UNITED NATIONS
BELARUS

UN BELARUS RESULTS REPORT

2020

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UN Belarus
Results Report

2020

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FOREWORD BY UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR IN BELARUS

It is my pleasure to present to you the first **UN Belarus Results Report** representing the work of UN agencies, funds and programmes that supported development process in Belarus in 2020. Despite the changing context, the UN system in Belarus has continued to focus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the situation of **communities that are left behind.** The report presents a clear picture of how we worked and what results were delivered to help Belarussians achieve the SDGs.

As in other parts of the world, COVID-19 had an immediate health, social and economic impact on the country. The UN system entities in Belarus, working with national and international partners, quickly reacted to provide some USD 7.5 million worth of emergency supplies and support to the **national response to COVID-19**. The UN Belarus also formulated a long-term set of priorities and included them in the COVID-19 Socio-economic Response Plan for Belarus.

While Belarus continued to **make progress towards the SDGs** and demonstrated interesting achievements such as adoption of the legislation reducing the use of single-use plastic and ensuring collection of waste; restoration of inefficiently drained peatlands and implementation of green economy pilot initiatives; development of the National Strategy on Active Longevity 2030; development of a network of early intervention centres of the Ministry of Health; and partial decriminalization of HIV transmission, which is important for 28,000 people living with HIV in the country, the aftermath of the August 2020 presidential elections revealed the lack of progress towards achieving SDG 16. The demand for good governance and respect for human rights has become ever more apparent. The UN promoted universal values and reminded state authorities of their international obligations regarding human rights.

2020 was the last year of the implementation of the UN Development Assistance Framework 2016-2020 (UNDAF), a programme that delivered USD 85 million of international development assistance to Belarus in the areas of governance, economic development, environmental sustainability, and human capital development. It was also the year when we focused on **women's rights** in Belarus by being engaged in drafting the **sixth National Action Plan for gender equality** (2021-2025) and advocating new solutions to old problems -- traditional gender roles and stereotypes, growing gender pay gap, need for gender-responsive healthcare, and gender gap in life expectancy. We brought innovations to the areas of promotion of reproductive health and promoted solutions to combat violence. The UN was also involved in the work of the National Council for Gender Policy under the Council of Ministers, an important platform for collaboration of the UN, national counterparts and civil society on the issues of gender equality contributing to the sustainable development of the country.

Gender empowerment remained a top priority within the UN family in Belarus. We self-assessed our own work practices and used an internal **Gender Scorecard** as accountability framework that measures gender mainstreaming in the UN. I am delighted to see steady progress in gender empowerment in the UN system in Belarus, if compared with the last evaluation in 2017. We have managed to put women in the center of the newly developed United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025, and we are better at targeting women's needs through joint programming, monitoring and evaluation as well as in our internal gender equality coordination mechanism. Gender equality remains a cross-cutting issue for joint UN communication activities. Our staff are more satisfied about the opportunities for women and they are better able to mainstream gender in their area of responsibility.

I hope you enjoy the detailed account of our work in 2020 in the following report prepared by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in close cooperation with the UN agencies, funds and programmes and with the use of enhanced collaboration capacity, new technologies and reporting systems that were established as part of the **UN Development System Reform**. On behalf of the UN Country Team and 20 resident and non-resident agencies, funds, and programmes that have worked together to deliver much-needed results I want to thank you all for your cooperation, support and partnership. In 2021, we will continue to offer what we are good at -- bringing together stakeholders to achieve the SDGs and offering external expertise of the whole-of the UN to support development and social cohesion in Belarus.

Joanna Kazana-Wisniowiecki
UN Resident Coordinator in Belarus

NATIONAL PARTNERS

Government ministries, institutions, and companies:

- Ministry of Architecture and Construction
- Ministry of Communications and Informatization
- Ministry of Economy
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry for Emergency Situations
- Ministry of Energy
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
- Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection
- National Academy of Science
- National Assembly
- National Reference Laboratory
- National Statistical Committee
- Republican Centre for Emergency Medical Care
- Republican Centre for Medical Response
- Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Medical Technologies, Informatization and Healthcare Economy
- Republican Unitary Enterprise "Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant" State Border Committee
- State Committee on Science and Technology
- State Customs Committee
- State Enterprise "Academpharm"
- State Institution "N.N. Alexandrov National Cancer Centre"
- local and regional government institutions
- healthcare providers

Academia and universities:

- Belarusian Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education (BelMAPO)
- Belarusian State Medical University
- Belarusian State Pedagogical University named after Maxim Tank
- Belarusian State University
- BEROC Economic Research Centre
- International University "MITSO"
- IPM Business School
- Polessky State University

Civil society organizations:

- Association Education for Sustainable Development
- Association of Life-Long Learning and Enlightenment
- Bar associations
- Belarusian Association of Assistance to Children and Young People with Disabilities (BelAPDIiMI)
- Belarusian Association of Persons with Disabilities
- Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs
- Belarusian Movement of Medical Workers
- Belarusian Red Cross Society
- Belarusian Helsinki Committee
- Business Women Club Brest
- Centre for Environmental Solutions
- Centre for Promotion of Women's Rights – Her rights
- Chernobyl Children International
- DOBRA Foundation
- Gender Perspectives
- Global network of people living with HIV
- Human Constanta
- International educational public association Act
- International non-governmental association for scientific research, information and educational programmes «Evolutio»
- La Strada Belarus
- Legal Initiative
- MamaPro
- Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- People Plus
- Positive movement
- ProWomen
- Radislava
- Republican Association of Wheelchair Users
- Republican social public association Your Chance
- Republican Volunteer Centre
- Street Medicine
- Young Women's Christian Association
- youth centres

Private sector:
A1, Cipla, EPAM, Itransition, Life:), MTS, KPMG, Oyper, PriorBank, SoftTeco, Viber, Wargaming

Online and printed media

Vulnerable groups and populations

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS AND DONORS

Estonia	Eurasian Economic Commission	European Union	Global Environment Facility	Germany
Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria	Norway	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe	Poland/ Polish Aid	Republic of Korea
Russian Federation	Sweden/SIDA	United Kingdom	United States Agency for International Development	World Bank

UN COUNTRY TEAM

UN entities contributing to results in 2020:

CHAPTER 1. KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN BELARUS

The socio-economic and human rights impact of COVID-19 has been significant. Since the first reported case in February 2020, the pandemic has not only claimed human lives but also posed an immediate risk of reduced availability and accessibility of other health services such as services related to chronic non-communicable diseases, maternal health, paediatric services, sexual and reproductive health. Certain vulnerable groups, such as people in detention, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, frontline healthcare and social workers have been particularly negatively impacted by the outbreak. Likewise, COVID-19 pandemic has affected the livelihoods of many vulnerable groups, such as the unemployed, self-employed, informal workers, people from rural areas among others, exacerbating gender disparities in some areas.

Besides, the COVID-19 has impacted the economy, which contracted by 0.9%, according to official statistics. Factors contributing to this contraction include the disruption in travel and tourism; reduced tax revenue; recession in trade partners affecting exports; oil shocks linked to supply disruption and the international oil price reduction; reduced internal demand; and disruptions in value chains. SMEs, self-employed, and informal workers, many of them women, were more immediately affected as certain activities (e.g., hospitality and trade), which suffered more from social distancing and travel restrictions.

The global Sustainable Development Report, issued in June 2020, estimates that Belarus has achieved almost 79% of SDGs, which ranked the country 18th in the list of 193 countries[1]. The developments of last year, including the COVID-19 pandemic and events that followed the presidential election in August, pose new challenges, especially in terms of partnerships for development. Further work and ambitious development policies are needed to sustain that impressive achievement. The UN in Belarus has worked closely with key institutions and civil society partners comprising the national SDG coordination architecture as well as international donors supporting sustainable development innovations. This will continue in 2021 and beyond to accelerate development solutions needed for the full achievement of SDGs.

[1] *Sustainable Development Report 2020, which can be accessed at https://sdgindex.org/reports/sustainable-development-report-2020/, is a global assessment of countries' progress towards achieving the SDGs. It is a complement to the official SDG indicators and the voluntary national reviews. Where possible, the report uses official SDG indicators endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission, and where insufficient data is available for an official indicator and to close data gaps, it includes other metrics from official and unofficial providers.*

CHAPTER 2. UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES THROUGH THE COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

2.1. Overview of Cooperation Framework Results

The COVID-19 pandemic shifted many UN development priorities in Belarus in 2020 towards supporting the country in addressing its socio-economic impact. Immediately in the wake of its onset, a COVID-19 Socio-economic Response Plan – "From Economic Shocks to Building Back Better" – was developed by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) as a comprehensive offer for response and recovery measures from short, medium- and long-term perspectives.

The UN response to COVID-19 in Belarus focused on five main areas of work: 1) health services and systems; 2) social protection and basic services; 3) economic response and recovery; 4) macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration, and 5) social cohesion and community resilience. The guiding objectives in this work originated from the global UN response strategy that helps countries to deliver a coordinated and comprehensive health response, pursue policies that address socio-economic, humanitarian, and human rights aspects of the pandemic, and recover from the crisis better and stronger through a greener and more inclusive economy and digital transformation.

In addition to COVID-19-related activities, the UNCT continued its work in supporting the country in achieving the SDGs, mobilizing strategic financing and partnerships for the 2030 Agenda, and ensuring that the principle of "leaving no one behind", human rights standards and gender equality considerations underpin the sustainable development efforts. The UN75 commemoration campaign in 2020 helped to promote discussions on international cooperation and the role of the UN in delivering on the 2030 Agenda.

