overall, it was effective, creating synergies among agencies and broadening collaboration. With the deliberate effort to increase team spirit and internal cohesion, UNCT collaboration matured and continuously improved during the UNDPF implementation. The UN House has significantly contributed to positive perception of the UN 'Delivering as One', created a conducive environment for better collaboration and joint activities among collocated agencies, and led to cost savings. The UN Operations Managers Team and the UN Communications Group are good examples of effective UN system coordination and collaboration with clear structure and joint work planning process leading to successful joint initiatives. The systematic work of the UNCT has led to an increase in the UN staff's awareness on 'Delivering as One', UNDAF and SDGs and improved information-sharing among individual agencies.

The UNCT should continue and further deepen implementation of all 'DaO' elements. The 'One Programme' element needs to be underpinned by the more focused Cooperation Framework, reflecting actual capacities of the UN system in Serbia and its comparative advantages. The Results Groups need to be kept practical and sector-oriented and meaningfully connect to the official development coordination structure, especially the Sector Working Groups.

CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMMING PRINCIPLES: HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

Human rights and gender mainstreaming are recognized as an important part of the DPF, and concrete steps were undertaken during the current DPF to support the process, namely through recognition of the issue in the CCA, the DPF itself and joint work plans, development of the gender scorecard, and advisory support to individual agencies and gender mainstreaming in specific areas, such as climate change. Despite these efforts, the **DPF was still lacking systematic human rights and gender equality mainstreaming**. This is particularly visible in outcomes related to rule of law and culture, with mainstreaming also insufficiently present in outcomes related to economic development and climate change. In general, all outcome areas would benefit from more consistent and explicit HR and GE mainstreaming. It is important for UNCT representatives as well as partners to recognize the importance of HR and GE and the contribution of the OHCHR and UN Women in this regard. This provides good ground for more systematic capacity building and incorporation of HR and GE issues in the next programming cycle.

The capacity for HR and GE mainstreaming within the UNCT should be increased in a systematic way, through trainings, but also advisory and mentoring support during the development of the CCA, Cooperation Framework, joint work plans, and monitoring and evaluation. UNCT should provide simple and clear guidelines for the agencies to assist them to assess and revise their programmes/projects in line with HR and GE mainstreaming principles. HR and GE mainstreaming should be prioritized during development of the Theory of Change for the next Cooperation Framework as well as in all its outcomes and outputs, UNCT should develop a monitoring and evaluation framework to monitor the progress and evaluates results related to HR and GE.

JOINT PROGRAMMING AND JOINT INITIATIVES

The UN System in Serbia has proactively explored opportunities for joint programming, but due to competing priorities and lack of available resources, only a rather **limited number** of proposals were

funded and implemented. Implementation of those proved that the joint programmes, designed around comparative advantages and complementarities of UN system, deliver effectively and efficiently, showing that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Given UN Development System increased focus on joint activities and decreasing resource base, **the joint programmes should become one of the key modalities of the UN System work** in the next programming cycle. The future formulation of joint initiatives needs to i) avoid internal competition, ii) be more strategic with early prioritization of key areas for joint programming, iii) explicitly reflect comparative advantages of the UN System and individual agencies, and iv) include well-coordinated resource mobilization strategy.

OTHER IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE UN SYSTEM WORK IN SERBIA

As many development challenges in the region have strong regional or cross-boundary aspects, there have been an **emergence of new structures and formats of regional and multi-country cooperation**, including the recognition of the UN role in convening and implementing this type of interventions. The UN system in Serbia was proactive in taking part in the regional initiatives and experimenting with the regional/sub-regional presence. As this aspect is now formally required in the formulation of new UN Cooperation Framework, the UN system in Serbia should further explore the potential for regional collaboration and programming and incorporate it firmly in its new Cooperation Framework.

Despite some ambiguity around the concept of innovation, the UN work in Serbia includes several **successful initiatives and 'early movers' in this area**. The UN **should be proactive and systematic in promoting innovation** and consider including it as one of the priorities in the next Cooperation Framework. The UNCT should clarify its understanding of innovation and apply a more systematic approach to its promotion, using UN system wide toolkits and best practices from several individual agencies. The UNCT should consider undertaking a simple mapping and categorization of UN initiatives supporting innovation in Serbia and related partnerships (e.g. in the area of digitalization, crowdsourcing, alternative financing, big data, collaboration with start-ups and technology/ gaming companies) to inform systematic approach to innovation inside and outside of the UN system. The UNDP's effort to establish an SDG Accelerator should be proactively explored to further promote innovation throughout the UN system in Serbia.

PERCEPTION OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS OF THE UNCT ROLE IN SERBIA

Significance of the UNCT in Serbia is strongly recognized by all stakeholders, though their views on specific roles are somewhat different. Irrespective of differences, the very strong message by various stakeholders at national and local level, among government, the civil society and the corporate sector, is that UNCT contribution is further needed in order to foster sustainable development in Serbia.

An important role and a **comparative advantage** of the UN, according to stakeholders' perceptions, is safeguarding human rights and established international human right mechanisms that provide framework for monitoring and improving human rights. Another set of comparative advantages include knowledge and expertise, experience and competence, good administrative capacities, solid procedures, sound financial management, but in the same time, flexibility and commitment to implementing partners and beneficiaries to deliver support beyond mere technical assistance, increasing their capacities and enabling their ownership. There are certain differences in the views on the role of the UN in the context of two key agendas: EU accession that is considered to be a key priority, and SDGs. The majority of stakeholders see the role of the UN as complementary to the EU accession. However, that complementarity is understood differently. While some stakeholders think that the UN should increase its engagement in the areas insufficiently covered by EU accession (i.e. social policy, poverty and social inclusion), others think that the UN role is in accelerating and deepening reforms that are both in line with EU accession process, but also deeply rooted in the UN mandates. There is some confusion in the civil society about the

role of the UN and its accountability. This confusion contributes to the divide in the civil society around the interest and willingness to work with the UN, which undermines social capital and networking needed to support reforms. CSOs also question how much funds and benefits delivered by the UNCT actually reach grassroots organizations and citizens. There is currently no strategic approach and systematic cooperation with the private sector. Evidence indicates a declining engagement with the corporate sector on sustainable development issues. Individual initiatives, on the other hand, show a big potential of this cooperation when it is properly developed especially around innovative initiatives. The UN role in nationalization and localization of SDGs has lately not been clear to many stakeholders and it looks like the UN is losing the leadership position in this regard. This may be positive as it shows that the UN development agenda is for everybody, but for UN identity, it is very important to remain strategically involved in the Agenda 2030/ SDGs related processes. One of the key messages coming from different stakeholders, including some from the government, is that the country needs the UN with more authority and with a stronger voice advocating with the Government and other partners for more decisive and effective reforms.

The UNCT should carefully reconsider the partnership role within the next Cooperation Framework, positioning itself as strong government partner with the authority and expertise of global organization, safeguarding human rights and promoting human-centered reforms. As already emphasized in the relevance section, the UNCT should define and articulate its role in the context of EU accession and find the best way to contribute to both EU accession and SDGs agendas. It also has to define and articulate its role in the nationalization and localization of SDGs. The UNCT should clarify to the civil society its role and accountability and more explicitly demonstrate how their interventions are beneficial for grassroots organizations and various groups of citizens. The cooperation with the corporate sector should be prioritized and redefined in the context of the new Cooperation Framework and established in a more strategic and systematic way. The partnership with emerging players in digital economy should be given particular attention.

THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA KEY FACTS

Key facts table: Serbia	
Population 2018 ¹	
Population estimate - Total	6,982,604
Urban	4,248,451 (60.8%)
Other	2,734,153 (39.2%)
Population Change Rate	-5.3
Ageing index	142.9
Population median age (years) - Total	Total: 43.2 Female: 44.5 Male: 41.7
Economy ²	
GDP per capita in EUR 2018	6,110
GDP Growth rate 2018	4.3
Activity rate (population 15+) 2018	Total: 54.5 Female: 46.7 Male: 52.9
Employment rate (population 15+) 2018	Total: 47.6 Female: 40.3 Male: 55.4
Unemployment rate (population 15+) 2018	Total: 12.7 Female: 13.7 Male: 11.9
Inactivity rate (population 15+) 2018	Total: 45.5 Female: 53.3 Male: 37.1
Sustainable Development Goals indicators ³	
At-risk-of-poverty rate 2017, in % (SILC)	Total: 25.7 Female: 26.0 Male: 25.4
Prevalence of stunting (moderate and severe) among children under the age of 5 years, in %, 2014	Total: 6.0 Female: 6.8 Male: 5.1
Mortality rate of children aged under five years (per 1000 live births), 2017	Total: 5.8 Female: 5.2 Male: 6.4
Full immunization coverage, 2014	Total: 70.5 Roma settlements: 12.7
Participation rate of youth (15-24) in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, %, 2018	Total: 65.8 Female: 70.4 Male: 61.4
Prevalence rate of physical, sexual or psychological violence by any partner in the previous 12 months, % of ever partnered women, 2018	9.2
Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 who got married before age of 15, %, 2014	Total: 0.8 Urban: 0.4 Rural: 1.3 Roma Settlements: 16.9
Proportion of youth (15-24) not in education, employment or training, %, 2018	Total: 16.5 Female: 17.0 Male: 16.0
Recycling rate of municipal waste, 2016	0.3
Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months, % of women, 2018	10.4

¹ Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Population statistics database, accessed on 26.08.2019 at <http://data.stat.gov.rs/?caller=18&languageCode=sr-Cyrl>

² Sources: for GDP data Ministry of Finance, Basic Macroeconomic trends 5.8.2019, accessed on 26.08.2019 at <https://www.mfin.gov.rs/pages/article.php?id=14757>, for employment data SORS, Labor Force Survey data, accessed on 26.08.2019 at <http://data.stat.gov.rs/?caller=24&languageCode=sr-Cyrl>

³ Source: Statistical Office of Serbia, SDG monitoring platform, accessed on 03.09.2019 at <http://sdg.indikatori.rs/>

1. Introduction

The United Nations Development Partnership Framework (DPF) for Serbia 2016-2020 is a strategic document developed in close cooperation and through a partnership between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the United Nations Country Team (the UNCT) in Serbia⁴. **The Development Partnership Framework Final Evaluation** is an external, independent exercise aimed at generating an independent assessment of results, successes, challenges and lessons learned to inform the DPF stakeholders and feed into the next DPF programming cycle. The DPF Evaluation should provide information primarily to the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the United Nations Development System and the UN Country Team, as well as Serbia's civil society organizations, international institutions, donors and the Serbian public at large about the key achievements of the DPF in the 2016-2020 period. Further details are included in DPF Final Evaluation ToRs in the Annex 6.

The road map for the final evaluation was presented in the **Inception Report**, setting parameters within which the evaluation has taken place and outlining evaluation design and methodology for credible evidence gathering to answer the specific evaluation objectives and questions. The draft Inception Report was presented to the broad gathering of the partners on 9 September 2019 and subsequently finalized incorporating the comments received from the partners. It was externally quality assured by the United Nations and received satisfactory rating. It can be found in Annex 7.

The **Final Evaluation** process was **designed in line with evaluation criteria** defined by OECD DAC⁵ and adhered to United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for evaluations⁶. In conducting the evaluation, the evaluation team strictly followed the UNDG Code of Conduct and Ethical Guideline for Evaluations⁷. It was guided by professional standards and ethical and moral principles of UN evaluations, it paid special attention to key ethical principles such as independence, impartiality, credibility in regard to the conflict of interest, honesty and accountability. The people's right to provide information in confidence was emphasized and the participants were also made aware of the key ethical principles of evaluation. Evaluators ensured that sensitive information could not be traced to its source and that the relevant individuals are protected from reprisals. Throughout the evaluation process, the evaluators paid special attention to respect of dignity and diversity, rights, and avoidance of harm. Special attention was given to issues and ethical considerations related to children and vulnerable groups, this was evident especially during the field visits to Raska, Novi Pazar, Kraljevo and Belgrade.

2. Development Partnership Framework (2016-2020)

The Government of the Republic of Serbia (GoS) and the United Nations Country Team in Serbia have jointly developed a medium-term strategic planning document named **UN Development Partnership Framework (DPF)**⁸ for the period 2016-2020 that was finalized and signed on 30 May 2017. The DPF was signed by the Government of the Republic of Serbia and nineteen UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes active in the country. The framework articulates a collective vision and response of the UN development system to national development priorities and activities to be implemented in partnership with the GoS and in close cooperation with the municipalities, civil society, international partners, academia and private sector until 2020. The joint implementation of DPF was envisioned through the establishment of the Joint National Steering Committee (JNSC) for strategic guidance and oversight and

⁴ The UN Country Team (the UNCT) refers to the totality of the UN development operations in Serbia, residents and non-residents as stipulated in Annex 8

⁵ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

⁶ <http://uneval.org/document/detail/22>

⁷ UNDG (2008), Ethical Guideline for Evaluations; UNDG (2008), Code of Conduct for Evaluations in the UN System

⁸ Development Partnership Framework is the locally agreed title given to the document that was developed following UNDAF Guidelines

five Results Groups (RGs) with the task of preparing and implementing 2-year joint work plans to be signed between the UN and GoS.

The Theory of Change (ToC) was not explicitly presented in the DPF. For the purpose of this evaluation, the evaluation team has attempted to reconstruct the theory of change as presented in the Annex 9. The DPF intervention logic is based on the situation analysis depicting main developmental challenges in five priority areas: governance and rule of law, social and human resources development, economic development, growth and employment, environment, climate change and resilient communities and in the area of culture and development. The outcomes expected from cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the UNCT, international and civil society partners were grouped into five strategic pillars and nine outcomes that respond to country needs and make use of the UN's strengths.

Table 1: Five pillars of DPF

Pillar	Outcome
I. Governance and Rule of Law	1. By 2020, people in Serbia, especially vulnerable groups, have their human rights protected and have improved access to justice and security 2. By 2020, governance institutions at all levels have enhanced accountability and representation to provide better quality services to people and the economy 3. By 2020, state institutions and other relevant actors have improved gender equality and enabled women and girls, especially those from vulnerable groups, to live lives free from discrimination and violence
II. Social and Human Resources Development	4. By 2020, high quality, inclusive, equitable, gender-sensitive, and age appropriate health services that protect patient rights are available and utilized by all 5. By 2020, an efficient education system is established that provides relevant, quality, inclusive and equitable education to all, particularly the most vulnerable, and increases learning and social outcomes 6. By 2020, the social welfare system is strengthened to provide timely, holistic and continued support to individuals and families at risk and enable them to live in a safe, secure, supportive family and community environment.
III. Economic Development, Growth, and Employment	7. By 2020, there is an effective enabling environment that promotes sustainable livelihoods, economic development, focused on an inclusive labor market and decent job creation
IV. Environment, Climate Change and Resilient Communities	8. By 2020, there are improved capacities to combat climate change and manage natural resources and communities are more resilient to the effects of natural and man-made disasters
V. Culture and Development	9. By 2020, Serbia has inclusive policies ensuring an enhanced cultural industries sector, promoting cultural diversity and managing cultural and natural heritage as a vehicle for sustainable development

Each DPF Pillar and Outcome was further complemented with the corresponding set of indicators containing baselines and targets, specifically designed to measure the progress toward results over the implementation period and reflected in the Serbia – UN Result Matrix, representing an integral part of the DPF. To support the achievement of these outcomes, the DPF has also defined a set of comprehensive and cross-cutting principles that represent a foundation for all DPF programming activities:

Coherence and complementarity with EU Integration processes in Serbia. All activities in this Strategy should be designed to complement the country's efforts to align with EU norms and standards and achieve a successful and timely completion of the EU accession process, especially in achieving the EU Acquis.

Post-2015 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). DPF has taken into consideration the global development agenda and was designed to support the Government of the Republic of Serbia in its efforts to align its national development policies accordingly and generate progress towards achievement of SDGs. The EU integration process and SDG implementation should be seen as highly complementary and potentially synergistic.

Promotion of UNCT coherence through application of the Standard Operating Procedures for Delivering Together in a Post-2015 development world. The key elements of Standard Operating Procedures for 'Delivering as One' (DaO), such as 'One Leader', 'One Programme', 'Operating as One' and 'Communicating as One' were closely reviewed and agreed to be implemented with the Government of the Republic of Serbia and UNCT under the Development Partnership Framework in Serbia 2016-2020. The 'One Fund' option is not part of the DPF, however some elements of the Common Budgetary Framework were partially applied in practice.

Cross-Cutting Programming Principles. The Government of Serbia and UNCT have agreed that the DPF will strive to observe a set of common principles which should be followed in planning and implementing all DPF outcomes, outputs and activities, this include the following cross-cutting principles: promoting fundamental human rights; ensuring gender equality; promoting environmental sustainability; strengthening entrepreneurship and competitiveness; advancing independence and engagement of civil society and media; and improving the quality and availability of data.

Although an outline of the Common Budgetary Framework is included, DPF financial resources are provided as estimates only. The Government of the Republic of Serbia and the UNCT system agreed to jointly calculate the gaps to meet the targets set under the DPF and jointly mobilize resources from various donor organizations for DPF implementation. It was also explicitly stated that the estimates included in the DPF Resources Table⁹ do not have financial implications for the Government of the Republic of Serbia, aside from existing agreements signed before the beginning of the financial year 2016. Out of the US\$ 169,764,004 total resources required for the DPF implementation, US\$ 76,566,167 were available and US\$ 93,197,837 should be mobilized during the implementation period.

3. Purpose, Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

In the section 'Why conduct a UNDAF evaluation?', UN Development Operations and Coordination Office (UNDOCO) stipulates that the evaluation is a systematic assessment which answers the questions: are we doing the right thing?, are we doing it the right way?, and 'are there better ways of achieving results? Evaluation is used for improving accountability and for learning what has worked, what has not and why. By answering the above questions, UNDAF evaluations can provide important information for strengthening programming and results at the country level, particularly for informing planning and decision-making for the next UNDAF programme cycle and for improving United Nations (UN) coordination at the country level¹⁰.

In specific terms, the Final DPF Evaluation should:

- Assess the extent to which DPF results have been successful in contributing to national capacities for achievement of national development goals, the EU integration agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Assess the DPF strategic intent, principle and spirit from the DPF that has been taken forward by UN agencies and identify the factors that have affected the UN agencies working together in the context of the 'One Programme'.

⁹ Section 4 of UN Development Partnership Framework 2016-2020: Common Budgetary Framework - Resources Required and Resource Mobilization

¹⁰ UNDOCO (2011). Frequently asked questions for UNDAF Evaluation, 16 pp.

- Provide information on the overall relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the programming and results of the current DPF 2016-2020, across its five Pillars and nine Outcomes.
- Generate evidence and lessons learnt based on an assessment of the current performance of DPF outcomes and outputs. Provide a set of actionable recommendations based on credible findings, to be used for organizational learning.
- Inform the planning and decision-making for the next UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and for improving United Nations coordination at the country level through promoting the 'Delivering as One' principle and in line with the ongoing UN Reform processes, namely by following provisions from the Monitoring and Accountability Framework from March 2019.
- Support greater accountability of the UNCT to DPF stakeholders.

The scope covered by the evaluation includes the overall results framework of the DPF 2016-2020 and its implementation instruments, specifically the Joint Work Plans. The evaluation pays special attention to the mainstreaming and application of the UNDAF cross-cutting principles: human rights-based approach, gender equality, environmental sustainability, strengthening entrepreneurship and competitiveness, and advancing engagement of civil society and capacity development. The DPF is evaluated against its contribution to national development results defined in the DPF results framework, especially its contribution to Agenda 2030/ SDGs implementation and the EU accession process priorities. The evaluation will review the progress and impact achieved through the implementation of 'Delivering as One' operating principle.

4. Methodology and Approach

4.1 Evaluation process and methods

The design of the evaluation process and the methodology was developed in cooperation with and approved by Evaluation Management Group (EMG). The design was based on the Evaluation ToRs (in Annex 6), the UN DOCO guidelines as well as the evaluation criteria defined by OECD DAC¹¹ and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation. The evaluation strongly drew on the findings of three country programme evaluations being simultaneously undertaken by UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA. The evaluation is based on the sets of key general and specific questions formulated along each evaluation criteria. These questions were further operationalized in the Evaluation Matrix. The more detailed explanation on the evaluation criteria with sets of relevant questions is presented in the Annexes 3 and 4.

The evaluation process included several stages: inception phase, data collection mission, analysis and report drafting, and presentation and validation of final results.

During the **inception phase**, the preparatory country mission was organized in order to gather documentation and information needed to define the evaluation design and process and to identify key stakeholders. Meetings were held with the EMG and ERG as well as representatives from the UNCT agencies and teams. Relevant UNCT documents were collected. A questionnaire for UN agencies was developed in order to collect information on several key aspects, such as engagement with key stakeholders and local communities, participation in joint programmes and regional initiatives. Based on information and documents collected, and in consultation with the EMG, the Inception Report was drafted, presenting a detailed evaluation design. The Inception Report was circulated to broader group of stakeholders, including all the UNCT agencies and government partners. The final version of the Inception

¹¹ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

Report was submitted in mid-September 2019, allowing the proper planning of the country data collection mission.

Data collection was implemented using a variety of methods:

- a) Collection of programme and project documents as well as other relevant UN documents (list of documents and references is presented in the Annex 10);
- b) Collection of secondary data including statistical data, reports, studies (referenced throughout the report and also listed in the Annex 10);
- c) Primary data collected through the country data collection mission organized during two weeks in late September and early October. It was implemented by using three different data collection methods:
 - **Individual interviews** – conducted with key stakeholders, including RC a.i., representatives of the RC Office, the DPF Monitoring and Evaluation Group Analyst, Country Representatives of UNDP, UNICEF, UNOPS, WHO, UNOB, representatives of key ministries (MFA, MEI, the Minister in charge of Demography, PIMO, the National Assembly, Chamber of Commerce, the Statistical Office of Serbia, the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities). The list of stakeholders interviewed through individual meetings or focus group discussions is included in Annex 11.
 - **Focus group discussions** – the focus groups were organized to gather additional evidence and test preliminary assumptions for number of areas.
 - **Field mission to selected local communities** - organized in order to explore the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the UNCT engagement in local communities in greater depth. For that purpose, visits were organized to Raska, Novi Pazar, Kraljevo, Obrenovac, Rakovica and Cukarica. The mission also conducted interviews with local self-governments in Raska and Novi Pazar, the Civil Defence Office in Kraljevo, the civil society in Novi Pazar, beneficiaries of programmes for support to innovative businesses in Kraljevo, ECD services in Rakovica and Cukarica, the joint programme in Obrenovac. Initiatives which were visited provided valuable information on the engagement of UNOPS, UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, WHO, but other agencies as well.

In total, **more than 140 stakeholders provided information, opinions and experiences** with the UNCT during implementation of the DPF, during country data collection mission. This generated a large amount of qualitative data and very valuable insights.

The analysis was conducted based on several instruments designed in line with the evaluation methodology:

- a) The analysis of the results at the output and outcome levels based on the **result matrix** (presented in the Annex 5), using a large number of different data sources, mainly programme documentation (reports, evaluations) as well as statistical and administrative data;
- b) The analysis of the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability based on the **evaluation matrix** (Annex 5), in addition to programme documentation and statistical data using data collected through the country mission.
- c) The **analysis of other aspects of implementation of the DPF**, internal functioning of the UNCT and cooperation between the UNCT and other stakeholders, relying mainly on information collected from diverse stakeholders during the country data collection mission.

The evaluation methodology is based on a composition approach: in addition to the data collection and analysis conducted specifically for the purpose of the DPF final evaluation, results of the three UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA) country programme evaluations conducted in 2019 were taken into account. The DPF evaluation team used the results of the three evaluations for the respective DPF Outcomes covered by the agency Country Programme Evaluations (CPEs):

- The UNICEF Country Programme Document (CPD) 2016-2020 – will fully cover DPF Outcome 5 (education system) while significantly contributing to Outcome 4 (health services) and Outcome

6 (social welfare) and partially contributing to Outcome 1 (human rights), Outcome 3 (gender) and Outcome 7 (environment, DRR);

- The UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) 2016-2020 – will fully cover DPF Outcome 8 (environment and resilient communities), significantly contribute to Outcome 1 (human rights), Outcome 2 (governance), Outcome 7 (economic development) and partially contribute to Outcome 3 (gender);
- UNFPA Cluster Evaluation in Western Balkans – will cover aspects of the UNFP country programme contributing to Outcome 3 (gender), Outcome 4 (health services) and Outcome 6 (population policies).

The Final Report has been drafted and submitted for reviewing to the UNCT and key stakeholders for the purpose of **validation**. In the conclusion and recommendation sections, the evaluation report paid special attention to the provisions of Internal Guidance for preparation of the new cycle of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework¹².

Recommendations were developed through multistage process. They were based on identified strengths and weakness of current DPF implementation as well as identified opportunities for further strengthening of the UN role in supporting sustainable development of Serbia. The preliminary recommendations were presented and tested with UNCT representatives, partners and key stakeholders during the focused groups discussions and presentation of preliminary findings and two rounds of comments provided on different versions of final report.

4.2 Indicators and methods for measuring results

The evaluation methodology was designed in a way that follows two simultaneous lines of assessment with two instruments:

- **DPF 2016-2020 result framework** with DPF original indicators defined to monitor and assess the achievement of nine outcomes and outputs within each outcome (Annex 5).
- **The evaluation matrix** containing the evaluation questions presented above in line with the evaluation criteria, with newly defined indicators to measure success (Annex 5).

In both cases a numerical and a colored scoring system was used to measure achievement. Essentially, for assessment of effectiveness, each indicator (originally defined in the DPF) was valued between 0 and 3 points based on the level of achievement. The scoring system used to measure effectiveness and sustainability is described in Table 3.

Table 2: Scoring system for the assessment of effectiveness by indicator defined at the level of outputs

	not possible to assess
0	No measurable progress
1	Low positive change but still far from the target by indicator not reached
2	Medium positive change but target by indicator not reached
3	High positive change or fully reached targets by indicator

Achievement for the output was then calculated as a percentage of realized indicators in relation to the total possible score (which depended on the number of indicators). The level of achievement of the output was scored as per system presented in the table 3.

¹² UNSDG (2019). UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, Internal Guidance

Table 3: Scoring of achievement of outcomes based on the level of progress/achievement of outputs

	0	not possible to assess
	1-33%	Low effectiveness
	34-66%	Medium effectiveness
	67-100%	High, full effectiveness

It is important to note that the scoring system used for this evaluation is not comparable to the scoring system applied in the monitoring of progress implemented by the UNCT, and the results cannot be comparable.

The impact was assessed slightly differently. It was based on the combined assessment of quantifiable indicators presented in the result matrix but complemented with qualitative findings from the data collection mission. The reasons for that were twofold. In some cases, indicators are not consistent with the outcome, they do not reflect adequately the intervention of the UNCT through the DPF (general, such as increased employment, or ranking on Global competitiveness index), or data for indicators were not available (i.e. indicators relying on MICS data).

Table 4: Scoring system for the assessment of impact (outcome level)

	not possible to assess
	No impact
	Negative impact
	Low positive impact
	Medium positive impact
	High positive impact

Finally, sustainability was measured in a similar way to the impact, albeit without precise measures per indicators, as no sustainability indicators were defined. It relied mainly on the qualitative analysis based on evidence acquired from different secondary and primary sources.