The UNCT provided policy inputs into the draft of the National Sustainable Development Strategy 2035 and other national economic, social, and environmental plans and programmes to mainstream sustainable development, with a specific emphasis on the needs of vulnerable groups and gender equality. The UNCT continued engagement with the national SDG implementation architecture, including the National SDG Coordinator, Council for Sustainable Development, Parliamentary Group on SDGs, and Partnership Group representing non-governmental development partners, and provided support to strengthening national statistical capacities to track progress toward the 2030 Agenda. The UNCT also designed and agreed with national partners a new five-year strategic cooperation plan for Belarus: UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025 (UNSDCF).

In 2020, the UNCT started a gradual transition to the strategic priorities of the draft UNSDCF:
1) Green transition for inclusive and sustainable growth; 2) Future generation orientation: adolescence and youth; 3) Digital transformation and social innovation; and 4) Gender equitable society. Many of the results achieved by the UN in 2020 fall under one or several of these strategic priorities and consider the impact of COVID-19 and the commitment of building back better.

At the same time, 2020 was the last year of the implementation of the UN Development Assistance Framework 2016-2020 (UNDAF), a programme that delivered USD 85 million of international

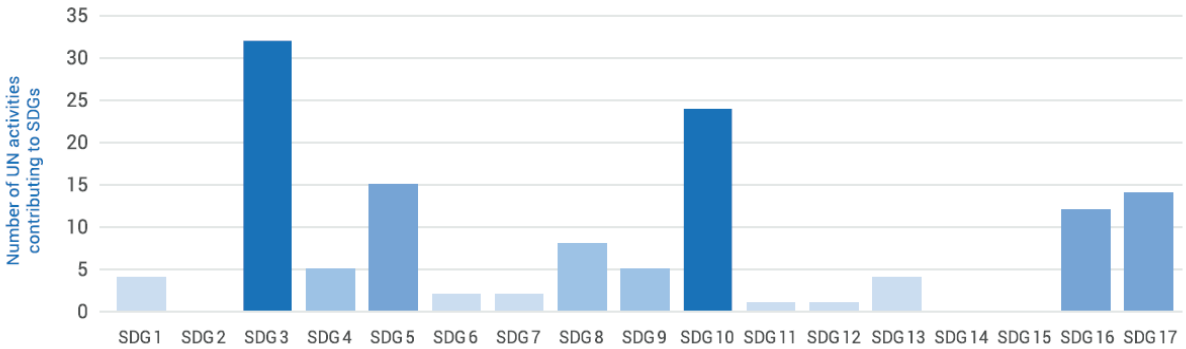
development assistance to Belarus in the areas of governance, economic development, environmental sustainability, and human capital development. Around 20 UN entities worked with more than 20 international partners and dozens of national partners from governmental institutions at the national, oblast and local level, civil society organizations, private sector entities, and academia to support Belarus on the path of sustainable development.

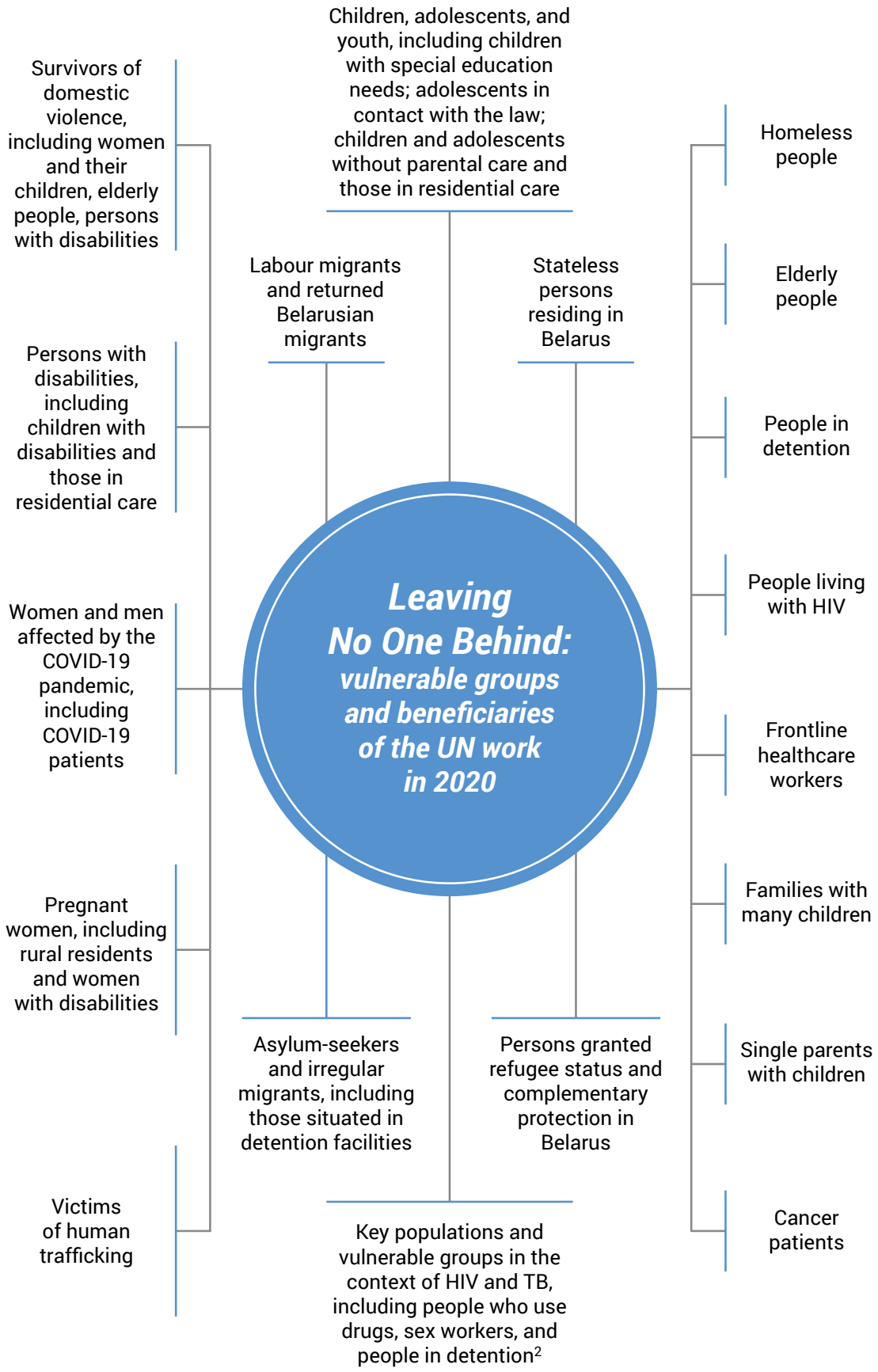
An evaluation of UNDAF 2016-2020 conducted in 2019 showed that the UN work had been relevant to the national priorities and achieved results across all its thematic areas. At the same time, it also recommended that in the next cycle of development cooperation with Belarus in 2021-2025, the UNCT should have more focused policy dialogue, better-resourced activities, put SDGs at the centre of its work, strengthen the focus on vulnerable groups and "leave no one behind", improve partnerships for SDG implementation, use benefits of a more integrated UN Development System, and support national partners in transferring their sectoral solutions and innovations to other countries.

2.2. Cooperation Framework Priorities, Outcomes, and Outputs

Resources spent on SDGs by the UN entities in 2016-2020 (average)

Which SDGs did the UN contribute to in 2020?





[2] *In the context of HIV transmission, key populations refer to groups who, due to specific higher-risk behaviours, are at increased risk of HIV, irrespective of the epidemic type or local context; vulnerable groups refer to groups who are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection in certain situations or contexts.*

2.2.1. UN Response to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a significant challenge for all countries, including Belarus. It has brought about a number of adverse human rights, social and economic impacts that the UN worked to minimize. In addition to the directly affected persons and their families, the risks were also relevant for the wider population through reduced availability and accessibility of healthcare, education, and social services. Women tended to be affected more and more exposed to risks as they account for about 85 per cent of healthcare and social care workers in Belarus, and they often carry a larger burden of domestic work at home. In addition to these costs that affect society in general, the year 2020 shows that certain groups are likely to suffer disproportionally from COVID-19 related social and human rights impacts, such as the unemployed (especially youth), self-employed, informal workers, migrant workers, refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, people in detention, small-town dwellers, families with children (especially with many children and single-parent households), children in institutional care and persons with disabilities, including those in residential care.

Since early on after the start of the pandemic, the UN system has played a significant role in bolstering the national response. Already in March 2020, on behalf of the UN Country Team, the RC informed the Government on the work of the UN system agencies, funds and programmes in strengthening preparedness and response to COVID-19 and offered additional assistance in the areas of medical procurement, information campaign and communication, COVID-19 response planning and mobilization of donor resources. Since that time, the UN Country Team has been providing continued emergency support. WHO worked with the Ministry of Health on needs assessment for the prioritization of medical supplies. Together with other agencies (i.e. UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF), they have been involved in the procurement of medicines and protective equipment in the context of a World Bank loan, which helped the country weather the first waves of the pandemic. In parallel, the UN agencies, in particular IAEA, IOM, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, and WHO, mobilized new grant resources and have partially reprogrammed ongoing projects to finance the procurement of basic and urgently needed medical supplies for the providers of medical and social assistance services.

To streamline procurement on the global level, WHO initiated a central procurement Supply Portal, further enhancing coordination of procurement contracts for all UN agencies. UN Belarus' procurement met needs of the healthcare and educational establishments, border guards and points of entry, residential care for elderly people, people and children with disabilities and health issues, orphanages and baby homes across Belarus. All this was made possible through the generous support of our multilateral and bilateral partners, including the EU, GEF, Germany, Global Fund, Norway MFA, Polish Aid, Russian Federation, SIDA, UK, USAID, and resident and non-resident UN agencies. Private companies (Wargaming, Itransition, SoftTeco, Oypeer, A1, MTS, Life:)) were actively engaged in the mobilization of additional resources for critical PPE supplies to the national healthcare system.

Following the request of the government, WHO organized the COVID-19 technical mission of experts to the Republic of Belarus in April 2020 and submitted a set of recommendations which are being implemented. In May 2020, the RC shared information about the new global UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 established by the UN Development System. In addition, working closely with the International Financial Institutions, the UN Country Team in Belarus set up a Task Force (TF) of economic and social policy experts that would formulate guidance aligned to the

national priorities in the area of economic and social impact of COVID-19 in Belarus. The UN Belarus also formulated a long-term set of priorities and included them in the COVID-19 Socio-economic Response Plan for Belarus. In line with the global UN pillars, the UN response to COVID-19 in Belarus focused on five main areas of work: 1) health services and systems; 2) social protection and basic services; 3) economic response and recovery; 4) macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration, and 5) social cohesion and community resilience.

PILLAR 1: HEALTH FIRST

Contributing Entities: IAEA, IOM, ITU, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, WHO

MAIN RESULTS

- Large-scale procurement of critical personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies to enhance frontline workers' capacities.
- Provision of laboratory supplies and case management equipment.
- Staff training in the areas of COVID-19 laboratory diagnostics, case management, intensive care, diagnostic approaches and treatment, prevention outreach to children at schools.
- Emergency financial aid to support persons with refugee status and complementary protection in Belarus who are working in healthcare sector.
- Information campaigns on important hygiene skills preventing the spread of COVID-19, e.g. almost 2.3 million people were reached by messages on COVID-19 prevention within the national "Clean Trend" campaign, which focused on giving parents and professionals tools and information resources to teach children and adolescents hygiene skills that limit the spread of COVID-19.
- Support to the uninterrupted provision of border and customs control services.
- Launch of the on-line school for pregnant women and their families.
- COVID-19 impact assessment, outreach, and risk communication.
- Specialized trainings for doctors and technical staff "Adopting telecom networks and equipment to support telemedicine and e-health as part of COVID-19 response".
- Expert support to the Ministry of Health in the process of medical needs assessment and preparation of the World Bank loan for medical procurement. Under the project "Emergency response to COVID-19 in the Republic of Belarus", two UN agencies signed agreements for supply of medical products and personal protective equipment for the total amount of USD 16.8 million. The procurement plan includes 54 items of medical products and personal protective equipment.
- Expert support and technical assistance provided in the preparation of strategic plans and programmes in the area of healthcare.

Facts and Figures on UN-Supported Health Response to COVID-19

COVID-19 PROCUREMENT PROCESSED BY THE UN AGENCIES IN BELARUS

UNITED NATIONS BELARUS

COVID-19 RESPONSE

3 465 050 Masks	**41 346** Soap (Liters)	**398** Air Recirculators
1 771 500 Gloves	**15 000** Shoe Covers	**390** Oxygen Concentrators
1 443 860 Respirators	**11 516** Dispensers	**100** Hygiene Kits
102 008 Protective Suits	**10 000** Lab Coats	**42** Methadone Dispensers
67 079 Goggles	**4 800** Disinfection Liquids (Liters)	**8** Computers
56 570 Protective Screens	**1 643** Non-Contact Thermometers	**2** Cardiographs
53 586 Antiseptic (Liters)	**660** Caps	**1** Video Conferencing System
52 000 Covid-19 Tests	**418** Pulse Oximeters	

Data as of January 2021

- **325** staff trained in the areas of COVID-19 laboratory diagnostics
- **145** specialists in case management and intensive care
- **693** health and education specialists trained on implementing COVID-19 prevention outreach to children at schools
- **30 000** children and adolescents reached with safe behavior skills campaigns
- **1016** psychologists learned about specialized psychological assistance to COVID-19 frontline workers
- **Tens of thousands** of healthcare providers better protected with PPE while responding to the needs of COVID-19 infected patients
- **At least 2.3 million** people reached with messages on COVID-19 prevention and infection control

PILLAR 2: PROTECTING PEOPLE

Contributing Entities: IOM, FAO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNECE, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN-Habitat, WHO

MAIN RESULTS

- Information campaigns on COVID-19 precautions and support services targeting vulnerable groups (migrants, rural dwellers, children with disabilities, women, elderly people, asylum-seekers, persons granted refugee status and complementary protection in Belarus, stateless persons, elderly people).
- Monitoring and ensuring of unhindered access of people to the territory of Belarus and to the state refugee status determination procedure despite COVID-19 related travel and border restrictions.
- Rapid needs assessment of civil society organizations and state-run "crisis rooms", which aid survivors of domestic violence. Support of civil society organizations in provision of essential services to survivors of domestic violence, including legal aid.
- 8 waves of rapid assessments on socio-economic impact for families with children.
- Capacity building initiatives for government institutions to improve social services for vulnerable groups (informal workers, people with disabilities, women, refugees, migrants, and other groups) and foster financial inclusion (cash and in-kind transfers).
- Supporting partners to make shifts to online outreach and peer-to-peer support.
- Preparation of a joint UN project on strengthening health, social services, and community resilience by developing distant counselling, with a focus on primary health care.

PILLAR 3: ECONOMIC RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Contributing Entities: FAO, ILO, IOM, ITU, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNECE, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, UN Women

MAIN RESULTS

- Assessment of the COVID-19 impact on Belarusian SMEs to better target assistance, facilitate their recovery, and strengthen their resilience.
- Support the digital transformation of civil society organizations and SMEs to adjust to the new realities of work.
- Direct financial support to business incubators, cluster initiatives and social enterprises in regional Belarus.
- Measures to define better education and professional orientation strategies for adolescents and youth to prepare them for an effective transition to the labour market.
- Capacity building on digitalization and regional integration, such as benchmarking readiness and maturity for digitalization of regional supply chains.

PILLAR 4: MACROECONOMIC RESPONSE AND MULTILATERAL COLLABORATION

Contributing Entities: EBRD, IFC, IOM, UNDP, UNECE, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, UN Women, World Bank

MAIN RESULTS

- Research and analysis on the impact of the pandemic on economic growth, social spending, and private sector development.
- Design of policy guidelines to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic concerning facilitating connectivity, addressing transboundary and other risks, and supporting green and resilient recovery.
- Support to the Government for the WTO accession.
- Preparation of a joint UN programme to promote sustainable development budgeting that prioritizes vulnerable populations.

PILLAR 5: SOCIAL COHESION AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Contributing Entities: IOM, ITU, OHCHR, UNDP, UNDRR, UNECE, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN-Habitat

MAIN RESULTS

- Policy advice, advocacy, and communication to address human rights consequences of COVID-19 concerning vulnerable groups, especially people in detention and persons with disabilities.
- Direct assistance to vulnerable groups, including migrants, victims of trafficking, asylum-seekers, persons granted refugee status and complementary protection in Belarus, stateless persons. USD 28,000 worth of emergency financial assistance was given to persons granted refugees status and complementary protection in Belarus who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 or had related medical issues.
- Almost half a million people received comprehensive information on COVID-19 implications for labour rights and protection mechanisms, which helped address irregular migration, reduce migrants' vulnerabilities, and minimize human trafficking.
- 85 stranded irregular migrants returned home; 44 victims of trafficking and 85 Belarusians who had to return home in 2020 received diverse reintegration assistance.
- Awareness-raising campaigns on COVID-19 related issues targeted at vulnerable groups, including on the issue of domestic violence in times of the pandemic.
- Emergency SMS distribution to vulnerable groups with the support of all three mobile operators in Belarus to reach out and inform them of COVID-19 and where to get counselling and assistance.
- Health/psycho-social support both to frontline workers and children and families.
- 693 public health and education specialists were trained on implementing COVID-19 prevention outreach to children at schools, reaching at least 30,000 children and adolescents with safe behaviour skills.
- "Youth and Coronavirus" survey of the needs of young people during COVID-19 pandemic in Belarus.
- Needs assessment study among people living with HIV and HIV-related key populations in the context of COVID-19 to reveal potential gaps in terms of their health, social and economic needs.
- Ensuring access to economic, legal and health support for people living with HIV and HIV-related key populations.
- IT solutions to volunteer networks for volunteers' recruitment, management, and training, resulting in the provision of more than 80,000 services to the most affected population groups.
- Three new clinics (2 in Viciebsk and 1 in Minsk) equipped with new dispensers to reach more people with the opioid substitution treatment (OST); eight OST patients secured continuity of treatment by meeting their transportation costs for daily round trips to neighbouring cities during COVID-19 quarantine restrictions.
- Improved city resilience, building on the experience of ongoing projects in Hrodna.
- Study of the impact of COVID-19 on the Internet drug trade to understand the scope and variety of drugs traded on the Internet and identify popular social platforms and channels to use them in further HIV prevention and harm reduction programs.
- Assessment of the governmental and non-governmental response to COVID-19 in Belarus, considering the obligations enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

HIGHLIGHTS OF UN PARTNERSHIPS IN COVID-19 RESPONSE

UN FAMILY:
multiple UN entities with and without a physical presence in Belarus, World Bank.

MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL DONORS:
EU, GEF, Germany, Global Fund, Norway MFA, Polish Aid, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, SIDA, UK, USAID.

PRIVATE COMPANIES:
A1, Itransition, Life:), MTS, SoftTeco, Oyper, Wargaming, Agropromsila, ExpertSoft, Lesante, Sigmapolus, SV Maschinen.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND RECIPIENTS:
Belarusian Red Cross Society and its branches across the country, Belarusian Movement of Medical Workers, Chernobyl Children International, Gender Perspectives, Radislava, BelAPDIiMI, MamaPro, environmental NGOs, healthcare facilities, educational establishments, social pedagogical and ECI centres, residential care institutions for elderly people, people and children with disabilities and health issues, orphanages and baby homes, and other medical and social assistance institutions.