Table 5: Scoring of sustainability of outcomes

	0	not possible to assess
	1-33%	Low effectiveness
	34-66%	Medium effectiveness
	67-100%	High, full effectiveness

5. Evaluation findings

5.1 Relevance

Conclusion:

- In overall, the DPF is relevant and in line with both Agenda 2030/ SDGs and the country's needs and development priorities. However, its effectiveness, impact and sustainability have been negatively

influenced by i) the absence of explicit overarching Theory of Change, and ii) too broad prioritization (5 pillars and 9 outcomes), often not corresponding to the breadth, depth and comparative advantages of the UN system in Serbia.

- The work of the UN system is evidently relevant, but its multifaceted roles (advocacy, normative, policy advisory, provision of technical assistance and implementation) and their combination was often misunderstood and needs to be more clearly articulated and communicated to the partners.

Recommendation:

In response to the weaknesses of current framework, the next UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework should be i) rooted in an explicit Theory of Change and analyses of UN system comparative advantages, ii) concentrate on a limited number of pillars/outcomes (the assessment of UN performance around nine outcomes of current DPF provides important guidance in this respect), and iii) include a solid monitoring and evaluation framework based on SDGs, and iv) to the extent possible include predictable funding framework. The Cooperation Framework needs to articulate the UN system multifaceted role in Serbia.

Technical recommendations:

- Simultaneously, the Cooperation Framework needs to keep a certain level of flexibility, allowing for inclusion of new initiatives emerging during the implementation.
- It is advisable that the UN system actively participates in the formulation of the next NAD, both to offer its knowledge and expertise as well as advocate for SDGs and UN priorities. The on-going formulation of both the next NAD and UN Cooperation Framework provides a unique opportunity to align the priorities and reflect the UN role more explicitly.
- UN system should also use the space created by the requirements of the new Law on Planning System and proactively participate in the preparation of National Development Strategies and Investment Plan.

In this section, the relevance of UNDPF is assessed against i) the national priorities as defined in the key policy documents, ii) UN support to Agenda 2030/SDGs implementation, as well as iii) coherence and complementarity with EU Integration processes. The last two areas also represent the overarching principles, which are together with 'Delivering as One' explicitly stated in the UNDPF¹³.

This section analyzes the **alignment of the UNDPF with the national priorities as defined in key strategic documents** of the Republic of Serbia, which in the absence of a comprehensive development strategy, set major directions of the development in Serbia, and in theory should frame all other sectoral and multi-sectoral policies and programmes. For the purpose of evaluating relevance of the UNDPF, the evaluation team selected the following documents that together cover most of the dimensions of sustainable development¹⁴:

- a) National Priorities for International Assistance (NAD) 2014-2017 with Projections until 2020;
- b) Indicative Strategy Paper for Serbia (2014-2020) for Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II.);
- c) National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (third edition from 2018);
- d) Rolling-over Economic Reform Program (ERP); and
- e) Employment and Social Policy Reform Program (ESRP).

¹³ Section 2.2 of the UN Development Partnership Framework 2016-2020: Overarching Principles and Cross-cutting Programming Principles

¹⁴ Although, as stated in RIA report, these framework documents were complemented by 81 strategies, programs and action plans formally valid in 2018 as well as 37 of those that have no specified expiry date

Key finding 1: UNDPF priorities, although not rooted in explicit Theory of Change, are relevant for Serbia and correspond well to the country's development and EU accession priorities as outlined in key strategy and policy documents as well as Agenda 2030 and SDGs.

UNDPF priorities as stipulated in 5 pillars and 9 objectives are relevant and correspond well to the country's development and reform priorities as outlined in its key strategic documents. Analyses of the **National Priorities for International Assistance (NAD) for 2014-2017 with Projections until 2020** show that the UNDPF is fully consistent with the priorities defined in its 12 sectors and themes. When analyzing the alignment of the DPF with **the Economic Reform Programme 2017-2019 (ERP)**, the DPF outcomes correspond well to the priority areas of energy, business environment, employment and labor market, social inclusion and equality, plus agriculture, which is covered as one of priority sectors. The evaluation also looked into the complementarity with the **Employment and Social Reforms Programme**, which is of particular importance as it focuses on areas close to several important UN mandates such as demand and supply side of the labor market, human capital and skills, social inclusion and protection including child protection, as well as health. The analyses of policy reforms proposed by the Programme show again a high level of alignment and relevance of UNDPF priorities for the selected directions of reform processes as well as important contribution of UN system to most of these reform processes described in the following paragraphs.

Based on 2019 Economic Reform Programmes: The Commission's Overview and Country Assessments¹⁵, the contribution of UN System can be recognized especially to the areas of public administration reform, access to finance for SMEs, promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency as well as better use of existing resources in areas such as education and health. The contribution of DPF (especially through Pillar 2, outcomes 4, 5 and 6) to Employment and Social Reforms Programme (ESPR) is recognizable mainly in components related to human capital and skills, social protection and health care, and to more limited extent to employment component (through Pillar 3, outcome 7). More specifically, DPF contribution to the area of human capital and skills targeted the improvement of early education, improvement of educational attainments of vulnerable groups, and increased access to preschool education. The contribution to the social inclusion and social protection is evident through strengthened support to families in social risks, continuation of deinstitutionalization processes and development of non-institutional community services. The contribution to the health care includes better access to health care of vulnerable groups. Finally, activities in outcome 7 targeted the decrease of regional disparities through support to the local development of municipalities and SMEs.

UNDPF outcomes correspond well also to priority areas identified in three main sections (Political Criteria, Economic Criteria and Ability to Assume the Obligations of EU Membership) of the **National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis** and **the Indicative Strategy Paper for Serbia (2014-2020) for Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II.)**, with only two areas not directly prioritized by these documents, namely gender equality and culture. This finding further underscores the importance of the UN system's prioritization of gender equality both in the DPF result framework as well as important cross-cutting principle.

UN system in Serbia was active in contributing to the numerous areas key for EU accession. Under the Political Criteria, UN has an important role in promoting democracy, especially through continuous support to the National Assembly. Several UN agencies also play key normative role in the areas of Rule of Law and Functioning of Judiciary as well as Human Rights and Protection of Minorities, contributing both to the monitoring of the situation, approximation of the policy and legal framework as well as capacity building of Serbian institutions. In the area of Regional Issue and International Obligations, UN was particularly effective in supporting Serbia's effort to meet requirements of the global Conventions as well as nationalization of Agenda 2030 and SDGs.

¹⁵ European Commission (2019). 2019 Economic Reform: The Commission's Overview and Country Assessments

As for the Ability to Assume Obligations of the Membership and its 33 negotiation chapters, UN system was involved predominantly in seven chapters: Chapter 19, Social Protection and Employment, Chapter 23, Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, with special focus on gender equality, violence against women, rights of the persons with disabilities and child rights, IDPs and refugees as well as various aspects of Roma inclusion, such as human rights, health, employment, education and housing. In the Chapter 24, Justice, Freedom and Security, UN supported multiple activities in the areas of anticorruption, fight against money laundering, drug and crime, small arms and light weapons and juvenile justice. Two other Chapters with strong UN involvement are Chapter 27, Environment and Climate Change and Chapter 28, Consumer and Health Protection, with the contribution particularly in the areas of environment and climate change, drug use prevention, health protection, and non-communicable and communicable diseases. Finally, UN was active in supporting Serbia's statistical capacity cover by Chapter 18 (Statistics) and promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy (Chapter 15, Energy). As in other EU accession countries, UN system has regularly provided its input for EU in preparation of the progress reports, highlighting the key developments in particular areas, but also UN support to necessary reforms, policy and legal changes and capacity development.

The alignment and complementarity between UNDPF priorities and the SDGs framework is high. In relation to some SDGs, this alignment is direct and DPF outcomes are defined in a way which directly contributes to the achievement of a relevant SDG (for instance SDGs 1, 3, 4, 8, 13 and 16). In other cases, although there is no direct link between DPF outcomes and particular SDGs, it can be concluded that specific elements of DPF outcomes and outputs have been contributing to the achievement of SD goals, or at least some targets, as in the case of SDG 2, SDG 9 or SDG 11. The issues of alignment, complementarity and UN contribution to SDGs are further analyzed in the effectiveness part.

➤ ***Key finding 2: At the same time, the UNDPF priority framework, as articulated in its 5 pillars and 9 outcomes, is too broad and often not corresponding to breadth, depth and comparative advantages of the UN system in Serbia. Its coherence and articulation of expected results is further exacerbated by the absence of an overarching Theory of Change.***

Another important finding and consideration for the next programming cycle is the **lack of strategic focus** of the UN priority framework. Despite the fact that priorities are closely aligned with the key development strategies of Serbia, they are too broad and in several outcomes do not clearly correspond to the UN system capacities and comparative advantages on the ground. Several informants, both from within and outside UN, emphasized this discrepancy. The evaluation team analyzed this issue in detail in the effectiveness and impact parts of the evaluation report. In order to address this issue, the new Cooperation Framework should be more focused, rooted in thorough analyses of UN System capacities and value added, it should also be explicit about comparative advantage of the UN system, both as a whole and individual agency¹⁶. The assessment of UN performance around nine outcomes of current DPF provides important guidance in this respect. Simultaneously, the Cooperation Framework will need to keep a certain level of flexibility, allowing for inclusion of new initiatives emerging during the implementation. This is now possible under the new Cooperation Framework guideline allowing adjustments during the cycle. This flexibility and incorporation of new initiatives could also be facilitated by the result framework incorporating specific 'entry points' around functional areas, such as support to SDGs nationalization, innovation or capacity building, to be used for.

Key finding 3: Despite the clear relevance of the UN system in Serbia, its multifaceted roles (advocacy, normative, policy advisory, provision of technical assistance and implementation) and their combination was often misunderstood and needs to be more clearly defined and communicated to the partners.

¹⁶ The UN Development System reform emphasizes on UNCT configuration and fit-for-purpose approach and related tools and processes, provide appropriate framework for UNCT Serbia to advance its work in this area

'The UN role is relevant and essential, but I'm not sure if it understood.'

(Senior UN informant)

When exploring the UN system functioning in the above mentioned policy framework, the interaction with several informants, especially from the Government, indicated that there is certain level of misunderstanding, if not confusion, about **the role of United Nations** in the upper-MIC context such as Serbia. Some informants mentioned that it was often a challenge to clearly understand the role of the UN, as it ***operated simultaneously as the donor, advocate, normative actor, provider of policy advice and technical assistance as well as implementer***. As its all roles were considered relevant, to address this issue, the UN System will need to further define its functions in specific areas of work, articulate it and proactively communicate it to the partners. For the next cycle, UN system may consider preparing a simple matrix, connecting the priority outcomes/ outputs with the comparative advantages of UN system and individual agencies and roles UN system envisages to play in these specific areas.

As for the role of the UN in project implementation, there is some resistance to the UN implementing development assistance, especially in areas where, in order to build national capacities, national actors should be left to directly implement initiatives. At the same time, several informants emphasized that they see no problem in the UN continuing its role in implementation if it is well justified, requested by the partners and focused on capacity development. The evaluation shows that there is a clear role of the UN in implementation, especially if it leads to systemic change, either through capacity development or testing specific models with clear scaling-up strategy. The involvement of the UN in practical implementation also strengthens its role and legitimacy in advocacy and policy advice, especially in the areas, which are not specifically linked to the UN normative function, such as for example, local development or environmental sustainability.

Support to Agenda 2030/SDGs implementation and the EU accession process

Conclusion:

The UN system, under the strong leadership of the Resident Coordinator, has been relevant and effective in raising awareness of and providing practical support for Agenda 2030/ SDGs implementation in Serbia. Over time, it has also succeeded to generate broad understanding of the relationship between Agenda 2030 and the EU accession as complementary, synergistic and mutually reinforcing.

Recommendations:

- In the next Cooperation Framework, the UN system needs to explicitly define and articulate its role in supporting both Agenda 2030/SDGs implementation and the EU accession process. The role should be multifaceted and include i) a strong normative and policy advisory function, ii) facilitation of reform processes, and iii) where requested by the Government or other partners, capacity development focused implementation.

Technical recommendations:

- The UNCT should advocate with the Government and other partners the importance of nationalization of SDGs as well as define its own role in supporting its various aspects, such as i) advocacy and awareness raising, ii) definition and prioritization of the accelerators, iii) SDGs localization, as well as iv) data and monitoring& evaluation.
- The UNCT should work with the Government and EU to explicitly articulate its role in supporting the EU accession and negotiation process. It could explicitly distinguish its role for i) the Chapters/areas with strong *acquis*, being very specific about a potential contribution to addressing opening and closing benchmarks, and ii) the areas covered by the EU accession more lightly, many of which are among high priorities for UN.

Given the importance of the DPF alignment with and contribution to the global development agenda, as well as a clear Agenda 2030 and SDGs focus of the next generation of UN Sustainable Development

Corporation Frameworks¹⁷, it was critical for the evaluation to explicitly assess the relevance and contribution of the DPF and the UN system to Agenda 2030/SDGs implementation. Based on primary and secondary data analyses as well as individual interviews and dedicated focus group discussion, the evaluation team was able to identify the following main elements associated with the UN system support to Agenda 2030/SDGs implementation in Serbia: i) advocacy and promotion of the SDGs agenda taking into account the specific context of Serbia, where policy reforms are significantly determined by the EU accession process, ii) support to institutional framework/coordination mechanisms, iii) support to Agenda 2030 and SDGs nationalization, including through RIA and MAPS processes and support to submission of VNR in 2019, iv) regional cooperation, and vi) SDGs monitoring and reporting framework.

Key finding 4: The UN system was instrumental and very effective in introducing and promoting Agenda 2030/SDGs through its advocacy and advisory/technical work in multiple areas of SDGs implementation. Moving forward, it will need to clearly define its role in supporting SDGs nationalization, amid growing interest of multiple development partners, in a way that accentuates the importance of full national ownership of the agenda.

Support to Agenda 2030/SDGs implementation: Indisputably, the UN system's engagement in various aspects of SDGs nationalization contributed to raising awareness among partners and the population at large. From the onset, the UNCT has been proactive in supporting the establishment and functioning of the **Governmental Inter-Ministerial Working Group on SDGs (IMWG)**, which comprises 27 members from various Government institutions and offices and is chaired by the Minister without portfolio in charge of Demography and Population. As emphasized by several informants, the partnership and dialogue with the Delegation of the European Union (DEU) was directed towards identifying linkages between EU accession and Agenda 2030 from the beginning, the UN and the DEU organized several programme-related and thematic events, including a dedicated policy oriented discussion between the UNCT and all DEU portfolio managers. The Resident Coordinator fostered regular discussions with the international development partners on SDGs in order to ensure coherent messaging provided to the Government of Serbia. SIDA, SDC, Norway, EU, GIZ, US and several IFIs were especially active in this group. UN agencies have also worked closely with CSOs in ensuring their participation in the SDGs-related dialogue. The UN started to work closely with the Parliament on SDGs-related issues with significant progress made so far (for more information, see also the chapter on partners' views). The UN, through Global Compact, was also active in supporting private sector participation in SDGs dialogue.

'UN brought SDGs to Serbia and we found ourselves as custodians of SDGs'.

'SDGs are always connected to us. This is the UN agenda. It looks like government counterparts expect that we will always bring up SDGs, that it is relevant for us, but not so much for them'.

(Informants from UN)

In 2017, Government started to undertake its first SDGs mapping exercise and preparation of the report 'Serbia and Agenda 2030 - Mapping the National Strategic Framework vis-à-vis Sustainable Development Work'¹⁸, which was supported by GIZ. This exercise was followed by UNCT support to elaboration of a **Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA)**¹⁹, which conducted a more detailed assessment of the national policy framework against the Agenda 2030 requirements. The report was presented to the IMWG and international development partners, but the Government has never officially endorsed it.

Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) Mission: Supported by the UN, the EU, the World Bank and other stakeholders, the Government of Serbia hosted the MAPS Mission on 3-7 September 2018. Twenty experts from 12 UN agencies, the World Bank and the EU Delegation, took part in the

¹⁷ The UN Sustainable Development Framework, Internal Guidance, June 2019

¹⁸ Government of Serbia (2017). Serbia and Agenda 2030 - Mapping the National Strategic Framework vis-à-vis Sustainable Development Work

¹⁹ UN System in Serbia (2018). Serbia and Agenda 2030: Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA)

Mission. It held nearly 30 meetings with the Government departments, as well as thematic multi-stakeholder consultations with representatives of the civil society, the academia and the local communities. The mission's draft report was made available to the IMWG for review in December 2018. In the inter-ministerial commenting process, only a handful of responses and comments were received, and the Government never officially endorsed the report. The MAPS Report has informed 2019 Voluntary National Review (VNR) that the Government presented to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2019. The report explicitly quotes the support Government received in preparation of the report as well as in SDGs implementation. In addition, UNICEF directly supported preparation of the section on children and youth of VNR.

The Government of Serbia was also supported by UN in **regional activities on Agenda 2030**: The first, the Regional Parliamentary Seminar on SDGs, was held in Belgrade in May 2018, with the support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The second event, an ambitious Sub-Regional Conference promoting the implementation of Agenda 2030 in the Western Balkans, was hosted by the GoS with the support of the UNCT, UNECE Geneva, the UNDP and GIZ, and took place in Belgrade in September 2018. The Conference gathered over 200 participants, including participants from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Switzerland, as well as a number of development partners/embassies based in Serbia and in the region.

SDG Indicators mapping and translation: Three indicators mapping exercises were conducted by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) in May-June 2018 and October 2018 to contribute to the preparation of the MAPS Mission. These exercises reviewed compliance, data sources and data availability for SDG indicators, in close cooperation with the representatives of 27 institutions of IMWG. The mapping exercises were conducted in three phases, the first focused on available data compared with the 100 SDG indicators monitored by EUROSTAT (so-called 'EU SDG indicators'), the second and third phases were primarily organized to identify data holders and producers with respect to the global SDG indicator framework. UNECE provided support to the latter two exercises. Serbia has also been a pilot country for several interesting SDG-related data initiatives such as the testing migration governance index (IOM), conducting child functioning/disability survey module of health behavior of school-age children and approaches to enumerating disadvantaged ethnic minorities (UNICEF) as well as the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (WHO).

Overall assessment: Most of the informants emphasized that the UN system in Serbia in general, and the Resident Coordinators in particular, have succeeded in raising awareness on Agenda 2030 and SDGs and underscoring that it is not a UN-driven agenda and needs to be owned by the countries themselves. The UN also succeeded in providing concrete and catalytic support to the early establishment and functioning of national SDGs coordination structure, analytical work related to SDGs (through especially RIA and MAPS processes) as well as proactive role of the Government in the regional and global arena on the issues related to Agenda 2030 and SDGs. In this respect, the UN system was particularly instrumental in supporting the GoS in promoting collaboration and exchange of experience on SDGs implementation among Western Balkan countries. UN System has made clearly a deliberate effort towards highlighting and articulating the complementarity of Agenda 2030 and SDGs and EU accession process. The UN system also established very good cooperation with other international partners on the issues related to SDGs, including GIZ and SDC, which are now also playing an increasingly active role in this area.

There are however also areas where more effort is needed. When assessing **the general awareness of Agenda 2030/SDGs**, several individual informants and focus group discussions highlighted that SDGs are generally known at the national level, but their visibility among local self-governments is significantly lagging behind. The same situation was observed among CSOs, except for those that have a more specific focus on SDGs or are obliged to make the link to SDGs in the grant application process. Several informants emphasized that the awareness of the central Government needs to be also further strengthened. It was emphasized that the awareness especially among sectoral ministries is still limited. In addition, despite the strong declarations, there is no concrete plan for SDGs nationalization and prioritization. Discussion with several informants indicates that SDGs nationalization will start with the request to the local

authorities to localize SDGs to their particular context, followed by the subsequent aggregation of the priorities on the national level.

As far as **RIA and MAPS processes** are concerned, both RIA and MAPS represented a considerable effort of the UN to support analytical depth and understanding of SDGs nationalization process in Serbia. However, several informants believe that both processes were too UN centric. In addition, the MAPS process, which attempted to be very inclusive, resulted in the size and composition of the mission team difficult to manage and be effective. Informants emphasized the disproportionate quality of some parts of the report, with the inputs from resident agencies not being sufficiently taken into account. Perhaps the most important weakness of the process and the report is the missing identification of the concrete accelerators, part that is very clearly articulated in other MAPS reports in other countries. Some informants believe that the 'lighter' MAPS process would have been more effective in the Serbia context.

The UN system played a key role in initial phase of SDGs nationalization. Currently other partners, especially GIZ and SDC, are becoming very active in supporting different levels of government in the nationalization of SDGs, moving down to the local level, involving the civil society as well as potentially linking it to public finance management on national and local levels. Moving forward, it is important that the UN stays involved, engages with other partners and clearly articulates its future role in supporting Serbia's path towards achieving Agenda 2030 and SDGs. The formulation of the new Cooperation Framework is an opportune moment for this type of strategic decisions.

Complementarity between Agenda 2030/SDGs nationalization and EU accession process: The European Commission has made **a strong commitment to fully integrate the SDGs in the European policy framework**. This was first expressed in the European Commission's Communication 'Next steps for a sustainable European future: European action for sustainability' in November 2016. Monitoring the progress, Eurostat prepared a set of reports based on a EU SDG indicator set, which comprises 100 indicators relevant for monitoring progress towards the SDGs in an EU context²⁰. The Republic of Serbia was identified as a potential **candidate for EU membership** during the Thessaloniki European Council summit in 2003. In 2008, a **European partnership for Serbia** was adopted, setting out priorities for the country's membership application, and in 2009 Serbia formally applied. In March 2012 Serbia was granted EU candidate status and in line with the decision of the European Council in June 2013 to open accession negotiations with Serbia, the Council adopted **the negotiating framework** in December 2013. By now Serbia has opened almost a half of the Chapters.

'We have opened almost half of the Chapters, we are continuing to work intensively on this and I expect a solid continuation of the dynamics in the coming period, predominately through all these reforms and through the fact that the UN 2030 Agenda has also become part of the EU political framework'.

(Statement of the Serbia Minister for EU Integration Jadranka Joksimovic at the UN conference 'Population Dynamics, Human Capital and Sustainable Development in South-East Europe' in Sarajevo on 21 October 2019)

Illustrating a strong synergy between EU Accession and Agenda 2030/ SDGs, it is estimated that nearly 65 percent, nearly two thirds of SDG targets (109 out of 169 targets) have a strong link with the Chapters of the acquis²¹. The crucial Chapters, those that have the greatest impact on achievement of 2030 Agenda, are Chapter 27 on Environment, Chapter 23 on Justice and Fundamental Rights and Chapter 19 on Social Policy and Employment. For instance, full achievement of EU requirements in the Chapter 27 would address as many as 40 SDG targets (25% of the total number of SDG targets). There are also many SDG targets that are not addressed through EU accession process. The EU Accession process contributes to achieving 109 SDG targets, which means that 60 targets – or 35 percent of total - are not addressed through this process. These targets are mostly clustered in SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals, SDG 10 – Reduced

²⁰ Eurostat (2018). Sustainable Development in the European Union: Monitoring Report on the Progress Towards SDGs in an EU Context

²¹ UN Montenegro (2018), Unravelling Connections: EU Accession and Agenda 2030, case of Montenegro

Inequalities and SDG 4 – Quality Education. This calls for SDG targets that are not (fully) addressed by the EU accession process to receive more focused attention by the Government and development partners including the UN system.

Key finding 5: After an initial misperception, the EU accession and SDGs implementation processes are seen by most of the partners as complementary, synergistic and mutually reinforcing. The UN advocacy and technical work has significantly contributed to this understanding. The UN system work is seen as relevant for EU Accession, but its potential contribution to achieving its priorities is still insufficiently conceptualized and communicated to the Government, EU and other partners.

The UNCT has from the beginning of UNDPF implementation understood the importance of **linkages between EU accession and Agenda 2030/SDGs** and has undertaken a series of steps to recognize and articulate these linkages, including through constant dialogue with the Government and EU. As a result of this deliberate effort, most of the informants emphasized that the understanding of the complementarity of two frameworks and related processes has improved considerably over time. Now, most of the informants consider the **two agendas increasingly as complementary, synergistic and mutually reinforcing**. Some informants perceive SDGs as a pathway to achieve ambitious EU accession agenda, others inversely see the EU accession process as the main accelerator towards achieving SDGs.

At the same time, while **linkages and complementarity are understood and accepted**, this understanding does not sufficiently permeate through concrete coordination processes and initiatives. There is general perception that although the UN was successful in demonstrating the linkages, SDGs are still not well articulated under the rubric of the EU negotiation chapters, and this process needs to be deepened. In this respect, and as also emphasized by a number of informants, **UN needs to** i) articulate its role vis-à-vis EU accession process more precisely, ii) focus on facilitation and acceleration of the reforms required within negotiation chapters, ensuring they are in line with the UN norms and standards, and ii) prioritize the areas, which are not sufficiently covered by EU accession process, but are key for UN mandates as indicated in the chapter above.

5.2 Effectiveness

Conclusions:

- In majority of outcome areas, the UNDPF was implemented effectively, but there are differences in effectiveness between and within the DPF outcomes. The implementation was highly effective in the areas of human rights, gender equality, health, education, social protection, economic development, climate change and resilience, while it was somewhat less effective in the area of culture and rule of law.
- Effectiveness is higher when programmes and projects are aligned with national priorities, responding better to government needs, when equipped with sufficient and predictable funding and implemented through mutually supportive initiatives. The effectiveness is undermined when there is lack of support or ownership of the initiative by the government counterparts or other partners, lack of synchronization with the dynamics of national reforms, lack of funding or too ambitious or unrealistic objectives and targets.
- The monitoring framework is not optimal. It does not contain system of regular monitoring and reporting, there is no centralized database of programmes/projects implemented by agencies, updated regularly. It suffers from several other weaknesses that limit the possibility to precisely assess the effectiveness and impact: i) 2020 targets are not always defined, ii) indicators are often too ambitious or inconsistent with the outcomes, and iii) data are not available for a number of indicators, particularly those that measure achievements at outcomes level. The number of indicators per output

is disproportionate: the success of some outputs can be evidenced by one indicator, while other outputs have to pass a more difficult 'test' with more indicators.

Recommendations:

- The UN system should devise a strategy for engagement in the areas that are necessary to be reformed for sustainable development of Serbia, but which are not currently prioritized by the Government, where the reforms are slow, or there is formal commitment, but without essential implementation.
- The next programming cycle should carefully identify and differentiate areas of influence and impact of the UNCT and other stakeholders, especially the government, in order to be able to clearly measure UNCT achievements and contributions in the context of broader systems and processes.
- The new Cooperation Framework should be designed differently, not as a mosaic of individual agencies' programmes, projects and initiatives, but as a consistent intervention based on clear and coherent Theory of Change relevant for the specific national context of Serbia.
- Outcomes should be formulated in a way that more precisely and clearly defines the UNCT contribution to the specific area.
- Technical assistance on policy issues should be backed up by other forms of assistance to different stakeholders related to functional competences and capacity-building in respective areas, such as support to administrative capacity, result-based and project management and procurement.