GOVERNMENT BODIES AND INSTITUTIONS:
Belarusian Society of Laboratory Medicine, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Ministry of Defense, National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, National Statistical Committee, State Border Committee and Minsk National Airport, State Customs Committee, Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Transfusiology and Medical Biotechnologies, Republican Centre for Emergency Medical Care, Republican Centre for Hygiene, Epidemiology and Public Health.

2.2.2. UN Support to Sustainable Development Goals

Throughout 2020 the UN Country Team remained closely involved in the work on Sustainable Development Goals and has supported the activities of the National SDG Coordinator and Sustainable Development Council, worked closely with members of the Partnership Group. The UN RC and the UN system entities participated in all meetings of the national Sustainable Development Council in 2020. The national SDG implementation architecture benefited from expert and operational support to its work through the joint project of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF. The UN Country Team supported the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus to strengthen its capacities to produce timely, high quality and reliable statistics for evidence-based advocacy and decision making, including data on children, women, and persons with disabilities. The UN underscored the indispensable role of partnerships in work on the SDGs, including a meaningful engagement of all members of the Partnership Group. The UN acknowledges the important voice of civil society in the spirit of the SDGs and the principles of partnership and “leaving no one behind”. Cooperation of the UN system and the national SDG architecture in popularizing knowledge about SDGs and localizing SDGs as well as implementing innovative sustainable development strategies regionally remain the priorities for 2021.

The UN advocacy focused on SDGs and promoted innovation and modernization work on many fronts, especially in the social sphere. The UNCT was also underlining that while the response to COVID-19 and economic situation is key, the needs of vulnerable groups must be prioritized. Working across mandates of different entities in 2020 the UN system focused on green growth, future generations, especially children

and youth, gender equality and inclusivity, promoting also rights of people with disabilities, refugees, migrants and other vulnerable groups.

Last year was the year of the Climate Summit in New York and a lot of discussion focused on the issue of environment and climate change. The UN Belarus welcomed new policy measures introduced in the country for the reduction of the use of single-use plastic and further progress in restoration of peatlands. Adaptation to and mitigation of climate change should remain a national priority for Belarus. Nature-based solutions to climate change such as restoration of peatlands, introduction of wind energy, greater reliance on electric transport – these are important measures for reduction of CO2 and preservation of national resources but also these measures help deliver on Belarus' international commitments and obligations as a global citizen.

The UNCT has actively supported development of the Road Map for Mainstreaming Ageing in Belarus and the National Strategy on Active Longevity 2030. Focusing on violence against women, the UN entities continued to support elaboration of a comprehensive approach to prevention of domestic violence, facilitating model cooperation between the sector of labour and social policy and the Ministry of Interior. Speaking about families, and the position of women in the workplace,
the UN presented in Belarus some of the most innovative models of gender-sensitive family-friendly workplaces from other countries, which were already taken up by private sector companies for replication. Another priority is adoption of the national concept on justice for children, integration of the new restorative approaches to adolescents in conflict with the law.

Other examples of the work of the UN in the last 12 months include work on HIV/AIDS, free legal aid, also work on migration and refugee rights. Belarus moved closer to accession to the 1954 UN Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. An achievement of 2020 is also the establishment of the UN Country Network on Migration and its operationalization, which helped Belarus submit its first voluntary report on the implementation of Global Compact for Migration. In the area of health, the UN system worked on promotion of healthy lifestyles, prevention of non-communicable diseases, provided support to development of the National Hepatitis C elimination plan for 2019-2028, and the development of the new National Tuberculosis treatment guidelines with universal access to new anti-TB drugs for all patients with drug-resistant tuberculosis. These are just a few examples of initiatives crucial for SDGs and where the UN was able to make progress in close cooperation with members of the Sustainable Development Council and the sustainable development community of Belarus that steadfastly kept working on strategic tasks even in the face of COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges.

The UN is committed to supporting recovery that helps achieve SDGs and implement the 2030 Agenda through the 'accelerators' of development or *sustainable development accelerator platforms* which can enable partnerships and attract resources to priority areas. The respective four 'accelerator platforms' are:

1) Green transition for inclusive and sustainable growth.

2) Future generation orientation: adolescence and youth.

3) Digital transformation and social innovation; and

4) Gender equitable society.

These accelerators coincide with the strategic priorities of the new UN-Belarus Cooperation Framework 2021-2025. They are designed to be mutually reinforcing and interact to ensure complementarity and catalytic effects of SDG-related investments. Their synergies are based not only on the proportionate focus on the economic, environmental, and social aspects but also on the principled, cross-cutting commitment to "leaving no one behind" and applying international standards on human rights and gender equality. Below are more details of the results achieved by the UN system in Belarus in 2020 under these accelerators to support the SDG and 2030 Agenda.

Green transition for inclusive and sustainable growth:

- Introduction of Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production practices in industrial enterprises to ensure continuous application of preventive environmental strategies to processes, products and services to increase efficiency and reduce risks to humans and the environment.
- Piloting of Product Environmental Footprint in several export-oriented enterprises to measure the environmental performance of a good or service throughout its life cycle.
- Initiation of project activities to leverage the potential of Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies to realize smart manufacturing. These technologies that transcend the boundaries between the physical, digital, and biological worlds will help set up manufacturing systems that can respond in real-time to meet changing demands and conditions in the factory, in the supply network and customer needs.
- Continued support to green urban development, with green urban development plans for Zelva, Haradok, Karma, Krychaŭ developed and approved for implementation.
- Direct support to business initiatives in the regions provided to 11 business support institutions, 33 entrepreneurial initiatives, including 8 clusters and 24 socially important initiatives.
- Update of the Nationally Determined Contribution, the country's international climate commitment, from 28% to 35%, including the development of scenarios with a view of increasing the climate ambition towards 2030 for the sectors responsible for most of the GHG emissions in the country: energy, industry and product use, agriculture, and waste.
- Support to the development of the National Action Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity 2021-2025.
- Support to legal reform introducing Strategic Environmental Assessment and transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment, including public consultations.
- Policy support for the development of Sustainable Smart City Profiles and public-private partnerships as tools to achieve SDGs.
- Improved regulatory framework and operational capacities in the field of nuclear and radiation safety.
- Better public awareness about forest fires in the exclusion zone and about the use of wood from highly contaminated areas.

Future generation orientation: adolescence and youth

- Improved policy and institutional frameworks to ensure social inclusion of children with disabilities, including through the following measures:
    - 40 inter-district Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Centres reorganized into a National ECI System, with staff trained on universal scales and screening tools, providing access to the service in every region of Belarus.

    - A National Early Childhood Development and Early Learning Resource Centre opened in partnership with the Belarusian State Pedagogical University, providing methodological support to adopt innovative approaches to delivering quality early education and early learning to young children with special learning needs and developmental delays.
    - 155 specialists and 30 foster parents in the Homieĺ region gained skills on how to best organize work with families and support young children, including children with disabilities.
    - 27 children with disabilities who were orphans or without parental care placed in foster families, and three returned to biological families.
- Enhanced skills of adolescents and youths in volunteer work, leadership, critical thinking, and better mental health, including through the following measures:
    - Over 200 volunteers and 70 coordinators of the Republican Volunteer Centre trained on COVID-19 prevention and support to the most vulnerable groups.
    - 150 adolescents were trained on leadership and critical thinking skills, resulting in 14 social initiatives designed to voice their concerns and create solutions on issues such as gender equality, environment-friendly practices, and mental health.
    - New restorative approaches to adolescents in conflict with the law, improved legal aid and referral pathways.
    - New tools and resources for parents and adolescents to tackle bullying, overcome stress and deal with psychological violence in schools.
    - Best international practices in the field of anti-bullying were adapted by the Belarusian State Pedagogical University into a National Programme to build safe and enabling environment in schools, which is being piloted in 26 schools across the country with 11500 adolescents in grades 5-9 undergoing training on identifying and addressing bullying in the current academic year.
- An awareness-raising campaign to prevent child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, including the dedicated website smartparent.by.
- Introduction of the multidimensional child poverty (MDCP) tool to better allocate public spending at the national and regional levels, resulting in the government's decision to expand its cash transfer programme for families with many children to mitigate the COVID-19 impact, increasing the coverage for additional 6,000 families.
- Integration and adaptation of refugee children and adolescents through community engagement, inclusive education and non-curriculum activities in youth centres, as well as capacity building of teachers and social workers.
- Strengthened government surveillance capacity on addressing challenges of non-communicable diseases, including the prevalence of risk factors, depressions, and patient satisfaction with primary healthcare.
- Development of the on-line learning module on family planning for medical students and healthcare practitioners.
- Support the development of new clinical guidelines on motivational counselling for the primary care staff on addressing main risk factors of non-communicable diseases (smoking, harmful use of alcohol, obesity) and main non-communicable diseases (diabetes 2 type, cardiovascular diseases, chronic obstructive lung disease).
- New National Hepatitis C Elimination Plan developed and approved for implementation in 2020-2028.
- Improved application of cancer diagnostic and radiation therapy methodologies and techniques.

Digital transformation and social innovation

- Support to the digital transformation of SMEs.
- A "Digital Solutions Guide for Small and Medium Enterprises" handbook published as practical guidelines for digitalization of business and on digital solutions for NGOs.
- Counselling services on cyber safety issues and violence online.
- Facilitation of national dialogue and exchange of best practices with other countries on smart sustainable cities.
- Direct assistance on unification of data format and data exchange processes in smart cities and development of necessary technical standards.