Technical recommendations:

For the monitoring framework of new UNSDCF it is recommended:

- 1) To define outcome level indicators more in line with SDG indicators. This however that also the strategic framework, outcomes and outputs are defined more in line with SDGs and their targets.
- 2) To provide more evenly distributed indicators at output level, avoiding the situation that achievements appear lower in some outputs due to significantly higher number of indicators.
- 3) To ensure more consistency between output and outcome level indicators.
- 4) To avoid indicators for which data are not collected from regular research or administrative sources (i.e. MICS), and use preferably data that are available on annual basis.
- 5) The monitoring system should be organized more effectively, as one integrated database updated regularly, information on ongoing programmes and projects should contain key information, such as title, objectives of the programme/project, implementing agencies, key beneficiaries, time frame, amount and sources of funding, and location of the implementation. The system should be decentralized and allow agencies to upload information directly to the platform.
- 6) The monitoring system should be managed by UN MEG and generate annual or biannual reports.
- 7) The monitoring reports should provide substantive information about the implementation of programmes/projects and be complemented by results scoring (for instance using the methodology applied in this report).

There are two important aspects of assessing the effectiveness of the UNDPF. One is related to the **extent to which planned outputs were achieved**. The other is related to the **extent to which outputs contributed to the achievement of outcomes**. In doing so, the assessment of effectiveness in this evaluation faced several limitations due to the insufficient design of DPF monitoring framework.

Key finding 6: Monitoring framework of DPF is not optimal for several reasons: i) output and outcome level indicators are often not consistent, ii) data for many outcome indicators are not available, which partly undermines precise measurement of the results and application of quantified methods through scoring system), iii) many output indicators measure the effects that are beyond the influence of UNCT, and iv) indicator framework is not sufficiently aligned with the SDG indicators.

The DPF monitoring framework poses a challenge to precisely measure (especially using scoring system) the achievement of outcomes and outputs for two reasons: i) targets for some outcomes and outputs are

not set clearly, so it is not possible to precisely assess the progress in implementation against the targets, and ii) lack of data for measuring progress against many indicators.

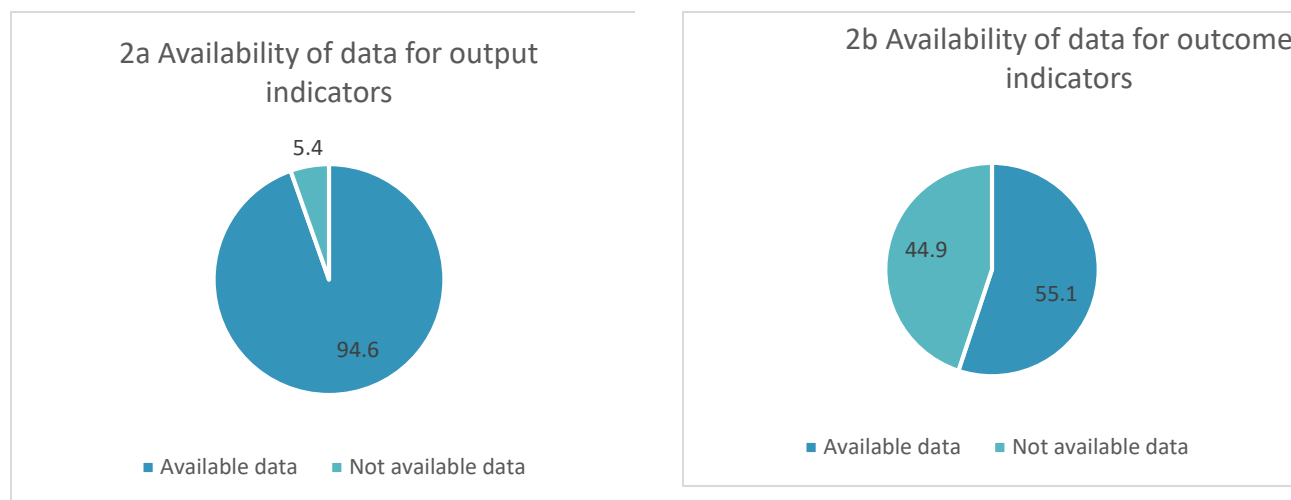
There are 48 outputs defined by the joint work plans through which the UN system planned to achieve nine desired outcomes in DPF. The success in the achievement of outputs is measured by 147 indicators. Although data were not available for 8 indicators at all, this still **allows for reliable assessment of effectiveness in achieving outputs** as data were missing for only 5.4% indicators.

The success in the achievement of 9 outcomes is monitored by another set of 69 indicators. At the time of the evaluation, data were not available for 31 indicators (44.9% of total number of indicators), which obviously influences full reliability of the scoring-based assessment. One of the key reasons for data gaps is the timing of MICS survey, which is the basis for measuring approximately one third of indicators. Therefore, **the effectiveness in the achievement of outcomes was assessed based on the output indicators** and not on the level of outcome indicators, as it was explained in the chapter on methodology. Outcome indicators are used for the assessment of DPF impact, but there they are heavily complemented with qualitative data.

Also, **the number of indicators per output is disproportionate**. The success in regard to some outputs is measured by one indicator, while at the same time some other outputs have even 10 indicators with lower chances to successfully pass the 'test of success' as they have to satisfy more criteria.

Another problem is the way how results were assessed during the monitoring cycles. UNCT Country Results Reports 2018-2018 is based more on **subjective assessment** of results achieved by agencies, instead of on a more robust measurement. This may generate biased views on the achievements of results. Also, the monitoring reports present only the scoring results, but not the explanation of what is behind the scores, indicating what was implemented and what not and why.

Figures 1a and 1b: Availability of data for output and outcome indicators



Some indicators are designed to measure the effects that are beyond the scope of UNCT influence and they can show underperformance, despite the successful UN system efforts in a given area. For example, the indicator used to measure output 1 of the outcome 1 (increased capacity of government stakeholders to apply the international human rights law and to report on the enforcement of international norms and standards) is measured by one of the indicators that is clearly outside of UNCT influence. While the outcome requires the UNCT to increase capacities of stakeholders, the indicator (*'National legislation and standards on AML/CFT is in line with the FATF and Moneyval (CoE) recommendations and are being implemented by relevant authorities'*) measures results that depend on the actions of the Government and other partners, much beyond the capacity strengthening, which is specifically targeted by the UN intervention.

Key finding 7: The DPF was implemented effectively in majority of outcome areas. The highest achievements are recorded in the area of outcomes 1 (human rights), 3 (enhanced gender equality), 4 (high quality, inclusive, equitable gender sensitive and age appropriate health services), 5 (efficient, relevant, quality, inclusive and equitable education), 6 (strengthened social welfare system), 7 (sustainable livelihoods and inclusive labor market) and 8 (environment, climate change and resilience). Some progress was achieved in the areas of outcome 9 (culture as vehicle for sustainable development), while the lowest progress was recorded in the areas of outcome 2 (rule of law).

The assessment results presented in the following chart show **the high effectiveness in the majority of outcomes**. It is, however, also very important to take into account that DPF pillars and outcomes **are very diverse in their scope**. Some are relatively narrow with only one outcome, while others are very broad and include diverse objectives, outputs and activities. This could impact the results, as in the case of narrower and thematically consistent areas, it was possible to have higher achievements with few effectively implemented actions, than it was in much broader and diverse outcomes, depending on more actions, with higher potential risks and challenges in implementation.

The following figure presents the overview of achievement of outcomes using scoring system explained in detail in the methodology chapter. A more detailed overview of the effectiveness of DPF implementation along nine outcomes and their outputs is presented in Annex 2.

Figure 2: The scores of effectiveness of outputs per nine outcomes

Outcome 1: By 2020, people in Serbia, especially vulnerable groups, have their human rights protected and have improved access to justice and security	77.7%
Outcome 2: By 2020, governance institutions at all levels have enhanced accountability and representation to provide better quality services to people and the economy	42.8%
Outcome 3: By 2020, state institutions and other relevant actors enhance gender equality and enable women and girls, especially those from vulnerable groups, to live lives free from discrimination and violence	78.6%
Outcome 4: By 2020, high quality, inclusive, equitable, gender-sensitive, and age appropriate health services that protect patient rights are available and utilized by all	73.2%
Outcome 5: By 2020, an efficient education system is established that enables relevant, quality, inclusive and equitable education to all, particularly the most vulnerable, and increases learning and social outcomes	93.3%
Outcome 6: By 2020, the social welfare system is strengthened to provide timely, holistic and continued support to individuals and families at risk and enable them to live in a safe, secure, supportive family and community environment	85.7%
Outcome 7: By 2020, there is an effective enabling environment that promotes sustainable livelihoods and economic development, focused on an inclusive labor market and decent job creation	83.3%
Outcome 8: By 2020, there are improved capacities to combat climate change and manage natural resources and communities are more resilient to the effects of natural and man-made disasters	73.3%
Outputs within outcome 9: By 2020, Serbia has inclusive policies ensuring an enhanced cultural industries sector, promoting cultural diversity and managing cultural and natural heritage as a vehicle for sustainable development	66.6%

Outcome 1: By 2020, people in Serbia, especially vulnerable groups, have their human rights protected and have improved access to justice and security

This is the area of high achievements. Capacities of government and other stakeholders, including police and judiciary, to apply international human rights laws and monitor and report on the enforcement of international norms and standards were heightened. The OHCHR has supported the Government of the Republic of Serbia in establishment and work of the Council for Monitoring the Implementation of the

Recommendations of the United Nations Human Right Mechanisms. This body is composed of different stakeholders, including Government, National Assembly, independent bodies, UN, the civil society organizations²². The Council works on the development of indicators for monitoring the implementation of recommendations of different international human right mechanisms, through the UPR platform. Implementing agencies (OHCHR, UNICEF, UN Women and others) provided support to judges, increasing their capacities to directly apply international standards in their judgments. This support is institutionalized through permanent cooperation with the Judicial Academy. UNICEF supported CSOs acting as watch dog organizations in the area of child rights.

The UNODC has significantly contributed to the development of national mechanisms to monitor and evidence organized crime. The regional data platform was established and populated with the national data for Serbia. It also contributed to the development of skills of relevant stakeholders in combating smuggling of migrants. The curriculum of the training on smuggling of migrants, along with sustainable education modules, has been integrated into the relevant training programmes for national institutions.

UNHCR provided significant contribution to enhancing capacities of Commissariat for Refugees and Migration and Office for Asylum of the Ministry of Interior in management of asylum system and reception, support of the migrants who requests asylum, as well as in integration of those who were granted the status of international protection.

UNICEF has contributed significantly to this outcome by increasing institutional capacities for protection of juvenile offenders, and application of diversion schemes and alternative sanctions in line with international standards. There was also significant contribution to the protection of children victims or witnesses of violence from secondary victimization²³. Through guidelines for guardianship for judicial professionals, UNICEF provided the framework for processing cases based on the principle of the best interest of the child during civil proceedings. The countrywide legal aid network was capacitated to address violations related to the child protection, health and education²⁴.

With support of UNCT, the offices of Protector of Citizens and Commissioner for Equality monitor and report on child rights, but this is still below targets defined by the UNCT, suggesting annual or bi-annual reports. Due to the support of UNCT (particularly OHCHR, UNICEF, UNDP and UN Women), the participation of the civil society in reporting to international human rights mechanisms significantly increased during the DPF implementation. Only in the process of reporting to the CEDAW Committee, more than 10 shadow/independent reports were submitted by civil society organizations, many of them supported by UNDP and UN Women.

The least progress is recorded in the improvement of the legal framework related to the anti-corruption, war crimes justice, engagement of the Protector of Citizens in monitoring asylum seekers' rights, which are all below targeted levels.

Outcome 2: By 2020, governance institutions at all levels have enhanced accountability and representation to provide better quality services to people and the economy

The DPF components in outcome 2 are the ones with the lowest progress so far. The highest achievements are in the area of small arms and light weapons control, the area in which SEESAC, the UNDP regional programme, is already successfully engaged for many years. Partial progress is recorded in relation to the development of national data collection and management systems for evidence on vulnerable children, implemented by UNICEF, while progress in the areas of open budget, open government, public administration reform, e-government was relatively limited.

The UNDP implemented activities in support to the public administration reform, including increase of efficiency and accountability and further development of e-government. The indicator of achievements of

²² More than 20 leading human rights CSOs participate in the UPR platform

²³ UNICEF Country Programme Evaluation

²⁴ The free legal aid network engaged 36 legal aid actors to provide free legal advice in 25 municipalities

public administration reform is defined as a percentage of the implementation of National Strategy for Public Administration Reform (PAR) and percentage of implementation of e-governance strategy. According to the government report on the implementation of PAR, (latest available for 2017) only 23% of the strategy was implemented. There are no reports on the implementation of e-government policies. UNDP actions focused on promoting efficiency and transparency in the public finance management²⁵. The indicator for measuring achievement in this output is the score and position of Serbia in the Open Budget Index. The target for 2020 was set to 55, but latest data available for 2017 show that Serbia scored 43 points, which classifies it as country with insufficient budget transparency²⁶.

The achievement in the area of representation and accountability at all levels (output 3) is measured by the percentage of citizens declaring trust in the Parliament, obtained through UNDP opinion poll. The target is set to 45% of citizens declaring trust in Parliament, however data for 2019 indicate that only 29% of citizens trust to this institution. It is important to note that the UNDP has implemented a range of projects to promote the transparency and accountability of public institutions at the central and local levels. This has included support for the National Assembly to strengthen its oversight function, to reach out to citizens and promote SDGs. Local democracy has been promoted through training and advice provided to the local councils. However, the defined indicator does not measure UNDP performance in this area, but the change that depends primarily on the government performance. Progress in the implementation of recommendations stemming from the Universal Periodic Review (output 4) was not possible to measure as the process of designing indicators for the monitoring of implementation was only recently completed. The increase of effectiveness of tackling safety and security concerns by government (output 5) is measured by the decrease of incidents of armed violence and transparency of arms reporting, and as indicated above, this is the area of highest achievement. The number of incidents was reduced for 21.9% during DPF implementation against the target of 20%.

There is no evidence of the progress in the area related to output 6, the alignment of national framework for combating corruption with UNCAC and reviewing the situation. As concluded by the independent evaluation of the UNDP country programme, the involvement of UNDP in the rule of law and fight against corruption has been minimal during the DPF implementation cycle as compared to past programming²⁷.

The contribution to the improvement of national data collection and management systems on the most vulnerable children (output 7) was partially effective. According to UNICEF's Country Programme evaluation, there was significant contribution towards improving records and building the analytical capacity of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoEST) to follow and analyze data and inform its decision-making. UNICEF supported the integration of analytical units within MoEST, which is responsible for the development of the system and analysis. There is also significant contribution by UNICEF to Institute for Public Health in developing a Register on Children with Disabilities and new MICS data base that will be available in 2020. UNICEF's model of cooperation with the Government relied on their leadership and was responsive rather than directive, providing technical support, models and exposure, particularly regionally (e.g., learning from other countries in the region that implemented the unique education number)²⁸. Despite these contributions, target to update monitoring system to include all relevant indicators, including for monitoring of SDGs is not yet achieved. SORS SDG monitoring platform still misses many data on the most vulnerable children.

There is some progress in the area of good governance at the local level (output 8). The UNDP has been implementing a project for improvement of transparency of local budgets in 20 municipalities, in partnership with the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM). Through local development programmes, UNOPS provided more than 300 representatives from 99 LSGs, with enhanced

²⁵ UNDP Independent Country Programme Evaluation

²⁶ The Open Budget Survey, accessed on 25 October 2019, <https://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey/open-budget-index-rankings/>

²⁷ UNDP Independent Country Programme Evaluation

²⁸ UNICEF Country Programme Evaluation

knowledge and skills on applying good governance principles at local level. In addition, permanent resources have been established in 23 LSGs to advance the adoption of GG principles in everyday functioning of LSG work and the state in general. Furthermore, UNOPS linked GG with its 53 local infrastructure projects, and TA provided within this pilot approach resulted in development or revision of 100 local regulations and procedures. These local regulations contributed to enhanced accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, citizens' participation, or non-discrimination. UNOPS also contributed to establishment of good governance index that will be used to measure quality of governance at the local level.

Outcome 3: By 2020, state institutions and other relevant actors enhance gender equality and enable women and girls, especially those from vulnerable groups, to live lives free from discrimination and violence

The implementation of the DPF in the area of outcome 3 shows significant progress. The majority of outputs were achieved to a high degree.

The engagement of UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, and UNFPA in response to violence against women represents a very good example of effective joint programming. It focused on further improving the social and institutional environment to contribute to the Serbian policy of zero tolerance and eradication of violence against women in Serbia. The available data indicate significant increase of reporting of violence against women after the enactment of the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence.²⁹ UNDP supported preparation of the first report on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention which confirms the mobilization of Serbian government in enforcing relevant laws and in prevention, elimination and sanctioning of discrimination and violence. A total of 260 institutions and organizations at the national, provincial and local levels participated in the development of the report. UNDP also contributed to the monitoring of the implementation of the Law on Preventing Domestic Violence, by developing monitoring framework and supporting the Ministry of Justice to collect, process and publish monthly data on victims, perpetrators and their relations.³⁰

UN Women supported a number of CSOs through the implementation of the regional programme 'Implementing Norms, Changing Minds'. UNDP has supported the creation of the group of "*Journalists against Violence*" which led to 31 editors and journalists from prominent national media to join efforts for more ethically and professionally balanced reporting on gender-based violence.

The achievement related to the increased capacities of professionals to address cases of violence against women (output 3), was undermined by selection of two indicators, both measuring results that are beyond the influence of the UNCT: development and adoption of the strategy for combating VAW and establishment of the SOS helpline in line with the Istanbul Convention standards. Neither of these two was achieved: strategy is not drafted, and helpline is established but not in line with Convention standards.

The UNDP provided significant support to the Institute for Social Protection by developing indicators for monitoring domestic violence, however the system is not yet applied in practice and there are concerns that with currently available human resources, Centers for Social Work will not be able to apply this new system of evidencing cases³¹.

In order to provide a better foundation for evidence-based policies and programs related to gender-transformative programs, UNFPA in partnership with Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS), implemented the national Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), a comprehensive survey on men's attitudes and practices, across a wide variety of topics related to gender equality, as well as women's opinions and

²⁹ According to data presented by public prosecutor during the Conference on the OSCE-led survey on wellbeing and safety of women in South East and Eastern Europe, during the first 22 months after the enactment of the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence, there were 88,000 reported cases of VAW, with 33,000 of issued emergency measures and 23 186 individual plans.

³⁰ Data are regularly published at the Ministry's website iskljucinasilje.rs

³¹ Focus Group Discussion during the evaluation data collection mission

reports of their own experiences.³² Local “Be a man” clubs were established through the Joint Program for an Integrated Response to Violence Against Women and Girls.³³

Very dynamic engagement of UNCT, particularly UNDP, UN Women and UNOPS was identified in the areas of support to national gender equality mechanisms, capacity building of officials to implement gender responsive budgeting, disaster risk management and response to climate change. Ministry of Environmental Protection was supported in gender mainstreaming of climate smart actions. Support also included enabling improved access to and availability of data by an open data approach for development, management and monitoring and new innovative technical and systemic solutions and business models. The number of budget users that introduced gender responsive budgeting in their budget submission has increased to 34 out of 40 budget users at national level in 2018.³⁴ UNOPS contributed, in partnership with UN Women, to the strengthening of local institutional framework for gender equality through establishment and strengthening of the local gender equality mechanisms, implementation of grants, and establishment of local Women Councilor Networks.

The UNDP, through SEESAC, brought significant progress in addressing the problem of small arms and light weapons (SALW), particularly in the context of gender-based violence against women. The regional study was published, gender coach programme conducted in three countries in South East Europe, three national trainings and one regional training were delivered for members of SALW commissions and other institutions in charge of SALW control.³⁵ SALW Control Action Plans in SEE contain measures to increase the participation of women in SALW control, enhance cooperation with women’s NGOs, address the misuse of firearms in domestic violence and develop and implement preventive measures focused particularly on young men³⁶. UNICEF contributed to the improvement of cross-sectoral cooperation on the issue of child marriage, which resulted in the establishment of a National Coalition against Child Marriage³⁷.

Outcome 4: By 2020, high quality, inclusive, equitable, gender-sensitive, and age appropriate health services that protect patient rights are available and utilized by all

The UNCT made efforts to contribute to the strengthening of the quality of health care services in order to make it more evidence-based, family centred, and accessible to vulnerable groups with special focus on health care legislation and regulations in line with international standards. These efforts resulted in relatively high level of achievements: out of 12 outputs, high achievements are identified in seven outputs.

UNICEF contributed to the quality of Early Childhood Development Services (ECD) and raised awareness of positive parenting among children and parents, especially among families from vulnerable groups such as Roma and families with children with disabilities. It has conducted several situation analyses, KAP surveys and other type of analytical activities in order to design models for Early Childhood Interventions (ECI). The studies and evidence produced with the assistance of UNICEF were of crucial importance for placing issues of ECD and ECI high on the Government agenda³⁸. UNICEF invested significant efforts to model, pilot and introduce new services, standards and to increase capacities of professionals to provide more accessible, acceptable and quality ECD services. Many aspects of ECD services were improved through UNICEF action, including early identification of developmental risks by pediatricians and patronage nurses, promotion and support to families for breastfeeding, improved maternity and neonatal services in locations supported by UNICEF, horizontal learning among professionals, and development of

³² <http://e8.org.rs/images/>

³³ Within this activity, a total of 16 public actions were organized by “Be a man” clubs and Local Youth Offices, which gathered around 1900 people

³⁴ UN Women, Fourth report on the progress in introduction of gender responsible budgeting in the system of public finance planning in the Republic of Serbia in 2018

³⁵ http://www.seesac.org/News_1/Gender-responsive-SALW-Control-in-the-region/

³⁶ <http://www.seesac.org/SALW-Control-Roadmap/salw-control-roadmap-seesac/>

³⁷ UNICEF Serbia, CP Evaluation 2016-2020, p. 29

³⁸ Ibid

standards of excellence for delivery and the neonatal care unit³⁹. The example of good practice is the Early Childhood Intervention Service in municipality of Rakovica which was visited during country data collection mission and described in the Annex 14. During the DPF implementation, the first ever Health Behaviour in School aged Children (HBSC) survey was carried out in Serbia, and following the results, two important regulatory acts were adopted: National Program for the Prevention of Obesity in Children and Adults and Rulebook on Detailed Conditions for Organizing, Implementing and Monitoring Nutrition in Elementary School both providing framework for childhood obesity prevention. To further strengthen the evidence in this area 2nd round of COSI is carried out with WHO support to further define the policy recommendations on reducing the burden of child obesity in Serbia.

The WHO, the UNFPA and UNICEF invested significant efforts in strengthening the health system in Serbia for disaster risk management and emergency responses.⁴⁰ This includes the very important *Health Sector Emergency Response Plan*, a generic document to guide Ministry of Health in case of emergency/crisis. In addition, some specific contingency and cross cutting procedures were adopted, including procedure on Sexual and reproductive health in emergency and crisis which has been based on *The Minimum Initial Service Package for Reproductive Health in Crisis Situations*. *National Programme for Preservation and Promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health of the Citizens of Serbia* contains measures and activities for improvement of gender-based violence prevention, protection and response within the health sector.

WHO and UNICEF engagement resulted in an increase of MMR vaccine coverage and efficient response to measles outbreak and ongoing accelerated actions toward 95% of vaccination coverage. Technical support and strengthened capacities based on the findings from the KAP study and Tailored Immunization Programme resulted in training materials for parents and health care professionals. A set of communication trainings for health care workers was conducted as well as the continuous medical educations on immunization that covered whole of Serbia. Overall assessment of response to the measles outbreak from 2017/2018 resulted in tangible recommendations already addressing issues as central data registry and procurement.

The WHO supported the Institute for Biocide and Medical Ecology in Belgrade in revision and improvement of the control of vector borne diseases; provided support to long-term care institutions for adults with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities; jointly with UNDP and other UN agencies implemented the EU funded project 'Open Communities, Successful Communities'. With the WHO support, a comprehensive assessment of the health system challenges and opportunities to improve NCD outcomes was implemented for cardiovascular diseases, stroke and diabetes, as well as for early detection and treatment of cancer as well as to improve prevention of key risk factors. As a part of the NCD prevention and tobacco control, the implementation of a Study on Economic and Social Impact of Smoking in Serbia started to further strengthen tobacco control measures. A National Alcohol Policy Programme with an Action Plan was finalized, and a series of capacity building events took place for representatives of Primary Health Care Centres and local self-governments in for early intervention on alcohol abuse. Since 2017, support was provided to the MoH and IPH Serbia in development of the new National Health Strategy (NHS) with initial evaluation of the previous NHS and Financial protection study is initiated aiming to improve national health financing strategy and moving towards UHC. As part of strengthening the health system the Public Health Strategy was adopted by the Government in July 2018.

The joint programme implemented by UNDP, WHO and UNOPS represents the example of very good collaboration of UN agencies and use of their specific capacities to "deliver as one" and implement a comprehensive program. Based on WHO technical expertise and recommendations, the UNDP and the UNOPS implemented a wide range of interventions to improve the physical capacity of health institutions in migrant recipient municipalities through procurement of equipment and vehicles and reconstruction work. At the same time, the WHO produced set of technical materials (assessments, guidance documents and contingency plans) that improved organization of health care for refugees and migrants at the

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ UNFPA Cluster Programme Evaluation for the Republic of Serbia, 2013-2018

national and local level. For example, the Guidance for Protection and Improvement of the Mental Health of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants in Serbia is considered by national stakeholders to be an invaluable document that provided the base for improved organization and access to mental health services for refugees and migrants.

The UNOPS has providing support to the MoH in improving health care infrastructure. One of the good examples is the reconstruction of four Clinical Centers in Serbia: Belgrade, Novi Sad, Nis and Kragujevac. This reconstruction is part of reform of the tertiary healthcare system and provision of efficient and unified in quality healthcare services to Serbian citizens. The UNODC has implemented the project related to prevention of drug use, HIV/AIDS and crime among young people through family skills training programmes. In order to prevent children and adolescents from using drugs, getting involved in crime and becoming vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, the UNODC implemented a project focused on support to families and family relationships.

Outcome 5: By 2020, an efficient education system is established that enables relevant, quality, inclusive and equitable education to all, particularly the most vulnerable, and increases learning and social outcomes

Evidence indicates high achievements in the area of improved access to and quality of education across different levels and in regard to various vulnerable groups, largely due to UNICEF efforts. The intervention was focused on providing an enabling environment for inclusive education across pre-primary and primary education. Different quality assurance systems were introduced, including monitoring and evaluation, strengthening capacities of institutions and professionals, providing manuals, guidelines, centers of excellence, PSE assistance network. UNICEF supported the MoESTD to develop or revise bylaws in order to provide more appropriate structures through intersectoral committees, or services, through individual education plans, pedagogical assistance, procedures, mechanisms in cases of discrimination. Technical advice and advocacy efforts resulted in the new Law on the Foundations of the Education System. The new Preschool Curriculum Framework was also developed with UNICEF's support. UNICEF built new physical spaces of learning in the most disadvantaged municipalities, strengthened the capacities of local self-governments and public preschool institutions to better plan and allocate resources for PSE, conducted outreach to vulnerable families with children who do not attend PSE. *Kindergartens without borders* is the project aiming at increasing access to and quality of preschool education, especially for children from vulnerable groups (children living in rural areas, Roma children and children with disabilities). As example of good practice, the preschool institution of municipality of Cukarica is described in more details in Annex 14. The inclusion of children with disabilities in education resulted in the Registry of Children with Disability based on a functional assessment and the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health⁴¹.

One of the main approaches that UNICEF applies in the improvement of education services (as well as in other areas) is modelling and piloting services. The innovation is, therefore, a part of the core UNICEF activities. The new models are not always adopted, scaled up or integrated in the system, but those that prove to be adequate and appropriate for the context are further integrated in the system and scaled up. Some of these initiatives are related to the prevention of drop-out and early school leaving, with particular efforts invested in prevention of harmful consequences of early marriage to educational outcomes and general wellbeing among Roma girls. Some of the pilot models of preventing school drop-out, however, are proving to be problematic to scale up presently⁴².

An important achievement of UNICEF action focused on improved education is related to the preparedness of educations system for disaster risk reduction and emergency response. Particular efforts were also invested in the integration of refugee and migrant children in the educational system, which

⁴¹ A more detailed contribution of UNICEF to this outcome area can be found in: Institute for Development Impact, Evaluation of the UNICEF Serbia Country Programme 2016-2020

⁴² Institute for Development Impact, Evaluation of the UNICEF Serbia Country Programme 2016-2020

provided good results. UNOPS through its projects contributed to education sector by completing construction and equipping or renovating numerous educational facilities (schools, faculties) across Serbia.

Outcome 6: By 2020, the social welfare system is strengthened to provide timely, holistic and continued support to individuals and families at risk and enable them to live in a safe, secure, supportive family and community environment

All outputs within this outcome, except one, related to the enforcement and implementation of policies and protocols in protection of children from violence, were effectively implemented.

Contribution of UNICEF to the improvement of social welfare system by integrating support services and measures targeting children living in families faced with multiple deprivations and preventing separation was highly effective. UNICEF contributed to the important legislative changes – revisions of the Law on Social Protection, Family Law and the Law on Financial Assistance to Families with Children. Successful effort was invested in introducing flexible forms of family-based care, such as intermittent fostering and kinship care. A number of guidelines were produced to support the establishment of new models and practices, to increase skills of implementing stakeholders to apply new services, such as guidelines for prevention of family separation.

The piloted service ‘Family outreach worker’ was designed to prevent family separation and displacement of children from the family. As evidenced by the UNICEF country programme evaluation, this service brought positive effects on beneficiary children’s lives and generated important lessons learned.⁴³ Another closely interlinked intervention was implemented in cooperation with the centers for foster care and adoption and the Provincial Institute of Social Protection, with regard to the development of intermittent foster care for families with children with disabilities and kinship foster care. The main aim of the service was to ensure intermittent foster care, which would enable children with disabilities and their families to stay together. There is evident positive output of these services, as the number of users increased during the implementation of their pilot phase⁴⁴.

The area of child protection from violence shows modest progress. Despite UNICEF’s efforts the indicators show little progress due to the fact that the general protocol for protection of children from VAC does not contain specific measures related to gender-based violence, violence against children with disabilities and digital violence. Also, the number of municipalities that have functional VAC teams is limited to only 31 out of which 28 have established multisectoral teams with support of UNICEF.⁴⁵ Results related to strengthening the social protection system for DRR and emergency response were effectively achieved. UNICEF provided psychosocial support to over 75,000 children in UNICEF supported friendly spaces; it provided winterization support to 27,000 children, and trained 200 frontline workers for child protection in emergencies.⁴⁶ High achievement is also identified in the area of policy guidance, provision of various analyses based on data, advice on human rights-based policy reforms and development of local social inclusion action plans.

Outcome 7: By 2020, there is an effective enabling environment that promotes sustainable livelihoods and economic development, focused on an inclusive labor market and decent job creation

The portfolio under this outcome is rather diverse and consists of a number of actions, some implemented through larger and complex programmes and some scattered around small-scale, fragmented and unrelated activities. The results measured by output indicators show high achievements, though more qualitative analysis indicates a lack of consistency and coherence between individual interventions that were relatively successful. The implementing agencies are aware of this situation within the outcome

⁴³ UNICEF Country Programme Evaluation, p. 44

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ UNICEF Country Programme Evaluation, p. 133

⁴⁶ MEG, the UNCT Country Results Report 2016-2018,

activities and during the focus group discussion emphasized that this pillar of DPF was not designed as a joint plan, but rather as a set of projects.

The achievements in improvement of business environment are measured by indicators that show the position of Serbia in global competitiveness and doing business rankings and by the number of small and medium enterprises that introduced innovation or use innovative market development. Serbia's ranking in the Global Competitiveness Index improved between 2016 and 2019 from 90/138 to 72/142, which is close, but not yet at the level of the set target (to increase the ranking by 20 positions upward)⁴⁷. According to the World Bank Doing Business ranking Serbia was positioned as 59/189 in 2016 and as 72/141 in 2019.⁴⁸ These contradictory trends indicated through two different indexes based on different methodologies prevent the formulation of clear findings and conclusion related to improvement of business environment.

According to the second indicator, which measures the number of innovative SMEs against the target of 20 SMEs, the output could be considered as achieved. Through local development programmes, UNOPS also supported over 100 manufacturing enterprises, as these entities were often not able to access commercial bank loans and for further business development, they needed new investments. Each beneficiary enterprise had the obligation of opening new jobs and implementing social corporate responsibility activities. One of them is the highly successful and fast-growing production of pastry and desserts in Kraljevo, described in the Annex 14. UNOPS supported women entrepreneurship. This intervention resulted in registration of 43 businesses and creation of 103 jobs.

The UNOPS has been implementing various programs contributing to the more balanced socio-economic development in Serbia, with particular focus on less developed areas through strengthening local governance, enhancing competitiveness of local economies and promoting entrepreneurship, developing/improving business and social infrastructure and increasing social cohesion and inclusion in local communities. The UNOPS has implemented more than 60 projects in Raska and Novi Pazar since 2016, mainly through the PROGRES programme, funded by the EU and the Government of Switzerland. In general, the direct beneficiaries, the Government and the donors have positively assessed these initiatives. UNOPS implemented projects that, within broader national reform, contributed to enhanced electronic issuing of construction permits through the project implemented under the patronage of the MCTI and in partnership with the National Alliance for the Local Economic Development (NALED). This effort contributed to the reduction of the average time needed for issuance of construction permits from eight to five days in targeted LSGs in the South of the country. This made this area more efficient than Vojvodina and Belgrade that needed on an average nine days. UNOPS also contributed to the enhancement of other LSGs services that improve business environment, such as is establishment of GIS with focus on investment promotion; development of planning and technical documentation for areas with potential to generate economic activity; development of Capital Investment Plan and similar – all will contribute to business environment.

Significant contribution to this outcome is provided by ILO through the 'Decent Work Country Programmes for Serbia (2013-2017) and Montenegro (2015-2017)', and the UNDP and ILO joint regional project 'Promoting Inclusive Labor Market Solutions in the Western Balkans' which is currently in its second phase (2018-2021). The review of the 'Decent Work Programme' has found significant achievements in strengthening capacity of government institutions and social partners to improve functioning of the labor market. It was noted that national constituents appreciated the opportunity to utilize the deliverables in their work. The issue of the representation of the social partners, which seriously influenced their position in the social dialogue, was identified as a shortfall. In regard to the

⁴⁷ World Economic Forum, Global Competitiveness Reports for 2016 and 2019, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-competitiveness-report-2016-2017-1> ;http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf

⁴⁸ World Bank, Doing Business 2016, 2019, <https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Annual-Reports/English/DB16-Full-Report.pdf> http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf

increase of employment opportunities, review found the low level of achievements, particularly in regard to the local employment policies and youth employability.⁴⁹

UNDP has contributed to the inclusive labour markets objectives, particularly targeting Roma, unemployed youth, people with disabilities, although the interventions were relatively small in terms of funding and outreach. UNDP has been working with the government at national and local level on micro-macro linkages important for development of institutional mechanisms for social inclusion, area-based development and strengthening of pro-Roma civil society. Through Regional Roma Surveys, UNDP has largely contributed to data collecting and monitoring and consequently to regional and national strategic level policy making. In order to support the government's efforts with regards to the social inclusion of Roma men and women at the local level, UNDP and UNHCR jointly implement interventions that strive to enhance the capacities of young Roma to proactively contribute to improved living conditions of the representatives of their communities.

UNDP has been using innovative research method to complement the quantitative researches. Qualitative research including more than 1,000 Roma returning from the EU to the Western Balkans have been used to complement quantitative data. UNDP has contributed in creating employment opportunities for Roma returnees, combined with support to their education and housing. Partnerships have been established among national government institutions, local authorities, communities, private sector, civil society and international organizations around these initiatives. Project "Support the Reintegration of Roma returnees" improved coordination mechanisms at the local level and contributed to awareness raising of returnees on how to improve their livelihoods.

The contribution of FAO to this outcome is multiple. At the national level, FAO supported government to develop methodology and increase skills for Post-Disaster Needs Assessment in the area of agriculture through software development. FAO has also invested resources and efforts to increasing resilience of local communities to DRR, particularly those affected by the 2014 floods, and in recovery of small farmer's productive capacities after the floods. Implementation of the project 'Strengthening disaster risk reduction and management capacities in Kraljevo municipality', was focused on improvement of existing flood management systems, plans and procedures. This intervention, as stated by several informants, had a significant impact on local community, which will be described more in the chapter on impact.

Outcome 8: By 2020, there are improved capacities to combat climate change and manage natural resources and communities are more resilient to the effects of natural and man-made disasters

This is the area that came more into the focus of UNCT engagement during recent years, particularly after the 2014 floods, and it is an area of diverse focus.

As the leading agency for this outcome, UNDP provided diverse types of contributions to the achievement of results. UNDP provided expert assistance and advisory support in formulating national policies and measures in the area of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Using UNDP's policies on innovation, the Government launched calls for stakeholders to identify climate smart, best value for money and innovative solutions to mitigate climate change. The Government used UNDP to pilot blending of funds and promoting partnerships with the private sector in the area of energy and resilience. The UNDP has assisted the Government in unlocking loans provided by development banks (Framework Loan Agreement between CEB and Serbia, as well as other loans).

Furthermore, the UNDP provided support in conducting wide consultative processes prior to the UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP14) and the UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP24), formulating the amendments to the Laws on Strategic impact assessments (SEAs) and Environmental impact assessments (EIAs), development of EIA/SEA database in open data format, preparation of a strategic planning guidance for integration of environmental activities into Local Actions Plans for Youth (LAPYs). It also supported regulatory framework development in the agriculture

⁴⁹ ILO, Final Review of the Decent Work Country Programmes for Serbia (2013-2017) and Montenegro (2015-2017), p. 7

sector, energy efficiency and renewable energy sectors. Municipalities were supported in setting up Energy Management and Information Systems or promoting the development of alternative sources of energy. The UNDP has promoted biomass production through the project “Reducing Barriers to Accelerate the Development of Biomass Markets in Serbia”, aimed at creating a more favourable legislative and administrative framework for economic opportunities in this sector, and included financial support to set up six biogas plants. The project was expected to deliver direct CO₂ reductions of 1 million tons during the 20 year life cycle of investments in 6 plants.⁵⁰

The capacity for Disaster Risk Reduction has been targeted through a series of interventions, including promoting gender mainstreaming. Against this background, and as concluded by the independent evaluation of the UNDP country programme, the CPD framework was flexible enough to enable response to unforeseen needs, increasing the size of the portfolio compared to what was initially planned. In regard to the man-made disasters, the UNDP supported migration affected local self-governments in contingency planning of public services contributing to better responsiveness the emergencies.⁵¹

FAO has contributed to the outcome through various programmes and projects, including regional programme ‘Enhancement of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management capacities and mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation practices into Agriculture sector in Western Balkans’. Through this initiative, the capacities and coordination for disaster reduction, including climate change adaptation and emergency preparedness were increased, as well as the resilience of agricultural producers and other stakeholders at regional, national and municipality levels. The support FAO provided in local communities in DRR was highly appreciated among local stakeholders (elaborated more in the chapter on impact).

UNEP provides support to the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Agency for Environmental Protection and the National Cadaster. It supports modernization of power plants, a system for reporting at international conventions. Other initiatives include support to the Ministry of Agriculture on capacity building for the Green Climate Fund readiness funds and green chemistry.

WHO provides technical support to the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Environmental Protection to initiate the process of development of the National Portfolio of Action, as follow up to the Ostrava Declaration in line with EU accession. WHO supported AirQuality Study conducted in Serbia and all aspects of environment pollution were addressed as threats to human health with focus on assessment on air quality. Joint UNEP and WHO project (implemented by the IPH of Serbia) aiming to strengthening Serbian national capacities and inter-sectorial synergies for safe management of contaminated sites and related hazardous substances to prevent negative impact on human health and the environment was implemented and the Road map was presented as a part of the National Portfolio of Action.

UNOPS supported the development of the technical documentation for the protection from erosion and torrents in the Jablanica, Pčinja, and Vlasina Rivers watersheds. This created the preconditions for the works that will reduce risk of torrential flooding in 11 LSGs. The General Design with Pre-feasibility Study for Regulation of Južna Morava River defined measures for anti-erosion and flood protection of settlements, road infrastructure and for exploitation of materials from the river and riverbanks and created basis for development of accompanying technical documentation.

Outcome 9: By 2020, Serbia has inclusive policies ensuring an enhanced cultural industries sector, promoting cultural diversity and managing cultural and natural heritage as a vehicle for sustainable development

Outcome 9 of DPF is relatively small. It was chaired by the WHO and coordinated by UNESCO. Under this programmatic pillar and outcome, UN agencies carried out activities to reduce disaster risk in cultural and natural heritage sites, support the management of World Heritage sites, and strengthened the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods. In addition, the results and data acquired during the implementation of

⁵⁰ UNDP Independent Country Programme Evaluation

⁵¹ UNDP CP Evaluation

the Culture for Development Indicators project provided direct inputs and contribution to the newly developed 'Strategy for Cultural Development of Serbia 2017-2027'.

UNESCO cooperates especially closely with the Ministry of Culture and Information, providing different forms of support such as training related to DRR in the areas of cultural heritage, translation of a handbook about this topic and preparation of the risk assessment and plan for recovery of the Monastery Studenica. UNESCO has also been cooperating with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development as well as the Ministry of Environment, particularly in protection of natural heritage and reserves.

Key finding 8: DPF was more effectively implemented in the areas which were designed closely in line with national priorities and when better responding to the needs of target groups, when engaging diverse group of relevant stakeholders and linked with complementary initiatives/programmes/projects, creating synergy; when supported by sufficient funding and grounded in high competences of implementing team as well as clear and not complicated administrative and procurement procedures. The lower effectiveness is linked to the weaker design of the DPF component due to unrealistic and over-ambitious objectives, insufficient underpinning by concrete initiatives on output level, corresponding lack of funds, insufficient cooperation of partners, lack of willingness or slow takeover of the results by government counterparts or other key stakeholders.

Recognition of the importance to align UNCT programmes and projects to national priorities and the ability to do so in the areas of UNCT competences is one of the key success ingredients that influence the effectiveness of implementation. Some of the examples include the dynamic engagement of the OHCHR and UN Women with the Office for Human and Minority Rights in promoting the processes and practices of monitoring and reporting on international human right mechanisms, or assistance provided by different agencies (UNDP, FAO, WHO, UNOPS, UN Women, UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR, UNESCO) in supporting the Government, local authorities, but also other stakeholders to develop better DRR response and to build the long-term resilience to natural or man-made disasters and emergencies. Tailor-made support to local communities, such as those supported by UNOPS, including provision of a combination of different types of support that not only enable beneficiaries to smoothly implement priority projects and satisfy administrative requirements, but also to build institutional capacities and developed permanent skills in projects management cycle are another successful example.

The second factor increasing chances for programmes/projects to be effectively implemented is related to the links with other complementary projects to create synergy and boost implementation for more systemic results. The examples of such approaches could be found in different components of the DPF. In the area of outcome 3, where complementary initiatives were implemented through different projects and programmes supported by UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP, the combination of initiatives related to the improvement of services for support to women and girls experiencing violence, increasing capacities of professionals in the system for protection, with simultaneous work with young men to eliminate gender stereotypes and promote zero tolerance to violence, combined with work on reduction on small arms and lethal weapons, deal with different aspects and promote changes from different angles, providing a more favorable environment for both effective implementation and stronger and more systemic effects.

Funding opportunities are one of the key preconditions for effective implementation. The initiatives that were supported by larger funds were able to design more complex and large-scale interventions, which create a better foundation for more effective achievement of results.

UN system capacities and competences of implementation teams, but also the capability of the UNCT to bring outside expertise and knowledge to the beneficiaries to enhance the capacities for implementation is another factor that significantly contributed to the effective implementation.

As assessed by many beneficiaries of the UNCT programmes/projects, the clear administrative framework with the procurement and section procedures, less demanding than among some other donors and relatively easy to comply with by the beneficiaries when applying for grants, implementing and reporting, has also facilitated the effective implementation and achievement of results.

The factors that hindered the effective implementation are the other (negative) side of the coin of success factors: lack of alignment with national priorities, lack of cooperation, funds and underpinning initiatives. In addition to these important inhibiting factors are related to the design of DPF. The UNCT representatives are aware of this fact, which was confirmed several times during focus group discussions and interviews. Instead of developing a coherent DPF intervention logic based on a consistent Theory of Change, the DPF was designed more as a 'patchwork' of country programmes and specific interventions of individual agencies. This undermined the internal coherence of DPF and in many cases resulted in the intervention area being populated by insufficiently related individual projects, implemented 'in siloes' instead of in an interlinked and coherent manner. In addition to this, in some cases, the UN system targets were set unrealistically or too ambitiously so they could not be achieved (especially high targets in global indexes measuring governance or business climate).

Another important inhibiting factor is a lack of willingness or ownership of government counterparts to take over the DPF outputs and incorporate them into policies, laws, measures or services, in other words, to convert them into systemic reforms. Also, the pace of government actions in a particular area being slower than the UN initiatives anticipated contributed to the lower effectiveness, such in the case of public administration reforms or adoption of new Strategy for combating gender-based violence.

5.3 Efficiency

Conclusions:

- The UN system management structure and division of roles and responsibilities was functional and both enabled and encouraged coordination and collaboration. It was well conceptualized, but there were gaps in practical implementation, especially in relation to the functioning of JNSC, result groups and linkages to the external development coordination mechanisms.
- The UN system was effective in adjusting its functioning to the emerging needs and priorities as shown in its efficient response to migration crises and natural disasters.
- The UN system was very successful in mobilizing additional resources for DPF implementation, and at the end of third year has already reached the targets set for the whole 5-year cycle.

Recommendations:

- The functioning of JNSC and its role in steering UN system activities should be intensified through its regular meetings, including an annual high-level UN-Serbia partnership event dedicated to strategic presentation of the results and planning for upcoming period. Appointment of JNSC membership should be based on the function.
- Linkages of the UN system to the external development coordination mechanisms should be re-evaluated and fine-tuned during the formulation of the next Cooperation Framework. The result groups should be kept practical, sector-oriented, and clearly connected to Sector Working Groups.

Technical recommendations:

- The UNCT should analyze best practices in the internal management structure and its connection to external development coordination mechanisms in the region and beyond as an inspiration for fine-tuning of its own system.
- Despite good performance of UNCT in resource mobilization, it is advisable that the next Budgetary Framework is more precise, preferable without significant unfunded components. Early involvement of the Government and key potential donors in the formulation of the Cooperation Framework should

contribute to the predictability of the funding framework. Following the example of many upper-MICs, the Government should consider direct financial support of the next UN Cooperation Framework.

Key finding 9: In general, the management structure of DPF implementation and division of roles and responsibilities was well conceptualized and formalized in various documents, but its efficiency was influenced by the gaps in practical implementation, especially in relation to functioning of JNSC, result groups and linkages to the external development coordination mechanisms.

The internal UN management structure of DPF implementation is evaluated in detail in sections related to ‘One Leader and One Team’, including the key findings, conclusions and recommendations. In this section, the report concentrates on the **coordination with the external partners and linkages to development coordination mechanisms**.

The DPF Joint National Steering Committee (JNSC) and Joint Programme Steering Committees (JPSCs) were designed as key forums for collaborative approach to DPF implementation between UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes and relevant national and international counterparts. JNSC was co-chaired by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and European Integration and consists of 36 representatives of Government institutions, appointed by name and not function. It was fully operational only in early 2018. The agreed text of its ToRs slightly departed from the DPF text indicating that the JWPs will be only endorsed by the JNSC through meeting minutes, instead of being signed by the Government and the result groups will be established only as an internal UN coordination mechanism with no Government participation. Despite the effort of UNCT, JNSC worked only virtually (via e-mail) and never met in person, mostly due to delays in reappointing its membership, while JPSC was meeting regularly in person. Although some aspects of JNSC work could be done virtually, its overall efficiency and effectiveness, especially as space for discussion and ownership building and a sign of collaborative nature of partnership, were influenced by this modus operandi. In practical terms, it also hindered the planning and monitoring& reporting process. Based on the information available to the evaluation team, the UN system actually never reported to the national counterparts on the UNDPF results in a comprehensive way through a joint event, which is a common practice in many other countries. This situation was further aggravated by the decision of the Government not to formally endorse the Joint Work Plans, which in combination with the lack of national counterparts’ participation in the UN result groups, weakened overall accountability of the UNDPF planning and reporting process.

The Ministry of European Integration is entrusted with overall responsibility for **coordination of development assistance** and is using the sector coordination approach in performing this function. The **Sector Approach** in Serbia is based on the application of a programme intervention logic across whole sectors⁵². The two key pillars of the Sector Approach are the "National Priorities for International Assistance in the Republic of Serbia 2014-17, with projections until 2020" (NAD)⁵³ and the **Sector Working Groups** (SWGs). NAD is a strategic planning document, which defines concrete measures for each sector within the context of national priorities for socio-economic development and EU accession. SWGs, established in 2010, are the main mechanism for both sector and donor coordination. Each SWG is led by a ‘task force’ composed of the lead sector institution, the lead donor and MEI, with the secretariat provided by MEI. The Government encourages all development partners, including UN, to work through

⁵² In Serbia context, the selected sectors are Justice, Home Affairs, Public Administration Reform, Competitiveness, Energy Ministry responsible for Energy, Environment & Climate Change, Transport, Transport, Human Resource & Social Development, Agriculture & Rural Development

⁵³ ‘National Priorities for International Assistance in the Republic of Serbia 2014-17, with projections until 2020’ aims at greater harmonization of international development assistance with national priorities, so that donor interventions are complementary to national priorities and public allocations from the country budget for the implementation of strategic reforms

Sector Working Groups and use those already at the early stage of strategy formulation. The UN system is currently not leading any of the sector working groups, those are led by EU, SDC, USAID and Sweden. As for the UN participation in SWGs, the primary and secondary data shows that UN agencies have participated in the areas corresponding to their mandates, but also through a formal designation of respective agency heads as UN representatives to specific SWGs. According to the Government informants, the participation of the UN system, especially the senior representatives, was very much welcomed as it sent a strong message to the other partners that the groups are critical for overall coordination. Several informants stated that more can be done in formalizing the UN system participation in the SWGs and in linking it to its own internal management structure, especially result groups, without creating parallel structures. Closer coordination would also allow for structured discussion on the complementarity and synergy between government priorities, EU accession and SDGs nationalization. As already current DPF JNSC ToRs stipulate the linkages between the SWGs and RGs, the next programming cycle should therefore thoroughly implement these provisions to further improve the linkages.

The UN System was also effective in adjusting its structures to **the emerging priorities**, particularly in response to natural disasters, such as the flood in 2014 and to a smaller scale in 2017, and the sudden influx of refugees and migrants in 2015. The timely support to overall coordination structure and well-coordinated response, both technically and financially, was very much appreciated by the government counterparts and other stakeholders involved in this response. The successful UN system crises management approach is elaborated in detail as best practice in Annex 13.

Key finding 10: UN system has been very successful in mobilizing additional resources, significantly exceeding the targets set in DPF Common Budget Framework. The fact that the same donors repeatedly allocated resources to the UN system can be considered as a proxy for efficiency of the resource spending.

The Common Budgetary Framework⁵⁴ included in section 4 of the UNDPF provides an overview of total required resources, available resources for the implementation of the UNDPF planned outcomes as well as existing funding gaps. According to DPF estimates, out of the US\$ 169,764,004 total resources required for DPF implementation, US\$ 76,566,167 were already available, consisting of US\$ 18,480,004 of core/regular resources, US\$ 58,086,163 of secured other resources, whereas rather significant amount of US\$ 93,197,837 was to be mobilized during the implementation period.

Analyses of financial figures for 2016-2018, which was updated on yearly basis by RCO and shared with the Government, show that in this period over US\$ 192 million were delivered by UN agencies, Funds and Programmes, out of which over US\$ 147 million in response to the UNDAF/DPF activities and over US\$ 43 million in response to the refugee/migrants crisis. Furthermore, at the end of December 2018, UNCT members reported over US\$ 105 million of resources available under ongoing programmes or disbursement in 2019 and beyond, with a pipeline of over US\$ 47 million. These figures illustrate that **UN system was very successful in mobilizing resources for UNDPF implementation**, exceeding the overall targets already after the three years of UNDPF implementation. It has to be however recognized that this was partly due to the effective response to emerging priorities, namely floods and refugee/migration crises, in which the UN system was entrusted with the implementation of significant response packages. The UN system was also able to keep a steady level of overall delivery between US\$ 63 and 66 million annually, constantly increase the level of end year balance and hard pipeline, and continuously increase the level of resources delivered through the joint programmes.

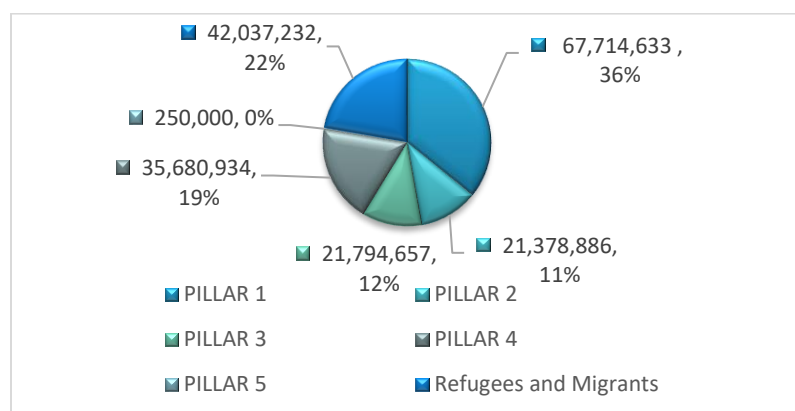
The following section analyzes the **annual financial figures of the UN system in Serbia**. During 2016, US\$ 63,257,913 were delivered by 17 UN agencies, Funds and Programmes: US\$ 47,630,296 in response to UNDAF/DPF activities and US\$ 15,627,617 in response to the refugee/migrants crisis. At the end of

⁵⁴ Section 4 of the UN Development Partnership Framework 2016-2020: Common Budgetary Framework - Resources Required and Resource Mobilization

2016, close to US\$ 38 million were available for further delivery in 2017 and beyond. Agencies indicated over US\$ 120 million as the (hard) pipeline. Only over US\$ 277,000 was delivered through ongoing joint programmes.