Gender equitable society

- UN contributions to the development of the sixth National Action Plan for ensuring gender equality for 2021-2025 in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. The National Action Plan provides an important venue for joint work of the UN and the national authorities on the issues of traditional stereotypes, growing gender pay gap, women economic empowerment, gender-responsive healthcare, including the gender gap in life expectancy and reproductive health, expeditious and holistic solutions to combat family violence.
- Implementation of the UNCT SWAP Scorecard, which is an accountability framework that measures gender mainstreaming in the UN and promotes improved planning, coordination, programming and results for gender equality and empowerment of women at the country level. The 2020 scorecard demonstrated steady progress since 2017, with improved gender mainstreaming in the draft United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025, joint programming, monitoring and evaluation and internal gender equality coordination mechanisms.
- A roadmap for piloting the Parent-Friendly Workplace model by private and public companies.
- Online course for the evidence-based health education of pregnant women and their families, with a potential to reach 80,000 pregnant women countrywide, including rural areas, to improve birth outcomes for mothers and babies.
- First Rapid Gender Assessment of COVID-19 on women and girls conducted at the early stages of the pandemic in Belarus, confirming a high share of women among the first responders to the pandemic and an increased share of unpaid work shouldered by women.
- A series of activities under the Business and Career Week for women willing to start a business and/or advance in their career in the times of COVID-19. The Week featured capacity-building workshops with experts, mentoring and networking sessions, trainings on building soft skills, meetings with role models and reached out to 400 beneficiaries.
- Creathon to help women redesign their products/services or develop new ones to sustain or start a business.
- Educational programme for women entrepreneurs, featuring online workshops and networking.

Human rights and Leave No One Behind

- An awareness-raising campaign to reduce stigmatization of victims of human trafficking, reaching at least 17,000 people of Belarus and improving media capacities to cover migration and human trafficking.
- A Viber-based info channel and a sticker pack "Cat on the Move" targeting some 25,000 Belarusians with easy-to-reach up-to-date insights into safe journeys, safe stays abroad as well as human trafficking, including in the COVID-19 context.
- 5,775 individuals benefited from phone and text services of a nation-wide hotline on safe migration and travel.
- Start of the construction of a specialized Migrant Accommodation Centre to improve migration management, including with respect to irregular migrants and vulnerable groups of migrants.
- A UN Country Network on Migration set up and operationalized to help Belarus develop and implement an action plan in the area migration.
- Free legal aid to 1,543 individuals (1054 women, 489 men), including persons with disabilities, survivors of domestic violence and other vulnerable individuals.
- 67 members (40 women, 27 men) of civic and state monitoring commissions providing oversight for places of detention participated in capacity-building and experience exchange training sessions.
- Advocacy for the increased use of alternatives to detention.
- A comprehensive and systematic analysis of existing human rights recommendations emanating from UN bodies and mechanisms towards the formulation of a new national human rights actions plan.
- An analysis and expert assessment of the drug policy of Belarus, its human rights aspects, and the system of provision of free legal aid in Belarus.
- Belarus' pledge to accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
- Continued advocacy within the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness by 2024, including reaffirmed commitment of Belarus to accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (expected in 2021) as per the pledge announced at UNHCR High-Level Segment on Statelessness in October 2019.
- Free of charge legal counselling and UNHCR financial aid to pay state duties required for application for Belarusian citizenship and receipt of permits for permanent residence to identified vulnerable stateless persons, enabling 111 of them to approach naturalization and regularize their legal status in Belarus.
- Unhindered access to the territory of Belarus and to the state refugee status determination procedure for foreigners wishing to apply for protection in Belarus (including apprehended irregular migrants) ensuring every human being could realize their universal right to seek asylum in the country.
- HIV testing of homeless people in Minsk through collaboration with civil society organizations, thus reaching out to the most "hidden" group of vulnerable people in the context of COVID-19.
- Assessment of needs and challenges that hinder access to HIV prevention services for people who use new psychoactive substances and amphetamine-type stimulants, new national clinical protocol on treating health disorders among this vulnerable group.
- Advocacy to uphold the fundamental UN values through reminding all partners about standards enshrined in the international law, holding regulation communication with the state authorities on their international human rights obligations and issuing calls to address all allegations of human rights violations.

Key challenges

The year 2020 saw a few challenges that slowed down the progress to sustainable development and prompted UN entities and its national and international partners to reconsider their approaches and operational modalities. The fallout from the challenging developments in the world and Belarus in 2020 will continue to influence the UN work in the years to come. Some of the challenges that will need to be addressed from 2020 include:

- COVID-19 pandemic, its broad socio-economic impact, especially on the most vulnerable populations, and constraints on the operational activities of the UN entities and their partners.
- Weakening of the human rights and rule of law protection mechanisms, shrinking civic space, which will impact the ability of Belarus to meet its international obligations and achieve its development goals.
- Changes in the socio-political environment and economic slowdown may put to risk the country's advances in sustainable development.
- The rapid rise of online technologies as a critical tool for people's daily lives and lack of skills, especially among vulnerable groups, to cope with this amplified use of technology for work, study, service provision, communication, etc.
- Deficiencies in public health policies, including those concerning the risk factors for non-communicable diseases and their treatment, primary healthcare, patient confidentiality and digital solutions.

2.3. Support to Partnerships and Financing the 2030 Agenda

Two main developments influenced UN support to partnerships and financing the 2030 Agenda in 2020: the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact in Belarus of the global economic recession[3]. These developments will continue to affect the nature of UN interventions in the years ahead. As the government projects the budget deficits to persist in 2021-2022, securing funds from public borrowing becomes crucial to avoid any regression on SDG attainment. In 2021, the Ministry of Finance plans to attract USD 500 million through a loan from Russian Federation (already approved), and around USD 475 million in domestic and foreign bonds and other instruments to fund the public debt payments. Furthermore, the debt repayment and servicing burden would continue to be high (around USD 3 billion per year) for each of the coming two years[4]. Considering that Government monies currently fund about 70 per cent of SDG related expenditures, the role of partnerships that could leverage additional resources either domestic (i.e., private) or foreign (private and public through official development assistance) will be crucial. In-kind contributions by civil society and other institutions will also be fundamental.

In 2020, the UN in Belarus made efforts to strengthen national capacity towards financing for development, including through assistance to improving the efficiency of the public finance management system and deepening transition from SDG funding to financing, for accelerating the achievements for SDGs and delivering an effective socio-economic response to COVID-19. In this context, a joint programme on

[3] *GDP loss was 0.9 per cent. As of January 1, 2021, the public debt of Belarus amounted to 37.3 per cent of GDP, including external public debt (30.9 per cent). Global GDP loss was 3.3 per cent in 2020, according to the IMF (World Economic Outlook, April 2021).*

[4] *The perspectives of financial leverage changed as a result of the election in Belarus in August 2020. While sanctions do not directly exclude Belarus from placing its bonds on the international markets, de-facto, some investment banks refrain from organizing the issue. International financial organizations are also unlikely to provide loans. Furthermore, the internal bond market will also likely remain not liquid enough for Belarus (e.g. USD 50 million domestic bonds released at the beginning of August 2020 have been sold at 31.1 per cent of the total bonds (as of 1 January 2021). As for the external sources of funding, the Russian Federation and China look like the only viable alternatives in the short run. The Russian market would also be the most likely destination of foreign bonds release.*

“Promoting new tools of sustainable development budgeting that prioritize vulnerable populations in Belarus” was approved for the period 2020-2022 by the UN Joint SDG Fund, to be implemented by UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women. By improving the efficiency and efficacy in the delivery of public services, the project will help achieve stronger growth and improved governance (SDG 1, 16 and 17), enhanced environmental performance (SDG 12-15) and increased social inclusion with a focus on the needs of vulnerable groups (SDG 3, 5, and LNOB).

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic also clearly required strategic engagement with international financial institutions (IFIs) and development partners to facilitate a coordinated response at the country level, to benefit from much needed financial flows and emergency financing. Both resident and non-resident agencies enhanced their partnerships regarding COVID-19 response as well as the delivery of joint programming to finance the 2030 Agenda.

In the new era of the Decade of Action, UN agencies, funds and programmes successfully joined forces in Belarus for the implementation of several projects including the EU-funded project on “Preventing non-communicable diseases, promoting healthy lifestyle and support to modernization of the health system in Belarus”, known as BELMED (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO), the UK-funded programme “Vulnerability 2 Vitality: Preventing Violence Against Young Women and Children through Grassroots Empowerment” (UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP), and the project "Support for the Functioning of the National Institutional Mechanism for Achievement of SDGs of Belarus" (funded and implemented by UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA).

Resource mobilization was undertaken both with regards to the Agenda 2030 and as part of the UN COVID-19 Socio-economic Response Plan for Belarus (SERP). Concerning the COVID-19 SERP developed by UNCT in 2020, a joint programme on “Empowering women and young vulnerable girls and promoting SME development through digital innovation in Belarus” drafted by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNECE was selected for inclusion in a catalogue of solutions by the UN’s Multi-Partner Trust Fund on COVID-19. A joint action programme for “Recovering Better through Strengthening Health, Social Services and Community Resilience in Belarus” was developed by WHO, UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA. With its focus on creating tools for remote access to health and social services, the project should improve the health and social resilience and the capacity of the Belarusian society to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

New opportunities for synergies and joint approaches for collective funding were identified with regard to the 2030 Agenda. A joint project on “Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in Belarus” drafted by UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and OHCHR was placed in the pipeline of the UN’s Multi-Partner Trust Fund that supports the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The project will support the country in putting into practice the legislative and policy frameworks for the implementation of the UNCRPD in Belarus. In December 2020, a project “Support to the Efforts of the Republic of Belarus in the Nationalization and Localization of Sustainable Development Goals” was approved for funding by the Russian Federation and was subsequently submitted for endorsement to the relevant state authorities in Belarus.