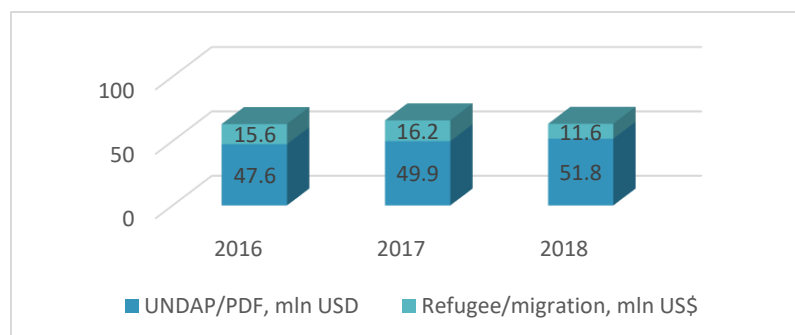
During 2017, the funding landscape of the UNCT programme portfolio for Serbia remained robust with most of the resources mobilized by individual agencies. Total UNCT Serbia delivery in 2017 amounted to US\$ 66,157.950, of which US\$ 49,914.934 was delivered through development programmes activities and US\$ 16,243.016 to refugee/migrants related activities, over US\$ 17 million were core resources (core resources or funds mobilized at HQ/regional level), while over US\$ 49 million was raised directly from development partners as non-core resources. Over US\$ 1.3 million was delivered through five ongoing joint programmes. For delivery in 2018 and beyond, under ongoing programmes, there were close to US\$ 42 million available for individual Agencies activities and close to US\$ 6 million for joint the UNCT programming work. The UNCT reported a total amount of US\$ 97.5 million under hard pipeline.

Figure 3: Delivery of the UN system in Serbia by pillars, mil US\$



In 2018, UNCT Serbia delivered program activities worth US\$ 63,348.686, out of which US\$ 51,758.789 were regular development activities and US\$ 11,589.898 for the refugee/migration situation. Furthermore, at the end of December 2018 UNCT members reported more than US\$ 105 million of resources available under ongoing programmes or disbursement in 2019 and beyond. In addition, the UNCT 2018 resource mobilization efforts resulted in a fairly robust hard pipeline of approximately US\$ 47 million. During 2018, the UN system delivered activities worth US\$ 4.1 million under five ongoing joint programmes, which was by far the highest ever.

Figure 4: Delivery of the UN system in Serbia in 2016-2018, mln US\$



The non-core resources mobilized by the UN system for joint and individual initiatives within the UNDPF were mostly provided by the multilateral development partners (EU/IPA/MADAD/Frontex, EBRD, WB),

bilateral partners (ADA, Denmark, France, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Norway, SIDA, Slovakia, Swiss, Russia, Turkey, UK/DIFID, US/AID), various trust funds (VaWTF, GEF, UNPRPD, UNDP/Russia TF), the private sector (including private companies from Spain and France) and the Government of Serbia and municipal budgets.

5.4 Impact

Conclusions:

Using several aspects, namely if impact is visible, if it is positive, if it is traceable to UNCT contribution and if it is visible at systemic, general level or small or medium scale (individuals, groups, local communities), UNCT intervention areas could be classified in several categories:

- There are areas of DPF implementation where evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, indicates a positive impact of UNCT interventions. These areas include human rights monitoring, gender equality and better protection of women from violence, higher capacities of local self-government for local development, better preparedness to respond to natural and man-made disasters.
- There are areas of DPF implementation where positive changes are identified, but they are not traceable directly to UNCT either because there was not so many (particularly large scale) interventions in these areas that would clearly link the UNCT interventions to positive changes (i.e. increase of employment rate), or UNCT interventions were of too small scale to instigate such broad change (i.e. improvement of general business environment).
- There are areas where positive changes are evidenced, but targets were not reached for various reasons (too ambitious objectives, lack of cooperation of key partners, insufficient funds, changes of context, lack of up-scaling of new models), as in the case of services for early childhood development and early childhood interventions, better social protection of vulnerable children, which indisputably have a positive impact on beneficiaries, but the scale of the impact still remains too narrow since they are not fully upscaled or incorporated in the system by government. In this cases the lack of upscaling, transferring new models into the system, or too slow takeover of new services by the government is the reason of discrepancy between high effectiveness of implemented interventions and at the same time limited impact.
- There are areas where trends are negative, but there is no evidence indicating that this is due to any UNCT intervention, as in the case of the worsening ranking of Serbia on the Corruption Perception Index, or the insufficient increase of the number of final judgements in corruption cases.
- There are areas where impact is impossible or not reliable to estimate due to the lack of data or inadequate indicators, as in the case of a number of indicators for outcomes within the Human and Social Resources pillar that have strongly relied on MICS data, or other surveys that have not been regular.
- Contribution of UNDPF to EU accession process and achievement of SDGs is recognizable, though often on small scale.

Recommendations:

- The impact can be increased by investing more in monitoring and supporting implementation of regulations and policies that were reformed due to the UNCT contribution. It is not sufficient for new solutions to be incorporated in laws or policies, these laws and policies have to be implemented more effectively. The UNCT should support this monitoring through both increasing government capacities to monitor and improve performance, but also through supporting independent monitoring by the civil society that should play more critical role at this stage of reforms.
- Innovative practices and services tailored to the needs of different groups, should be up-scaled vertically (through the national systems) and horizontally (in larger number of areas and local communities). There should be more systematic effort to concentrate resources in same initiative instead of implementing many diverse and small-scale projects.

- The interventions should be planned realistically taking into account the current country context and focus on narrower, more streamlined areas with sufficient resources and more precisely defined and measured UNCT contribution.

5.4.1 Impact in outcomes areas

The assessment of the impact provides estimates of the changes induced by the interventions implemented through DPF in the outcome areas. These changes can be traced at different levels: systemic (institutions, legal, policy), community (local communities, smaller settlements), geographical (urban and rural areas, certain regions), social groups, families, households and individuals. The first challenge the assessment of impact faces is to measure if change occurred and to which extent. This measurement is mainly based on the indicators defined at outcome level, but also with qualitative insights of the implementing and partner stakeholders or groups impacted by the change, whose views and experiences were collected during the data collection mission. Due to the lack of data for many indicators, as emphasized in the previous chapter, for some outcomes the impact assessment will be more grounded in qualitative evidence than quantified indicators. The result matrix with all indicators, sources of verifications and remarks regarding the measurement is presented in Annex 5.

The second challenge is related to the attempt to estimate how much the UNCT contributed to the change if change is observed. There is a possibility that positive (or negative) change is evidenced, but in order to attribute that change to the UNCT, evidence is needed that more specifically points to UNCT contribution. This is not always easy to establish.

The third challenge is related to the time frame. The impact is possible to assess after the implementation of the programme. The implementation of DPF is still ongoing and many projects and programmes through which this strategic intervention is implemented are not yet completed. Therefore, the impact might be visible later and current results might not reflect fully the effects of interventions on various aspects of the reality.

Key finding 11: The impact of UN interventions through which DPF was implemented varies between but also within the outcomes in scope, strength, direction and targets. Evidence points to a relatively high impact on processes: reform of laws, policies, procedures, mechanisms, protocols, but lower effect on social groups and situation in different areas of society. Relatively high impact on processes is evidenced in the areas of human rights, gender equality, anti-discrimination and protection of women from violence. Medium impact is identified in providing new solutions for early and more inclusive education, local capacities for development, climate change and energy efficiency, while lower impact is found in the areas of health care system reforms, social protection that brings more equity and cultural aspects of development. No impact is recorded in the area of good governance and rule of law.

Figure 5: The scores of effectiveness and impact in nine outcome areas

Outcome 1: By 2020, people in Serbia, especially vulnerable groups, have their human rights protected and have improved access to justice and security	effectiveness	impact
Outcome 2: By 2020, governance institutions at all levels have enhanced accountability and representation to provide better quality services to people and the economy	effectiveness	impact
Outcome 3: By 2020, state institutions and other relevant actors enhance gender equality and enable women and girls, especially those from vulnerable groups, to live lives free from discrimination and violence	effectiveness	impact
Outcome 4: By 2020, high quality, inclusive, equitable, gender-sensitive, and age appropriate health services that protect patient rights are available and utilized by all	effectiveness	impact
Outcome 5: By 2020, an efficient education system is established that enables relevant, quality, inclusive and equitable education to all, particularly the most vulnerable, and increases learning and social outcomes	effectiveness	impact
Outcome 6: By 2020, the social welfare system is strengthened to provide timely, holistic and continued support to individuals and families at risk and enable them to live in a safe, secure, supportive family and community environment	effectiveness	impact
Outcome 7: By 2020, there is an effective enabling environment that promotes sustainable livelihoods and economic development, focused on an inclusive labor market and decent job creation	effectiveness	impact
Outcome 8: By 2020, there are improved capacities to combat climate change and manage natural resources and communities are more resilient to the effects of natural and man-made disasters	effectiveness	impact
Outcome 9: By 2020, Serbia has inclusive policies ensuring an enhanced cultural industries sector, promoting cultural diversity and managing cultural and natural heritage as a vehicle for sustainable	effectiveness	impact

OUTCOME 1: HUMAN RIGHTS AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The achievement of outcome 1 is measured by 9 indicators. Three were not possible to measure due to the lack of data or not clearly defined targets. Despite these gaps, analysis based on measurable indicators and qualitative data indicates that **certain impact was achieved at the systemic level, on civil society**

organizations, vulnerable groups and asylum seekers. There was no impact on the fight against corruption.

There is a positive impact of the UNCT interventions on human right mechanisms **at systemic level**. As presented in the section on effectiveness, due to the UNCT engagement (particularly OHCHR and UN Women), the national human rights mechanism for monitoring the implementation of recommendations issued by international HR mechanisms is established and indicators for monitoring the implementation are in late stages of development. This is an important institutional change that will enable a more transparent and accountable system of monitoring human rights reforms of the government. However, it remains to be seen if the monitoring system will be set into a motion when the indicator framework (which includes different human right related conventions' recommendation) is completed.

Another systemic change with contribution from UNICEF is visible in application of diversionary schemes in cases of juvenile offenses. In 2017, from 1633 charges, 330 were diversionary schemes (20%), meeting the target, also defined at 20%.⁵⁵ Systemic change is also visible in the area of the system for monitoring organized crime and measures undertaken in addressing this problem. The official track record on regulations and preventive measures against organized crime is established on the national level with the contribution of the UNODC.

The impact is visible **on the civil society** as well. Due to UNCT support (OHCHR through UPR platform, UNDP and UN Women through support to independent CSOs' reports to CEDAW Committee and GREVIO, and UNICEF support to CSOs watchdogs in child rights area) there was dynamic engagement of the civil society in monitoring and reporting on human rights situation. During third cycle of UPR reporting in 2017, at least 37 CSOs participated in submitting reports on human rights in Serbia, which exceeds the target defined in DPF (34 CSOs). More than 15 CSOs participated in reporting to CEDAW⁵⁶ and GREVIO⁵⁷ with the support of UNDP and UN Women in 2018. This dynamic participation of the civil society provided solid evidence on the situation regarding human rights, particularly on different marginalized groups, which better informed decisions and recommendations of international HR mechanisms. Moreover, this kind of support and engagement of the civil society has significantly increased capacities of organizations, particularly grassroots organizations of marginalized groups (i.e. Roma women, women with disabilities, rural women, older women), to monitor and report on their human rights situation.

The impact on different **social groups** is also evidenced through more effective action of Protector of Citizens in protection of their human rights. The percentage of complaints addressed to the Protector of Citizens related to the violation of rights of vulnerable groups was high in 2017. The Office of the Protector of citizens has issued a total of 490 recommendations to government bodies, out of which 256 through the control procedure, and 234 in a shortened control procedure. Approximately 90% of these were accepted and implemented within the stipulated timeframe for recommendation. Out of these 490 recommendations, 115 were related to the rights of children.⁵⁸ The impact on asylum seekers is more modest, but visible, due to more efficient decision-making procedures for asylum requests. In 2018 there were 341 asylum applications, and 301 decisions on status of 478 persons.⁵⁹ However, the number of positive decisions is still relatively low.

In some areas positive changes are evidenced, but they cannot be simply attributed to UNCT contribution. This is the case with general increase of efficiency of judiciary in regard to the processing of criminal

⁵⁵ UNICEF Country Programme Evaluation, p. 62

⁵⁶ Reports available at

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=1232&Lang=en

⁵⁷ Reports available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/serbia>

⁵⁸ UNICEF Country Programme Evaluation, p. 61

⁵⁹ Migration profile of Serbia 2018, p. 52

http://www.kirs.gov.rs/media/uploads/Migracije/Publikacije/Migracioni_profil_2018.pdf

offenses. The targets are fully achieved,⁶⁰ but this change is difficult to attribute to the UNCT as there is no strong evidence that indicates a high level of engagement of the UNCT in the area of efficiency and length of criminal procedures.

The area with **no impact** is the fight against corruption. The DPF target is defined as an increase of the number of final judgments on all cases with elements of corruption (the Criminal Code recognizes several types of corruption offenses) of 20%. In 2017 (there are no more recent data) there were 4 verdicts for bribes related to elections and 48 verdicts on taking or giving bribe, while in 2016, there was a total 102 of cases of this type.⁶¹

OUTCOME 2: GOOD GOVERNANCE AND RULE OF LAW

The achievement of outcome 2 is measured by 7 indicators Based on the available quantitative and qualitative evidence, **there is almost no impact in this outcome area.**

Targets were not reached in relation to any outcome level indicator. Some minor positive changes were evidenced in budget transparency, governance effectiveness and open government, but they are still far below the targets and not easy to attribute to UNCT interventions. For example, the impact on budget transparency is measured by the Open Budget Index. The target is set to a score of 55 points but in 2017, this value was 43.⁶² Changes in governance effectiveness are measured by the World Bank's Governance Effectiveness Index. In 2017, this value was 0.19, an improvement compared to -0.10 in 2013, but still below the target of 0.4.⁶³ Another indicator measures the progress of implementation of the Public Administration Reform Action Plan and the Open Government Action Plan. According to the external evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy and Action plan for reform of public administration, only 23% of planned objectives were achieved. The Strategy for Open Government for 2018-2020 was adopted in 2018 but reports on the implementation are not available. In some aspects, even negative trends are recorded. This is the case with the fight against corruption. Measured by the Corruption Perception Index, a negative trend is observed. The rank of Serbia in 2016 was 78/175. The target value is set to 50, but according to the data for 2018, Serbia was ranked as 87/180.⁶⁴ Certainly, these changes are not attributable to UNCT engagement.

OUTCOME 3: GENDER EQUALITY

The achievement of outcome 2 is measured by 6 indicators and data were not available for two indicators. Based on the available quantitative and qualitative evidence, **there is significant impact of the UNCT at the system level and on target groups, mainly women experiencing gender-based violence.**

There is strong evidence indicating a **system level impact** of UNCT actions, (UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA and UNICEF). There is evidence indicating significant improvements of the system for protection of women from gender-based violence visible through significant increase of reporting cases of VAW.⁶⁵ Although these positive changes can be mainly attributed to the new Law on Prevention of Domestic

⁶⁰ In case of juvenile criminal offender processing, the percentage of cases lasting over one year was reduced from 44% to 6.5% (the target was set to less than 20%). In case of adult offenders, the percentage of cases lasting over a year dropped from 70% to 31.2% (target was 50%). Sources: Juvenile crime offenders, SORS, page 25, <http://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2018/Pdf/G20185641.pdf>; Adult crime offenders, p. 32, <http://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2018/Pdf/G20185643.pdf>

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² The Open Budget Survey, <https://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey/open-budget-index-rankings/>

⁶³ World Bank, Government Effectiveness Index, https://govdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/h1c9d2797?country=BRA&indicator=388&viz=line_chart&years=1996,2017

⁶⁴ Transparency International, Corruption Perception Index, <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2018>

⁶⁵ For example, the number of cases reported to the system for social protection increased by 13% between 2017 and 2018 and by 74% between 2013 and 2018 (from 9.877 to 31.102 cases). The indicators show a significant increase of convictions for domestic violence (from 1451 in 2016 to 2713 in 2017). Source: SORS, judicial statistics, page 64, <http://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2018/Pdf/G20185643.pdf>

Violence, the UNCT support to institutions of the system for protection was so dynamic and comprehensive (as presented in the chapter on effectiveness) that it is well grounded to assume that its contribution was significant.

The systemic impact was very significant in the area of gender responsive budgeting, a reform that was directly and strongly supported by UN Women. While the outcome indicator sets the success target to the increase of 40% of budget users that implement GRB, in 2019 there were 34 out of 40 budget users at the central level that introduced this form of budget planning.

The system impact is also visible in regard to the national and local gender equality mechanisms. The Coordination Body for Gender Equality is very active despite poor human and other resources to a great extent due to the support of UN Women. Almost all local self-governments have established local gender equality mechanisms. However, limitations in the observed positive impact of UN Women on gender equality mechanisms is related to the fragile position of the CBGE due to the weak legal foundation (the body is not established by law but based on a decision) and lack of budget funds for the implementation of activities. At the local level the shortfalls are linked to the fact that many local mechanisms are not very active.⁶⁶

OUTCOME 4: HEALTH

The achievement of outcome 4 is measured by 10 indicators and data were not available for eight indicators, requiring more qualitative assessment of the impact. The reason for lack of data is the fact that majority of indicators require MICS survey which was still in stage of implementation when the UNDPF evaluation was finalized. Based on the available evidence it can be concluded that **despite the rather high effectiveness of the implementation of DPF in this outcome area, and although the processes that are necessary for changes are visible and specifically supported by UNCT, the impact is still not visible to a remarkable extent.**

Positive changes at system level that can be attributed to the UNCT contribution include the development of relevant national policies, such as the Strategy for Public Health in Republic of Serbia 2018-2026, National Program for Preservation and Promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health, National Programme for Early Childhood Development and National Programme for Protection of Breastfeeding and Developmental Family Centered Care, improvement of health aspects of DRR policies and mechanisms. However, there are no reports on the implementation of these strategies, so it is not clear to what extent they are implemented and what is the impact of their measures and activities.

The system level impact of the UNICEF contribution is visible in the area of ECD services, although with limited scope due to the insufficient streamlining of activities and lack of capacities of the partners to absorb the activities simultaneously implemented at different levels in order to act upon them for sustainable change. Wide thematic intervention portfolios included strengthening institutional and regulatory frameworks, parenting skills, vaccination, development and accreditation of health services, nursing, higher education courses in pediatrics, advocacy and support to infant and young child feeding, and similar. According to UNICEF CP the external factors also hampered impact as the take up of new models was too slow or postponed.⁶⁷

During the DPF cycle UNICEF piloted five new services or approaches: Developmental care in neonatal intensive care units, ECI services, Intersectoral ECI model, Developmental screening as part of pediatric preventive care services, improved model of universal progressive Home visiting with the focus on ECD. Four of these services are partially scaled up, while the intersectoral ECI model has just started recently.

⁶⁶ Special Report of the Protector of Citizens: Representation of Women in Decision-Making Positions, and the Position and Activities of Local Gender Equality Mechanisms in Local Self-Government Units in Serbia, available at <https://www.ombudsman.rs/index.php/izvestaji/posebnii-izvestaji/5902-special-report-of-the-protector-of-citizens-representation-of-women-in-decision-making-positions-and-the-position-and-activities-of-local-gender-equality-mechanisms-in-local-self-government-units-in-serbia>

⁶⁷ UNICEF Country Programme Evaluation, p. 60

However, if the impact on the system was not on large scale, should still be acknowledged the impact of interventions implemented by UNICEF, but also by the UNFPA and the WHO on targeted social groups.⁶⁸ As presented in the section on effectiveness, ECD and ECI Services have significantly impacted the families and children included in piloting programs. Improvement of neonatal services, support to the infants and parents through improved patronage nursing services brought systemic change and increased significantly the quality of childcare and parental support in targeted communities.

A significant impact was achieved in the area of vaccination, with strong contribution of UNICEF and the WHO. After years of the rate of vaccination dropping under the influence of groups who demonstrated a lack of confidence in the vaccination system, and after the measles epidemic last year, efforts invested by the two agencies in raising awareness and stimulating parents to vaccinate children provided good results, with an increase in vaccination rates. However, according to the same source, the level is still not satisfactory among vulnerable populations, such as Roma living in substandard settlements.

The area of very slow progress where it is difficult to have an impact on the situation and induce positive changes is, according to the representatives of the WHO, the overall health care system reform. While universal health coverage is good, the out of pocket payments are very high (estimated at 41% by WHO calculations). The WHO has been working on health care system assessment, pricing and procurement policies, but this is a very complex area, often political and difficult to impact.

Impact was not possible to assess in some other areas of dynamic engagement of the WHO due to the lack of data. Among WHO priorities in Serbia, there is addressing the issue of high premature mortality due to the non-communicable diseases (94% of premature mortality). One of the main causes is a high prevalence of tobacco consumption,⁶⁹ which makes tobacco control one of the crucial issues in advancing the health of the population. According to the information obtained from the WHO, screening programmes are not performing as well as was expected. However, this is an area where much more has to be done, and it is either still early to assess impact or not possible, due to the lack of recent data.

OUTCOME 5: EDUCATION

Outcome 5 is monitored by 5 indicators. Data are available only for one, so the assessment of impact has to rely on qualitative data only. The only available quantitative indicator shows progress in regard to the improvement of the preschool education system, while the data for the indicators related to the quality of education and participation of vulnerable groups at all levels of education will be available in December 2019 (PISA) and in the 2020 (MICS).

This outcome area was mainly under the responsibility of UNICEF. The impact of UNICEF engagement in education was assessed by the independent country programme evaluation. Similarly to the conclusions related to the impact of UNICEF engagement in the area of health, the country programme evaluation found that in area of education, intervention was very wide, covering all major areas, such as legislative and executive frameworks, the media, the civil society. Engagement was present at almost all levels of education - from preschool to secondary school. The types of interventions included strengthening regulatory framework, modelling new early childhood development services, inclusive education, improved access and quality of education, etc.⁷⁰ However, limited financial resources, including decreasing UNICEF core funding, and capacity of government partner (MoESTD) to absorb the new practices limited the scale of the impact.

During the DPF cycle, UNICEF piloted three models and approaches in the education sector: prevention of early school leaving of children and adolescents, preschool education and network for inclusive education. None of these models is presently scaled up, but it is expected that will be done in the following period.

⁶⁸ Unfortunately, due to the lack of data, it is not possible to precisely (using quantifiable indicators) assess that impact in use of contraception, sexual and reproductive health, and prevalence of healthy lifestyles. Available evidence indicates that there is some positive impact on different groups

⁶⁹ 15,000 persons annually die in Serbia as a result of smoking, as indicated by WHO representative

⁷⁰ UNICEF, Independent Country Programme Evaluation, p. 60

The new Law on the Foundation of the Education system (2017) includes additional provisions, including drop-out prevention. The government plans to expand the model to 50 schools, and 10 schools have been supported with donor funds in 2019. The MoESTD provided training and the resource pack for these schools. The PSE model will be scaled up using the World Bank Loan, while the network for IE will be scaled up through the IPA project 2019/2020.

Even though the impact was not large-scale and profound at the level of the education system due to a lack of funds and a lack of willingness of the government counterparts to take over piloted or initial solutions, the impact on groups and communities that had the opportunity to experience effects of UNICEF interventions should not be ignored. There are different examples that demonstrate the significant impact of UNICEF interventions on groups or local communities.

OUTCOME 6: SOCIAL PROTECTION

The achievement in outcome 6 is measured with 5 indicators. Data were not available for one indicator. Despite invested efforts of UN agencies, **the impact in this outcome area is very low, mainly due to the low potential of scaling-up, and integrating into the system of otherwise good models, solutions and initiatives.**

Quantitative indicators show no progress in regard to the improvement of the welfare system. However, small progress is visible in areas measured by two indicators: a decrease of the number of children with disabilities in institutional care and an increase in the number of municipalities that implement local protocols for protection of children from violence, abuse and neglect. Even if the impact is small, the contribution of UNICEF in these two areas is strongly evidenced.

Available evidence indicates no impact on better coverage of the poorest quintile of households by financial social assistance, though the lack of recent data advises caution when assessing this result.⁷¹ The lack of progress is also indicated in regard to the number of municipalities that offer community services in compliance with the social protection law, particularly for vulnerable groups.⁷²

Low progress is recorded in regard to the deinstitutionalization of care for children with disabilities. Instead of a decrease of 30% for children with disability in institutional care, there was a decrease of 5.4% at the end of 2017.⁷³ However, this small change can be attributed to UNICEF that strongly invested in the processes of deinstitutionalization of social protection services. Finally, the process of implementation of local protocols for protection of children from violence, abuse and neglect is also slow. Despite invested efforts, only 31 municipalities had VAC protocols, out of which 28 were established through direct UNICEF support.⁷⁴

According to the UNICEF Country Programme Evaluation, this line of engagement, compared to the engagement in areas of health and education was more focused and streamlined. However, the impact was low due to the insufficient scaling up of innovative social services, ineffective incorporation of new standards and practices into the system for social protection. During the DPF cycle there were four models and approaches that were piloted or implemented on a smaller scale: Family Outreach Workers service, intermittent foster care, units for protection of child victims in criminal proceedings and diversionary measures and alternative sanctions. The intermittent foster care is currently being scaled up in Vojvodina with UNICEF support, but the three remaining models are not scaled up. There are some commitments to integrate the service of family outreach worker through amendments to the Social Protection Law, but it

⁷¹ The DPF target is increased by 30% compared to the baseline value of 10.7%, but data are available for 2016 only and show an increase of 10.3%. Source: UNICEF, Country Programme Evaluation, p. 133

⁷² The target is set to 130 municipalities, but last available data show that only 90 municipalities provide community services for children with disabilities. Source: UNICEF, Country Programme Evaluation, p. 133

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 134

is not yet there. 'Diversionary measures are planned to be scaled up through IPA 2020 project, including adjustments of the model for protection of child victims in criminal proceedings to allow for scaling-up.

OUTCOME 7: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INCLUSIVE LABOR MARKET

The outcome 7 is measured by 6 indicators. Data were available for 3 indicators. **When measured by quantitative indicators it can be concluded that there are positive changes in this outcome area, but they cannot be attributed to the UNCT as projects implemented within this area were local, small scale, or focused on areas that are not measured by defined indicators. However, when impact is assessed beyond indicators, at the level of local communities, groups and individuals, the impact of UNCT projects (primarily UNOPS, FAO and ILO) is visible and very positive.**

Positive changes are visible in regard to economic development and inclusive employment. Indicators show an increase in the employment rate, including the increase of employment of women and young people that have been set as specific targets. The NEET rate has declined, which was also one of the key indicators, and Serbia has advanced its position on the Ease of Doing Business ranking (details in result matrix, Annex 5). However, these changes are not directly attributable to UNCT engagement in the area of economic development and inclusive labor market. As presented in the chapter on effectiveness, the engagement of UN agencies was limited to few local communities, a relatively small number of businesses or farmers.