Below is an overview of some of the partnerships and respective achievements in 2020 by individual UN entities:

IOM successfully rolled out a two-phased information campaign targeting labour migrants from Belarus seeking employment abroad, or already working in Poland, Lithuania, the Czech Republic as well as foreigners employed in Belarus. The intervention involved a partnership with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, as a result of which a total of 497,568 people received comprehensive up-to-date information on COVID-19 implications for labour rights, which contributed to SDG 8, 10, 16 and 17. Another COVID-19 intervention involved IOM’s expertise on logistics, procurement and supplies, where it provided protection of government and civil society partners through the delivery of PPEs and protection gear in partnership with USAID and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, thus helping the attainment of SDG 3, 10, 16, 17. Another project by IOM that involved partnerships was the joint initiative with the messaging app Viber and famous Belarusian illustrator Mitya Pislyak to increase public awareness of the problem of modern slavery and reduce risks for falling into such a situation faced by people on the move, contributing to SDG 10 and 17. One more COVID-19 response activity was targeted at stranded migrants and combined pre-departure, return and reintegration assistance to 96 in-

country migrants. most severely affected by the pandemic, within the Assisted voluntary return and reintegration programme funded by the European Union.

ITU continued the provision of technical and organizational advice on using information and communications technology for sustainable urban development through its annual flagship Forum on Smart Sustainable Cities, thus contributing to SGD 9 and 11. The work involved partnership with the Ministry of Communications and Informatization of the Republic of Belarus, OJSC "Giprosvjaz" and UNDP.

OHCHR strengthened the provision of legal aid to groups in vulnerable situations, including women victims of violence and persons with disabilities, thus contributing to SDG 16. The work involved multi-stakeholder partnerships with the Ministry of Justice, Bar Associations, CSOs "Gender Perspectives" and "Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities".

UNAIDS, to identify potential gaps in terms of health, social and economic needs of people living with HIV and HIV-related key populations, partnered with the Global network of people living with HIV, CSO "People Plus", State Enterprise "Academpharm", the private company "Cipla" to assist the Ministry of Health in developing and conducting two rounds of a needs assessment study. The intervention contributed to SDG 3 and 10 by ensuring access to economic, legal and health support for key populations and vulnerable groups. Besides, UNAIDS also developed and conducted, with the help of CSOs "Positive movement" and "People Plus", two rounds of needs assessment among the same groups of the population to reveal potential gaps in terms of their health, social and economic needs, contributing to achievements on SDG 3 and 10.

UNDP provided immediate response to the Government needs facing COVID-19 by repurposing funds and procuring the required PPE, sanitizers and medical equipment (addressing SDG 3, 4, 10 and 17). In addition to Government stakeholders (e.g., Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the State Border Committee), UNDP partnered with the Belarusian Red Cross Society to deliver equipment to beneficiary institutions. Regarding SDG 3, UNDP came to an agreement with the Ministry of Health and the World Bank on provisions of a World Bank loan to Belarus and will provide a large-scale procurement of medical equipment for tackling COVID-19. UNDP also continued to provide direct support to business initiatives in regions of Belarus, which will impact SDGs 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 17. As a result of this intervention, 12 pilot districts received technical assistance that will leverage private finance for SDGs (i.e. Brest region: Kobryn and Biaroza; Viciebsk region: Braslaŭ and Orša; Homieĺ region: Brahin, Žlobin and Chojniki; Hrodna region: Lida; Minsk region: Barysaŭ and Maladzečna; Mahilioŭ region: Bychaŭ and Kličaŭ). UNDP has also rolled out rapid response and financing facilities to address immediate socio-economic challenges and lay the ground for recovering better after the pandemic: research on SMEs, capacity building for businesses, including women-led ones, support to communities as well as strengthened procurement capacity to deliver medical equipment and supplies. UNDP was engaged into elaboration of the National Strategy of Intellectual Property and preparation of project proposals on improvement of the ecosystem of support to innovations and innovative development in partnership with the State Committee on Science and Technology of the Republic of Belarus. At the end of 2020, UNDP with support from State Committee on Science and Technology launched an Accelerator Lab to explore solutions for green and circular economy, youth engagement, digital transformation and gender equality and to help the country recover greener and more resilient.

UNECE partnered with local authorities in CIS countries, including Belarus, to undertake an online Regional Workshop on the development of Sustainable Smart City Profiles[5]. The workshop was organized by UNECE in cooperation with the city governments of Hrodna (Belarus), Nur-Sultan (Kazakhstan) and Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) and the Ministry of Architecture and Construction of Belarus. This event aimed at building capacities of local and national governments to produce evidence to feed into the evidence-based policymaking process at all levels, contributing to SDG 9 and 17. Also, UNECE held another workshop in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy on formulating and implementing national PPP policy frameworks to promote public-private partnerships as tools to achieve the SDGs, which will build capacities among Belarusian authorities to attract private funding infrastructure, contributing to SDG 9 and 17.

UNFPA contributed to SDG 1, 3, 5, 10 through its partnerships with CSOs. Examples include its assistance to the volunteers' network of the Belarusian Red Cross Society with the IT solutions for volunteers' recruitment and management: Volunteers in Action, Volunteer Portal System on the Salesforce platform, among other actions, which resulted in the provision of more than 80,000 services to the most affected population groups as a response to COVID-19. UNFPA also developed an online course for the health education of pregnant women and their families in partnership with the social charitable organization MamaPro, supported by the Ministry of Health. Potentially the course may reach up to 80,000 pregnant women countrywide, including rural areas with evidence-based knowledge and improve birth outcomes for mothers and babies.

UNHCR prioritized its COVID-19 response to ensure persons of concern (PoCs) are not left behind in light of the pandemic through a partnership with the Belarusian Red Cross Society. The intervention allowed for the provision of protective masks and sanitisers (some 10,000 items); extra financial assistance to those who lost jobs or had health issues as well as for PoCs among medical personnel in Belarus (totalling some USD 28,000). The intervention contributed to SDG 1, 3, 6, 8. Besides, this intervention was supplemented by a thematic awareness-raising campaign to inform PoCs on COVID-19 related issues including production and distribution of 6,000 leaflets with basic information on COVID-19 and possible assistance; in partnership with UNFPA, production and distribution (incl. via social media and messengers) of information materials on domestic violence in times of COVID-19; and coordination of emergency SMS distribution to PoCs with the support of all three mobile operators in Belarus (A1, MTS, Life:)) to reach out to and inform PoCs of COVID-19 and where to go for counselling and assistance.

UNICEF actively supported the national healthcare, education and social protection systems to ensure a timely and effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic spread with a focus on infection prevention and control measures and protection of frontline health workers, specialists of education and social protection systems thus enabling them to provide quality care and services to patients, children and families. UNICEF contributed to SDG 3 through the provision of over 600,000 personal protective items and over 2,000 items of medical equipment thanks to contributions of individual and international donors, as well as private sector companies (Wargaming, Itransition, SV Maschinen GmbH, Expert Soft Inc, Agropromsila, Sigmapolus, Lesante), which enabled approximately 38,000 healthcare providers to be better protected while responding to the needs of COVID-19 infected patients and children. To ensure effective respiratory support to the patients infected with COVID-19, UNICEF supplied 140 oxygen concentrators – to the hospitals in Minsk and six regions and organized two national and one international webinars on the proper use of oxygen concentrators facilitated by the leading experts of the Belarusian Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education (BelMAPO). At the same time, resource training and educational materials were provided for up to 10,000 frontline healthcare workers on diagnostic approaches and treatment of COVID-19 in cooperation with BelMAPO (for training of schools, residential institutions). UNICEF also played an important role in skills development contributing to SDG 4, 5 and 13. For example, over 350 adolescents and 70 volunteer coordinators of the Republican Volunteer Centre were trained on COVID-19 prevention and support to the most vulnerable groups, as well as leadership and critical thinking skills. In addition, UNICEF worked with partners to develop new restorative approaches to adolescents in conflict with the law, by introducing and testing targeted support services in four social pedagogical centres across the country, in partnership with the Republican Association of Barristers and CSOs to enhance legal aid and referral pathways, as a result of which over 500 parents have received free legal consultations through a Legal Aid chat bot service.

[5] *As part of the UNDA 12 Tranche "Smart Sustainable Cities for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda in the UNECE Region".*

UNIDO undertook interventions that will contribute to leveraging private finance for the SDGs. It partnered with the EU to assist the Belarusian State University, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and Ministry of Economy through its EU4Environment initiative to create pilot demonstration enterprises for Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production (RECP) assessments. As part of this initiative, at least 24 companies will become members of the two RECP Clubs (2 Industrial Parks and/or Free Economic Zones), 15 experts were trained on promoting practices of RECP application in industrial facilities. As a result, the initiative contributed to addressing SDG 9, 12, 13.

UNODC, in partnership with HIV service providers, contributed to SDG 3, 5, 10 through assessing needs and specific challenges that hinder access to HIV prevention services; the assessment was carried out among people who use new psychoactive substances and amphetamine-type stimulants, including in three Fast-Track Cities.

UN Women, in partnership with the EU through its programme on "EU4Gender Equality: Together against gender stereotypes and gender-based violence" implemented jointly with UNFPA, focused on strengthening equal rights and opportunities for women and men through shifting social perceptions, harmful gender stereotypes, and increasing men's participation in caretaking. Furthermore, the first Rapid Gender Assessment of COVID-19 impact on women and girls was conducted with support from both UN Women and UNFPA at the early stages of the pandemic in Belarus. UN Women in partnership with UNICEF supported the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus in developing a data visualization platform on gender equality indicators with the aim to improve public access and offer a one stop shop for gender data at national level.