If the impact of UN agencies is assessed in the context of benefiting communities and target groups, then results are different. Although small scale, the interventions had profound impact on individuals, groups and local communities that were targeted by the interventions.

The focus of UNOPS in municipalities of Raska and Novi Pazar indisputably has a strong impact on these local communities. This impact is visible at different levels. Representatives of self-governments of both local communities emphasized that UN support has been crucial since they started to apply for projects about ten years ago. The support provided by the UN was not only in the form of infrastructural investments, but in developing capacities of self-governments to plan, apply for funds and implement projects. They find the process UNOPS implements in local communities by assessing their needs prior to designing the intervention to be very beneficial. The interest of municipalities has increased significantly. While in the previous programme cycle only 25 municipalities showed interest, there were 99 municipalities in the last call. They recognize holistic and continuous support as an added value of UN agencies.

'They send clear instructions. They instruct us step by step, so we are sure that we are doing well. This way, we are sure that we are working according to laws and rules. They (UN) set so high standards in project implementation so we now have so high expectations from other donors.'

(Representative of self-government)

The presence of a UNOPS office in the region has been evaluated as particularly beneficial many times and by different stakeholders (self-government, the civil society, businesses). Local staff is very responsive, supportive and providing support 'on site', which is assessed as very effective. Representatives of self-governments in Raska and Novi Pazar listed a number of changes that occurred with contribution of UN agencies (particularly UNOPS and UNDP): increased capacities for project management of local self-governments, improvement of local infrastructure, better urban planning, good governance, increased employment, increased number of entrepreneurs and enterprises, improved social inclusion, particularly of the Roma population, improved environmental protection and energy efficiency.

The improved disaster risk management in Kraljevo implemented by the local Civil Defense Department with UNDP and FAO support represents the example of good practice which had strong impact on local community generally and particularly in the sector of agriculture, with spill-over effect on neighboring communities, improving significantly resilience of these communities (description in Annex 14).

OUTCOME 8: ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

The achievement of outcome 8 is measured by 10 indicators. Data were not available for 4. **Measured by indicators, the impact of UNCT engagement is visible on policies, reduction of final energy consumption, increase of use of renewable energy, more widespread education on climate change and risk reduction, and improvement of early warning systems. There is no impact on the drop in average annual concentration of particulate matter. Qualitative information indicates that the strongest impact of UNDP is on the government's response to natural disasters.**

There is a number of sectoral policies that address the issue of climate change, including the Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2014-2024, Strategy for Water Management 2016-2034, National Strategy for Sustainable Use of Natural Resources, Strategy for Development of Forestry, Strategy for Development of Tourism 2016-2025, and Strategy for Public Health. Considering that UN agencies contributed to the development of many of those strategies, the impact on the policy framework could be evidenced.

The target of reduction in final energy consumption in comparison to 2008 was set to 9%, and it is fully achieved.⁷⁵ However, it is difficult to establish how much UN agencies contributed to this objective. Indisputably, the UNDP has been significantly involved in areas of climate change, renewable energy and energy efficiency. The UNDP independent country programme evaluation found that the UNDP provided valuable contribution to Serbia's implementation of international conventions and compliance with the EU acquis in the area of climate change and energy, although the resources mobilized for this purpose were modest to generate impact on a larger scale.⁷⁶

The UNDP has provided significant support to policy development in line with the international conventions, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Minamata Convention on Mercury. The UNDP contributed to the process of implementing the environmental EU acquis, for example, in the field of chemical safety. The UNDP support to local energy efficiency policies was important. The development of an energy management information system and municipal energy agencies has helped local self-governments to reduce costs and improve the management of public buildings.⁷⁷ Households as a target group of energy efficiency policies have been until now neglected.⁷⁸ UNDP contributed to the 130% increase in the share of renewables through the biomass project⁷⁹ through the project "Reducing Barriers to Accelerate the Development of Biomass Markets in Serbia" which was aimed at creating a more favourable legislative and administrative framework for economic opportunities in this sector, and included financial support to set up six biogas plants.⁸⁰

The UNCT has contributed significantly to the preparedness of Serbia to respond to natural and man-made disasters. This is recognized by many national and local stakeholders. The UNDP, UNOPS, FAO, WHO, IOM were very active in providing various forms of support to the government and local authorities in response to emergencies and in upgrading policies and mechanisms for disaster risk management and response to crises. The Public Investment Management Office cooperates closely with UNDP and evaluates this cooperation as highly positive. There is also evidence for the contribution of the UNCT to the inclusion of issues of risk reduction and safety in disasters and emergencies in educational programmes. Although

⁷⁵ Progress Report on the implementation of Energy Efficiency Strategy, page 2

<https://www.mre.gov.rs/doc/efikasnost-izvori/Izvestaj%20o%20sprovodjenju%20APEE%20RS%202010-2013%20%20sa%20prilozima.pdf?uri=CELEX:32009L0028>

⁷⁶ UNDP Independent Country Programme Evaluation, p. 24

⁷⁷ UNDP has trained over 1000 energy managers in Serbia, whose task is to reduce the final energy consumption in local municipalities, public entities. Source: UNDP, <http://www.ems-undp.rs/en-us> ; <http://www.ems-undp.rs/en-US/Blog/Post?id=1130>

⁷⁸ UNDP Independent Country Programme Evaluation, p. 24

⁷⁹ Fact sheet on biomass provided

<http://biomasa.undp.org.rs/?lang=en>

⁸⁰ UNDP Independent Country Programme Evaluation, p. 23

the target set to 70% of schools was not reached, there is certain progress as 244 primary schools from 65 municipalities were trained for mainstreaming these issues in educational programmes.⁸¹ The impact of environmental risks on human health have been recognized as an important part of the health and environment process, and in order to better plan adequate responses to this problems, National Portfolio of Action was developed by the MoH and MoEnv.

OUTCOME 9: CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

The outcome 9 is monitored through 5 indicators. Data are available only for two. **The impact of UNESCO engagement is most visible in the area of building capacities of the Ministry of Culture to implement policies for protection of cultural heritage, fight illicit trade, reduce disaster risks related to cultural heritage and promote cultural diversity.**

The system level impact of UNESCO engagement is visible in the area of increased capacities of the Ministry of Culture and Information to provide adequate response to disasters and protect cultural heritage. Newly acquired skills were implemented in 2018-2019 when risk assessment and recovery plan were produced for Studenica Monastery. Another area of impact is related to the increased capacities to fight illicit trade in cultural property, as a result of UNESCO support for adjusting the regulatory framework and providing trainings for Ministry personnel.

On the other hand, activities related to the promotion of creative industries were not implemented to the extent that can provide even a smaller scale impact. During the evaluation, evidence was not found that this is an active area of DPF implementation and data needed to access the indicator that measures the number of new enterprises offering services to tourists at cultural sites are not available.

5.4.2 Impact in the light of the contribution to EU accession processes

The contribution of UNDPF to EU accession is recognizable in the areas of Social Policy and Employment (chapter 19), Fundamental Rights (chapter 23), Justice, Freedom and Security (chapter 24), Education and Culture (26), Consumer and Health protection (chapter 28), Environment and Climate Change (chapter 27) and to smaller extent to Energy (chapter 15) and fundamental political criteria (democracy and public administration reform).

The UNDPF achievements in the area of Human Rights and Access to Justice and Security (outcome 1) and gender equality, protection from discrimination and violence (outcome 3) have contributed to the areas of fundamental political criteria in component related to the participation of civil society as necessary precondition for democracy, and chapters 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental rights) and 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security).

The conclusions of European Commission (EC) presented in the Serbia Progress Report⁸² (henceforth SPR) for 2019 in regard to chapter 23 indicate *'that legislative and institutional framework for upholding human rights is broadly in place... However, consistent and efficient implementation of legislation and policies needs to be ensured'* (p. 23). It is recommended to improve the implementation of international human rights instruments. To this end, UNCT made significant contribution as evidenced in the chapters on effectiveness and impact, supporting development of national mechanisms to monitor the implementation of recommendations issued by international mechanisms and supporting dynamic engagement of civil society in this area. In the area of fundamental rights that are in focus of EC 2019 SPR (p. 27-28), the recognizable contribution of UNCT

⁸¹ UNICEF, Country Programme Evaluation, p. 135

⁸² European Commission, Serbia 2019 Report Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 2019 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-serbia-report.pdf>

is related to the antidiscrimination, gender equality, violence against women, rights of the child, and rights of persons with disabilities, LGBTI, minorities, Roma.

In the area of fundamental political criteria, EC also emphasized the importance of participation of civil society and enabling environment for such participation. Having in mind presented achievements of UNCT in this area, this can be considered as significant contribution of UNCT to EU accession process.

UNCT contribution is recognizable in different areas of negotiation chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security), particularly in relation to the strengthening legal framework to address money laundering to which UNCT has contributed, fight against organized crime, cooperation in the field of drugs, which are all, according to EC assessment, areas of some progress. EU progress report for 2019 also concluded that 'Serbia continued to significantly contribute, as a transit country, to the management of the mixed migration flows towards the EU, by playing an active and constructive role and cooperating effectively with its neighbors and EU Member States' (p. 30). According to this assessment, Serbia has the necessary institutions to handle the asylum applications. The evaluation showed that this is another area of significant UNCT contribution.

The UNDPF achievements in the area of outcome 2 have contributed to public administration reform, which is important part of political criteria and rule of law. This is the area for which EC concluded that Serbia has some level of preparation to apply the *acquis* and European standards, while progress is being assessed as limited. As evidenced by the evaluation, this is the area of relatively low achievements of UNDPF. Some progress is recognized by EC in the area of service delivery and policy planning, public consultations and e-government, with the adoption of new laws regulating these areas. As illustrated in the effectiveness and impact chapters, these were also the areas where UNCT provided important contributions, although with limited impact so far.

The achievements under UNDPF pillar 2 (outcomes 4, 5, and 6) have contributed to the EU accession processes in the area of chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment), chapter 26 (Education and Culture) and chapter 28 (Consumer and Health Protection). The progress in the policies relevant for these negotiation chapters is evaluated as moderate with some progress. In this area UN System contribution is recognizable especially in the area of health, social inclusion and protection. The evaluation evidence points to significant contribution of UNCT through innovative models in the area of education, early child development, social protection and healthcare. These could have much higher impact and contribution to faster progress towards EU standards if upscaled and institutionalized.

According to EC 2019 SPR, Serbia has made some progress and is moderately prepared in developing a functioning market economy (p. 43). It is not easy to attribute the contribution of UNCT interventions in area of outcome 7 to such a generic goal and broad reform process, having in mind the scale of implemented projects, but the evaluation evidence indicates that UNCT interventions are directed towards these objectives. Many of EU criteria are related to the structural reforms that were out of scope of UNDPF interventions (i.e. reforms of tax authority, state-owned enterprises, fiscal rules). However, UNCT interventions contributed to overall increase of capacities of economic actors to cope with competitive pressure, particularly SMEs (chapter 20 – Enterprise and Industrial Policy) as well as to improve physical capital and quality of infrastructure. The UNCT engagement in this outcome area also contributed to the chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment), through support to social dialogue, and to chapter 11 on agriculture in line with IPARD.

The UNCT achievements in the area of outcome 8 have contributed to the reforms related to the chapter 15 (Energy) and chapter 27 (Environment and Climate Change). Some UNCT contribution is evident in areas such as air quality, waste management, water quality, and civil protection. As this area is assessed as area with some level of preparation and limited progress, and particularly the

climate change is recognized as ‘at very early stage’, the UN System can play a key role in further advancements of these areas.

The outcome 9 achievements of UNDPF are relatively small scale, but they are of significant contribution to chapter 26 (Education and Culture), particularly in relation to the implementation of UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expression and recognized cultural industries, participation in Creative Europe Programme and other initiatives. This chapter is assessed by EC as area with good level of preparation and with overall good progress.

5.4.3 Impact in the light of achievement of SDGs

The broad thematic scope of DPF enabled diversified contribution to the progress in the achievement of SDGs. However, the scope of the impact was limited due to the small-scale interventions in many areas.

In regard to the **SDG 1** (No poverty), UNCT contributed through the outcomes 6 and 7. However in both cases the contribution was of limited scope due to the small-scale interventions. In case of outcome 6, new models for support to vulnerable families and children were tested and introduced, but not upscaled. Similarly, in regard to the outcome 7, increasing access to economic resources and improving livelihoods was of very limited scope. Contribution to the **SDG 3** (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) is traceable to the outcome 4. The contribution was of diverse as it was focused on better access to health care services, improved sexual and reproductive health particularly of young people, early childhood development and intervention, better immunization and with less success the reform of the health care system, including the change of burden that is paid out of pocket by citizens. The progress in achieving targets of **SDG 4** (inclusive and equitable quality education) was evidenced by the DPF outcome 5, particularly in the area of early childhood education, preschool education, with more inclusive and creative models.

The **SDG 5** (gender equality and empowerment of women) was addressed through intervention implemented within DPF outcome 3. The evaluation recorded significant contributions in regard to the protection of women and girls from violence, increased political participation of women and overall increased dynamics in exercising women’s rights. While interventions within the outcome 4, related to the improvement of sexual and reproductive health were also evidenced, there were no indications of contribution to the economic empowerment of women.

The contribution to the **SDGs 8** (sustainable economic growth and decent work) and 9 (resilient infrastructure, inclusive industrialization and faster innovation) were of smaller scale, but traceable to the interventions within the outcomes 7 and 8. However, the contribution to the SDG 10, to reduced inequalities was not specifically visible, which is surprising having in mind that UNCT engagement in the area of social cohesion, inclusion and inequalities was very strong and appreciated in the past. The contribution to the **SDG 11** (inclusive cities and settlements) was evidenced during evaluation, though to the limited scale. Interventions within the outcome 8 targeted a number of local communities with combination of infrastructure and social interventions with positive effects, while outcome 9 contributed to the promotion and protection of cultural heritage. Contributions of interventions implemented within the DPF outcome 7 and 8 are visible also in relation to the **SDG 12** (sustainable consumption and production patterns), and in particularly well in relation to the SDG 13 requesting urgent action to combat climate change.

Finally, the contribution to the **SDG 16** (peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and inclusive institutions) was variable, with more effective contribution of interventions implemented through outcomes 1 and 3 and on regional level and less effective contribution of activities under outcome 2.

5.5 Sustainability

Conclusions:

- The sustainability of results significantly vary between and within the outcome areas depending on several key factors: i) integration of results in the system through mechanisms, laws, policies, services or practices, ii) capacities of relevant personnel to implement changes, iii) adequate resources, iv) and continuous international, governmental and independent civil society monitoring.
- Results in outcome areas in which DPF was effectively implemented, with recognizable positive impact and when scaled up, integrated into the system, implemented by personnel with adequate skills, equipped with sufficient resources and regularly monitored have relatively good prospects for sustainability have. This mainly applies to the results in outcome areas 1, 3, 5, 7 and 8.
- More questionable sustainability is identified in interventions that have lower impact, often despite the high effectiveness in implementation, due to the smaller scale of interventions, lack of scaling-up of existing results, insufficient funding, high fluctuation of personnel, low prioritization by the government, and lack of monitoring. This is visible in the outcome 4 and 6 and to certain extent in outcome 9, where results are relatively sustainable, but very narrow and with low impact.
- The lowest chances for sustainability are in the outcome area 2, where there is almost no impact and results are fragile and often not safeguarded by exit or disengagement strategies.

Recommendations:

- During the design of interventions, a clear exit strategy should be defined with different scenarios for ensuring of sustainability of results.
- As for the impact, the UN resources should be concentrated on fewer areas, with systematic approach to maintaining results through up-scaling, integration into the systems and long-term capacity-building of stakeholders.
- The support to independent monitoring of the implementation of reformed policies, laws or practices by civil society can also increase accountability that is important for incorporation of the solutions into systems, leading to sustainability.

Sustainability assessment has to answer questions on whether results can be sustained over short and longer periods, and what are the factors, positive and negative, that influence the chances for sustainability.

Key finding 12: Overall, the sustainability of the results produced by UNDPF implementation vary significantly and relates to the factors of programme design, implementation strategy including exit and scaling-up, quality of partnership, and changes, positive or negative, in external environment. Due to short timeframe of implementation of number of initiatives or their scale, it is problematic to be explicit about their sustainability.

The sustainability of results varies greatly between DPF outcomes and in some cases between different results within one outcome area. When assessing sustainability, it is important to have in mind the relation between effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Where there is no effective intervention, it is not possible to have strong impact. However, as it was presented in the previous chapter, it is possible to have highly effective interventions, yet with the small impact due to the various reasons that were elaborated already (small scale intervention, reluctance of government partners to incorporate novelties in the system, etc.). Stronger impact is usually good ground for sustainability. However, even smaller interventions with limited impact could have better chances to sustain over time, even if not upscaled or if their effects still didn't reach the larger populations or areas. This is particularly true if sustainability is observed not only at the level of outcomes, but when also the results at output level are taken into account. Having this in mind, in the following table several types of outcomes according to their effectiveness, impact and sustainability could be identified:

- 1) The outcomes with high effectiveness, positive impact and good sustainability prospects (outcomes 1, 3, 5, 7, 8);
- 2) The outcome with high effectiveness, but limited impact, which has still good sustainability prospects (outcome 4);
- 3) The outcomes with high effectiveness, but low impact and low sustainability (outcome 6);
- 4) The outcome with limited effectiveness, low impact, but still good sustainability prospects (outcome 9); and
- 5) The outcomes with low effectiveness, no measurable impact and weak prospects for sustainability, mainly due to the sustainability of few good output level results.

Figure 5: The scores of effectiveness, impact and sustainability in nine outcome areas

Outcome 1: By 2020, people in Serbia, especially vulnerable groups, have their human rights protected and have improved access to justice and security	effectiveness	impact	sustainability
Outcome 2: By 2020, governance institutions at all levels have enhanced accountability and representation to provide better quality services to people and the economy	effectiveness	impact	sustainability
Outcome 3: By 2020, state institutions and other relevant actors enhance gender equality and enable women and girls, especially those from vulnerable groups, to live lives free from discrimination and violence	effectiveness	impact	sustainability
Outcome 4: By 2020, high quality, inclusive, equitable, gender-sensitive, and age appropriate health services that protect patient rights are available and utilized by all	effectiveness	impact	sustainability
Outcome 5: By 2020, an efficient education system is established that enables relevant, quality, inclusive and equitable education to all, particularly the most vulnerable, and increases learning and social outcomes	effectiveness	impact	sustainability
Outcome 6: By 2020, the social welfare system is strengthened to provide timely, holistic and continued support to individuals and families at risk and enable them to live in a safe, secure, supportive family and	effectiveness	impact	sustainability
Outcome 7: By 2020, there is an effective enabling environment that promotes sustainable livelihoods and economic development, focused on an inclusive labor market and decent job creation	effectiveness	impact	sustainability
Outcome 8: By 2020, there are improved capacities to combat climate change and manage natural resources and communities are more resilient to the effects of	effectiveness	impact	sustainability
Outcome 9: By 2020, Serbia has inclusive policies ensuring an enhanced cultural industries sector, promoting cultural diversity and managing cultural and	effectiveness	impact	sustainability

1) HIGH EFFECTIVENESS, RECOGNIZABLE IMPACT AND RELATIVELY GOOD PROSPECTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

In the area of human rights, the institutional structures with the mandate to take over and maintain achieved results are mainly in place: mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of recommendations of international human rights mechanisms, independent human right bodies monitoring and reacting upon violation of human rights, particularly of vulnerable groups, an asylum system with institutionalized

procedures, and diversionary measures, mechanisms to monitor organized crime. The sustainability is strengthened through increased capacities of officials and professionals to implement new laws, policies and procedures, and even more with the active monitoring and advocating by civil society.

Although these mechanisms institutionalize the DPF results to a great extent, there is still significant risks that can undermine the sustainability of results in this outcome area. Governmental mechanisms can be inactive or insufficiently effective in case of lower commitment, lack of human and other resources or different political and policy priorities. The results related to enhanced capacities of various stakeholders for improved performance (i.e. judiciary and public administration) could be undermined or lost by the staff turnover in these institutions or frequent leadership changes. There is also concern about how sustainable the engagement of the civil society will be in future in the area of monitoring and advocating of human rights, if the support for the UN system decreases or stops.

Results in the field of gender equality and gender-based violence are institutionalized to a high extent, which creates favorable ground for their sustainability. The new Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence is the strongest factor that enables sustainability, but the need to further increase of the capacities to implement the Law, as well as to provide better services to support the victims should not be underestimated. The risk factors are related to the lack of integrated strategy for prevention and combating gender-based violence, which can indicate low prioritization or other challenges on the side of government partners. Gender responsive budgeting is also institutionalized through the law, but the capacities of stakeholders to implement it, although enhanced with the UN support, could be undermined in case of a high fluctuation of personnel, diminishing support or ineffective implementation on the law on budget.

In the area of outcome 5 related to education, as noted in the UNICEF Country Programme Evaluation, concrete changes in institutional, legislative and policy frameworks were achieved with UNICEF support and they are strong drivers of the sustainability of results. Some of the normative acts adopted with the support of UNICEF also foresaw additional allocations from the national budget and other donor resources (e.g., the upcoming World Bank loan to the education sector). There is also commitment by the government to work with UNICEF on priorities across the spectrum of UNICEF's engagement in Serbia, with clear request for further support.⁸³ The Government of Serbia has institutional structures with mandates to respond to the needs of children across target sectors of UNICEF. UNICEF has invested significant and continuous efforts to increase institutional capacities to drive the reform.

The results achieved within outcome 7 related to the strengthening local capacities for sustainable development, through provision of technical assistance, mentoring and trainings, have also good prospects for sustainability. As observed during the evaluation mission, these capacities are strongly institutionalized in local self-governments due to the years of engagement and support of UNDP, UNOPS and other agencies, and provide good ground for diverse initiatives fostering local development. Local preparedness for natural disasters is in the targeted municipalities strongly institutionalized, for instance the local Civil Defence Office in Kraljevo represents good example of a self-sustainable result.

The outcome 8 follows similar patterns of incorporating results in the national mechanisms. This is visible in regard to the reporting on climate change achievements according to UNFCCC, as well as in UNDP's engagement in the energy management. The UNDP has been transferring the Energy Management Information System to the Ministry of Energy and Mining, and the use of the system is incorporated in the Law on Efficient Use of Energy⁸⁴. Although, UNDP is generally strong in setting up effective partnerships among the different stakeholders involved in its interventions, according to the UNDP Country Programme evaluation, the government ownership of achieved results is generally low, with national

⁸³ UNICEF Country Programme Evaluation

⁸⁴ <https://www.paragraf.rs/dnevne-vesti/010219/010219-vest15.html>

stakeholders unwilling or often lacking the financial means and human resources to continue their cooperation once the project is completed, compromising results and impact⁸⁵.

2) HIGH EFFECTIVENESS WITH LIMITED IMPACT AND RELATIVELY GOOD PROSPECTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The area of health includes large number of diverse initiatives, with many examples of joint work of UN agencies. The sustainability of many of the results is grounded in the fact that changes induced by interventions, new models, services are incorporated in the key national policies, such as *Strategy for Public Health in Republic of Serbia 2018-2026*, *National Program for Preservation and Promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health*, *National Programme for Early Childhood Development* and *National Programme for Protection of Breastfeeding and Developmental Family Centered Care*, *Health Sector Emergency Response Plan*, *the Minimum Initial Service Package for reproductive health in crisis situations*, *the National Programme for Preservation and Promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health of the Citizens of Serbia*, and others. However, like in previous outcome, the question remains whether the government will effectively implement these policies, ultimately influencing the sustainability of results.

Increased immunization of children is 'won battle' presently, but the resistance to immunization in the absence of continuous government commitments to raise awareness and increase outreach among general population and especially vulnerable groups might undermine the sustainability of this result and deteriorate health of new generations of children. The 'battle' on non-communicable diseases is not yet won, as UNCT interventions addressing the causes, including risky lifestyles are not yet sufficiently incorporated in the health care system or in the other systems that can support the changes (i.e. educational institutions, local self-governments as promoters of healthy lifestyles and others).

Strengthening capacities of professionals for better understanding and evidencing maternal mortality, as well as in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights, provides good ground for sustainability of improved SRH services, but their sustainability is undermined by the high number of medical professionals leaving the country. The UNFPA Country Programme Evaluation found that youth-friendly trainings and education for elimination of gender-based stereotypes have a significant impact on young men who attended them, and 'hopefully that kind of formative experience will last a lifetime'. However, a bigger impact and stronger and longer sustainability depends on the replication of these activities on a continuous and larger scale⁸⁶.

3) HIGH EFFECTIVENESS BUT LOW IMPACT AND WEAK SUSTAINABILITY

Although the outcome 6 includes initiatives highly innovative and beneficial for different vulnerable target groups providing models with better protection, this is still area with low impact and very fragile sustainability, mainly due to the uncertain integration of new models in the system of social protection. As the UNICEF independent evaluation of the Country Programme found, scaling mechanisms for reducing equity gaps in favor of the most vulnerable children have been minimal. Out of four new models of services (family outreach workers, intermittent foster care, protection of child victims in criminal proceedings and diversionary measures and alternative sanctions for juvenile offenders) only one is currently being upscaled and only in Vojvodina, still with UNICEF support. Without upscaling, some good results that are visible on small scale could be lost.

4) MODERATE EFFECTIVENESS WITH LOW IMPACT BUT STILL GOOD PROSPECTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The area of outcome 9 was moderately effective and the impact was rather low. However, due to the systemic integration of results, these limited results are rather sustainable. This is apparent in the area of prevention of illicit trade of cultural property and monitoring and reporting on relevant international conventions, as well as the capacities of Ministry of Culture and information to act competently in

⁸⁵ UNDP Independent Country Programme Evaluation

⁸⁶ UNFPA Country Programme Evaluation.

protection of cultural heritage in natural disaster situations. Outside of these areas, the sustainability of results is not very solid.

5) LOW EFFECTIVENESS WITH ALMOST NO IMPACT AND WEAK PROSPECTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Results related to good governance and rule of law were not prominent, so it is not applicable to discuss their sustainability in detail. However, considering the ongoing reform of public administration and requirements that Serbia has to fulfil during the EU accession process, it could be envisaged that as long as EU accession remains priority, even small results will sustain or even advance. The slowing down of EU accession could contrary undermine already fragile results.

5.6 UN Coordination and Delivering as One ('DaO')

Conclusions:

- UN coordination has been enhanced through systematic application of five 'Delivering as One' elements. Overall, it was effective, creating synergies among agencies and broadening collaboration.
- With the deliberate effort to increase team spirit and internal cohesion, UNCT collaboration matured and continuously improved during the UNDPF implementation.
- The UN House has significantly contributed to positive perception of the UN 'Delivering as One', created a conducive environment for better collaboration and joint activities among collocated agencies, and led to cost savings.
- The UN system was effectively coordinating its operational and communication activities.

Recommendations:

- The UNCT should continue and further deepen implementation of all 'DaO' elements. The 'One Programme' element needs to be underpinned by the more focused Cooperation Framework, reflecting actual capacities of the UN system in Serbia and its comparative advantages.
- The Results Groups need to be kept practical and sector-oriented and meaningfully connect to the official development coordination structure, especially the Sector Working Groups.

Technical Recommendations:

- The UNCT should consider the gradual application of the 'Common Budgetary Framework (One Fund)' element. This process can benefit from looking at the examples of common budget application and establishment of 'One UN/ SDG' Funds, both in the region and globally.
- As the preparation of a robust Theory of Change is not a trivial task, the UNCT may organize a dedicated session on preparation of the ToC around UNDG Guidance⁸⁷ and other related documents and methodologies.
- UN OMT should proactively use the upcoming new BOS guidance to further expand the 'Operating as One' concept, including explicit quantification of savings achieved through common services and joint operation.
- The UNCT should explore a possibility of UN House expansion allowing for further collocation of UN agencies.
- The UNCT should consider commissioning of a UN perception survey among key partners and the broader population. This could capture potential changes in the perception of the UN and its role in Serbia in Agenda 2030/SDGs and the EU accession framework and guide the formulation of new Cooperation Framework.

Although not being formally 'Delivering as One' country, the UNCT in Serbia has committed to implementation of five elements of 'Delivering as One': One Leader, Common Premises, One Programme,

87 UNDG. Theory of Change: UNDAF Companion Guidance

and Communicating and Operating as One. It also committed to apply the undg 'Standard Operating Procedures for Countries Applying 'Delivering as One' Approach'⁸⁸ to ensure greater effectiveness and better delivery of results. The following sections will analyze the performance of the UN system in implementation of these elements.

Key finding 13: Application of 'Delivering as One' elements, 'One Leader', 'Operating as One', 'Communicating as One' as well as 'UN House – Common Premise', has been effective and constantly improving during the implementation of the UNDPF. The 'One Leader' element and related UN system coordination mechanisms has increased the efficiency of UNDPF implementation.

One Leader and One Team: During the implementation of the UNDPF 2016-2020, the UN System in Serbia was led by two accredited Resident Coordinators (RC), and after departure of the second RC at the end of 2018, by RC ad interim, the third RC has arrived in October 2019. All RCs have exercised strong leadership in promoting the UN collaboration, implementation of 'Delivering as One' elements as well as nurturing constructive relations with the Government and other partners. Most of the informants confirmed that, also due to this effective leadership of successive RCs, the UN system work in Serbia has been continuously strengthening in terms of its visibility, coherence and results.

The UN Country Team Serbia, chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator, was the main coordination body. Its work was slightly re-organized in 2017 to ensure better coordination between DPF implementing entities (19 Agencies, Funds and Programmes – including accredited, project based and non-resident ones), the UN observers (ICTY, UNOB, UNDSS, Human Rights Unit) and IFIs (WB, EBRD, IFC, IMF, EIB). E-mail lists were organized to enable coordinated internal communication. Non-resident Agencies took part in the UNCT meetings, often via skype calls or communicated their contributions via e-mails. The UNCT has meet in average on monthly bases through both regular and extraordinary meetings, with most of the meetings attended by the Heads of Agencies in person. All the meetings were prepared in advance, based on a standard agenda agreed upon with the UNCT, and well documented through meeting notes and summary of follow-up actions. Implementation of action points was monitored through the year. There is sufficient primary and secondary data evidence that the UNCT was well managed and effective throughout the implementation of the UNDPF.

The UNCT has also swiftly established and operationalized **5 UNCT DPF Results Groups (RGs)**, as the key internal coordination mechanism of the 'One Programme' element. Each group was chaired by accredited Agency Head (pillar 1 - UNHCR, pillar 2 - UNICEF, pillar 3 and 4 - UNDP, pillar 5 - WHO) and co-chaired by an alternate chair mobilized from the group of accredited Agency Heads. To support the work of RGs, the UNCT has also created **9 outcome groups**, each group chaired by one Head of Agency/Project Office. To facilitate coordination among the result groups, in 2017 the regular meeting of **Results Groups Chairs** was introduced and chaired by RC, which usually took place week before the regular the UNCT meeting.

'We don't have strategic discussion to advance things. We discuss outputs, but there is no discussion beyond that'.

(One of the UN informants)

The assessment of the functioning and utility of RGs by informants varied significantly. Most of them acknowledged that the establishment of RGs is essential and consider them to be a good idea in principle. Roughly half of the informants considered RGs as effective way of coordinating the UN substantive work, monitoring and reporting under respective outcomes, the rest found them more formalistic and used mainly to aggregate the collective results for reporting purposes. In general, the results groups around outcomes, which were more homogeneous and sector-oriented functioned more effectively, whereas those covering broader or multiple areas without obvious substantive linkages were

88 undg (2014), Standard Operating Procedures for Countries Applying 'Delivering as One' Approach

less relevant, often seen as artificial. Another weakness, which was emphasized by several informants, was that groups were not adequately used for strategic discussion on the priorities and collective results of the UN system, but rather for coordinating technical aspects of individual interventions. Several informants proposed that in order to make the results groups more effective and efficient, they should be re-designed as sector-oriented groups or issue-based coalitions, and used not only for planning, monitoring and reporting purposes, but also strategizing and discussing key priorities of ongoing and future cooperation, including joint programmes and related partnerships. The evaluation team fully supports this suggestion.

Operations Managers Team (OMT) was active throughout the UNDPF cycle, its work was guided by the Business Operations Strategy developed in 2016. OMT is evaluated as efficient and results oriented. Work of **UN Communications Groups (UN CG)** was initially chaired by UNICEF and led to a number of successful campaigns, visibility events and other activities. The UN CG is evaluated as effective and efficient. Functioning of these two groups is evaluated in detail in the next chapter. Amidst stable security situation, the **Security Management Team (SMT)** chaired by the UN RC and UNDSS was meeting regularly and successfully implemented its work plan.

A **Monitoring and Evaluation Group (MEG)** was established only in September 2018 and is seen by several informants as major contribution to the UNCT work in the important area of monitoring and evaluation. Its work needs to be further strengthened during the next cycle. In addition, the Temporary Inter-Agency Technical (IAT) Group was established to support preparation of the Gender Scorecard. Recognizing the importance of Agenda 2030, the UNCT Serbia established the **SDG Working Group** at technical level coordinated by the UN Coordination Specialist. The group included technical staff of UN agencies and jointly supported the RIA process and the MAPS Mission, it was active in 2017 and early 2018. Refugee/migrants related activities were coordinated through **Refugee/Migrants Theme Group (RMTG)** that was co-chaired by UNHCR and IOM Representatives. Functioning of this group is assessed as successful and a good example of adaptive management exercised by the UN system in response to emerging priorities (or further details, please see also the effectiveness section).

The UN system internal management structure **was effectively supported by the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator (RCO)** composed of Coordination Specialist/Head of RCO, Coordination Assistant, Monitoring and Evaluation Expert, Communications Expert, and since mid-2017, by the German funded UN Volunteer.

Despite certain shortcomings related to functioning, especially **the Result Groups**, the internal coordination and management structure of the UNCT has been established swiftly and operated in general effectively and efficiently. It is, however, recommended that in preparation for the next programming cycle, the UNCT take stock of current practices, identify strengths and weakness as seen by the participating agencies and individuals and adjust and fine-tune the existing internal management structure. In addition, and as expressed by several informants, given the upper-MIC status of Serbia and importance of the UN's ability to influence the budget and investment related discussions, more capacity and understanding of public finance issues in RCO and UNCT seems important. This would also strengthen the UN position in important discussions around the funding and financing of SDGs.

Coordination is all about structures and personalities. Structures will never be perfect. But as for the personalities, we are really lucky now as representatives are all good, supporting all each other

(Senior the UN informant)

The UNCT Serbia under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator has developed '**Principles of Cooperation**', which articulating UNCT Serbia's operating principles, internal coordination and management rules as well as principles related to ethics and values. This was done in response to several instances where miscommunication among individual agencies led to inefficiency and influenced the cohesion of the UNCT. The document signed by all resident UN agencies, funds and programmes and endorsed by non-resident Agencies was used as the key reference document for UNCT internal

management. This is considered as good practice even in broader UN context. According to several informants, the Principles of Cooperation have improved interaction within the UNCT.

ONE PROGRAMME - DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK (DPF) 2016-2020⁸⁹

The Government of the Republic of Serbia (GoS) and the United Nations Country Team in Serbia have jointly developed a medium-term strategic planning document named **UN Development Partnership Framework (DPF)**⁹⁰ for the period 2016-2020 that was finalized and signed on 30 May 2017. The evaluation team understood that reasons for the delay in UNDPF finalization are related to extended negotiation around the description of the country context⁹¹, legal provisions for UN agencies operation in Serbia, funding and budgeting framework, as well as links with the EU accession processes. The conceptualization of the DPF and its strengths and weaknesses is discussed in detail in the relevance and effectiveness section.

Joint Work Plans (JWPs) were developed and consolidated by the Result Groups initially for the 2-year period 2016-2017, later the UNCT took a strategic decision to extend them to cover a 3-year period through 2018. 3-year JWPs consolidated by the Results Groups were submitted for review in late 2017. The Government however decided that the JWPs would not be signed, but only considered by the JNSC. The fact that JWPs were only disseminated and not formally endorsed or signed by the Government weakened the overall accountability framework of the UN system work in Serbia and the UNCT and the Government should revisit the issue when preparing the next Cooperation Framework. According to the preliminary periodic review of the JWP (triennial, 2016-2018), consolidated by the UNCT Monitoring and Evaluation Group (MEG), the average achievement rate of the planned targets at the output level ranged between 70 and 80 per cent.

UNDPF formulation process and implementation of the JWPs was inclusive of all UN agencies, Funds and Programmes, including **the Non-resident Agencies**. All NRAs are members of the UNCT mailing list and receive all relevant communications. Each NRA appointed a focal point for each of the outcome groups to which they are contributing according to the UNDAF/DPF document. In addition, UNESCO, as NRA, leads one outcome area in the UNDAF/DPF in close cooperation with the RCO. Despite these achievements and documented effort to involve NRAs, several informants, especially from resident agencies, emphasized that in order to strengthen UN system capacities in Serbia, there is **a need for deeper and more systematic participation of NRAs**. Here again, the UNCT should take stock of current practices, identify strengths, weakness and limitations of NRAs participation in the UNCT Serbia and potentially adjust the current modus operandi. NRAs should certainly be part of future programming cycle, but the nature and scope of their involvement should correspond to their substantive capacity and ability to engage on a regular basis. As indicated by several informants, more can be done to coordinate NRAs activities and visits with RC and resident UN agencies to facilitate closer collaboration and use of the capacities of UN agencies with strong country presence.

ONE COMMON PREMISE - THE UN HOUSE

Key finding 14: The UN House has significantly contributed to the positive perception of the UN as 'Delivering as One', it also created a conducive environment for better coordination, collaboration and joint activities among the UN staff and their partners. Based on initial

⁸⁹ The conceptualization and effectiveness of UNDPF is analyzed at length in Relevance and Effectiveness sections of the Evaluation Report.

⁹⁰ Development Partnership Framework is the locally-agreed title given to the document that was developed following UNDAF Guidelines.

⁹¹ Finally it was agreed to use as country context description the text of the Prime Minister's introductory address delivered on the occasion of the inauguration of the new Government of Serbia in August 2016.

assessment, the collocation in the UN House led to significant reduction in running costs for all agencies.

UN House in Serbia, which was conceptualized in 2015 and provided by the Government of Serbia for 10 years free of charge, now hosts most of the UN entities, namely UNDP (including SEESAC Regional Programme), UNHCR, UNODC, UN Women, UNFPA, Human Rights Unit in the RCO, FAO, UNEP, regional UNOPS office, UNV, UNDSS as well as the Office of the Resident Coordinator (RCO), as well as some smaller projects. It currently hosts approximately 200 personnel. There are still some large agencies, namely UNICEF, UNOPS, IOM, WHO and ILO outside of the UN House. The UN House is managed by UNDP. Besides providing venue for meetings and events for extended UN family, additional services include parking space for official cars, telephone/electricity services, security services, cafeteria, reception desk and interpretation equipment in main conference room. Informants stated that generally speaking UN House services work efficiently.

The building is branded in a unified manner displaying SDGs logos consistently through the entire office space. The UN House regularly hosts internal and external meetings, sending a strong message of coherence of the UN system. For instance, in 2017, the conference rooms on the first and second floor hosted over 750 internal meetings, whereas the common areas on the ground floor served as a venue for over 160 external meetings and conferences in 2017 and 170 in 2018. All UN Staff Town Hall meetings are regularly held there, creating the feeling of belonging to one UN family. Rather quickly, the UN House has been broadly recognized as the center of the UN activities in Serbia. One of the key reasons for UN agencies collocation in the UN House is cost efficiency. As indicated in the table in the Annex 16, initial calculations show that the establishment of the UN House and collocation of UN agencies led to significant cost-shaving in running costs.

Despite many positive aspects, some challenges still remain. The space is not distributed evenly and the density of staff is not the same on every floor, also the meeting facilities on the ground floor, financed on cost-recovery bases, are available to the building residents at prices that are similar to commercial rates. The building was made available to the UN only for 10 years in 2015, and it is unclear what will happen afterwards if the UN system stays in Serbia beyond the expiration of the current agreement. UN House has also never been inaugurated with the Government. The environmental aspect is also not fully in line with the original project, which included the installation of solar panels⁹². Perhaps most importantly, the UN House role in promoting UN collaboration and coherence, both as a symbol of cooperation and co-working space, would be further enhanced through collocation of other agencies currently outside of the UN House. The UN system should therefore continue exploring the possibility of increasing available space in the UN House through its expansion.

OPERATING AS ONE

Key finding 15: The UN Operations Managers Team is a good example of effective UN system coordination and collaboration. It has clear management structure and joint work planning cycle promoting managing for results.

Operations Management Team (OMT) is one of the well-functioning the UNCT groups. As illustrated below, through close coordination of the activities and implementation of several common services, it has increased the operational efficiency of UN system in Serbia. The group has been chaired by UNICEF and UNDP and usually meets once every three months or on an ad hoc basis. The OMT is guided by the **Business Operations Strategy (BOS)**. As of now, most of the envisaged common services are successfully implemented. As showed in the BOS analyses included in Annex 15, OMT Serbia is currently running 8 long-term agreements (LTAs), 6 rosters for sets of professions as well as 10 common services functioning on the level of the UN House and cost-shared among collocated agencies. Despite the fact that LTAs can

⁹² This is due to the low calculated generation capacity as well as the fact that it is impossible to simultaneously build an additional floor and install the solar panels

be signed for 5 years, OMT undertakes regular evaluation of the quality of services every year, and if satisfactory, extends the LTA for an additional year. For banking services, OMT decided to diversify the services and sign an LTA with two banks (Komercijalna Banka and Raiffeisen), each agency can then decide which bank they will use given their competitive advantage (e.g. level of fees, speed of service).

The interpretation services were sourced through an extensive selection process including testing and interviewing. The selected candidates are classified in categories for different types of translations, with evaluation of the quality of service undertaken after each engagement. It is envisaged that the next year the similar process will be undertaken for the next 3-year cycle. A similar selection process is used for graphic designers and on-call drivers. For catering services, the UN system uses several service providers depending on the type of event, and the service is not formalized as common service due to limited demand. As a good practice, OHCHR engages catering service providers which employ people with disabilities. On the issue of taxation, most of the agency has its own standard basic agreement with the Government, which defines conditions for tax exemption. The UN system is making a proactive effort to unify the arrangements. As of now, only utility services except electricity are not tax exempt. The common services in the UN House are administered by UNDP and cost-shared among co-located agencies. The financial data collected by UNDP comparing the expenditures before and after collocation of the agencies in the UN House clearly indicate significant cost-savings.

As a proxy for the operational performance of the UN system and individual agencies, the evaluation team analyzed the available **audit reports** of 7 agencies in Serbia in the period 2016-2020. As shown in the detailed overview presented in Annex 16, all audit results are either satisfactory or unqualified, indicating that the operational performance of these UN agencies is on a high level.

COMMUNICATING AS ONE

Key finding 16: The UN Communications Group is good example of effective UN system coordination and collaboration with clear structure and joint work planning cycle leading to successful joint initiatives. The systematic work of the UNCT has led to an increase in the UN staff's awareness on 'Delivering as One', UNDAF and SDGs and improved information-sharing among individual agencies.

The functioning of the **joint UN Communications Group** (UNCG) is another example for good collaboration and coordination among UN agencies. The group is currently chaired by UNOPS and its work is guided by the **Joint UNCT Communications Strategy 2018-2020**, which was developed based on a **joint UNCT Communications Assessment** (2017). It reviewed the knowledge, perceptions and needs for further improvement of the visibility of the UN system in 2030 Agenda context and generated a set of recommendations to inform the new UNCT Communications Strategy. The Strategy covers both external and internal communication. The review of the recent annual work plans and focus group discussions showed a good level of achieved results. The annual work plan is divided into external and internal communication sections and includes clearly identified audience, responsibilities, intended outcomes, indicators as well as resources needed. For external communications, the work is divided into two basic areas: i) joint positioning and visibility, and ii) communication and advocacy for SDGs. Internal communication is structured around two key areas, i) work of the Communication Group itself and ii) internal communication among UN staff, with 12 specific activities proposed for implementation in 2019. The Communication Expert in RCO manages the social media content related to the UN. UN-related news is monitored through a media-monitoring agency.

Communication and advocacy around joint programmes represent a special category, where some aspects are communicated by individual agencies, while others are communicated jointly, all under the pre-agreed and coordinated framework. UNCG has introduced the new UN visibility guidelines with the same rules followed by all the agencies. Obviously, individual agencies have different requirements related to visibility, some (for instance UNICEF) having very strong requirements on visibility standards, even customized for different partners, whereas others (for instance UNOPS) allow for more flexibility.

To benchmark and monitor results on internal communication, the UN system has undertaken two **internal UN staff surveys in 2017 and 2019**, allowing for comparison and identification of trends. The evaluation team considers this as a best practice. Both surveys monitored awareness of the UN staff and level of information around the areas such as 'Delivering as One', 2030 Agenda and SDGs, the UNDPF and its structure and implementation mechanism, level of information sharing among individual agencies as well as possible tools and approaches to enhance overall collaboration. The comparison of results of two surveys indicates not only increasing number of participating respondents, but also positive trend and improvements in all the categories, with slight increase related to the questions on 'DaO' and significant improvement related to Agenda 2030. The UN staff was rather skeptical about introducing new collaboration platforms such as Yammer or Google doc for improved information-sharing and cooperation and still prefer e-mail communication and direct personal contacts. A significant raise in the use of social media for receiving information about the activities of other agencies is worth to notice.

As the UN system in Serbia is entering a new planning cycle, it is advisable to undertake similar **perception survey among key partners and broader population**. It could potentially capture changes in the perception of the UN and its role in Serbia against the background of the 2030 Agenda /SDGs and EU accession process and further guide the visioning exercise and prioritization for the new the UN Cooperation Framework.

5.7 Cross-cutting Programming Principles: Human Rights and Gender Equality

Conclusions:

- Human rights and gender mainstreaming are recognized as an important part of the DPF, and concrete steps were undertaken during the current DPF to support the process, namely through recognition of the issue in the CCA, the DPF itself and joint work plans, development of the gender scorecard, and advisory support to individual agencies and gender mainstreaming in specific areas, such as climate change.
- Despite these efforts, the DPF was still lacking systematic human rights and gender equality mainstreaming. This is particularly visible in outcomes 2 and 9, with mainstreaming also insufficiently present in outcomes 7 and 8. In general, all outcome areas would benefit from more consistent and explicit HR and GE mainstreaming.
- It is important for UNCT representatives as well as partners to recognize the importance of HR and GE and the contribution of the OHCHR and UN Women in this regard. This provides good ground for more systematic capacity building and incorporation of HR and GE issues in the next programming cycle.

Recommendations:

- The capacity for HR and GE mainstreaming within the UNCT should be increased in a systematic way, through trainings, but also advisory and mentoring support during the development of the CCA, Cooperation framework, joint work plans, and monitoring and evaluation.
- UNCT should provide simple and clear guidelines for the agencies to assist them to assess and revise their programmes/projects in line with HR and GE mainstreaming principles.
- HR and GE mainstreaming should be prioritized during development of the Theory of Change for the next Cooperation Framework as well as in all its outcomes and outputs,
- UNCT should develop a monitoring and evaluation framework to monitor the progress and evaluates results related to HR and GE.

The DPF defined the following cross-cutting principles to be mainstreamed throughout UN system work: promoting fundamental human rights; ensuring gender equality; promoting environmental sustainability; strengthening entrepreneurship and competitiveness; advancing independence and engagement of civil society and media; and improving the quality and availability of data. There is no evidence that indicated mainstreaming environmental protection and competitiveness across the DPF interventions, and gaps in data in the context of DPF monitoring was already discussed within the

chapters on effectiveness and impact. Therefore, the attention of this section is focused on two cross-cutting principles that were subject of more invested efforts: human rights and gender equality.

Key finding 17: Human rights and gender equality are addressed by the DPF with twin-track approach: with specific objectives and outcomes in regard to the advancement of human rights and gender equality and by mainstreaming two principles throughout the DPF interventions. During DPF cycle 2016-2020, baseline assessments were done, and mainstreaming was initiated, but it has not advanced significantly across the implementing agencies and outcome areas.

Human rights and gender equality are at the core of the UN basic principles and there is recognition by the UNCT that they should be mainstreamed throughout the DPF, and moreover throughout the whole UNCT system. That recognition is reflected in the DPF document, which emphasizes human rights and gender equality as two main cross-cutting aspects. The HR Unit in the RCO and UN Women are the backbones of this UNCT mainstreaming effort.

Both human rights and gender equality are pursued through the DPF with a twin-track approach. For their achievement, specific objectives are set within the DPF while, at the same time, they are also mainstreamed in other objectives and results. As presented in previous chapters, both outcomes dedicated to two topics show good results: outcome 1 dedicated to the promotion of human rights and better access to justice, particularly of vulnerable groups, and outcome 3 which is dedicated to gender equality and anti-discrimination. With a twin-track approach, human rights and gender equality are both specifically targeted with interventions that directly influence areas recognized as key priorities, as well as provide more human rights and gender results within other areas.

However, it is one thing to recognize the importance and rely on individual agencies to take care of cross cutting two principles, but another thing is to organize systematic mainstreaming that requires assessment of outcomes, outputs, activities and budgets from the human rights and gender perspective prior to the adoption of intervention proposals. In DPF, the first approach was applied more than the second. This resulted in relatively low achievements of human rights and gender mainstreaming throughout the outcome areas.

During the DPF development, the RC Office HR Unit started the process of strengthening capacities of UN agencies in mainstreaming human rights and UN Women started the similar process related to mainstreaming gender equality. A revision of Joint Work Plans revealed that in some parts of the DPF, the two principles were not visible. The agencies worked on improvement of HR and GE mainstreaming, but opportunities were limited due to the plans being already finalized as well as lack of time to go through more profound capacity building.

The assessment of DPF outcomes and outputs indicates that there is a lot of room for improvement in regard to human rights mainstreaming. There are outcomes in which human rights are not sufficiently reflected, such as outcome 2 (Rule of Law), as many outputs and outcome indicators are more system focused than people focused. Outcome 9 completely misses the human rights perspective at the level of outputs and is also more system- than people-oriented. Outcome 8 could also integrate human rights perspective more consistently and explicitly, particularly in the area of energy poverty and impact on different groups as well as in the impact of climate change and disasters on vulnerable groups.

UN Women has convened preparation a gender scorecard which measures gender mainstreaming across 7 aspects of the DPF: CCA, outcomes, indicators, joint programmes, comms & advocacy, monitoring and evaluation, government engagement, CSOs engagement, leadership, organizational culture, gender parity, gender coordination, gender capacities, financial resources and results. According to the scorecard results, out of total number of indicators, in 13.3% of indicators DPF is below the standards, in 60% of indicators DPF meets the gender mainstreaming standards and in 26.7% of indicators exceeds the standards. Scorecard results indicate that gender analysis and sex disaggregated data are consistently applied in two out of five DPF pillars: namely pillar I (Governance and Rule of Law), and pillar II (Social

and Human Resources).⁹³ Based on the scorecard results, the UNCT plans to develop an Action Plan that will provide guidance for better gender mainstreaming.

A regional review of gender mainstreaming in UNDAFs indicated a slightly less favorable picture. The DPF for Serbia has been scored as medium (2/3) in regard to the gender responsive outcome statements, with low (1/3) in regard to gender responsive outcome indicators and medium (2/3) in regard to sex-disaggregated data⁹⁴.

The analysis for the purpose of this final evaluation also shows a somewhat less favorable picture on gender mainstreaming. For example, while gender equality is relatively present in outcome 1 on human rights and access to justice, there are still outputs and indicators that are not sufficiently gender sensitive, such as: the number of CSOs engaged in the human rights review mechanism, but without specific reference to women's and feminist organizations, indicators on juvenile crime offenders are not gender disaggregated, as well as indicators on diversionary schemes, the same applies to asylum data. Outcome 2 lacks gender mainstreaming completely. While outcomes within pillar II are more gender sensitive than other outcomes (except outcome 3), there is still room for improvement in systematic gender sensitive formulation of outputs and indicators. Outcomes 7 and 8 are partially mainstreamed and represent the areas that should certainly be a target of more intense gender mainstreaming capacity building and assessment in the next cycle. This particularly relates to outcome 9.

5.8 Joint programming and joint initiatives

Conclusions:

- The UN System in Serbia has proactively explored opportunities for joint programming, but due to competing priorities and lack of available resources, only a rather limited number of proposals were funded and implemented.
- Implementation of those proved that the joint programmes, designed around comparative advantages and complementarities of UN system, deliver effectively and efficiently, showing that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Recommendations:

- Given UN Development System increased focus on joint activities and decreasing resource base, the joint programmes should become one of the key modalities of the UN System work in the next programming cycle.
- The future formulation of joint initiatives needs to i) avoid internal competition, ii) be more strategic with early prioritization of key areas for joint programming, iii) explicitly reflect comparative advantages of the UN System and individual agencies, and iv) include well-coordinated resource mobilization strategy,.

Technical recommendation:

- Number of successfully implemented joint programmes should be one of the success criteria when assessing future performance of the UNCT.
- The UNCT should allocate certain amount of core resources as 'seed money' to stimulate joint programmes in key priority areas, being a first step towards the establishment of an 'SDG Fund' in Serbia.

When analyzing joint initiatives implemented by the UN System in Serbia, the evaluation team used the

⁹³ The UNCT – SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard, the UNCT Serbia 2018

⁹⁴ UNDP ECA, Desk Review of 18 UNDAFs in Europe and Central Asia, p. 10

definition of joint programming stipulated in the UNDG Guidance Note on Joint Programming⁹⁵. It indicates that 'Joint Programme (JP) is appropriate if it identifies and builds on complementarities and brings together the added value of its partners in addressing complex development challenges. It requires a commitment from participating organizations to work together. Its design should ensure components that build on each other, clarity on the roles and responsibilities of each partner, and mutual accountability on the delivery of development results'.

In order to evaluate effectiveness and impact of joint initiatives, including identification of lessons learned for the next programming cycle, the evaluation team analyzed i) **seven ongoing joint programmes** implemented by UN agencies (list of ongoing joint programmes as well as their brief analyses based on the focus group discussion is included in Annex 18), as well as ii) **nine joint programmes**, which were designed and submitted to the donors, but were not subsequently financed. Besides individual meetings, the evaluation team organized the focus group discussion with the managers of joint programmes from several UN agencies to test the preliminary assumptions and generate lessons learned.

In seven ongoing JPs, twelve UN agencies worked together to address complex development issues requiring a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach, mainly in the areas of violence against women, promoting employment of persons with disabilities, supporting local community cohesion in municipalities hosting refugees and migrants, inclusive labour markets, Roma employment, conflict prevention and peace building. The total value of these 7 programmes is US\$ 8.2 million, with delivery in 2018 of US\$ 4.0 million and outstanding balance of US\$ 2.9 million. This indicated that the **joint programmes represent only less than 3% of total UN system delivery**. The ongoing JPs are delivered through close cooperation with dozens of national counterparts and international development partners. The programmes were funded by the European Union, SIDA, UNPRPD, France, Sweden, and UNDOCO. All the activities were aligned with and contributed to the implementation of the DPF 2016-2020.

In addition, the UN system has developed another 9 joint initiatives, including 5 proposals for HSTF (2 proposals in 2016, 1 in 2018 and 1 in 2019), 3 proposals for EU (2 proposals on competitiveness through innovation and tourism development and 1 proposal on social housing) as well as 1 proposal for Sustainable Development Fund. Thematically these joint proposals focused on the issues of environmental health and security, social housing and tourism. The development was largely triggered by calls for proposals issued by the donors, especially the European Delegation in Serbia and the UN Trust Fund for Human Security.

The analyses of primary and secondary data indicate that although the UN system **was proactively exploring the possibilities for joint programme, this effort seems neither sufficiently strategic, nor systematic**. This resulted in a relatively high number of proposals not being funded. As emphasized by several informants, there were multiple reasons for rather low success rate:

- The joint programming was often driven by competition for resources, resulting in a proposal blending together thematic issues relevant for individual agencies, but without sufficient programmatic coherence.
- Individual agencies often proposed existing activities or extensions of ongoing programmes, seeing the joint programming as an additional fundraising opportunity.
- The agencies have often pushed for their specific interests disregarding the UN level prioritization⁹⁶.
- Another important limiting factor was relate to the different levels of details in the planning process, with some agencies having a clear idea of proposed initiatives while others remained general and

⁹⁵ UNDG (2014) Guidance Note on Joint Programming. Simultaneously, joint programming approach in broader sense is applied also through 'One Programme' component of DaO and its annual work plans (JWPs)

⁹⁶ For instance, the preparation of 3 separate proposals for one HSTF call in 2016 is a clear example of this practice, as it was clear from the beginning that the selection of multiple proposals is unlikely, and therefore part of the effort will be wasted

waiting to come up with more details once the resources were mobilized, leading to substantively imbalanced proposals.

There was noticeable difference in the approach of individual agencies to joint programming, with some interested to be included in most of the joint programmes, while others preferring to join only high-quality proposals with clear value added generated by the joint approach. The informants also shared the view that the initiatives with smaller financial envelopes and less competition for resources had better chances to succeed, same for the joint initiatives around the normative role of the UN and those related to the local level. Several informants concluded that the issue of competition for resources is systemic and will persist as it originates in an increasingly resource-constrained environment.

When evaluating **practical implementation of existing joint programmes**, the analyses clearly indicates that when the initial 'competition' issues are overcome and implementation starts, UN agencies work together very effectively and efficiently, often despite the high number of agencies involved (joint programmes in Serbia usually include between 2 to 5 participating agencies). The joint teams can overcome issues related to incompatibility of rules and procedures, agree on properly functioning management arrangements, build trust among themselves and partners, and successfully deliver concrete results. Currently, several joint programmes are implementing or planning the follow-up phase, which is an evidence of the satisfaction of partners, both donors and beneficiaries, with the results of joint approach.

Looking forward, the above-mentioned limitations in the design of joint programmes could be effectively addressed through i) strategic prioritization and prior agreement of UN system on key issues to be address jointly, this can be done as part of the Corporation Framework formulation or during the annual work-planning process, ii) empowerment of RC to make an informed decision on lead role and composition of UN consortium based on comparative advantages and complementarity of UN agencies in given area, and subsequent implementation of different components by individual agencies with corresponding mandate, and iv) well-coordinated resource mobilization strategy.

As indicated by several informants, these measures should be supported by better capturing of the knowledge and experience, including donor intelligence, related to joint programming to be used in the future initiatives. Simple measures, such as regular meetings of joint programme managers, can go a long way in enabling the exchange of approaches, ideas and tools generated in different contexts, but with a high potential to be utilized in future joint programmes. The UN System should also consider number of successfully designed and implemented joint initiatives to become a success indicator for the future performance assessment of the UNCT as well as the allocation of its own core resources as seed money for joint initiatives.

5.9 Other important aspects of the UN system work in Serbia

This section will look into other aspects of the UN System work in Serbia, namely participation in regional initiatives and ability to promote innovative approaches. These two aspects are of particular importance in light of the new Internal Guidance for the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework⁹⁷, which explicitly recognizes the importance of regional and cross-border elements as well as innovation for the new generation of Cooperation Frameworks.

5.9.1 Regional initiatives

Conclusion:

- As many development challenges in the region have strong regional or cross-boundary aspects, there have been an emergence of new structures and formats of regional and multi-country cooperation, including the recognition of the UN role in convening and implementing this type of interventions.

⁹⁷ UNSDG (2019). The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, Internal Guidance

- The UN system in Serbia was proactive in taking part in the regional initiatives and experimenting with the regional/sub-regional presence.

Recommendation:

- As this aspect is now formally required in the formulation of new UN Cooperation Framework, the UN system in Serbia should further explore the potential for regional collaboration and programming and incorporate it firmly in its new Cooperation Framework.

Regional co-operation and integration is an essential element of long-term development, prosperity and stability of the Western Balkans, both of the region and individual countries, including Serbia. It addresses shared challenges such as economic development, trans-boundary infrastructure, sustainable energy, environmental pollution, cross-border criminal activities, and many others. Several regional mechanisms were recently established to promote this cooperation. This new trend of intensified regional cooperation among the Western Balkan countries creates new opportunities for the UN's normative and programmatic work. To evaluate the extent to which the UN system in Serbia responded to the regional issues and participated in regional initiatives, the evaluation team included several questions related to regional cooperation into the questionnaire shared with UN agencies during the inception phase. The agencies were asked to provide information about the regional programmes and projects in which they are participating, their geographical coverage, partnership structure and funding.

The survey confirmed the assumption that the work of UN system in Serbia has been influenced by overall prioritization of regional cooperation and emergence of new regional initiatives. The answers revealed that half of the responding UN agencies are involved in 9 on-going regional initiatives (UNICEF 3, UNODC 2, FAO 2, UNHCR 1 and UNWOMEN 1). These initiatives cover multiple programmatic areas such as:

- Regional housing to address protracted displacement situation of most vulnerable refugees and displaced persons;
- Violence Against Women in Western Balkans and Turkey in line with the Istanbul Convention;
- Acceleration of the inclusion of Roma children in quality Early Childhood Development, Early Learning and Basic Education, protecting children from violence and promoting social inclusion of children with disabilities;
- Disaster Risk Reduction and Management capacities and mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation practices into agriculture sectors;
- Implementation of relevant UN treaties and instruments, in the areas of environment, drug and crime as well as drug dependent treatment and care;
- Conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The total budget of these initiatives (if we exclude the large regional housing project, which alone has a budget of US\$ 134 million) is almost \$19 million, they usually cover between 3 and 6 countries and are funded by a broad group of donors such as the EU, the OSCE, the CEB, Austria, France, Italy, Sweden, Russia, Turkey, UK, USA, and individual UN agencies.

Commenting on the role of the UN system in addressing regional issues and participating in regional initiatives, several informants emphasized that given the interconnectivity of the region and the importance of regional issues for its prosperity and stability, this trend will not only continue, but will be further reinforced by the EU integration process, which strongly prioritizes regional cooperation. It was also stated that the regional approach to programming, which is increasingly applied by the development partners, is both the reflection of growing interest of governments in regional cooperation as well as the result of decreasing development funding and ambition of the donors to cover more issues and geographical areas through this approach. The informants also mentioned that the regional approach, besides addressing genuine regional and cross-border issues, effectively promotes the exchange of experiences between countries, which face similar development changes or participate in the same

integration processes (for instance, exchange of EU accession related experience between candidate countries). Various models of geographical coverage (being covered by other country or regional office) is another important emerging trend in the UN operation in the Western Balkan region (for instance UNFPA, UNOPS, UNHCR, UNODC and to lesser extent some other agencies, are already now operating under this modality). This trend motivated by cost-saving and economy of scale and its implications, needs to be also taken into consideration in the formulation of the next Cooperation Framework.

In conclusion, the above-mentioned overview and interviews with the partners confirmed that the new formats of regional and multi-country programming have recently become more popular. There is also recognition of the UN role in convening and implementing such types of interventions. It offers UN the opportunity to both support growing interest of the Governments and EU in the regional cooperation as well as establish the new partnerships with various regional institutions (such as for instance the Regional Cooperation Council and affiliated institutions). Ultimately, as many development challenges have strong regional or cross-boundary aspect, the regional approach is often the only effective and sustainable type of response. In addition, Agenda 2030 and the new Cooperation Framework standards call for more regional and cross-border cooperation and partnerships. So far, the regional approach has been pursued in an ad hoc fashion and needs to be further promoted in a more systematic way. There are, however, also corresponding challenges, which need to be addressed, and relate to preparation of such initiatives as so far several of them were conceptualized and funded from outside, with limited involvement of the national partners. Despite these challenges, the UN System in Serbia should further explore the potential for regional collaboration and programming and incorporate this aspect firmly in its new Cooperation Framework. This will also require a structured discussion and coordination with other UNCTs in the region.

5.9.2 Innovation in UN System work

Conclusion: Despite some ambiguity around the concept of innovation, the UN work in Serbia includes several successful initiatives and ‘early movers’ in this area. The UN should be proactive and systematic in promoting innovation and consider including it as one of the priorities in the next Cooperation Framework.

Recommendations:

- The UNCT should clarify its understanding of innovation and apply a more systematic approach to its promotion, using UN system wide toolkits and best practices from several individual agencies.
- The UNCT should consider undertaking a simple mapping and categorization of UN initiatives supporting innovation in Serbia and related partnerships (e.g. in the area of digitalization, crowdsourcing, alternative financing, big data, collaboration with start-ups and technology/ gaming companies) to inform systematic approach to innovation inside and outside of the UN system.
- The UNDP’s effort to establish an SDG Accelerator should be proactively explored to further promote innovation throughout the UN system in Serbia.

The growing importance of innovation, both incremental and disruptive, in UN work is clearly recognized the new Internal Guidance for the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework⁹⁸, which explicitly calls for ‘new platforms and approaches for sustainability and innovation’. One of the issues hampering deliberate promotion of innovation in the UN is its conceptual ambiguity. This was also reflected in the discussion with several informants, who argued that the innovation is often present in most aspects and day-to-day work of the UN system, without calling it such. While recognizing limitations in precise categorization of distinct innovation approaches, to analyze the innovation in the work of the

⁹⁸ UNSDG (2019). The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, Internal Guidance

UN system in Serbia, the evaluation team used the categorization of innovation approaches proposed by the UNCTAD⁹⁹:

- **Mission-oriented innovation:** Organizing networked programmes at national or international levels, as well as incentive structures that can direct innovation towards the achievement of specific technological, environmental or social goals.
- **Pro-poor and inclusive innovation:** Extending the beneficiaries of innovation and building on ideas of innovation for the bottom of the pyramid. This focuses on pro-poor innovation and includes also innovations by marginalized groups.
- **Grassroots innovation:** Broadening the range of actors in the innovation process to include grassroots innovation movements. The approach aims to practice innovation, in both technology and service provision, in socially inclusive ways.
- **Social innovation:** Shifting beyond technological to social innovation. This approach focuses on organizational innovations and new social practices designed to improve human well-being (for example, in business models, production practices and finance and public services delivery).
- **Digitally enabled open and collaborative innovation:** Fostering open, digital collaborations. Such innovation approaches draw on and recombine multiple sources and forms of knowledge, especially through digitally enabled open collaboration.

Similar to the issue of regional cooperation, the evaluation team used the inception report questionnaires to undertake a quick assessment of application of innovative approaches by the UN system in Serbia. It asked UN agencies whether they consider some of the UN system programmes, projects or initiatives as particularly innovative. They were also asked to articulate why and in what sense is the proposed initiative innovative. Out of 10 agencies, which responded to the questionnaire, 7 agencies shared the description of 11 initiatives they perceive as innovative. The short description and analyses of these initiatives using the UNCTAD categorization is included in Annex 19.

Rough categorization of the identified initiatives using the above-mentioned UNCTAD terminology shows that 3 initiatives (WHO Emergency Hub, UNDP Acceleration Lab and Gender and Climate Change) fall under mission-oriented innovation, other 3 (Femicide Review Investigation, Access to ICT for the Older People and UPSHIFT) under pro-poor and inclusive innovation, and remaining under social innovation (Mentoring Program for Women and Girls with Disabilities, U-Report and HALO BEBA) and digitally enabled and collaborative innovation (MAGIC Box, Gig Economy in Serbia and Use of Artificial Intelligence). Therefore, all suggested categories of innovation, apart from one, are represented in UN system initiatives in Serbia in roughly equal way.

This confirms the view expressed by several informants, who emphasized that although innovation is now often associated with the application of new, especially digital technology for promotion of public goods, they see numerous innovations in more traditional aspects of the UN day-to-day work. They believe that very often new system-oriented and institutional approaches and tools, such as human-centered design, modeling or scaling-up of existing initiatives, are more impactful than often small-scale technology driven innovation on the margins of programmatic work.

In order to promote innovation more systematically, the UNCT needs to clarify its understanding of innovation and agree on a systematic approach to its promotion. The quick review and categorization of innovative approaches applied by individual agencies as well as simple training and skills building for selected staff or even innovation retreats for UNCT could go long way in inducing more innovation into its work. It should also connect to advanced work and tools of several agencies in this area, such as for instance UNICEF Office for Innovation¹⁰⁰, UNDP Project Cycle hackers Kit¹⁰¹, the first system-wide

⁹⁹ UNCTAD (2017), New Innovation approaches to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/innovation>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/innovation/hackers-toolkit.html>

5.10 Perception of key stakeholders of the UNCT role in Serbia

Conclusions:

- The UNCT role in Serbia is perceived as very important by the vast majority of stakeholders whether they are from the government, public institutions or the civil society, both at the national and local level.
- An important role and a comparative advantage of the UN, according to stakeholders' perceptions, is safeguarding human rights and established international human right mechanisms that provide framework for monitoring and improving human rights.
- Another set of comparative advantages seen by various stakeholders include knowledge and expertise, experience and competence, good administrative capacities, solid procedures, sound financial management, but in the same time, flexibility and commitment to implementing partners and beneficiaries to deliver support beyond mere technical assistance, increasing their capacities and enabling their ownership.
- There are certain differences in the views on the role of the UN in the context of two key agendas: EU accession that is considered to be a key priority, and SDGs. The majority of stakeholders see the role of the UN as complementary to the EU accession. However, that complementarity is understood differently.
- While some stakeholders think that the UN should increase its engagement in the areas insufficiently covered by EU accession (i.e. social policy, poverty and social inclusion), others think that the UN role is in accelerating and deepening reforms that are both in line with EU accession process, but also deeply rooted in the UN mandates.
- There is some confusion in the civil society about the role of the UN and its accountability. This confusion contributes to the divide in the civil society around the interest and willingness to work with the UN, which undermines social capital and networking needed to support reforms. CSOs also question how much funds and benefits delivered by the UNCT actually reach grassroots organizations and citizens.
- There is currently no strategic approach and systematic cooperation with the private sector. Evidence indicates a declining engagement with the corporate sector on sustainable development issues. Individual initiatives, on the other hand, show a big potential of this cooperation when it is properly developed especially around innovative initiatives.
- The UN role in nationalization and localization of SDGs has lately not been clear to many stakeholders and it looks like the UN is losing the leadership position in this regard. This may be positive as it shows that the UN development agenda is for everybody, but for UN identity, it is very important to remain strategically involved in the Agenda 2030/ SDGs related processes.
- One of the key messages coming from different stakeholders, including some from the government, is that the country needs the UN with more authority and with a stronger voice advocating with the Government and other partners for more decisive and effective reforms.

Recommendations:

- The UNCT should carefully reconsider the partnership role within the next Cooperation Framework, positioning itself as strong government partner with the authority and expertise of global organization, safeguarding human rights and promoting human-centered reforms.
- As already emphasized in the relevance section, the UNCT should define and articulate its role in the context of EU accession and find the best way to contribute to both EU accession and SDGs agendas. It also has to define and articulate its role in the nationalization and localization of SDGs.

¹⁰² <https://unsdg.un.org/blog/its-time-innovation-become-uns-new-normal>

- The UNCT should clarify to the civil society its role and accountability and more explicitly demonstrate how their interventions are beneficial for grassroots organizations and various groups of citizens.
- The cooperation with the corporate sector should be prioritized and redefined in the context of the new Cooperation Framework and established in a more strategic and systematic way. The partnership with emerging players in digital economy should be given particular attention.

Key finding 19: Significance of the UNCT in Serbia is strongly recognized by all stakeholders, though their views on specific roles are somewhat different. Irrespective of differences, the very strong message by various stakeholders at national and local level, among government, the civil society and the corporate sector, is that UNCT contribution is further needed in order to foster sustainable development in Serbia.

The role of the UNCT in Serbia as well as the perception of that role among diverse stakeholders is highly significant for the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of its strategic intervention. During the country data collection mission, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with numerous stakeholders: the government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of European Integration, Minister without portfolio in charge of UN 2030 Agenda, Public Investment Management Office, and others), public institutions, civil society organizations, the corporate sector, international donors and others (see more in the chapter on methodology). These diverse actors indisputably recognize the great importance of the UNCT. However, views on specific roles differ among stakeholders. As emphasized by different representatives of government counterparts, the UN contribution to the nationalization of Agenda 2030 and SDGs in Serbia is crucial.

'We hold cooperation with the UNCT in the highest regard. We practically wouldn't be able to do anything without the UN in the area of 2030 development Agenda. Cooperation is very constructive and productive with the RCO, with other agencies also, but we cooperate in particular with the RCO.'

Representative of the Government of Serbia

The process of localization of Agenda 2030 is currently underway, led by GIZ, and government representatives shared their expectation of UN engagement in this process. Representatives of the National Assembly emphasized the importance of the UN in establishing the SDG focus group within the work of the National Parliament. The inclusion of SDGs in parliamentary work was seen as a significant contribution of the UNCT.

Key finding 20: There are different views on the UNCT role in light of the EU accession process and SDG Agenda. While EU partners more often emphasize that the UNCT role should be complementary, providing support to the areas not sufficiently covered by EU negotiation Chapters, there are other voices among government and the civil society emphasizing the role of the UNCT as facilitator and actor supporting and boosting reform processes that speed up alignment with EU acquis. The expertise and support that goes beyond pure technical assistance and builds capacities of all implementing partners and beneficiaries was recognized as the main competitive advantage of the UN System.

Some respondents noted that there is sometimes confusion about the specific role of the UNCT in the context of the EU accession process that is structured in a specific way and represents a key national priority. Some government representatives even perceived a certain degree of rivalry between the UN and the EU as well as about the alignment of two agendas, EU accession and SDGs. Others noted that 'it is a challenge to understand the role of the UN as they emerge as both implementers and donors.

'There is no need for that (rivalry). As if someone will steal the credit for everything which is being done. The UN has its role. We are counting on the UN. With all the setbacks, it is still irreplaceable. Things can't be done without UN. It is complementary to the EU agenda.'

Representative of the Government of Serbia

As a comparative advantage of the UN, most of stakeholders recognized the expertise, high quality in programming, but also proper and adequately tailored support to the needs of implementing partners that goes beyond technical assistance. Through partnerships with UN, other stakeholders build capacities, leaving permanent added value beyond individual interventions. Some government representatives highlighted the difference between UN agencies present in the country and those that are not. They consider presence in the country as important for being a source of relevant expertise, as opposed to the situation when expertise is imported, mainly from headquarters. The respect for UN agencies among the government counterparts particularly increased after the successful response to the floods in 2014.

'In 2014, when the floods occurred, the UN turned out to be a very active and valuable partner. It has established itself in many areas as a partner with strengths.'

Representative of the Government of Serbia

International organizations reported on many positive aspects of cooperation with the UNCT. Some emphasized the importance of UN core values and institutional knowledge that represent great assets, and which are the reason they appreciate cooperation.

Cooperation with both the EU Delegation in Serbia and EU institutions in Brussels is good and is developing. Previously, the EU Delegation did not work as much with the UN, which was often perceived as a large, somewhat bureaucratic structure. Now the EU sees the UN as 'specialized agencies that can administrate the programmes.' Cooperation with the UNOPS, UNDP, UN Women, FAO, WHO and other agencies was evaluated as very good and the perception of these agencies has significantly changed in a positive direction. They are now perceived as 'a forthcoming, flexible, very efficient and reliable partner'. As a donor, the EU Delegation particularly appreciates the sound financial management of the UN, clear rules and procedures as well as quality control and strict audit requirements.

Key finding 21: The civil society, but also local stakeholders and stakeholders representing public institutions, voiced many times that Serbia needs the UNCT with stronger authority that will advocate for more profound reforms in line with democracy and human rights, and create pressure on the government rather than simply comply with government requests and needs.

'You have to approach the government with authority which the UN has. If we are stuck using the diplomatic language, we are not getting anywhere. It gets worse. The UN recommendations are exactly what we need, but in the end they are often very soft, not strong enough.'

Representative of an international organization

Representatives of international organizations expressed the opinion more than once that stronger UN authority is needed. There were some views among representatives of the international community that the UN should engage more in the areas not covered by EU accession agenda, such as poverty and social exclusion, or the social sector. Other international partners indicated that the UN should strive more towards an advisory and strategic role in the country and move beyond implementation of projects.

Representatives of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia indicated many aspects of cooperation with the UNCT that resulted in significant improvement of statistics required for development. The MICS survey, Transmonee, Cring and other databases, gender disaggregated data,

6. Conclusions

UNDPF is relevant and in line with both Agenda 2030/ SDGs and the country's needs and development priorities. However, its effectiveness, impact and sustainability have been negatively influenced by the absence of explicit and overarching Theory of Change, and too broad prioritization (5 pillars and 9 outcomes), often not corresponding to the breadth, depth and comparative advantages of the UN system in Serbia. UN system has been instrumental and effective in raising awareness and providing practical support for Agenda 2030 and SDGs implementation in Serbia. Over time, it has also succeeded to generate broad understanding of the relationship between Agenda 2030 and the EU accession as complementary, synergistic and mutually reinforcing.

In majority of areas, the UNDPF was implemented effectively, with differences between and within the outcomes. The implementation was effective especially in the areas of human rights, gender equality, health, education, social protection, economic development, climate change and resilience, while it was less effective in the area of culture and rule of law. The areas of DPF implementation with significant positive impact include human rights monitoring, gender equality, local development, and preparedness to respond to natural and man-made disasters. The good prospects for sustainability of results are identified especially in the outcome areas of human rights and access to justice, gender equality, education, economic development and inclusive labour markets and climate change and resilience.

UN system management structure and division of roles and responsibilities *was functional and enabled and encouraged coordination and collaboration. It was well conceptualized, but there were gaps in practical implementation, especially in relation to the functioning of JNSC, result groups and linkages to the external development coordination mechanisms.* The UN system was effective in adjusting its functioning to the emerging needs and priorities as shown in the response to migration crises and natural disasters. It was very successful in mobilizing additional resources for DPF implementation, and at the end of third year has already reached the targets set for the whole 5-year cycle.

UN coordination has been enhanced through systematic application of five 'Delivering as One' elements. Overall, it was effective, creating synergies among agencies and broadening collaboration. With the deliberate effort to increase team spirit and internal cohesion, UNCT collaboration matured and continuously improved during the UNDPF implementation. The UN House has significantly contributed to positive perception of the UN being one team, created a conducive environment for better collaboration and joint activities among collocated agencies, and led to cost savings. The UN system was effectively coordinating its operational and communication activities.

Human rights and gender mainstreaming are recognized as an important part of the DPF, and concrete steps were undertaken to support the process, namely through recognition of the issue in the joint work plans, development of the gender scorecard, and advisory support to individual agencies. Despite these efforts, the DPF still lacks systematic human rights and gender equality mainstreaming, which is particularly visible in outcomes related to rule of law, economic development and inclusive labour markets, climate change and culture.

UN System in Serbia has proactively explored the opportunities for joint programming, but due to competing priorities and lack of available resources, only a rather limited number of proposals were funded and implemented. Implementation of those proved that the joint programmes, when designed around comparative advantages and complementarities of UN system, are delivered effectively and efficiently generating clear value added.

The UN system in Serbia has been proactive in taking part in the regional initiatives and experimenting with the regional/sub-regional presence. Despite some ambiguity around the concept of innovation, the UN work in Serbia includes several successful initiatives and 'early movers' in this area. The UN should be proactive and systematic in promoting regional programming and innovation and consider including them as priorities in the next Cooperation Framework.

7. Lessons learned

- The process of development of DPF was not guided by solid ToC. but was organized around individual agencies country programmes. This undermined the consistency of strategic framework. The process of development of the new UNSDCF should start with more nuanced discussion on the current context, based on which consistent and comprehensive theory of change should be developed, guiding the country programmes of individual agencies as well as identification of the areas of joint programming and regional initiatives.
- Bringing partners on board during preparation of strategic framework is of key importance. Participation of government as well as of civil society in designing as well as implementation creates better framework for effective interventions and results with stronger impact. Although DPF document included large number of partners in relation to the specific outcome areas, the evaluation evidence indicates that the actual implementation did not include such a broad group of stakeholders.
- Providing technical support to implementing partners together with financial support, increasing their capacities to design and implement specific interventions, proved very beneficial and should be the usual modus operandi for UN system. Presence in the field wherever possible, guidance and mentoring support should be key components of technical support.
- Systematic monitoring and evaluation of such a complex system as the UNCT with numerous and diverse agencies, programmes and projects requires a much more developed evidence framework/database. The database could use a simple tool for recording basic information about programmes and projects, such as the title, objectives, period of implementation, implementing and partner stakeholders, intervention area and progress so far, and available funds. Any additional information, such as products, reports and evaluations could also be hyper-linked to this framework.
- Having in mind the benefits of the gender scorecard, it is important to have a similar human rights scorecard, which would identify areas of the DPF with insufficient human rights perspective being more system rather than people focused. This would further strengthen the key UN added value in promoting human rights based and human-centered approach.
- There should be more internal UNCT learning on innovative forms of cooperation between UN agencies and cooperation with the corporate sector in order to replicate or scale-up successful practices.

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