2.4. Results of the UN Working Better Together: UN Coherence, Effectiveness, and Efficiency

As part of implementation of the UN Development System Reform, the UNCT completed preparation of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025 and worked jointly to adjust its programmes and plans in the changing country context. The UNCT supported enhanced collaboration in analysis, monitoring and results reporting and used the analysis to better align ongoing programmes with the national priorities, form a joint understanding of the UN system of the priorities and new challenges in Belarus. The UNCT prioritised joint programming efforts and resource mobilisation for strategic SDG-oriented initiatives and encouraged further work on simplifying and joining the back-office operations.

The development of the new UNSDCF 2021-2025. The design of the new UNSDCF was supported by a UNCT configuration exercise to examine the capacities needed to deliver on the Cooperation Framework's results and determine a new composition of the UNCT that can pool together all required capacities from across the UN entities present in Belarus and the region. The exercise resulted in 20 UN entities, with and without a physical presence in Belarus, committing to the implementation of the UNSDCF. It is also summarized in a concept paper that can serve as a concise guide helping national and international partners better navigate the UN Development System, effectively use the available UN capacities, and build new issue-based partnerships and coalitions.

The total list of UNSDCF planned signatories includes twenty entities: FAO, ILO, IOM, ITC, ITU, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNDRR, UNECE, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOPS, UN Women, and WHO. The UNSDCF outcomes will be directly addressed by the agencies in their upcoming programmes, work plans and other planning frameworks.

Policy Support and Advice. The optimized pooling of UN analytical resources and a stronger network of partnerships with government agencies and CSOs also resulted in stronger policy support and advice. UN entities came up with a set of detailed recommendations and comments to the National Strategy of Sustainable Development 2035, national and government programmes, strategies, concepts and plans in

the various areas of socio-economic development, environment, health, demography, education, employment, entrepreneurship, youth and elderly population, HIV and tuberculosis prevention, drug policy, migration, gender equality, which have been eventually accepted and are likely to influence Belarus' progress towards the achievement of SDGs for years to come.

Joint Work Programming. With the collective implementation of the UNDS Reform and RC system repositioning on the ground, noticeable progress has been made at the level and scope of joint work programming. The UN entities collaborated more effectively and more efficiently, undertaking collective actions to accelerate the progress toward national sustainable development targets. The COVID-19 response has shown the potential for joint work and created many opportunities for partnerships and resource mobilization. There is also an increasing interest of donors in the advantages of joint programming, as shown by the increasing number of donors' decisions to channel funds through joint UN initiatives.

The UN RC and several UN entities participated in the work of the National Council for Gender Policy under Belarus' Council of Ministers, which is an important platform for collaboration of the UN, national partners, and civil society on the issues of gender equality contributing to the sustainable development of the country. Similarly, the UN is engaged in the national structures for the coordination of the national response to HIV/AIDS, with governmental and non-governmental partners. An achievement of 2020 is also the establishment of the UN Country Network and its operationalization, which helped Belarus submit its 1st voluntary report on the Global Compact for Migration implementation. The Network will further facilitate the development and implementation of the action plan in the area of migration. The development of a concept for migration policy in Belarus has been supported and consolidated comments from UN agencies have been provided to the government.

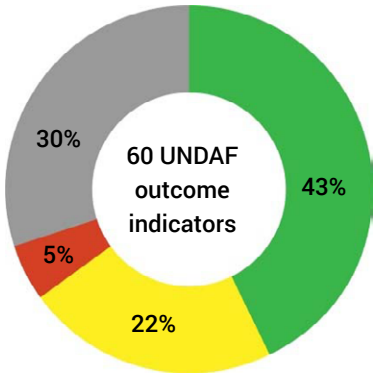
Joint Operations. On the operations side, UNCT actively engaged in developing a new generation Business Operations Strategy (BOS) 2.0 that was designed to facilitate strategic planning, management, monitoring, and reporting of the UNCT's joint support to programme delivery. The new strategy was developed with the existing operational environment and its challenges in view. It reflected a rather moderate scale of UN operations in Belarus and the fact that the resident UN agencies did not have common premises, with a few of them co-located in the same buildings and some having totally separate office premises. That made the economy of scale and the development of common services quite difficult. That said, BOS design and implementation still helped UNCT make gains with efficiency and enhance internal transaction cost avoidance and improve quality of services, including cost savings on externally sourced goods and services. It included such common services as accommodation and event management, travel, reception, rate harmonization and HACT management. The total estimated labour benefit amounted to about USD 34,000. The savings came from common negotiation of joint Long-Term Agreements (LTA), thus saving staff time and leveraging the common negotiating power leading to receiving better value for money and enhanced quality of service. A positive side-effect was also the spirit of common collaboration and the dynamics to boost further interagency cooperation.

Positive dynamics in the cooperation between the UN entities showed in the coordination of response to the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of both health relief and socio-economic aid to the country and the duty of care for UN personnel. The former part was addressed through the joint procurement of medical and personal protective equipment (PPE) and the rollout of services to vulnerable populations; the latter was implemented through a complex of measures, including the adoption of a UNCT Business Contingency Plan (BCP) and business continuity plans of each agency, procurement of oxygen concentrators and PPE, hiring of a medical coordinator and a stress management counsellor, arrangements for diagnostics and treatment of staff members and dependents, development and implementation of the COVID-19 MEDEVAC protocol. The coordination of activities was performed through inter-agency task forces including those on Health, Social and Economic Impact, Vulnerable Communities & Human Rights, Risk Communication, Procurement of COVID-related Medical Supplies, Donor Coordination and Partnerships and Staff Safety and Security. These task forces proved to be an important mechanism in ensuring coherence and coordination of UN agencies in the COVID-19 response.

United Nations' 75th Anniversary. Another area that showcased the revitalized cooperation of the UN entities was the commemoration of the UN's 75th Anniversary. The UNCT initiated online and offline dialogues in communities across the country, focusing on trends such as climate crisis, poverty and inequality, protracted conflict, migration and displacement, and the rapid changes in demography and technology. Within the framework of a countrywide campaign, the UN conducted a series of regional youth dialogues in partnership with the Ministry of Education and several universities. Each dialogue was facilitated by a particular UN agency and themed by its mandate. The UN also collaborated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct a historical exhibition on the 75th Anniversary of the San Francisco Conference and celebrate the UN Charter Day. The cycle of commemorative events was completed with the Youth Media Festival and Discussion Platform "Towards the Future We Want: Youth Position" that brought together young activists and UN partners from across the board and all over the country.

2.5. Evaluations and Lessons Learned

An independent evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020 was conducted in 2019. The evaluation examined the contribution of the UN Development System entities working in Belarus across four UNDAF strategic areas of response: Inclusive, Responsive and Accountable Governance; Sustainable Economic Development; Environmental Protection and Sustainable Environmental Management; and Sustainable Development of Human Capital.



43% Achieved - 26 indicators
22% On track - 13 indicators
5% Not achieved – 3 indicators
30% N/A – 18 indicators

The evaluation, updated in 2020, concluded that out of 60 UNDAF outcome indicators, goal values were achieved for 26 indicators, another 13 indicators were on track, but not fully achieved by the end of 2020; goal values were not achieved for 3 indicators. The evaluation identified 18 indicators that were difficult to monitor due to unavailable data or methodological issues.

Until the end of 2020, achievements in the sustainable development agenda had allowed the Belarusian government and the UNCT to focus their attention on the most critical development priorities through the provision of high-quality policy advice and capacity building, by leveraging global experience and expertise, and through coordination and convening power to bring together various stakeholders. The evaluation concluded that during recent years, Belarus

significantly reduced the proportion of the population living in poverty and narrowed inequalities, achieved universal primary education, made progress on gender equality by expanding women's participation in decision-making and reduced infant (under one year), child (under five) and maternal mortality rates. It also made progress in health, by reducing the tuberculosis incidence rate and the prevalence of active forms of tuberculosis; environment, by decreasing total and carbon dioxide emissions, increasing its land area protected to maintain biological diversity and covered by forest, national parks, and nature reserves; and on urban settlements, by improving the housing availability and conditions.

On the other hand, as an upper-middle-income country, Belarus has continued to face conditions of declining donor interest and funding. Thus, approaches that help prioritize strategic interventions that are long-term and linked to the national priorities, with clearly set targets and a focus on sustainability will continue to be relevant. Significantly, the COVID-19 pandemic has put the delivery of health services very high on the UNCT agenda.

The following lessons learned have been identified by the evaluators and taken into consideration in the development of the new UNSDCF for 2021-2025:

- The UN can deliver results in complex multi-stakeholder environments and politically sensitive areas by promoting international standards, policy expertise, and good practices.
- The UNDAF demonstrated its institutional potential to serve as a unifying mechanism that can bring all the UN agencies together to pursue common goals and promote collaboration.
- The next UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) can be a powerful instrument to lead collective and coordinated efforts of UN agencies. To be successful, UNSDCF should prioritize strategic interventions, which must be long-term focused, linked to SDGs and national priorities, with clearly set targets and a focus on sustainability.
- UN agencies can be more successful if they focus on both delivery of "low-hanging fruits" interventions and prioritizing of more strategic interventions addressing root causes of inequality and vulnerability.
- Belarus has a well-established public service that can effectively deliver on Government policies and programmes. The UN adds value and its efforts are sustainable when the agencies focus on the provision of expertise and policy advice, and, when needed, pilot innovations and demonstrate effective solutions through project delivery on the ground.
- UNDAF's relevance and effectiveness could have been improved after the mid-term review. By revisiting their strategic priorities and revising the M&E framework of UNDAF, the UN System could have been better positioned to respond to changes in the national context and overall economic climate.

Considering the important lessons of UNDAF, the new Cooperation Framework for 2021-2025 was formulated as a strategic, policy-oriented, pragmatic, results-oriented document directly linked to SDGs and national priorities, with a well-elaborated participatory monitoring mechanism and based on the comparative advantages of the UN Development System entities. The human rights perspective mainstreamed into the UNSDCF should ensure that the needs of vulnerable groups are addressed. Realistically formulated results, proper planning, communication, improved coordination, and effective monitoring can help keep the UNSDCF relevant and useful throughout its cycle. In the new UN structure, the RCO is uniquely positioned to help identify top priorities for joint UN interventions, facilitating the process of strategic consultations between UN agencies, national partners, and donors.

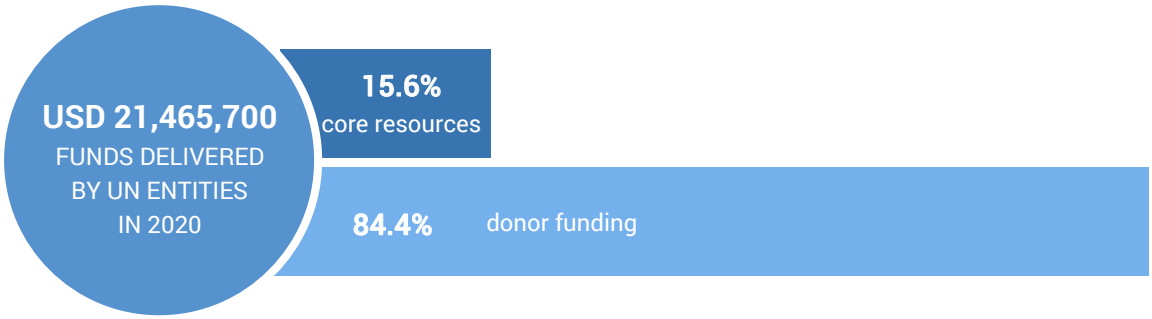
2.6. Financial Overview and Resource Mobilization

The total financial resources required by the United Nations system in Belarus to achieve eight outcomes within four UNDAF strategic areas were estimated at USD 111,328,000 from 2016 through 2020, of which USD 38,964,992 were available to the agencies and USD 72,363,008 needed to be mobilized during the programming cycle.

The amount of financial assistance that the UN system could allocate to an upper-middle-income country such as Belarus was expected to be limited. Therefore, the UN agencies planned to focus on using their comparative advantages; preparing joint funding proposals; ensuring a broad-based partnership with donors; and mobilizing resources from third-party cost-sharing, global trust funds, foundations, and private sector enterprises.

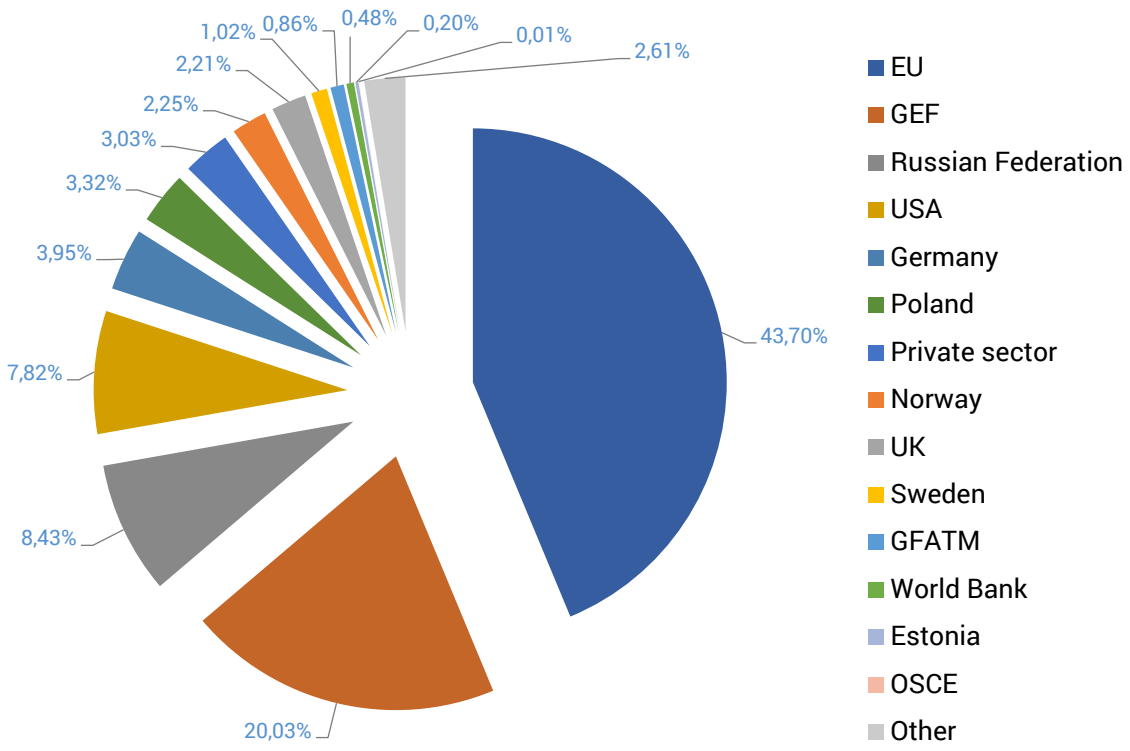
The UN did not fully achieve its resource mobilization targets as outlined in the UNDAF by the end of 2020 as the UN signatories of UNDAF managed to mobilize and deliver 76 per cent (USD 85,125,000) of the total resources that were planned to be mobilized in the UNDAF, with USD 21,465,700 or 25 per cent of the UNDAF delivered resources spent in 2020. In the final year of the UNDAF implementation, the UNCT managed to contribute USD 3,342,651 of core resources and mobilize USD 18,153,049 of donor funding, despite all constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and declining donor attention to Belarus.

UNDAF financial resources



Main donors that provided funding to support the UNDAF in 2020 included the European Union, Global Environmental Facility (GEF), Russian Federation, USAID, Germany, Poland, UK, Norway, Sweden, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), World Bank, Estonia, OSCE. The UN agencies also managed to mobilize additional resources through partnership with the private sector and the use of special funds of the agencies obtained on a competitive basis and aimed to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Total resources mobilized and delivered by UN entities in 2020, by donor



The UN's ability to mobilize financial resources for UNDAF implementation in 2016-2020 was influenced by multiple factors, including reduced corporate core resources, declining donors' interest, and minimal cost-sharing with the national partners. The UN agencies were pursuing a cost-sharing model with national partners with very limited success. In upper-middle-income countries such as Montenegro, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, the business model where public budget resources are used effectively through the UN system is very well established. In Belarus however, this mechanism has been underused. The UN agencies aimed to use all opportunities to demonstrate the effectiveness of their systems and large-scale savings that the public budget can achieve in several areas realizing its programmes through the UN (e.g., medical and other procurement on international markets where UN agencies have access to a more competitive process and a broader range of goods). One of the successful partnerships brokered in 2020 were formalized in the agreements of the Ministry of Health signed with UNDP and UNICEF to procure medical products, personal protective equipment, high-precision and laboratory equipment to strengthen the health care system under a World Bank loan.

CHAPTER 3. UNCT FOCUS FOR 2021

The newly developed UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025 and its four strategic priorities will guide the UN in its development work in Belarus in 2021. This work will take place in the continued context of the COVID-19 pandemic and will be geared toward supporting the country in addressing its diverse impacts. Key focus areas for UNCT in the first year of UNSDCF will include:

Addressing the impact of COVID-19:

- Strengthening the national preparedness and response to COVID-19.
- Addressing the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, especially with respect to vulnerable groups.
- Increasing resilience of the national health system so that it could effectively address communicable and non-communicable diseases.
- Expanding outreach activities on the COVID-19 socio-economic response.

Enhancing resilience and building back better to achieve sustainable development:

- Promoting partnerships with civil society.
- Promoting wider use of digital technologies for sustainable development.
- Focusing on system changes for vulnerable groups of children, adolescents, and youth.
- Continuing engagement with the national SDG architecture, including partnerships and co-creation of initiatives with governmental institutions, civil society organizations, private sector, and academia.
- Leveraging volunteerism and solidary of generations to promote social inclusion and community resilience.
- Advancing socio-economic development at the local level.
- Fostering community empowerment and self-reliance for persons granted refugees status and complementary protection in Belarus, asylum-seekers and stateless- persons through education, employment (incl. self-employment), Russian-language courses and other activities.
- Supporting social and technological innovation, including in the context of developing circular economy and green economy principles.
- Supporting governmental and non-governmental partners in pursuing human-rights based policies and activities, promoting gender equality, and applying the Leave No One Behind approach.
- Partnership building and resource mobilization with a wide range of national and international partners.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCP	Business Contingency Plan
BOS	Business Operations Strategy
COVID-19 MEDEVAC	COVID-19-related medical evacuation
CO2	Carbon dioxide
CSOs	Civil society organizations
ECI	Early Childhood Intervention
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GFATM	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IFIs	International financial institutions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
LNOB	Leaving no one behind
LTA	Long-Term Agreements
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFA Norway	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway
MDCP	Multidimensional child poverty
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OST	Opioid substitution treatment (therapy)
PoCs	Persons of concern
PPE	Personal protective equipment

PPP	Public-private partnership
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
R&D	Research and Development
RECP	Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SERP	Socio-Economic Response Plan
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
TB	Tuberculosis
UK	United Kingdom
UN RC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDA	United Nations Development Account
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization