



UNDP COUNTRY PROGRAMME (2018-2022) END TERM EVALUATION

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
BER	Biodiversity Expenditure Review	MTR	Mid Term Review
BIOFIN	Biodiversity Finance Initiative	NAPVCW	National Authority for the Protection of Victims of Crimes and Witness
BFP	Biodiversity Finance Plan	NBRO	National Building Research Organisation
CBO	Community-Based Organisations	NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation	NEOP	National Emergency Operation Plan
CDLG	Capacity Development for Local Government	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
CCAP	Climate Change Adaptation Project	NIM	National Implementation Modality
CO	Country Office	NPC	National Police Commission
CP	Country Programme	NPD	National Planning Department
CPD	Country Programme Document	NSC	National Steering Committee
CRIWMP	Climate Resilient Integrated Water Management Project	NSDI	National Spatial Data Infrastructure
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	OMP	Office on Missing Persons
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)	OP6	Operational Phase 6
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality	PCAP	Partnership and Communications Strategy and Action Plan
DoA	Department of Agriculture	PDNA	Post Disaster Needs Assessment
DoM	Department of Meteorology	PEP(s)	Partner Engagement Plan(s)
DRM	Disaster Risk Management	PIR	Policy and Institutional Review
DSD	Divisional Secretariat Division	PMU	Project Management Unit
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Areas	PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
ETE	End Term Evaluations	PVE	Prevention of Violent Extremism
EU	European Union	PWD	Person with Disabilities
FNA	Financial Needs Assessment	RBLAC	UNDP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
GCF	Green Climate Fund	RTIC	Right to Information Commission
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
GEF	Global Environmental Facility	SFDRR	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka		
HCFC(s)	Hydro chlorofluorocarbon(s)		
HRCSL	Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka		
IFIs	International Financial Institutions		

SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SGP	Small Grants Programme
SLCDMP	Sri Lanka Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme
SLS	Sri Lankan Standards
SMEs	Small and medium scale enterprises
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TNC	Third National Communication
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSDF	United Nations Sustainable Development Framework
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

The evaluation of UNDP's current Country Programme (CP) focuses on five key areas: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability. After reading all the basic material, interviewing over 120 key informants, and cross-referencing the information that these sources provided, the Evaluation Team presented eighteen key findings, and reached fourteen conclusions. Each conclusion leads to a particular recommendation, all of which are addressed to UNDP.

The 2018-2022 CP is very relevant to the needs of Sri Lanka. All three Outcome areas relate directly to three of the four Drivers of the UNSDF, which is the overriding vision of the United Nations system for the period in question. CP Outcomes 1 on **'Sustaining peace through more inclusive, effective and accountable governance'**, CP Outcome 2 on **'Building resilience through integrated climate and disaster risk management'**, and CP Outcome 3 on **'Building the data and knowledge foundations for evidence-based policy development'** are clearly at the heart of the sustainable development needs of the country. They are consistent with the policy objectives of the Government, as well as with the commitments undertaken by Sri Lanka, in respect of its international obligations.

With respect to the effectiveness of the 2018-2022 CP, it is clear that the projects designed for Outcomes 1 and 2 are designed to contribute to their respective outcomes. Projects reported under Outcome 3 are tangentially related to its Outcome. However, projects related to Outcome 3 are still designed to contribute to key SDG objectives and, therefore, are making an important contribution to Sri Lanka's sustainable development.

Overall, some projects are being implemented with greater success than others. It is too premature to fully assess the contribution of all projects to the CP Outcomes.

It should be considered that the period of the CP covers 60 months, whereas the evaluation covers only the first 40 months of this period. Moreover, of the 40 months covered, fourteen were impacted by the COVID 19 crisis, which has

affected the capacity of UNDP to both implement project activities and monitor projects.

Regarding the efficiency of the execution of the current CP, despite the setbacks of the COVID crisis, the overall delivery has proceeded at a good pace. Moreover, important advances were made in the establishment of partnerships, as well as in the rational use of funding, which included using national experts and identifying free or quasi free sources of expertise from civil society, private sector, and academia. The usual UNDP financial control mechanisms have been applied to all projects.

Considering resource mobilisation, more needs to be done, to both secure an adequate financial base that allows the Country Office to cover costs and grow, and to establish partnerships with the IFIs. In addition to the corresponding references to this point outlined below, for further information on this, please refer to **Annex 7 "Repositioning UNDP Resource Mobilization in Sri Lanka – Possible Lessons from the RBLAC Experience"** of the report, which outlines the strategy suggested.

It is too early in the CP process to make a definitive determination to the effectiveness of CP results and even more difficult to determine what the possible impact of the CP might be over the medium and long term. However, some clear indications seem to emerge with respect to the direction of the CP results.

For example, the following achievements were evident during the CP cycle: greater transparency and inclusivity in the work of Parliament; select policymaking and oversight Government structures were strengthened to perform core functions for improved accountability and inclusivity; marginalised and vulnerable communities received increased and equitable access to justice; increased capacity of subnational level institutions to deliver equitable, accountable, and effective services; increased capacity of CSO partners to carryout social media monitoring and engage in counter-messaging to respond to hate speech and violent extremist discourse; improved policies and strategies on disaster risk management at the national level; interventions for enhanced adaptation and resilience to the impacts of climate change implemented at the

local level; the development of key policy documents (albeit in draft form), such as the National Emergency Operation Plan, and the National Disaster Response & Recovery Policy; jointly conducting two Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNAs) with the support of WB and EU; GCF funded CRIWMP project, and GEF funded ESA project, GEF/SGP funded 40+ CSO projects at three landscapes to mitigate CC and NRM through community-based approach; the provision of support to enhance the Landslide Early Warning System at the National Building Research Organisation (NBRO); the provision of technical assistance to develop eleven risk incorporated project proposals; youth entrepreneurship development; support to the SD Council; and the completion of important innovation initiatives. Cross-cutting results in areas, such as gender, youth, COVID support and Human Rights, are also evident. More information can be found under each of the Findings below.

It is premature to determine the sustainability of the achievements of this CP. However, this report does point out some of the strengths and weaknesses in this respect. The key elements that are required for future sustainability include: political and policy stability; stability of counterpart staffing to avoid the loss of institutional memory and operational efficiency, future governmental and CSO capacity to sustain the results that are ultimately achieved, and adequate funding levels.

The Evaluation Team was requested to respond to four questions: **(1) what did the UNDP country programme intend to achieve during the period under review?** The answer to this is summarised in the Theory of Change outlined below, **(2) what has the programme achieved thus far (or is likely to achieve) in its intended objectives?** Findings 1 through 8 and 10 below and the text that follows outline the achievements of UNDP thus far, in terms of its organizational and cross-cutting substantive objectives. Findings 11 through 19 outline the achievements of UNDP thus far, in terms of work on moving toward the achievement of the three CP Outcomes. **(3) has UNDP been able to adapt to the COVID-19 Pandemic and support the country's preparedness, response and recovery process?** Finding 9 provides information in this respect. **(4) What fac-**

tors contributed to or hindered UNDP's performance and eventually, to the sustainability of results? Information that responds to this question is disseminated in each corresponding finding.

The Evaluation Team made eleven recommendations in response to its Findings and Conclusions. They are:

RECOMMENDATION No. 1: UNDP should prioritise enhancing or having dedicated RM capacity within its resource mobilisation strategy and existing structure, to increase collaboration and partnership with the IFIs.

RECOMMENDATION No. 2: UNDP should review the existing structure of the teams to ensure that leadership roles within them are more clearly and coherently defined to ensure that administrative and policy/technical functions are (to the extent possible) bifurcated, and the leadership roles with respect to programme delivery and quality assurance are performed by separate personnel.

RECOMMENDATION No. 3: UNDP should ensure that each M&E project framework has clear, realistic, well-defined, and measurable baseline and success indicators (for each outcome, output and sub-output), and that a common, accessible, and up-to-date reporting database is maintained from which progress reports can be produced.

RECOMMENDATION No. 4: UNDP should identify CSOs that have the potential to be long-term partners in the design and delivery of the CP and develop a strategy to invest in the organisational capacity and sustainability of these CSO partners.

RECOMMENDATION No. 5: UNDP should expand the way gender mainstreaming within budgets is assessed by also measuring disaggregated spending on specific gender-related initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION No. 6: UNDP should increase the mainstreaming of disability rights into the CP's design and ensure that all related stakeholders are aware of ways to incorporate this priority into social cohesion programming, CCA, DRR, natural resource management, and

energy sector project implementation, and access to data interventions.

RECOMMENDATION No. 7: UNDP should fully operationalise the recalibrated SDG16 Portfolio to enable UNDP to better align with and influence the current government's policy agenda and develop coherent and workable partnership strategies pertaining to key institutions, such as the Ministry of Justice, as part of such operationalisation.

RECOMMENDATION No. 8: UNDP should vet all interventions within the broader social cohesion programme area to ensure that protection concerns remain paramount, and to minimise involvement of security-oriented institutions within programming.

RECOMMENDATION No. 9: UNDP should continue to facilitate national level state-sector institutions, expand interventions to engage provincial and local government stakeholders, and

CSOs as implementing partners in CCA, DRR, natural resource management, and focus more on private sector resource mobilisation for the renewable energy sector and low carbon development.

RECOMMENDATION No. 10: UNDP should ensure the systems and practices developed are integrated within the existing institutional frameworks at the national and sub-national levels and the practices of vulnerable communities, by partnering with state and private sector stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION No. 11: UNDP should consider establishing a project designed to create a unified national data gathering and analysis system under the Department of Census and Statistics, which can be the repository and analytical tool for all demographic, microeconomic, macroeconomic, social, and operational statistics.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose, Scope, Methodology, and Limitations of the Evaluation

As the current Country Programme (CP) of UNDP enters its final year, in accordance with standard UN evaluation procedures followed by the Team, an End Term Evaluation is required. Since the purpose of UNDP's cooperation is to support the Government's socio-economic development plan and sustain its sectoral policy accomplishments in support of the country meeting its sustainable development goals (SDGs), it is important to evaluate the achievements of the current CP. This evaluation is meant to ensure that the new CP (2023 – 2027) builds on those achievements.

Evaluation Questions:

The main objectives of the ETE were to answer the following questions:

- 1 What did the UNDP country programme intend to achieve during the period under review?
- 2 To what extent has the programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives?
- 3 To what extent has UNDP been able to adapt to the COVID-19 Pandemic and support the country's preparedness, response, and recovery process?
- 4 What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP's performance and eventually, to the sustainability of results?

This evaluation covered the period between 2018 and the first quarter of 2021. The Evaluation encompassed UNDP's work in Sri Lanka under the three CP Outcomes (focus areas) mentioned below. The purpose of the evaluation, as stated in the Terms of Reference was: 'Setting is to take stock of the progress in achieving the results of the Country Programme, its relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of strategies and interventions in light of the development priorities, and emerging development issues, including in the context of COVID-19 impact at the national and sub-national level.' The purpose was not to evaluate individual projects (each UNDP project has its own monitoring and evaluation process). However, as the CP is composed of projects, the Evaluation Team reviewed the documentation of each of the 32 projects with a total

of 66 sub-project components, under execution during the period in question. This assessment was done with a view to determining their contribution so far, to each of the three CP Outcomes (See list of projects in Annex 1).

Secondary data was collected from various documents and other reference materials, which are outlined in Annex 3. They included background documents on the national contexts, project and programme documents, such as national policy documents, the 2018-2022 United Nations Development Assistance Framework, the UNDP Country Programme 2018-2022, the Mid-Term Review of the previous UNDP Country Programme, the Evaluation of the SDG 16 programme, project documents, CP and project M&E frameworks, work plans and project progress reports, monitoring and self-assessment reports, such as the yearly UNDP Results Oriented Annual Reports (ROARs), strategy notes, and project evaluations. A list of these documents is outlined in Annex 3. The documents consulted were, in general terms adequate, although gaps were found in terms of the clear formulation of many baseline and target indicators in the M&E frameworks, and in the diversity of formats and periodicity of progress reports.

A review of these documents served to establish a list of questions that were approved at the Inception Report of this evaluation. Furthermore, interviews, which were carried out remotely, provided both additional material, as well as an opportunity to triangulate key pieces of information. The evaluation benefited from the observations of key informants from among UNDP's staff, Government counterparts, members and staff of key state institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs), donors, and academia. Over 120 interviews were conducted during this evaluation. (See full list of key interviewees in Annex 2).

Unfortunately, due to internal travel restrictions, the team was unable to interview actual project beneficiaries at the community level. Therefore, we were unable to capture their perspective.

The Evaluation Team had to overcome some limitations. The main ones were:

- The impossibility to identify the national consultant to review CP Outcome 3, so by default, his task was absorbed by the Team Leader causing some time delay;

- Delays that occurred securing comments to the Inception Report;
- Given the limitations explained above, not all the expected documentation related to project progress and implementation were available; and
- Difficulties in securing some interviews in a timely manner.

1.2 Background

Demographics

Sri Lanka, previously known as Ceylon, is an island country located in the Indian Ocean, south of India. It is a multi-ethnic, and multi-religious country. The Sinhalese make up around 75% of the population in Sri Lanka, Tamils (including Hill Country Tamils) constitute 15.2 per cent, and the Moors in terms of ethnicity constitute 9.2 per cent of the population. The majority of Sinhalese is Buddhist. Hindus, Muslims (adherents of Islam), and Christians constitute 12.6 per cent, 9.7 per cent, and 7.6 per cent of the population, respectively.

Human development

An analysis of the 2020 Human Development Report shows that in many key indicators Sri Lanka has been making steady progress since the 1990s. It is ranked 72nd in 2020, with a Human Development Index of .782 up from about .620 in 1990. The GDP per capita income has grown from US \$ 463 in 1990 to US \$ 3,682 in 2020, and Sri Lanka became a lower middle-income country, as per the World Bank country classification on 1 July 2020. The overall inequality index has also improved slightly between 2010 and 2020 going from .625 to .673. Foreign direct investment as a percent of GDP has fallen from 4.5 percent in 1990 to 1.8 percent in 2020. Similarly, labour force participation decreased from 62.5 percent in 1990 to 53.9 percent in 2019. The decrease in these last two indicators is probably the result of a major shift in the economy from a reliance on commodities to an economy where services, especially tourism, is now the main sector.

In terms of social advancement, life expectancy has increased from 69.5 years in 1990 to 76.1 years in 2019 (the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic are still to be considered). The GINI coefficient is 39.8 which is comparable to that of Albania, showing that inequality is still a problem

that needs to be tackled. Poverty is still a concern, as the population vulnerable to multidimensional poverty stands at about 14.3 percent. When we look at years of schooling, the overall figure is 14.1 percent.

In terms of dealing with gender disparities, there are areas in which substantial advances have been achieved. For example, life expectancy, according to the HDR is 80.3 years for women and only 73.6 years for men in 2019. This difference, of slightly over seven years, is comparable to the figures in many developed countries. These statistics indicate that access to gender-oriented medical services is adequate. Similarly, in terms of years of schooling, girls average 14.5 versus 11.4 for boys. Although gender-based inequalities have reduced over the years, significant gaps persist relating to female representation in Parliament, and women's labour force participation.

Conflict

The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka between the Sinhalese and Tamils has historical roots. From the Sinhalese perspective, Tamils and other minorities received preferential treatment during British colonial occupation. From the Tamil perspective, Sinhalese-dominated governments adopted discriminatory policies during the post-Independence period. Such policies included those relating to citizenship, language, education and land distribution. In 1983, the conflict eventually became an armed conflict between Tamil separatist groups and the Sri Lankan security forces. The armed conflict ended in 2009, when the separatist group the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were militarily defeated. Several attempts at securing a political solution to the ethnic conflict were made but have been unsuccessful. Moreover, processes and mechanisms designed to deliver reconciliation and accountability have had mixed results. In this context, several critical issues relating to peacebuilding remain unaddressed.

Since the conclusion of the armed conflict, a new sphere of conflict and violence involving the Muslim community has emerged. Several episodes of anti-Muslim mob violence have taken place since 2012. In April 2019, an Islamist group perpetrated coordinated suicide attacks on Christian places of worship, and hotels. These attacks have introduced a new dimension to Sri Lanka's conflict landscape.

Sri Lanka has faced a number of constitutional disruptions during the CP period. In October 2018, it was confronted with a crisis concerning the President's unilateral removal of the Prime Minister, and the subsequent dissolution of Parliament. That crisis was eventually resolved when the Supreme Court declared that the dissolution of Parliament was unconstitutional. Subsequently, in early March 2020, the newly elected President dissolved Parliament and called for an early parliamentary election. However, due to the COVID-19 crisis, parliamentary elections were postponed twice, and were held on 5 August 2020. Therefore, Sri Lanka was compelled to deal with the Pandemic for several months without a sitting legislature. Some of these contextual changes are discussed in more depth in Section 1.3.

Environment, Energy, and Climate Change Adaptation

Environmental and Climate Change Vulnerability: Sri Lanka is an island nation, and is subject to the effects of climate change. Its high population density, estimated at 341 inhabitants per square kilometre, leading to haphazard-unsustainable development, puts pressure on land, causing deforestation, loss of natural habitat and biodiversity, and high air pollution in some cities, that is, Colombo and Kandy. In general, it is recognised that depletion of forest cover, soil and mangrove degradation, coral reef destruction, air and water pollution, waste management, loss of wildlife habitat and consequently, vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, and extreme weather events are critical environmental problems that affect the country.

Sri Lanka faces moderate disaster risk levels. It is ranked 97th out of 191 countries under the 2019 INFORM Risk Index. The Global Climate Risk Index¹ placed Sri Lanka at 98th position in 2015, and the ranking went to 4th in 2016, 2nd in 2017, 6th in 2018, and 30th in 2019.

Sri Lanka has exposure to hydro meteorological disasters, such as floods, droughts, landslides, tropical cyclones, high winds, storm surges, and their associated hazards. 33% of the central highlands are prone to landslide hazards, while most of the low-lying areas of the rivers are prone to seasonal inundation. Sri Lanka's surface water is

sourced from high watersheds and transported by 103 distinct natural river basins that cover 90% of the island. River basins originating in the wetter parts of the hill country are perennial, while the majority of those in the Dry Zone are seasonal. The country's water resources are critical for many development sectors, and for human use. The overall impact of climate change on the water sector is likely to have adverse effects for agricultural water supply, hydro energy generation, human health, and human settlements. The country's forest cover stands at 29.7 percent to date, and the Government has targets to increase it to 32 percent by 2030. Sri Lanka has a 1,785 km coastal line, and occupies a territorial sea of 21,500 km², and an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of up to 200 nautical miles (370 km) from the coastal line at an extent of 517,000 km². Sri Lanka has the rights to the resources in the water column, seabed, and subsurface in the EEZ. Moreover, the Sri Lanka energy policy has ambitious target to supply 70% of its power generation from renewable energy sources by 2030, and carbon neutrality by 2050.

Change in Country Context

Since the formulation of the CPD, at least four major transformational events have taken place in Sri Lanka. Each of these major transformational events impacted the CP's overall theory of change.

Firstly, on Easter Sunday on 21 April 2019, simultaneous suicide attacks were launched on three churches and three hotels in various parts of Sri Lanka. The attacks were attributed to an Islamist militant group, and resulted in the death of around 270 civilians, mostly Christian worshippers. These attacks have altered relations between the Muslim community and other communities in the country and have presented a new and unprecedented challenge to sustainable peace and social cohesion in Sri Lanka.

Secondly, in November 2019, Gotabaya Rajapaksa was elected President following the presidential election. The new President promised to break from the policies of his predecessors by focusing on national security, economic development, and constitutional reform. Notably, his government decided to deviate from the

¹ Germanwatch, *Global Climate Risk Index 2015*, 206-209.

previous administration's policy approach in several areas. Each of these shifts, that is, (1) 'peace and reconciliation' to 'development', (2) 'rights' to 'security', (3) 'accountability' to 'efficiency', and (4) 'autonomy' to 'centralisation' are discussed in more detail below.

Thirdly, in March 2020, the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted Sri Lanka, and caused major economic, social, and cultural disruptions. The crisis impacted a variety of sectors. As with other countries, it affected employment, diminished national production, and critically reduced private investment. The extent to which this has, and will, affect the country's economy in the future is still to be measured. Institutions that are relevant to the CP, including Sri Lanka's justice institutions, including courts, and Sri Lanka's legislative bodies, including Parliament and local authorities, and Sri Lanka's climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR) mechanisms were also affected. The Pandemic also resulted in the postponement of parliamentary elections. As a result of the delay, Sri Lanka was compelled to face the Pandemic without a functioning Parliament for more than five months.

A fourth transformational event took place in October 2020. Following parliamentary elections held in August 2020 (in which the *Sri Lanka Podu Jana Peramuna*, the President's political party), secured nearly two-thirds of the seats in parliament, the Government enacted the Twentieth Amendment to the Constitution. The new Amendment reversed most of the reforms introduced by the Nineteenth Amendment. It restored the powers of the Executive President to make appointments to key offices, and hold ministerial portfolios. In effect, the Amendment concentrated power in the executive president, and created a clear pathway for the new government's policy agenda.

These major changes in context required UNDP to revisit the strategic direction and overall programmatic parameters of the CP, to maintain its relevance, impact, and achievability.

1.3 The UNDP Country Programme in Sri Lanka

UNDP Sri Lanka operates under the umbrella of the 'One United Nations' Initiative and is a member of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Sri Lanka. The common intended contributions of the UNCT to the government of Sri Lanka is outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) for 2018-2022. The UNDP's current CP aimed to support UNSDF drivers:

- 1) Towards improved Data Knowledge Management and Evidence-Based Policy;
- 2) Strengthened, Innovative Public Institutions and Engagement Towards a Lasting Peace; and
- 3) Enhancing Resilience to Climate Change and Disasters and Strengthened Environmental Management.

To achieve this, the Country Programme contains three Outcomes derived from these UNSDF drivers. They are:

Outcome 1: Sustaining Peace through more Inclusive, Effective and Accountable Governance;

Outcome 2: Building Resilience through Integrated Climate and Disaster Risk Management;

Outcome 3: Building the Data and Knowledge Foundations for Evidence-based Policy Development.

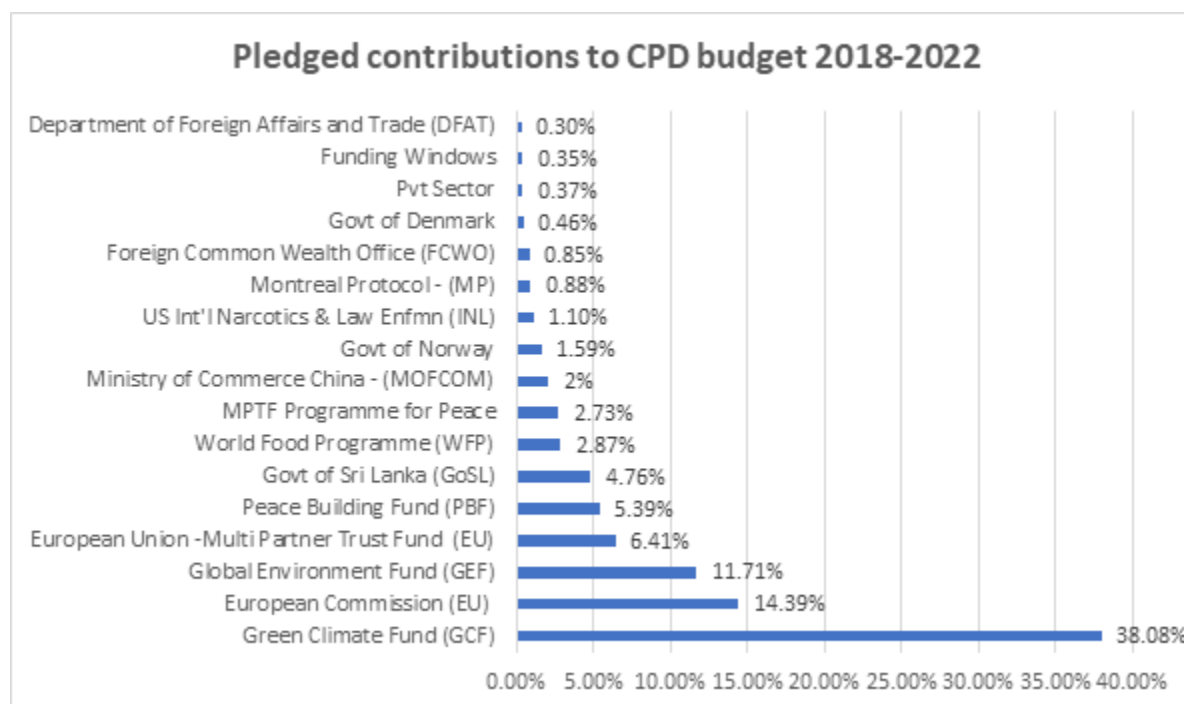
For this purpose, 32 projects have been approved, 9 of which were formulated to support Outcome 1, 17 were designed to support Outcome 2, and 6 were to support Outcome 3. Figure 1 below shows funding by source. Table 1 below provides a financial overview of the CP until 30 April 2021, and Table 2 presents the CP's Theory of Change.

Table 1. 2018-2022 Country Programme Outcomes and Resources (as of 30 April 2021)

One United Nations Plan outcomes and UNDP country programme outputs	2018 - 2022 BUDGETS US\$ (2018-2022)	1 JAN. 2018 - 30 APR. 2021 DELIVERY US\$ (%)
Outcome 1: Sustaining Peace through more Inclusive, Effective and Accountable Governance		
1.1: Select policymaking and oversight structures strengthened to perform core functions for improved accountability and inclusivity;	34,646,864.0	20,259,139.0 (58.5%)
1.2: Marginalized and vulnerable communities have increased and equitable access to justice, including demand- driven legal protection and gender sensitive services;		
1.3: National and subnational level institutions have the capacity to deliver equitable, accountable and effective services		
Outcome 2: Building Resilience through Integrated Climate and Disaster Risk Management		
2.1: Policies and risk management strategies are implemented at national and subnational levels (rural and urban) for enhanced adaptation and resilience to climate change and disaster risk;	55,810,662.0	28,868,850.0 (51.7%)
2.2: Policies, systems and technologies in place to enable people to benefit from sustainable management of natural resources;		
2.3: Low-carbon pathways and green development promoted focusing on renewable energy and blue-green investment;		
2.4: Reliable information systems/capacities established to strengthen accountability, use of evidence-based decision-making, and management of environmental standards		
Outcome 3: Building Data and Knowledge Foundations for Evidence-based Policy Development		
3.1: National and subnational data collection measurement and analytical systems in place to monitor progress on the SDGs;	5,832,230.0	3,922,252.0 (67.3%)
3.2: Evidence-based national development plan(s) informed by sustainable development framework formulated with citizen engagement		
Total:	96,289,756.0	53,050,241.0 (55.1%)

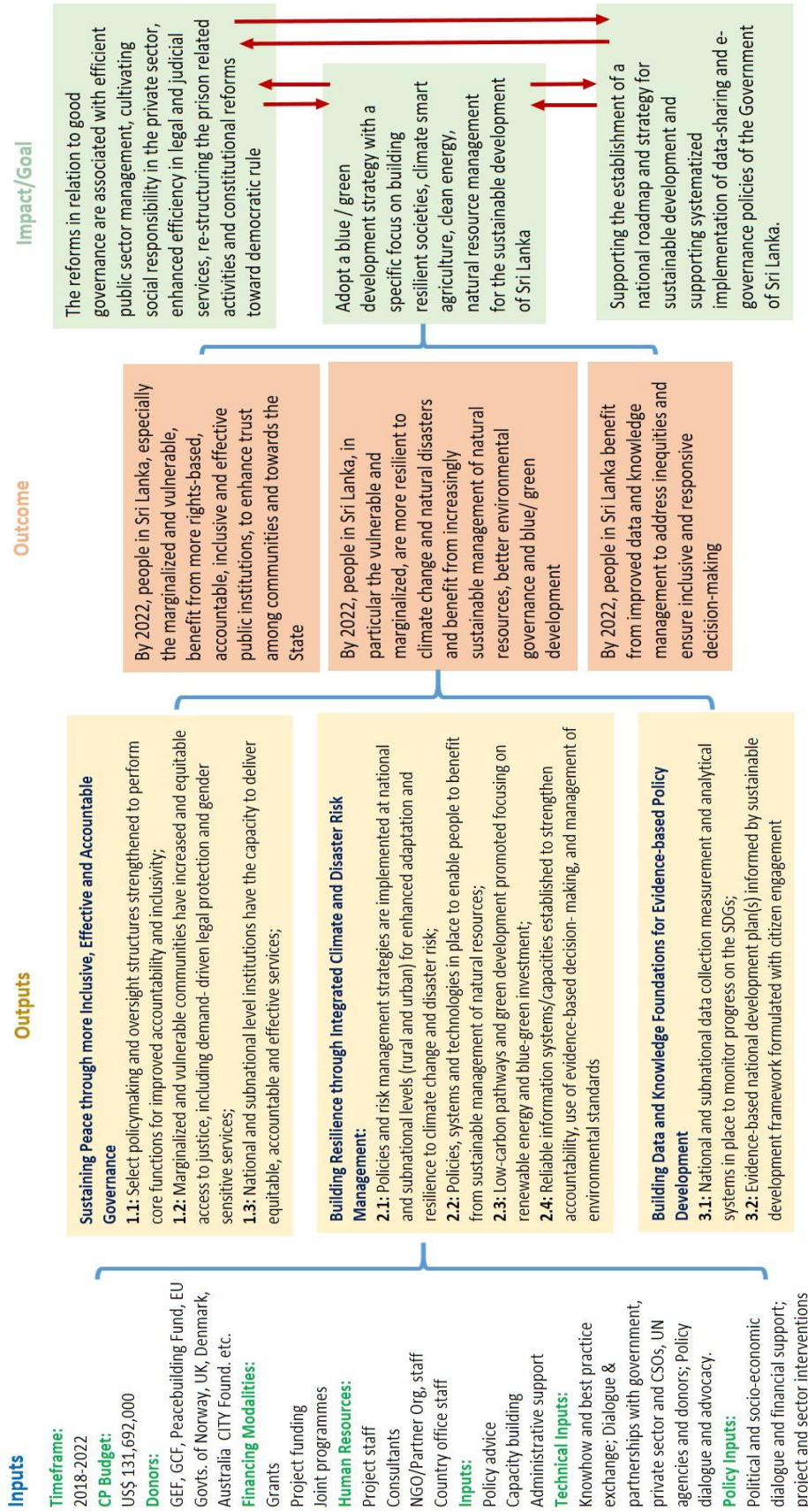
Source: UNDP

**Figure 1. Main Contributors Pledging Financing to the UNDP CP (2018-2022)
(expressed in % of total CP funding)**



Source: UNDP

Theory of Change – Reconstructed Intervention Logic – UNDP Country Programme – Sri Lanka



Source: UNDP

Assumptions

- Intercommunal peace continues to prevail.
- Government priorities related to CP Outcomes remain unchanged.
- Anticipated level of external financing fully materializes.
- Levels of Political, Social and Economic stability remain unchanged.
- Major natural or man-made disasters do not affect project delivery.
- Major changes in counterpart staff that affect project operations and institutional memory do not take place.

CHAPTER 2: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the outcome analysis, an assessment of crosscutting issues and the analysis of the main factors that influenced UNDP performance and contributions to results. The assessment was based on an analysis of the correlation between project results, their contribution to the expected outputs under each outcome and, consequently, to the overall outcome objectives.

2.1 Overall Programme Implementation

Finding 1. Strategic positioning and innovation: UNDP has leveraged its unique strengths in delivering technical expertise, and functioning as a high level convenor within Sri Lanka's sustainable development programming. However, UNDP is yet to reach its full potential in influencing a data-driven national policy agenda.

Previous evaluations and strategic direction setting exercises have identified three unique strengths possessed by UNDP.

Firstly, it has unique and often unparalleled convening power, both with respect to the Government and the non-state sectors. Such convening power enables UNDP to facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration and multi-disciplinary approaches. According to key informants from within the public sector and line ministries, it is also the preferred partner to coordinate the support of UN agencies and development partners to strengthen core functions of key institutions, such as the Ministry of Justice and Parliament. During the CP cycle, UNDP has deployed this convening power to meaningfully engage Government and non-state actors, including civil society and the private sector. For example, such convening power was evident in UNDP's facilitation of stronger interaction between public sector and the private sector under the business and Human Rights initiative.

Secondly, UNDP has unique strengths in policy advocacy and technical advice, which is evident by the fact that it remains the only UN agency to be invited to become a 'member' of the legal reform committees of the Ministry of Justice since 2018. It remains a key player in the provision of technical advisory services to the Government

on policy, law reform, and implementation, in line with international standards and best practices. It is also a recognised player in initiating and facilitating evidence-based national policy formulation through research in a number of areas, including access to justice, prison reform, and gender responsiveness. These unique strengths were, to a large extent, harnessed during the CP cycle to offer high-quality and normatively grounded policy and technical inputs to actors within the public, CSO, and private sectors.

Finally, UNDP has a unique strength in supporting the capacity of development actors at both the national and subnational level. This strength is mainstreamed within the CP with a view to sustainably building the capacity of development actors both within Government and in the non-state sector. For example, according to several key informants working in the local government sector, the Capacity Development for Local Government (CDLG) project has leveraged UNDP's strength at the sub-national level and has enabled mainstreaming and localisation of SDGs.

Despite the transformational events discussed above, the Government has not sought to deviate from commitments to achieving the SDGs. Its National Policy Framework contains a clear commitment to 'integrating the SDGs into [the] development framework', to restructure the cabinet ministries to achieve SDGs by 2030, and to formulate a systematic plan to achieve SDGs. Accordingly, the CP remains relevant in terms of the Government's stated policy agenda.

Within this overarching context, UNDP retains the potential to shape the national sustainable development agenda. Under CP Outcome 1, it has strategically leveraged its unique strengths to influence the Government's policy agenda. For example, it pioneered the development of key policy documents, including the National Legal Aid Policy, and Sentencing Policy, and has succeeded in shaping important policy reforms on victim and witness protection, whistle-blower protection, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and prioritisation of bail applications. UNDP's strengths in convening power and technical expertise aided the Government in contributing towards these reforms.

Under CP Outcome 2, UNDP has, through high-level dialogue, supported the Government to

adopt 'Environmental Sensitive Areas' (ESAs) as a high-level policy instrument to support sustainable natural resource development, including contributing to the national and sector priorities of the country and global commitments, conventions and frameworks. The GCF-supported CRIWMP project contributed to climate change adaptation practices and providing safe drinking water for vulnerable groups in selected regions of the country. The project outputs enhanced multi-partner engagement at national, provincial and local level during its implementation. Through its strong relationship with Government actors involved in the environment, energy, and Disaster Risk Management (DRM), UNDP was instrumental in developing a climate-smart agricultural guideline, setting the standards to the biomass energy supply chain management, waste-to-energy generation efforts, drafting a disaster recovery policy and reviewing the national emergency operation plan of the country to cater to emerging needs.

However, UNDP is yet to reach its full potential in influencing data-driven policy formulation and implementation. Projects reported as pertaining to CP Outcome 3, rather than contributing to data gathering and analysis to support policy development, relate to the promotion of innovation, entrepreneurship, tourism development, and COVID-19 relief.

Finding 2. Building partnerships: UNDP has succeeded in establishing key partnerships, which have brought the organisation wide recognition with Government and the CSO community. However, key partnerships are still to be consolidated, especially with CSOs and IFIs.

Building partnerships is one of the of the key strengths that the UNDP has acquired over the last decade. UNDP's convening power and unique strength as a trusted interlocutor between the public, private, and civil society sectors is evident in the partnerships it has managed to build. The best example of partnerships forged is CITRALAB. CITRALAB has established over 40 partnerships with local governmental institutions, with private sector entities such as CITI group, Dilmah Tea, CISCO, Facebook, and Unilever, with various UN agencies, with local and international academic institutions such as

the University of Colombo and London School of Economics, and with key think tanks on innovation, such as NESTA and the Australian Centre for Social Innovation.

These partnerships have brought about important results. Firstly, small, but not insignificant, amounts of funding have been channelled through UNDP. Secondly, non-financial resources from CSO and academic sources have been leveraged in support of projects, and UNDP's profile, as a source of innovative thinking and a problem-solving partner, has been enhanced both within Government and the CSO community in Sri Lanka.

In terms of CP Outcome 1, partnerships were built with several key institutions within the justice sector, including the Secretary General of Parliament, National Authority on Protection of Victims of Crimes and Witness (NAPVCW), and several line ministries. Partnerships were also established with key independent commissions including the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL), the National Police Commission (NPC), and the Right to Information Commission (RTIC). Unfortunately, some of these partnerships could not be sustained at the same level, due to circumstances beyond UNDP's control. For instance, following the change in Government in 2019/20, and the enactment of the Twentieth Amendment to the Constitution, fresh appointments were made to these commissions, and the independence of the commissions have been called into question. In this context, it was not possible to maintain the same level of engagement with these commissions.

In terms of CP Outcome 2, UNDP was able to attract South-South cooperation to support waste-to-energy (Renewable Energy Technologies) knowledge transfer with the Government of China. Furthermore, the BIOFIN initiative partnered with International Union of Conservation of Nature, Sri Lanka. In addition,, several private sector industries, including MAS holdings, were able to develop partnerships to promote 'Net Zero Carbon' policy to achieve clean energy targets of their individual industries, and to contribute to the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) targets too. Moreover, Tea plantation sector industries established partnerships with UNDP to promote clean energy interventions.

While important partnerships were built during the CP cycle, there is room for improvement in terms of how UNDP integrates CSOs as long-term partners within the design and delivery of various aspects of the CP. Under CP Outcome 1, for instance, civil society inputs have been integrated into some aspects of the SDG16 Portfolio's design. For example, UNDP's internal strategic priority-setting discussions benefited from the input and guidance of external stakeholders including non-state sector experts. Nevertheless, a clearer civil society engagement strategy, as envisaged in the study *Civil Society Engagement Strategy for the UN Country Team Sri Lanka: Inclusive Engagement of Civil Society in SDG Implementation and Monitoring Processes*² should be implemented to ensure that projects continue to be relevant in terms of civil society priorities. Projects often had predetermined parameters set by donors or internal UNDP staff, and could improve in terms of design input from those who worked at a grassroots level. UNDP is occasionally viewed as a 'contracting entity' that is 'contracting' CSOs to carry out certain interventions. Accordingly, UNDP needs to enhance its mechanisms through which it systematically consults civil society actors and integrates their priorities when determining 'what is relevant'.

One major shift in UNDP's partnership strategy needs to be more investment in CSO sustainability. This shift is further justified by the fact that space to work with Government entities and independent commissions on key normative issues has diminished since the political transition of 2019/20. Furthermore, civic space has narrowed, and CSOs have become more vulnerable to reprisals and repression. This overarching context warrants a reconfiguration where greater investment is made towards CSO sustainability, as opposed to focusing purely on sustainability among Government or institutional counterparts. Such reconfiguration would also enable CSOs to see themselves more as invested partners than 'contractors', and better 'own' the projects that they implement.

The Evaluation Team reviewed UNDP's Partnerships and Communications Strategy and Action

Plan (PCAP), as well as the Partner Engagement Plans (PEPs). Despite their best efforts, to date limited progress has been made in establishing partnerships with the IFIs. The Team's interviews carried out with several IFI officials of both the ADB and WB indicate that they do not adequately see UNDP as a partner that can contribute experience, technical, and managerial resources to the achievement of the goals of their programmes. They are not familiar with what has been achieved by partnering with UNDP in other regions. A reading of the CP documentation and a review of the financing of the current CP confirm this conclusion. This issue will be dealt with in further detail in the finding on resource mobilisation.

Finding 3. Resource mobilisation: UNDP has managed to mobilise resources from various international funds, from bilateral and multilateral donors, from Government, and from the private sector. It has designed a resource mobilisation strategy. However, the overheads that proceed from the implementation of related projects is insufficient to cover the non-core costs of the Country Office or to provide a solid base for the organisation to deliver a wider array of services.

The main objective of a resource mobilisation strategy is not to finance the UNDP Country Office operations, but rather to assist the Government to undertake key initiatives. However, this can only be achieved with a strong, well-staffed and financed Country Office presence.

UNDP today is very different from the organisation it was in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, when it relied on very large and predictable core funding. Today, its value is no longer in its capacity to fund projects on its own. Rather, it is on the capacity of the UNDP Country Office to provide the Government and the donor community with technical expertise to identify opportunities for change and innovation, and the design and implementation of technical assistance needs. Critical to the sustainability of the initiatives that

² UNDP, *Mid Term Evaluation and Strategic Direction Setting of UNDP's SDG 16 Portfolio: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions* (2021), 78.

UNDP has supported in the current CP is the capacity to continue to harness resources to support their consolidation.

Today, UNDP in Sri Lanka finds itself in a situation similar to the situation faced by the UNDP Country Offices in Latin America during the 1990s. As core resources were diminishing in that region, 'the cost of doing business' was increasing to the point that some UNDP Country Offices had overheads above 140% of their total delivery. Such an untenable situation would have resulted in either the closure of most Country Offices in the region, or their reduction to a small and meaningless size.

The UNDP CO in Sri Lanka has the advantage of having, at its highest leadership echelon, extensive experience in resource mobilisation at a global level. UNDP has accordingly drafted a document entitled 'Partnership and Communications Strategy Action Plan' (PCAP) which the Evaluation Team reviewed, and 'Partner Engagement Plans' (PEPs) for several key donors.

The PCAP includes a series of proposed areas for future development, among which are several that the Evaluation Team is recommending in this report, for example, strengthening the Department of Census and Statistics, to foster evidence-based policy and decision-making in the public sector, continuing work on promoting a green economy, governance, and justice. This document constitutes a solid start, as it outlines the areas UNDP would like to pursue and identifies possible partners. However, UNDP can strengthen its ability to mobilise resources effectively and sustainably in two respects.

Firstly, the resource mobilisation strategy does not adequately focus on mobilising resources in partnership with IFIs.

UNDP in Sri Lanka can learn from the Latin American experience. UNDP's Latin-American Bureau (RBLAC) partnered with the main IFIs, in order to use the UNDPs managerial expertise to assist governments in the process of managing and disbursing large, loan operations that were substantially behind schedule because of several factors, the most important of which was Government red tape, and legal and regulatory limitations and requirements faced by Government entities.

This strategy, which worked very well in Latin America, would also be beneficial in Sri Lanka if properly adapted to local conditions. UNDP's focus should be on partnering with IFIs. A paper, describing the basics of the RBLAC Strategy for the benefit of those who are unfamiliar with it, can be found in Annex 7.

Secondly, the way resources are mobilised across the CP Outcomes can be better structured. At present, there is an unsustainable strain placed on policy and technical specialists to simultaneously mobilise resources, devise strategies, manage projects, and deliver programmes.

In this context, and in the informed opinion of the Evaluation Team, it is preferable that the resource mobilisation strategy is driven by a dedicated unit that answers to the Resident Representative. Key informants from within the UNDP team and donor organisations expressed strong support for the establishment of such a dedicated unit. It is anticipated that such a unit will produce a high return on investment, as a unit of this nature can help identify funding opportunities in advance, particularly with IFIs, and liaise closely with donors.

The Evaluation Team was informed that the Policy and Engagement Team is expected to drive resource mobilisation with the support of the policy specialists of the Inclusive Governance Team and Climate and Environment Team. Some key informants from the UNDP Country Office observed that the current structure, which was designed and put in place in 2019, can indeed deliver the desired results. If this is the structure that is ultimately maintained, further support in the form of human resources and external consultants with requisite experience in working with IFI may be needed to successfully incorporate IFIs into the current resource mobilisation strategy. This alternative is discussed under Conclusion and Recommendation No. 1.

Finding 4. Efficiency and leadership structure: UNDP has a highly capable and motivated team to achieve the current CP. However, certain aspects of its leadership structure may be improved to ensure it is 'fit for purpose' in terms of

delivering technical expertise and meeting donor requirements.

The overall efficiency of the CP, in terms of delivery, has remained at a satisfactory level. CP Outcome 1 received 36.0 percent of the total CP budget, with a value of US\$ 34.6 million, as of end April 2021. Of this amount, US\$ 20.2 million had been delivered. This figure depicts a delivery rate of 58.5 percent. CP Outcome 2 is the largest area with a budget of US\$ 55.8 million, which represents 58.0 percent of the total CP budget. Delivery through April 2021 was US\$ 28.8 million, which depicts a delivery rate of 51.7 percent. Finally, CP Outcome 3 has budgets for US\$ 5.8 million, of which US\$ 3.9 million has been delivered, as of end April 2021. This gives a delivery rate of 67.3%. However, as projects under this outcome account for only 6.1 percent of the total CP Budget, their effect on the efficiency of the CP's execution is minimal. **Out of an overall CP budget of US\$ 96.2 million, US\$ 53.0 million was delivered, as of April 2021, which amounts to 55.1 percent.**

In terms of value for money, good use is being made of national expertise to support the CP through both in the use of paid national consultants, and in securing free expertise from CSO sources. This is a practice that should be expanded, where possible. The standard UNDP financial monitoring controls are being applied effectively with regard to all projects contained in the CP.

Taking into consideration the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the delivery rate is more than satisfactory, which the Team attributes to the capable and motivated staff within the UNDP Country Office. Yet there is some room for improvement, in terms of the leadership structures within the respective programmatic teams.

The primary aim of a particular structure should be to maximise UNDP's ability to leverage its unique strengths and to minimise duplication and inefficiencies. For example, as discussed below, the governance landscape in Sri Lanka has evolved considerably since the change of Government in 2019/20, and UNDP's continued ability to provide technical expertise and influence policy depends heavily on an immersive and constant engagement strategy. Key informants from among UNDP's technical specialists suggested

that they lacked the time to adequately engage implementing partners, including Government counterparts because of their current administrative workload. UNDP's Inclusive Governance Team may, therefore, benefit from a strategy of having policy and technical specialists, who can invest more time in strategic thinking and engagement both with Government and civil society counterparts.

The current structure of the Inclusive Governance Team should, in theory, ensure time and space for technical staff to focus on strategizing and engagement. The role of the Portfolio Manager is, in essence, designed to provide this space. However, in practice, there appears to be some overlap between this role, the role of the Programme and Quality Analyst, and the overall leadership role of the Team Leader. It may be useful to revisit the division of labour between these three roles to ensure greater coherence, so that eventually, technical specialists are not overburdened with administrative functions. While some managerial expectations may be placed on technical staff, it is important to more clearly bifurcate managerial and technical functions in practice so that technical specialists can concentrate on delivering technical expertise within a challenging governance environment, and leverage UNDP's unique strengths.

Meanwhile, it was also observed that the objective of maintaining a firewall between leadership roles in programme delivery and quality assurance is not always achieved under the existing structure of the Climate and Environmental Team. In fact, some projects, including the GEF-funded projects, have a donor requirement for leadership roles, in terms of programme delivery and quality assurance, to be clearly separated. As a result, the Climate and Environment Team has also encountered some challenges in terms of satisfying donor requirements in this regard and has had to devise short-term solutions to bifurcate programme delivery and quality assurance. For example, it was explained that the leadership role of 'Integrated Services Team Leader' would be positioned as a short-term solution to this challenge.

Both the Inclusive Governance Team and the Climate and Environment Team are of the view that some adjustments to the working arrangements

of the teams could be considered to maximise efficiency and meet donor requirements.

Finding 5. Monitoring and evaluation: UNDP has dedicated resources to conduct monitoring and evaluation across the CP Outcomes. However, there are gaps in the coherence of indicators and assumptions, and the use of standardised tools to properly monitor CP initiatives.

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the CP and its component projects is a task normally shared by UNDP and the Government. In evaluating the current CP, the Evaluation Team assessed the way this crucial task is being carried out.

Of the 32 projects that make up the current CP, fourteen have had either mid or term reviews of final project evaluations. Similarly, certain programmes and initiatives, such as the SDG16 Portfolio and the CITRALAB initiative have also been subject to evaluation.

UNDP has a Unit that is charged with overseeing the M&E function. Most projects under CP Outcomes 1 and 2 of the CP, when designed, included an M&E framework that sets out the expected outcomes and outputs, each containing baseline and target indicators.

Under CP Outcome 1, the M&E function has taken place in a satisfactory manner, primarily because UNDP is responsible for data gathering directly, and is not reliant on Government data and assumptions. However, some indicators of success lack precision and coherence. In some cases, the metrics used to measure progress were based on perceptions that later, the interviewees could not explain in detail.

An example relating to CP Outcome 1 interventions on independent commissions clearly illustrates this problem. The empirical basis for the rating scale that 1 = very weak, 2 = weak, 3 = moderate, 4 = strong, and 5 = very strong, respectively, remains unclear. Moreover, the qualitative baseline data that places the HRCSL at 2 (weak), the NPC at 2 (weak), and the RTIC at 'not fully operational', respectively, remains unclear. This lack of clarity makes the achievement of the envisaged target by 2022, that is, HRCSL at 3 (moderate), NPC at 3 (moderate), and RTIC at 4

(strong) difficult to gauge. According to UNDP's results monitoring framework, as of 2020, the HRCSL and NPC were at level 3 (moderate) and the RTIC was at level 2 (weak). This qualitative opinion was notionally supported by key informants from each institution, although they too expressed doubts about the precise nature of the measurement.

M&E gaps are also evident in CP Outcome 2. For most of the NIM projects under Outcome 2, monitoring and reporting are carried out by respective line ministries, and UNDP staff rely on Government reporting on project tasks. DIM projects under Outcome 2 rely on UNDP staff and National Steering Committees established for the programme. For example, SGP OP6 is governed by the National Steering Committee (NSC) and the members of the NSC conduct voluntary monitoring missions to the project sites. It was noted that monitoring activities are conducted with the Government and key stakeholders to follow-up on progress and record feedback from stakeholders on CP Outcome 2 intervention. However, for many other projects that started during this cycle, monitoring has been uneven, mostly because the COVID-19 outbreak has restricted movement to the field sites to meet beneficiaries. All NIM projects have NSC and Project Board meeting progress reports and minutes, annual progress reports and back-to-office reports. However, most of these reports are output-based, and do not fully assess progress towards individual project outcome. This point was addressed during project MTRs and TEs.

Since most of the output targets and related indicators under Outcome 2 rely on Government information, the contributions of individual UNDP interventions to the national level outcome cannot be ascertained easily, and the assumptions behind some indicators, such as Greenhouse Gases (GHG) emission, are hard to measure. The same is true for Outcome-level results and indicators. Reporting of contributions to Outcome 2 targets heavily relied on Government statistics and assumptions about the number of beneficiaries, based on population statistics of the project implementation or coverage. The tracking of changes to policy development is even more challenging, as this requires noting that 'policies/plans and strategies are in place'.

Their effectiveness, sustainability, and probable impact are not easy to evaluate, and the impacts of policy changes for CCA and DRR are not adequately documented for this evaluation cycle. Moreover, the number of actual beneficiaries from UNDP project contributions to CCA, DRM and sustainable natural resource management is not easy to assess, and the monitoring data and information are fragmented.

In the case of CP Outcome 3, because of the very nature of these activities, most projects did not have M&E frameworks. UNDP carried out some field monitoring visits and registered their findings in Back-to-Office reports. Project progress reports were available, although their periodicity and format varied substantially, and conformed mainly to the formats required by the funding sources. This variance makes aggregation of data and the establishment of a comprehensive M&E data base difficult.

While recognising that UNDP has established some mechanisms, such as the Engagement Facility that allows its UNDP Country Offices to spend resources without the support of a Project Document (PD) or an M&E framework, the minimum amount of time invested in drafting a simple PD, containing (1) a pre-printed formatted cover page, (2) a paragraph providing the reasoning behind the initiative, (3) an Outcome and expected output(s), and (4) a simplified M&E framework with indicators, should not constitute a major additional burden. It would certainly ensure better monitoring of the initiative. In fact, this is a practice which existed in UNDP in the past, under the title Preparatory Assistance Document, now termed PIP.

Finding 6. Gender: UNDP has made a notable contribution towards gender equality and responsiveness through its current CP. This work has been recognised by the Country Office being awarded the Silver Gender Seal. However, there is room for improvement in terms of the ways in which gender contributions are measured through disaggregated budget analyses.

Gender and the empowerment of women remains one of the key crosscutting themes within

the CP. UNDP provides considerable priority to this theme within programming and internal policy, and a Gender Specialist has been appointed to lead gender mainstreaming within the Country Office. A key achievement during the CP period was the Country Office's participation in the Gender Seal Certification process in 2018 as a measure to 'strengthen, inspire and support integration of gender equality at all levels of work'.³ The Country Office achieved a SILVER level certification based on the final score of 81%, fulfilling 34 out of 42 benchmarks.

Progress has been made towards meeting gender responsiveness targets within CP Outcome 1. Several highlights are worth mentioning. Key informants noted that institutional actors within independent commissions initially lacked gender sensitivity, and some progress was achieved in this respect through gender responsiveness training supported by UNDP. For example, the staff and commissioners of the NPC were provided gender training which, according to a former commissioner, produced a positive attitudinal change with respect to gender equality. A positive indicator of such attitudinal shifts is the NPC's approval of the appointments of eight women Superintendents of Police, eight women Senior Superintendents, and a woman Deputy Inspector General of Police. These appointments are entirely unprecedented, when compared with previous records of women representation in the Police. Another highlight was UNDP's agility in terms of meeting new needs in the realm of SGBV during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The ability for victims to receive adequate services and care was severely hampered during the country-wide lockdowns. However, UNDP was able to support the establishment of new shelters, and the functioning of existing ones to service victims during the Pandemic. Moreover, significant progress was made in relation to ensuring the economic empowerment of women-headed households within internally displaced or recently resettled communities. Such work has also provided a sound platform to address SGBV within these communities.

In terms of future priorities, UNDP could prioritise support for CSOs that provide essential services for SGBV victims. UNDP remains a crucial

³ UNDP Sri Lanka, *Gender Equality Seal Report Card* (2020).

interlocutor in this respect and may be well positioned to convince donors about the importance of supporting such services in the absence of sustained investment by the state. Such a need arises because Sri Lanka has graduated to a lower middle-income status and donors have withdrawn from supporting services such as victim shelters, in anticipation that these services can be financed by the State. Furthermore, more interventions are needed to address core gender inequality gaps in Sri Lanka, including electoral representation and labour force participation. UNDP is well-positioned to drive policy reform in these areas, and support advocacy organisations that champion reform.

Interventions under CP Outcome 2 have also addressed gender priorities. They have, for instance, created opportunities to help women address environmental and climate change issues that disproportionately affect them. This prioritisation is evident in interventions that engage with CCA, natural resource management and biodiversity conservation, more so than in disaster risk reduction and energy sector interventions. In reported cases, gender-sensitive solutions for CCA have been promoted through entrepreneurship training and capacity development of local women on CCA and natural resource management. However, the nature of this engagement is not adequately documented. The documentation focuses on capacity-building activities, rather than on ways that women and marginalised groups used their engagement with projects and capacity-building interventions to change their role and wellbeing on the ground.

The CCAP I & II, CRIWMP, ESA and SGP interventions have targeted women, who made up the majority of project beneficiaries. In most of these interventions, UNDP has been consistent in promoting the role of women in formulating and implementing policies, such as the National Policy on Non-protected Land Areas, which was developed as a gender-responsive policy under the SGP intervention. This intervention focused on engaging women in promoting behavioural change, with respect to sustainable economic activities.

Under the projects and initiatives reported as relevant to CP Outcome 3, several activities and

outputs were also specifically designed and executed to support the needs of women. Similarly, important partnerships have been established with key Sri Lankan and foreign institutions.

An example of such integration of gender is the Strategic Support to Post-COVID Tourism Revival and Transformation project. In preparation for this, a rapid assessment survey was implemented. This survey found that among those who lost their jobs, a higher percentage (67 percent) were women, and more women than men were asked to stay home. Labour shortages in the sector may worsen, because of health and safety concerns. With many young people and women in informal work in the sector, they are likely to be hit hardest.

Most of the projects under the current CP are now 'Gen2', which is a gender rating that reflects adequate gender responsiveness – with some room for improvement. Although gender was not adequately reflected as a priority at the design stage of the CP, it was eventually integrated during various stages of the evolution of the CP. Project documentation is now vetted to ensure that gender is factored into programming. Therefore, gender is being mainstreamed better, primarily due to the work of UNDP's Gender Specialist.

However, the process through which spending is currently evaluated can be improved. At present, the overall gender rating of a project is the only indicator of gender spending. For example, if a project is rated 'Gen2', the entire budget for that project is considered to fall within 'Gen2' spending. This type of assessment is useful to ensuring that projects integrate gender into all their components, rather than compartmentalise interventions. Yet it would be also necessary to disaggregate budgetary allocations to assess how much resources are in reality allocated for gender components. For example, project X with a budget of LKR 1 million may be rated 'Gen2', and therefore the entire budget can be rated 'Gen2'. Yet this figure does not offer visibility in terms of the percentage of that budget that might directly link to key gender issues, such as SGBV, or women's economic empowerment. It would also be useful to monitor the percentage of the budget that is actually allocated for such work.

Finding 7. Youth: UNDP has contributed towards youth-centred social cohesion, youth-related policies, and youth self-employment through entrepreneurship. However, there is room for improvement in terms of beneficiary selection within some youth-related interventions. Moreover, the long-term impact of certain initiatives is yet to be fully measured.

UNDP has made important contributions in the domain of youth engagement and empowerment. For example, under its social cohesion work within CP Outcome 1, it implements a project on youth engagement with a particular focus on creating economic opportunities and engaging youth through the media. It also implements a project on cohesive communities by focusing on youth engagement, in partnership with the Sri Lanka Federation of Youth Clubs, the National Youth Services Council, and the Youth Parliament. Moreover, with the support of the World Health Organisation, it has explored youth participation in health-related activities to facilitate cooperation and diversity among young persons.

Under Outcome 2, Youth engagement was prioritised under the CRIWMP, CCAP, ESA and SGP interventions. Moreover, UNDP promoted youth entrepreneurship within the SME sector, although the impact on such livelihood development was not easy to assess during the evaluation.

Under CP Outcome 3, the HackaDev programme was designed specifically to promote leadership innovation and entrepreneurship among the country's youth. This programme has introduced basic entrepreneurial and innovation tools, and over 18,000 young people have, through the HackaDev Programme, received some training in this respect. The cumulative female participation rate has gradually increased over the years and stands at 44% as of March 2021. The programme has also piloted a few initiatives targeting vulnerable youth groups, such as young persons with disabilities, young women in the estate sector and youth in conflict with the law. About 84 teams have received seed funding to expand their ideas through a business incubation process. Moreover, Citra Lab continues to work with

the Ministry of Youth Affairs to build a more integrated youth development framework for the country. The support provided included a concept on developing a comprehensive SDG data portal on youth with a view to placing, at the Government's disposal, a database that can be used to set policy, regarding services required by young people. This database is to be compatible with the overall database designed for SDG monitoring.

UNDP initiatives have the potential to produce a lasting impact in terms of youth empowerment in the country. However, many of these programmes lack the capacity to reach marginalised youth, for example, those who are most at risk of gravitating towards militant groups that promote violent extremism.⁴ Many of the existing programmes target youth, who are like-minded and already willing to subscribe to values of co-existence.

Moreover, the overall impact in terms of youth empowerment through interventions under CP Outcome 3 is yet to be fully measured. While it is creditable that many young entrepreneurs were supported to initiate their business ideas, it remains unclear as to how this support has tangibly translated into their long-term empowerment.

Finding 8. Human rights: UNDP is aware of and has prioritised Human Rights within the design and implementation of the CP. However, UNDP is yet to manage the risk of Human Rights becoming subordinated to other Governmental aims. Moreover, there is room for improvement in terms of the way the CP integrates the rights of persons with disabilities.

UNDP has recognised its normative commitment to ensuring that a Human Rights-based approach to development is adopted throughout its programming. This priority is certainly evident in the way projects are conceived and implemented under CP Outcome 1 concerning openness of Parliament, language, access to justice, local governance, resettlement, and social cohesion.

⁴ Also see Marga Institute, *Social Cohesion and the Prevention of Violent Extremism in Sri Lanka Law, Policy, Institutions, and Interventions* (UNDP 2021), 49. The study was

commissioned by UNDP, and was based on key informant interviews with stakeholders working on social cohesion.

There is little doubt that rights underlie the overall aims of these projects. However, there is room for improvement in the way UNDP manages the risk of Human Rights de-prioritisation.

As noted in Section 1.3 above, there is a distinct shift from ‘peace and reconciliation’ to ‘development’, and ‘rights’ to ‘security’ within the current Government’s policy agenda. Accordingly, the vocabulary of ‘rights’ is often avoided within UNDP programming, particularly when engaging with current Government institutions, in anticipation that it would elicit a negative response from these Government counterparts.

In certain instances, a pragmatic rebranding of interventions to align with Government terminology, such as ‘development’ or ‘efficiency’, may be necessary to maintain channels of engagement and continuity in programming. However, it is crucial that UNDP remains an influential actor in shaping the government’s vocabulary, and ensuring that it is reminded of its normative commitment under Sri Lanka’s Constitution, and under the Human Rights treaties that Sri Lanka has ratified.

Therefore, programmatic pragmatism must be balanced with normative commitment to ensure that rights do not become an afterthought within UNDP’s projects.

For example, it would not be too contentious to frame openness of Parliament in terms of people’s electoral rights, or to frame access to justice in terms of the right to a remedy, or to brand CCA in terms of environmental rights. It is important that interventions are framed in terms of rights, so that the vocabulary of rights remains current and top of mind among Government actors.

Under Outcome 2, interventions such as ESA, CRIWMP, SGP, and CCAP did focus on PWDs to some extent. The M&E framework with respect to these interventions clearly identified PWDs as a target group and conducted interventions to integrate PWDs within the overall project implementation cycle. Moreover, energy sector training programmes included PWDs as beneficiaries. However, it remains unclear as to how these interventions changed behaviour within the energy sector to better integrate the interests of PWDs.

The mainstreaming of disability rights needs to be further prioritised within the CP. PWDs remain one of the key crosscutting identity groups contemplated under the CP. Some important progress has been achieved in terms of access to justice. For example, UNDP provided advice to, and supported the process, that led to cabinet approval for a draft amendment to legislation on victim and witness protection, to prioritise disability inclusion. It also supported the Ministry of Justice on a disability-inclusion strategy for the justice sector. However, interventions across other CP Outcomes, including on social cohesion, and data innovation, are not consistently designed to specifically benefit PWDs.

In this context, more can be done to bring this group into sharper focus. For example, improving PWDs’ access to local authorities may be important additions to the programmatic components on access to justice and service delivery. Moreover, programmatic components on language rights and access to data ought to expand, to include policy reform on the inclusion of sign language and braille. Accordingly, there is room for improvement in terms of mainstreaming the rights of PWDs within the CP.

Finding 9. COVID-19 response and recovery: UNDP adapted well to the COVID-19 Pandemic and contributed significantly to Sri Lanka’s efforts towards responding to the Pandemic, and to the recovery process. However, some key opportunities to influence policy have been missed.

The COVID-19 Pandemic impacted Sri Lanka, and caused major economic, social, and cultural disruption. Naturally, COVID-19 hampered the implementation of projects under the CP. For instance, it impacted work relating to Parliament, due to the long suspension of parliamentary activity. COVID-19 also hampered access to justice and the functioning of statutory bodies and local authorities. Court hearings were suspended, and the delivery of basic services were impeded during this time. Meanwhile, new challenges with respect to social cohesion emerged. For instance, a policy of mandatory cremations was introduced to regulate the disposal of bodies of those suspected to have died of COVID-19. This policy had a discriminatory impact on the Mus-

lim community, as the community practiced burials and considered cremation contrary to Islamic teaching. Following several months of tensions and critical discourse and international attention, the policy was eventually reversed.

Within this challenging context, UNDP's contribution to the COVID-19 response and recovery process in Sri Lanka was notable.

UNDP was able to decisively respond to the new context by infusing flexibility into programming to meet emerging challenges. In fact, UNDP was described as 'proactive' in identifying key areas that needed support in the context of the Pandemic.

In the realm of access to justice and related services, UNDP supported the maintenance of safe houses during the Pandemic to ensure that victims of SGBV continued to access protection. It also supported the provision of psycho-social assistance and emergency COVID-19 response kits to SGBV victims.

The support provided to justice sector institutions to operate remotely during the COVID-19 Pandemic remains one of UNDP's most significant successes under its access to justice project. The equipment and technical knowledge transfer offered by UNDP to a host of institutional actors, including high courts, prisons, and legal aid officers, have enabled these actors to provide crucial services to litigants during the Pandemic. For instance, the capacity of high courts to hear bail applications was generated through such support. Key informants observed that this impact is unlikely to be sustained, even after the Pandemic, as many court officers, prison officials, and lawyers are not equipped with the necessary hardware and knowledge to offer remote services. The ability of litigants – especially vulnerable groups, such as victims of SGBV and prisoners – to access justice through remote means was enhanced because of these interventions.

UNDP's work under the CDLG project also responded to the Pandemic. For example, COVID-19 was the main thematic focus of its support for drafting generic By-laws for local authorities. The principal aim of this initiative was to equip local authorities to better regulate public spaces in the context of COVID-19, and to develop ave-

nues of income-generation to ensure greater financial sustainability. Meanwhile, equipment and technological support were offered to local authorities to enable them to function remotely during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

It was noted by key informants that significant credibility was generated as a direct result of UNDP's COVID-19 related support, and that such credibility strengthened trust and working relationships between UNDP and implementing partners.

CP Outcome 2 interventions contributed to COVID-19 response and recovery by expanding their interventions at the local level to support the affected communities. Project interventions, such as SGP CSO projects, were expanded to support women and youth by diversification of livelihood sources, while the CRIWMP project expanded its home garden project to support more women beneficiaries. Moreover, the issue of Health Care Waste Management (HCWM) heightened, as a result of COVID-19, with an increase in the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other protective measures taken to contain the spread of the virus. While UNDP did contribute towards addressing this problem, a scale-up plan is still required to ensure the overall sustainability of such small, but effective interventions in future, at the Regional Director of Health Services (RDHS) level.

Despite this significant contribution, UNDP appears to have missed some opportunities to leverage its technical expertise in shaping law and policy during the COVID-19 Pandemic. There was no evidence of legal and policy advocacy with respect to drafting new laws and policies to meet the challenges produced by the Pandemic. In fact, archaic quarantine laws from the nineteenth century continue to be applied in Sri Lanka to restrict movement and regulate public spaces. A private member's bill on Public Health Emergency was tabled in Parliament but it is yet to be taken up for debate.

UNDP could have played a more proactive role in engaging government actors on international best practices, and providing inputs on comparative experiences elsewhere to shape policy in response to the Pandemic.

Finding 10. Communications Strategy: A strategy document was provided to the Evaluation Team showing ample evidence of a deliberate and well-mounted communications campaign in support of the implementation of the CP.

UNDP's communication strategy clearly identifies target groups, the messages to be conveyed, and the purpose of the messages. The key messages were:

1. UNDP is the lead development agency within the United Nations.
2. UNDP is a trusted key development partner for Sri Lanka's development.
3. In Sri Lanka, UNDP works to strengthen governance structures and capacities, and provide an enabling environment for access to opportunities, focusing on the most vulnerable and excluded population groups, in ways that are sustainable from an economic, social and environmental standpoint.
4. UNDP has been working as a key development partner of choice in Sri Lanka since 1967 to achieve sustainable human development on the economic, social and environmental fronts, and UNDP works closely with the Government at the national, regional and local levels, as well as civil society and the private sector.
5. UNDP aims to eradicate extreme poverty and reduce inequalities and exclusion to protect both people and the planet.
6. UNDP promotes gender equality, equal opportunities, and works towards empowering women to make decisions and have full access to their rights in both public and private spheres.

2.2 Inclusive Governance

CP Outcome 1: By 2022, people in Sri Lanka, especially the marginalised and vulnerable, benefit from more rights-based, accountable, inclusive and effective public institutions, to enhance trust among communities and towards the State.

⁵ Government of Sri Lanka, *National Policy Framework: Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour 2020-2025* (2020), 1.

CP Outcome 1 is on **Sustaining Peace through more Inclusive, Effective and Accountable Governance**. This Outcome is organised as a programme 'Portfolio' with three components. The first is titled 'Parliament and Independent Commissions', the second is titled 'Rule of Law and Access to Justice', and the final component is titled 'Public Sector and Local Governance'. The Portfolio approach is centred on the achievement of SDG 16 – on peace, justice and strong institutions. Therefore, it is called the 'SDG16 Flagship Portfolio'.

Finding 11. Changes in the governance landscape: UNDP has responded well to transformational shifts that have impacted governance programming Sri Lanka. However, the recalibration of the SDG16 Portfolio is still quite new and is yet to be fully operationalised to enable UNDP to reach its potential in both aligning to and influencing policy.

The Government's priorities at the inception of the current CPD in 2018 have shifted in many respects, since the political transition of 2019/20. Four shifts are worth noting. Firstly, the previous administration's focus on rights, exemplified by Sri Lanka's co-sponsorship of several Human Rights Council resolutions on reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka, has shifted towards security.⁵ The current National Policy Framework states that the Government shall give 'first priority' to ensuring national security. Secondly, the previous focus on peace, reconciliation, and transitional justice has now shifted towards economic development. Thirdly, a previous focus on institutional independence and accountability has shifted towards institutional efficiency. Finally, the previous focus on de-politicisation, exemplified by the Nineteenth Amendment, has now shifted towards further concentration of power in the Executive President through the Twentieth Amendment. These shifts necessitated a certain level of adaptability in programming within CP Outcome 1 for it to remain relevant to the prevailing policy agenda.

In 2021, the SDG16 Portfolio was recalibrated in accordance with these transformational shifts.

Accordingly, the SDG16 Portfolio has been organised under four new components: (1) Voice and Representation; (2) Rights and Justice; (3) Strong and Efficient Institutions; and (4) Social Cohesion.

These new components ensure the continuation of previous work envisaged under the Portfolio, but infuse an anticipatory approach to governance programming. Several important changes have been introduced to ensure CP Outcome 1 remains relevant.

Firstly, the current Government's focus on efficiency has been identified as an entry point for continued work on institutional capacity building, and the strengthening of systems and processes. Therefore, the work on independent commissions and sub-national units of government has been located under the 'Strong and Efficient Institutions' component. Capacity development of key institutions remains relevant in terms of the current Government's policy agenda, particularly when framed as an initiative to enhance the efficiency of these institutions.

Secondly, in response to the shift in the Government's priorities from peace and reconciliation to development, UNDP has recalibrated its SDG16 Portfolio to focus on social cohesion and inclusive development. Its work on PVE, hate speech, resettlement, early warning, gender for peace, and youth for peace have now been located under a new component titled 'Social Cohesion'. This component seeks to advance inclusive sustainable development, whereby some of the major push and pull factors relating to conflict and violent extremism can be proactively addressed in line with the UN Secretary General's Prevention Agenda.

Despite the positive aspects of the Portfolio's recalibration, UNDP is yet to reach its full potential in terms of *influencing* Government policies on governance. UNDP has indeed contributed to key reform initiatives, such as the vetting of discriminatory laws, and providing technical expertise to legislative drafting committees. It was also confirmed by key informants that UNDP has worked through the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) to positively influence more contentious legal and policy reforms (for example, constitutional reforms), rather than directly engage the Government.

Further strengthening the working relationship with the Ministry of Justice could offer more opportunities for UNDP to shape the Ministry's normative compliance when implementing its reform agenda. Even where substantive input is not possible or is strategically inadvisable, UNDP may still be well-positioned to encourage the Ministry to adopt a more consultative drafting process, whereby key actors within civil society and academia (and the public at large) are meaningfully consulted on contentious laws and policies.

Finding 12. Sustainability of impact: The impact of UNDP's work under CP Outcome 1 is significant across the various components of the Outcome area. However, the sustainability of the impact of certain components remains in doubt, often because of circumstances beyond UNDP's control.

Several notable achievements of UNDP's work under CP Outcome 1 are worth noting.

Firstly, UNDP has contributed towards the achievement of the aim of strengthening select policymaking and oversight structures to perform core functions for improved accountability and inclusivity.

UNDP's support has enhanced parliament's openness to the public. In particular, Parliamentary proceedings, including the proceedings of parliamentary committees, are now more easily accessed by the public. It was noted that this shift is primarily due to UNDP's support on Parliament's communication strategy and the revamping of Parliament's website. Parliament, which was once a very 'closed' institution, is a more 'open' institution, as a direct result of UNDP's interventions.

Secondly, UNDP's support for independent commissions has seen a positive impact in some respects. For example, case backlogs in the HRCSL and RTIC were effectively managed as a direct result of UNDP's support through embedding volunteers and consultants. The impact of such support was significant, as case backlogs often had a debilitating effect on a commission's ability to fulfil its mandate. Moreover, the gender study completed in collaboration with the NPC, and the gender training offered to the NPC, have had

a notable impact on the sector. Such interventions have created an enabling environment in which the recruitment of women Police Officers to senior level positions has taken place.

Thirdly, UNDP has contributed towards ensuring that marginalised and vulnerable communities have increased and equitable access to justice. This impact also extended to ensuring demand-driven legal protection, and gender sensitive services. The support offered to the NAPVCW has been crucial to raising awareness, with respect to its work. For example, the compensation fund set up under the NAPVCW is now regularly accessed by victims of crimes (including SGBV victims) and witnesses. Moreover, awareness with respect to the fund was generated through UNDP's support.

Fourthly, UNDP has contributed towards building the capacity of subnational level institutions to deliver equitable, accountable and effective services. UNDP's work on local governance, through the CDLG project, has notable impact in this regard. Key informants consistently complimented the quality and reach of training programmes offered through UNDP's support. Moreover, the development of By-laws for local authorities is likely to have a lasting positive impact, in terms of the ability of local authorities to regulate public spaces and generate revenue.

Finally, the work on social cohesion has seen a notable impact in developing the capacity of CSO partners to administer social media monitoring and engage in counter-messaging to respond to hate speech and violent extremist discourse. The investment made in fledgling organisations, such as Hashtag Generation remains one of the major successes of this work. Hashtag Generation has grown from a small, essentially volunteer organisation to an effective CSO within the space of three years, largely due to the core support it received from resources channelled through UNDP. This successful approach is worth replicating.

Despite such a significant impact during the CP cycle, the sustainability of the impact of certain aspects of UNDP's work is impeded because of various intervening circumstances. Political transitions, major constitutional changes, and policy fluctuations have impeded such sustainability.

For example, the important work done to support the OMP and to advance transitional justice in Sri Lanka produced a positive impact in 2018 and the first half of 2019. The OMP was beginning to achieve tangible results in the realm of processing complaints, conducting research, formulating policy, and delivering tangible services, such as facilitating the issuance of certificates of absence to relatives of the missing. An important database of missing persons remains on the OMP's website, which was created with UNDP's support. Yet with the change of government, Sri Lanka's withdrawal from its co-sponsorship of Human Rights Council Resolution 30/1, and the appointment of new members to the OMP, it is highly improbable that the impact of the interventions completed thus far can be sustained.

Moreover, the impact of UNDP's support for Parliament's sectoral oversight committees was somewhat impeded because of the complete overhaul of the sectoral oversight committee system following the political transition of 2019/20. However, it was observed that some of the competences developed during the support provided to sectoral oversight committees were transmitted to the new ministerial consultative committee system under the new Parliament. For example, the core competencies of parliamentary support staff to convene, conduct research, and document decisions in committees have essentially remained even after the transition.

The introduction of the Twentieth Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution has, meanwhile, stymied the impact of UNDP's support to independent commissions. According to key informants, the impact of work done with respect to building the legitimacy of these institutions is now at risk of being undone because of the culmination of the previous Commissioner's term of office, and the politicised appointments of new commissioners. For instance, according to two former members of the HRCSL, the HRCSL would almost certainly lose its 'A Status' at its next evaluation, owing to the politicisation of new appointments.

The unsustainability of the impact of certain interventions has shaped UNDP's decision to strategically deprioritise certain previous interven-

tions as part of its recalibration exercise. The decision to discontinue support for the OMP, and downscale support for independent commissions reflects such de-prioritisation.

Finding 13. Protection issues: UNDP pays special attention to the protection needs of its partners, when designing and implementing programmes. However, there is room for improvement in terms of factoring in the risks associated with partnering with security-oriented institutions.

CP Outcome 1 includes highly sensitive components concerning social cohesion and PVE. Key informants noted that increased surveillance and crackdowns on dissent have made civil society actors who engage in Human Rights work generally, and social cohesion, PVE, and peace-building activities specifically, more vulnerable. According to one key informant, the very terminology of ‘prevention of violent extremism’ attracts the attention of the security establishment, and could place CSO partners at risk. There are also studies (that UNDP has access to) that note very clearly that ‘PVE’ in Sri Lanka is strongly associated with ‘counter-terrorism’, and ‘the particular approach of the [government] that is associated with more traditional military [counter-terrorism] operations’.⁶

In this context, UNDP has given special consideration to the security of Human Rights defenders it regularly engages with. UNDP is conscious of protection-related challenges. It is also aware of its normative commitments, and has already strategically withdrawn from certain initiatives, such as supporting a national action plan on PVE.

However, UNDP may need to further revisit its overall strategy on social cohesion to prioritise rights considerations (particularly that of minorities), and to avoid partnering with security-oriented institutions.

For example, reservations were expressed about engaging the Kotelawala Defence University as a key implementing partner in developing a curriculum on non-violent communication, as that may entail working with actors within the broader security establishment. There is little evidence to

suggest that the security establishment’s approach to PVE prioritises rights. Instead, key informants suggested that a ‘law enforcement’ or a ‘security-oriented’ approach is often adopted. In practice, this approach tends to target minority voices and opponents of the State, rather than violent extremist groups. Such an approach is not only problematic, but also counterproductive, considering that marginalisation and discrimination are major factors related to violent extremism.

2.3 Energy, Environment & Climate Change Adaptation

CP Outcome 2: By 2022, people in Sri Lanka, in particular the vulnerable and marginalised, are more resilient to climate change and natural disasters and benefit from increasingly sustainable management of natural resources, better environmental governance and blue / green development.

CP Outcome 2 is on **Building Resilience through Integrated Climate and Disaster Risk Management**. This Outcome is organised as a ‘portfolio’ with three major areas of interest. The first is ‘Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management’, the second is ‘Natural Resource Management’, and the third is ‘Climate Mitigation, low carbon development, GHG Reduction and renewable energy’ and the ‘use of information for evidence-based decision-making, and the monitoring of environmental standards’ as a cross-cutting theme. The Portfolio approach is mainly focused on the achievement of SDG 6, 7, 13, and 15 relating to clean water and sanitation, affordable clean energy, climate action, and life on land respectively. Therefore, this Portfolio’s overall focus is on ‘Building Resilience’.

Finding 14. National level contribution: UNDP interventions have made significant contributions to building resilience through integrating climate and disaster risk management aspects into national policies, strategies, and plans. However, there is room for improvement in terms of

⁶ Ben Schonveld, *Sri Lanka PVE Programming and Recommendations* (2019), 38.

ensuring the long-term impact and sustainability of some interventions. Moreover, the impact of certain interventions remains difficult to measure at this juncture.

UNDP interventions under CP Outcome 2 have been effective and have made an impact on national, and sector priorities and global commitments.

Firstly, UNDP contributed towards the revision of policies and strategies on disaster risk management at the national level. Climate change adaptation (CCA) interventions for enhanced adaptation and resilience to impacts of climate change were also implemented at the local level. Several UNDP interventions at the national level are worth noting.

Disaster Risk Management (DRM) at the national level focused on reviewing the National Emergency Operation Plan (NEOP), drafting a National Disaster Response & Recovery Policy (which is yet to be incorporated into National Disaster Management Policy), and conducting two Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNAs) in the aftermath of the 2016-2017 floods, jointly with WB and EU. UNDP also provided support to enhance the Landslide Early Warning System by providing 100+ automated rain gauges to the National Building Research Organisation (NBRO).

UNDP's interventions in DRM also brought about key changes in government policy planning and resources mobilization. Owing to UNDP support on DRM, the Government requested UNDP to provide technical assistance to develop 23 Out of 43 projects proposals under the Sri Lanka Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (SLCDMP), worth LKR 29 billion, on behalf of the line ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) to obtain funds from the Treasury. However, only 31 percent of the total amount was obtained from the Treasury.

Yet the tangible impact of these interventions, in terms of annual budgetary allocations, remains difficult to measure, as the estimates are embedded into line ministries' capital expenditure projects. At present, there are no proper mechanisms to monitor implementation, and determine the total amount of Government funds allocated to DRM and CCA activities within the na-

tional budget. Moreover, the impact of these efforts is not easily reflected in the DRM efforts of the country or in the risk ranking indices at a global level. Moreover, there were limited resources mobilised towards DRM under the current CP cycle, to support the implementation of actions under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) at the national, sub-national and community levels.

UNDP also helped to put in place at the national level, the policies, systems, and technologies to enable people to benefit from CCA practices, and to build the climate resilience of smallholder farmers who depend on village irrigation systems, as well as rain-fed farmers, by implementing pilot interventions at selected geographies. In addition, the CCAP-II intervention supported the preparation of a climate smart green village concept and a training module on Greenhouse agriculture for the Department of Agriculture staff training institute. The intervention demonstrates CCA practices by implementing pilot interventions at five selected geographies.

The UNDP intervention on the GCF-funded Integrated Water Resource Management (CRIWMP) project remains one of the highlights. It was implemented in three climate-affected river basins in the Northern, North Western, North Central and Eastern Province. This project contributed to national and sector priorities (for example, 'water for all and food security'), and the continuation of the government programme of 'Irrigation Prosperity' (*Vari Saubhgya* 2020-2025). Outputs supported under CRIWMP project set standards to the above national programme. It also supported the development of a Strategic Plan for Water Resources Development and Management (2020-2030). An updated technical guideline for irrigation works to cater to climate change impact is meanwhile being published.

The CRIWMP intervention also facilitated preparation of a national level guideline on 'climate smart agricultural practices' and a training module for the Ministry of Agriculture. Moreover, this intervention helped increase farmers' access to reliable local weather information through the 'Agromet' advisory system introduced with the support of the Department of Meteorology (DoM) and Department of Agriculture (DoA). In terms of sustainability of these initiatives, the

Meteorologists of the DoM were provided international and local training on climate and weather forecasting and were equipped with an automated meteorological observation network to strengthen the early warning dissemination capabilities of the institutions engaged.

During the GCF funded-CRIWMP project implementation, a project restructuring challenge at output level (Project output 2.2.1 and 2.2.2) was encountered. Under the restructuring process, the total number of project beneficiaries were reduced by 57% and the planned infrastructure facilities were reduced (due to a design calculation error at the project formulation stage) to avoid any cost implications. However, all the challenges were rectified by restructuring output 2 of the project, in consultation with GCF and the Government. Moreover, due to the change of Government administration in 2019, the Government initially reviewed the co-financing arrangement, and PMU was able to rectify the issues concerning the co-financing budget. However, to avoid such project design errors in the future, engaging dedicated technical experts during the project design and formulation stage will be critical.

Secondly, UNDP helped put in place national policies, systems and technologies to enable people to benefit from the sustainable management of natural resources.

The GEF-funded project on operationalising a land use governance framework known as 'Environmentally Sensitive Areas' (ESAs) has emerged as a vehicle for safeguarding significant biodiversity within production lands that are of high interest in conservation in Sri Lanka. However, it was not easy to measure the impact of this intervention on overall environmental conservation, habitat enrichment, and biodiversity conservation or the respective NDC target of 'increased national forest cover'.

Six pilot ESAs are now operational at the Kala Oya river basin in North Central Province (NCP) and the NWP in Sri Lanka. The ESA approach focuses on sustainable development in the country by facilitating a balance between the local aspiration for development and the need to protect environmentally-sensitive habitats and biodiversity. This has already been achieved by developing an ESA Policy at the national level to ensure

that the balance between environmental protection and development efforts is sustainable. The policy is being used by the Government as a tool to set standards to guide government administration on sensitive areas outside the protected areas of the country. Accordingly, the ESA policy has become a national level tool to advance sustainable development and upon identification of ESAs at National level, strategy is being enveloped for a national level scale up.

The ESA intervention also brought development partners and natural resource management stakeholders at the national level together. Accordingly, the ESA policy has become a national level tool to advance sustainable development.

The project has also developed and validated a national guideline to integrate biodiversity concerns into land-use planning as a decision-support tool. Furthermore, UNDP supported the review of the wild elephant management and conservation policy, which led to the development of policy directives on wild animal-human conflict.

However, it was noted that the ESA tool may require a considerable amount of time for negotiations, discussions, and the revision of the existing legal framework to integrate ESA aspects into the prevailing national and provincial governance system and this is factored within the National Environment Action Plan (NEAP): 2021-2030, which is being developed with the support of UNDP. This initiative is making slow, but steady progress, and must focus on the convergence of environmental policy reform, community action, and sustainable resource mobilisation in the long run. Although this development is positive, constant follow-up is required to scale-up the results of this intervention into the future CP cycle of UNDP, to ensure proper integration of systems and processes are developed, and integrated into the national, regional and local development planning processes of the country.

One of the highlights of the SGP intervention is the preparation of an 'ecological atlas' for the Mannar-Jaffna landscape, which assisted the Ministry of Environment to gazette wetlands in that landscape as protected areas. Moreover,

two new endemic 'day gecko' species were discovered and introduced to the taxonomic world by a research initiative supported by the SGP intervention. Furthermore, several CSOs at the national level were supported by SGP interventions to function as watchdogs, and several environmental issues of national interest were brought to the public's attention.

Other initiatives in the Portfolio have contributed towards financing biodiversity conservation. For example, the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) Phase I project succeeded in producing a Policy and Institutional Review (PIR), Financial Needs Assessment (FNA), Biodiversity Expenditure Review (BER), and Biodiversity Finance Plan (BFP). The project outputs demonstrated that processes can be developed in the existing financial sector to assess biodiversity conservation expenditure and future financial requirements, and to design comprehensive plans and tools to increase the efficiency of biodiversity management in the country. Meanwhile, the BIOFIN Phase II initiative has just begun. This initiative still requires a considerable amount of financial and technical assistance for its roll out in the future.

Thirdly, UNDP has contributed towards the promotion of low-carbon pathways and green development focusing on renewable energy and blue-green investment. Several highlights merit attention.

UNDP energy efficiency initiatives have focused on raising awareness, knowledge transfer, brokering partnerships and policy development, and have been effective in improving the uptake of energy efficiency, which has benefitted the number of private sector industries and municipalities. For example, MAS Holdings (an apparel company), Elpitiya Plantation (a tea plantation), and Kaduwela Municipal Council (a local authority) benefited from such engagement. Under waste-to-energy interventions, UNDP supported the MoH to conduct a nationwide rapid assessment on Healthcare Waste Management (HCWM) to develop a National Action Plan covering short and medium-term interventions in line with global best practices. However, this

plan is yet to be finalised. A pilot test was conducted at the Regional Director of Health Services (RDHS) Moneragala (Moneragala Base Hospital), and there are plans to introduce this intervention to other areas too.

The intervention on biomass energy technologies (waste to energy power generation, biomass energy, and supply chain management) has contributed towards the investment on low carbon development and clean energy practices in the apparel and plantation industries. UNDP has also assisted suppliers of biomass to adopt SLS 1551, a standard for sustainable biomass energy. It supported the establishment of sustainable fuel wood plantations. Furthermore, the establishment of an innovative Energy Data Management system (EDMS), MRV (EnerGIS System), a MAC analysis at national level, technologies on Variable Frequency Drives (VFDs), domestic solar Photovoltaic (PV) energy storage, and biogas programmes in the tea plantation sector are worth mentioning.

UNDP supported ozone depletion substances reduction by enhancing the capacities of the Custom Department officials and training several local-level refrigerator technicians. However, there is room for improvement in ensuring that GHG emission reduction is better integrated into development planning. For example, the estimation and monitoring of GHG emissions needs to be incorporated into the project appraisal process of the National Planning Department (NPD).

These interventions have contributed towards the achievement of SDG 13, and its targets, as per the latest Sustainable Development Report shared at UNGA 2021.⁷

The Third National Communication (TNC) is another key intervention supported by GEF under this Portfolio. However, a considerable amount of time has been taken to develop the TNC, and the next National Communication Cycle is already coming up. The delays reflect that there is a gap in terms of adhering to strict deliverable deadlines by the consultants engaged in compiling the various sections of the TNC report.

All the above interventions contributed towards the revision and gazetting of the National Energy

⁷ Sustainable Development Report: Sri Lanka, <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/sri-lanka>.

Policy and strategies and, therefore, contributed to the overall outcome goal, as well as to the CPD outcome and targets. A notable contribution in this regard is the Government's recent approval of a very ambitious energy target, that is, to achieve 70% of power generation through renewable energy sources by 2030.

Finally, UNDP contributed towards the establishment of reliable information systems and capacities to strengthen accountability, the use of evidence-based decision-making, and the management of environmental standards, as a cross cutting theme under this Portfolio.

UNDP contributed towards enhancing evidence-based decision-making capacities of environment related state sector agencies. Monitoring and management were carried out in line with three Rio conventions and the SFDRR. For example, the 'Metadata Portal', launched by the Ministry of Disaster Management in 2017 with the support of UNDP is aligned with the national data sharing policy. This achievement is important but cannot be sustained without it being institutionalised within the existing government National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). The Metadata Portal needs to be linked to the NSDI platform of the government to maximise the sustainability of the intervention.

Finding 15. Sub-national level contribution: UNDP interventions at the sub-national level have made a limited contribution towards building resilience through integrated climate and disaster risk management. However, there was inadequate incorporation of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and CCA priorities into provincial and local government development planning processes and systems. Moreover, there was room for greater cross integration between CP Outcomes 1 and 2 with respect to capacity development at the local government level.

Overall, UNDP interventions brought many national and sub-national level state agencies into one platform to demonstrate ways in which integrated approaches are effective in delivering outputs. Such integration was evident in the many contributions UNDP made at the sub-national level.

Firstly, in terms of DRM, certain important sub-national level contributions were made to enhance governance and planning processes. For example, a set of By-laws were drafted for the Central Province, and digital baseline datasets were offered to seventeen selected local authorities to mainstream risk-management into local-level planning processes.

However, this intervention, which sought to enhance governance systems for CCA and DRM at the local government level, did not adequately draw from the CDLG project implemented under CP Outcome 1. The intervention could have been delivered with more inputs from the Inclusive Governance team at UNDP to ensure better cross integration between aspects of CP Outcomes 1 and 2 – where the target beneficiaries were local authorities.

Secondly, in terms of renewable energy and blue-green investment, several sub-national level contributions are worth noting. For instance, UNDP support for the promotion of waste-to-energy generation project included the Kaduwela Municipal Council. This intervention made an important contribution towards urban domestic waste management by the relevant local authority.

UNDP's contributions at the sub-national level also featured partnerships with private sector actors. For example, it partnered with Brandix Apparel Limited to promote renewable energy in Sri Lanka. Consequently, Brandix claims that its manufacturing facility in Batticaloa is the first in the world to achieve 'Net Zero Carbon' status. This certification signifies that a factory has completely neutralised its environmental impact through CO₂ emissions by being highly energy efficient and using on-site renewable energy resources. Another good example is UNDP's partnership with the Elpitiya Tea Plantation. Under this initiative, investments were directed towards the installation of renewable energy capacity at the Plantation's factories.

UNDP's interventions in promoting biomass energy production and modern bio-energy technologies for the apparel industry, tourist hotels, and the tea plantation sector have undoubtedly contributed towards reinforcing the local economy,

increasing forest cover, improving living standards of rural women, and improving sustainable small and medium enterprises.

The ESA intervention also engaged the Provincial Tourism Development Authority within the NWP to promote the five ESAs relevant to the Authority. Such engagement is an indication that there is potential for UNDP to engage with sub-national level counterparts for implementation and promotion of sustainable natural resource management.

The GCF-funded CRIWMP project supported the upgrading of 213 out of 325 targeted village irrigation systems and 3,767 rural home gardens. It also supported COVID-19 affected families, and supported cultivation of 6,736 hectares of Other Field Crops (OFCs) and the construction of six new rural water supply schemes (RWS) managed by communities to provide drinking water for 24,200 people. Moreover, Rainwater Harvesting Tanks were installed with an advanced filtration system. Furthermore, a flood risk assessment was conducted.

Despite these important contributions at the sub-national level, it is evident that CP Outcome 2 could have had more interventions on CCA, DRR, and natural resource management, with sub-national level stakeholders, such as Provincial Councils and local authorities, delivering the project outputs. Therefore, a more decentralised approach to the delivery of outputs was not evident.

Moreover, there were no interventions that specifically aimed to promote reliable information management systems, the use of evidence-based decision-making, and the management of environmental standards at the sub-national level. For instance, the Metadata Portal remains a national level initiative that is not yet integrated into sub-national level data management and knowledge sharing systems.

Finding 16. Community level contribution: UNDP has made an important contribution towards building resilient communities – often in partnership with CSOs – in the areas of CCA, natural resource management, biomass energy and agricultural livelihoods diversification. However, there was room for improvement, including

DRM interventions at the community level, in partnership with CSOs.

UNDP interventions under the SGP OP6 supported 30+ projects implemented by CSOs at three different landscapes in the country. Interventions largely focused on the community-based landscape approach, which involved mitigation of environmental degradation at different landscapes in Sri Lanka. The interventions have produced a significant impact to natural resource management, conservation, research and development, livelihood diversification, and increased awareness and enforcement of environmental laws. Some CSO groups also performed an environmental watchdog function by bringing environmental issues to the attention of the public and the authorities. Meanwhile, the development of eco-tourism, organic farming, bee-keeping and entrepreneurship training have enabled local communities (especially women and youth) to benefit from income increases.

Apart from these contributions, UNDP made several sector-specific community level contributions in partnership with CSOs.

In terms of CCA and natural resource management, the CRIWMP intervention focused on building resilience of vulnerable farmer communities through integrated water management in three river basins in the Dry Zone. Existing CBOs were strengthened, and new CBOs also established Community-based CBOs to engage in water governance. Several infrastructure and minor irrigation systems were renovated to achieve the targets to provide water for agricultural activities and to provide safe drinking water to schools and hospitals.

It is noted, however, that the benefits of improved irrigation systems, home gardens, access to weather information systems, and behavioural change of sustainable economic activity, cannot be fully measured at present, as the project is still in progress. Therefore, it is too soon to determine the effectiveness and probable impact of the initiative.

In terms of CCA, UNDP has supported the improvement of the resilience of vulnerable, marginalised rain-fed communities in the NWP, and the upper and lower Mahaweli river basin to mitigate the impacts of climate change and frequent

disasters. The impact of these interventions was significant. At the end of the interventions, 96% of the targeted population practiced diverse livelihood options, and over 53% of women in the group secured new sources of income and were able to access market mechanisms.

Despite notable contributions in CCA, the extent to which the current CP has supported local communities in the domain of DRM needs improvement. Since late 2018, UNDP has had no adequate interventions focused on DRM, with the aim to empower local communities, despite the support provided through CRIWMP project by establishing disaster preparedness and early-warning systems in selected geographies. There were no adequate resources mobilised towards DRM, towards achievements under the SFDRR.

2.4 Data for Policy Formulation

CP Outcome 3: By 2022, people in Sri Lanka benefit from improved data and knowledge management to address inequities and ensure inclusive and responsive decision-making.

CP Outcome 3 is on **Building the Data and Knowledge Foundations for Evidence-based Policy Development.**

Finding 17. Scope and relevance of interventions: The project outputs designed under this Outcome are disconnected from the Outcome's stated purpose.

The original intent was to establish systems to gather, analyse and share data to improve the setting of national policies. It mirrored Driver 1 of the 2018-2022 UNSDF for Sri Lanka ('Towards Improved Data, Knowledge Management and Evidence-Based Policy'). This original intent clearly shifted early in the implementation of the CP, and projects classified under this CP Outcome.

If the Evaluation Team were to strictly judge the contribution that the six projects, reported as relevant to this CP Outcome, have made to date, the contribution would be marginal, considering

that their focus was quite different from the original intent. In essence, these projects have had few activities or outputs that related to data gathering for policy development. It would have been preferable that, when drafting the current CP, the choice had been made to link the UNDP CP Outcome 3 to UNSDF Driver 3 'Human Security and Socio-Economic Resilience'. This Driver better describes the projects under CP Outcome 3.

Finding 18. Contribution to national policy objectives: Projects under this Outcome have made, and can further make, important contributions to national policy objectives outlined in chapters 4,5 and 6 of 'Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour', that deal with improvements in health services, the promotion youth services, tourism promotion and technology and innovation. Their outputs can contribute to SDGs 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 16, and 17 and to the formation of partnerships.

The Citra Lab project and its sub-projects have significant advances in the promotion of innovative solutions to social problems and the delivery of Government services. They are also supporting key initiatives for the development of entrepreneurship for youth. While it is premature to judge their effectiveness and potential impact, there is no doubt that these initiatives have contributed to creating an image of UNDP as a potential partner in the promotion of innovative solutions. Some examples of their work are:

- Revamping the civil service training system of the Sri Lanka Institute for Development Administration in order to deliver quality services, placing citizens at the centre of government work, to better serve the users of government services;
- A digital transformation agenda, including a National Digital Strategy for Sri Lanka which, among other things, aims to bridge the digital divide and re-engineer public sector processes;
- A series of development dialogues in partnership with the South Asia Centre of LSE and the University of Colombo;

One of the key contributions under CP Outcome 3 was HackaDev, which is an initiative designed to instil concepts of innovation and promote entrepreneurship among young people. This initiative entails three different, but complementary approaches: (1) Youth Innovation Challenges, where young people are provided the opportunity to present and develop innovation ideas and proposals; (2) an academy that promotes critical skills related to entrepreneurship, design thinking, innovation, media literacy, leadership; and (3) an incubation stage, where selected ideas receive seed funding and technical assistance to develop them further.

Todate, over 18,000 young persons have benefited from exposure to basic innovation tools, from a range of services from the programme, such as training, bootcamps, and mentoring programmes. The most interesting, or in other words, desirable, feasible and viable proposals generated through the programme are provided with seed-funding and incubation support through the HackaDev Incubator programme. Todate, 84 ideas have received or are receiving funding of approximately, on average, US \$ 2,500 each, inclusive of comprehensive incubation support, to fuel their development. Over 30 enterprises are functioning on their own following their exit from the programme. Citra Lab and HackaDev provide value for money, having managed to mobilise over 100 experts from the private sector, CSO and the broader innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, who volunteered their support sources to provide training, coaching, and mentoring.

Under this Outcome area, there are also initiatives designed to respond to spontaneously surging needs (or future needs) that require rapid response. They are implemented under a mechanism called the Engagement Facility. Therefore, by their very nature, it is not possible to anticipate at the design stage, what outputs they will be expected to produce or activities they will be undertaking. For that reason, baseline and target indicators cannot be defined a priori either.

Other initiatives, such as COVID-19 related initiatives, not only lack M&E frameworks, but are scattered over several projects in the three CP Outcomes of the CP. It would have been preferable to have all COVID-related activities under a

single project. However, the Evaluation Team was informed that the funds for many of these activities were diverted from different projects, whose financing, in turn, came from various donor sources. Therefore, consolidating all COVID-related financing and activities under one single umbrella project was not feasible.

The Evaluation Team was aware of work done with the SD Council on the preparation of a platform which is in the process of being made compatible with the Council's current one as well as preliminary work with the SD Council and other key entities on SDG financing and other areas. However, these initiatives did not secure funding, so there are no tangible results to report. After the cut-off date of this report (30 April 2021), the Evaluation Team received additional information on preparatory work in support of the SD Council. The content of the future undertakings is outlined in the letter sent by UNDP to the SD Council on 23 June and in the minutes of a meeting between that institution and UNDP dated 9 July 2021.

UNDP is to assist the SD Council in:

- SDG Data [Collection] – The inclusion of a partnership between UNDP and UNESCO to support the development of an integrated SDG data platform, which will bring together the functionality of the current Sri Lanka SDG Data Portal, with the enhanced data visualization and reporting capability of the SDG Tracker;
- SDG Financing and private sector engagement – The development and launch of the Sri Lanka SDG Investor Map to provide market intelligence for potential investors on investment opportunities aligned with the SDGs.

If this planned assistance is successful, UNDP could make a significant contribution towards Sri Lanka's achievement of SDG targets.

Finding 19: Overall value and potential: While the major original intent of Outcome 3 was not addressed in the current CP, data gathering for policy analysis is still an area that can be of great value to Sri Lanka's development efforts, and one where UNDP can play an important role.

An overall data gathering and sharing system should be the goal. This goal could be created by strengthening the Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics. This department is, at present, mainly dedicated to gathering demographic and basic domestic and economic information. Some duplication of functions related to data gathering and analysis has occurred. An example of this problem is the creation of more than one data gathering platforms for monitoring SDG progress. Under the SD Council there exists two platforms, one financed by USAID, and another by UNDP/CITRALAB. Several sources mentioned that these platforms are currently in the process of being consolidated into one single data platform. Moreover, the Department of Census and Statistics' website has several pages of content on the SDGs and, in theory, information therein should relate to the SDG indicators. However, it appears that only baseline data, dating back many years, is currently available. Having a single national data gathering system would:

- avoid duplication of efforts;
- allow for identification of national data gaps;
- allow aggregation of data from different sources; and
- identify potential synergies between programmes.

2.5 Key Lessons for the Next UNDP Country Programme

The process of drafting the next UNSDF is in progress, and a Common Country Assessment (CCA), is almost completed. Moreover, the United Nations Secretary General wishes to concentrate the attention of the Country Team (UNCT) on five areas defined as the '5 Ps': People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership. There is also the new UNDP Strategic Plan (2021-2025), which provides additional guidance to all new UNDP country programmes regarding UNDP's intention to work with its partners to deliver its mandate.

The foregoing analysis reveals several lessons that can be incorporated into the process of developing the next UNDP CP. Some of these lessons are positive, that is, they relate to aspects of the current CP that should be replicated in the

future CP. Some of the lessons are negative, that is, they point to areas of improvement or aspects that should be avoided in the next CP.

Firstly, it is observed that UNDP's current CP set out to achieve objectives that were directly derived from the UNSDF and were at the heart of the governance and development challenges faced in Sri Lanka. Overall, programmatic continuity on issues related to the **PLANET** (CAA, nature, energy, DRR and recovery and the blue/green economy), **PROSPERITY** (innovation, entrepreneurial development and tourism), **PEOPLE** and **PEACE** (support to democratic institution building, Human Rights promotion, equitable provision of services, access to justice) and **PARTNERSHIP** (resource mobilisation and partnership development) is needed, considering that these are the areas where UNDP has a comparative advantage. These areas are highly relevant to providing the environmental protection that a country like Sri Lanka requires, creating long-term conditions for political and social stability, and promoting innovative solutions to address the future developmental challenges the country will face.

Therefore, the projects selected for CP Outcomes 1 and 2 were very relevant, and need to be replicated in the next CP.

As mentioned above, the projects reported as relevant to CP Outcome 3 are not fully relevant to that outcome, but can still make significant contributions to the attainment of the Agenda 2030, and to key government objectives.

Secondly, it is perhaps too early to determine whether the various interventions under the current CP will achieve their stated outcomes as designed. This evaluation covers 40 of the 60 months of the CP, and during fourteen of those months, the country has had to deal with the COVID-19 crisis that negatively affected project delivery. However, there is an important lesson to be learnt here. The adaptation demonstrated by UNDP, in response to the Pandemic demonstrates the value of adaptability in programming. Such adaptability needs to be replicated within the next CP, that is, some flexibility within the overall parameters of the CP should be maintained to enable changes in response to unforeseen events.

Thirdly, the current CP adopted certain specific strategies that were particularly successful. For example, partnerships with the private sector, and long-term investment in the capacity development of key CSO partners are strategies that have produced tangible results within the current CP. These strategies need to be replicated within the next CP to maximise impact and sustainability in delivery.

Finally, the current CP relied on a resource mobilisation model, a leadership structure, and M&E frameworks that contained certain gaps worth addressing in the next CP. The key lessons to be driven forward include: the need to develop a dedicated resource mobilisation unit which can focus on long-term partnerships with IFIs; the need to maintain better firewalls between leadership relating to programme delivery and quality assurance; and the need to maintain more coherent and accessible M&E frameworks.

CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Overall Programme Implementation

The following general conclusions concern the areas of improvement with respect to the overall implementation of the CP:

1. **UNDP's current partnership and resource mobilisation strategies do not sufficiently focus on building sustainable partnerships with IFIs, and mobilising resources through such partnerships.**

Current resource flows do not seem to be sufficient, in the medium term, to cover the costs needed to sustain the minimal staffing required to provide adequate programme and project support to the CP. A resource mobilisation strategy driven by a dedicated team that answered directly to the Resident Representative, and focused on identifying funding opportunities with IFIs, could have enhanced UNDP's overall contribution to the development of Sri Lanka.

Moreover, (even in the absence of a dedicated team that focuses on IFIs) UNDP has yet to explore other opportunities. For, example, using the Engagement Facility to finance a specific project to assist the government and the IFIs in the delivery of IFI financed operations. Such a project would have required the engagement of consultants with both UNDP and IFI backgrounds, and successful experience in establishing and operating large joint partnerships between UNDP Country Offices and IFIs, for example, in Latin-America.

2. **UNDP's team structure is not ideal in terms of enabling it to fully realise its strength in providing technical expertise and meeting the donor requirement that leadership roles in delivery and quality assurance are kept separate.**

UNDP's existing structure, in which leadership roles in policy and technical direction is collapsed within the leadership role in delivery, management, and administration has not translated into UNDP fully realising its

unique strengths in offering technical expertise. Moreover, the current structure expects leadership roles in the delivery of interventions and in quality assurance to be performed by the same personnel. This structure often falls short of certain donor requirements that delivery and quality assurance be performed separately.

3. **UNDP's M&E framework does not consistently enable it to assess the overall progress of the CP.**

At the project level, presently, not all projects and initiatives currently have complete M&E frameworks with defined and measurable indicators. Since different formats and varied periodicity are often used to report on project progress, it is difficult to locate, and aggregate, data on the higher-level progress of the CP.

4. **While civil society was adequately consulted at the level of designing the CP as a whole, civil society was not systematically consulted and integrated into the design and delivery of projects under the CP.**

UNDP did consult civil society during the development of the CP, and in developing flagship portfolios, such as the SDG16 Portfolio. However, UNDP still relies on a delivery model of 'contracting' CSOs to deliver aspects of projects within the CP. It is yet to shift towards a more robust 'partnership' model, wherein CSOs have greater ownership of the CP.

5. **UNDP is yet to adopt a more disaggregated, multidimensional approach to accurately assess the extent to which the CP has met gender priorities.**

Although gender ratings can offer a useful basis for assessing the overall gender responsiveness of a project, UNDP's current approach does not adequately capture the precise gender contribution of project interventions. Disaggregating budgetary alloca-

tions is crucial to assessing how much resources are actually set aside for gender components.

6. **The extent to which the CP fully mainstreams and integrates the rights of PWDs as a cross-cutting programmatic priority is inadequate.**

Some progress has been achieved in terms of integrating disability rights within certain aspects of the CP, such as within its access to justice programming. However, there remains a gap in terms of mainstreaming the rights of PWDs within social cohesion programming, CCA, DRR, natural resource management, and energy sector project implementation, and access to data interventions.

3.2 Inclusive Governance

Two additional conclusions can be offered with respect to CP Outcome 1.

7. **The 2021 recalibration of CP Outcome 1 (that is, the SDG16 Flagship Portfolio) remained crucial to ensuring that the Outcome area adapts to certain transformational shifts that have taken place since its inception and remains relevant and impactful.**

The recalibration exercise has offered UNDP strong potential to align with current government priorities and create new opportunities for policy influence. The recalibration has reflected UNDP's ability to adapt to changing contexts and ensure that the CP stays fit for purpose.

8. **The overall strategy on social cohesion has not adequately integrated civil society protection concerns and avoided partnering with security-oriented institutions.**

A 'law enforcement' or 'security-oriented' approach to social cohesion programming can lead to the violation of rights, and result in counterproductive consequences, considering that marginalisation and discrimination are major push factors related to violent

extremism. UNDP's programme design on social cohesion is conscious of these challenges. Yet certain aspects of its social cohesion programming, which entails partnerships with institutions that are security-oriented, may result in protection concerns for CSOs that work closely with UNDP within the social cohesion space.

3.3 Energy, Environment & Climate Change Adaptation

Two additional conclusions are presented with respect to CP Outcomes.

9. **Although UNDP interventions on CCA, DRM, energy and low carbon development, and natural resource management are relevant to Sri Lanka's national and sector priorities, limited assistance was provided to improve the technical and financial capacities of CSOs, and provincial and local government sector institutions to engage these areas.**

UNDP's current interventions have continued to address national level policy gaps, have set standards, and have provided direction on CCA, DRM, natural resource management, and the clean energy sector by mobilising state and non-state sector implementing partners to engage the sustainable development process. However, these interventions contemplate limited assistance to building the technical and financial capacities of CSOs, and provincial and local government institutions. This gap is particularly evident in terms of enhancing the implementation and enforcement of policies, strategies and action plans supported by UNDP at national level. The support given by UNDP at the national and sub-national level is limited to piloting the policies and strategies. Yet such support is not adequately mainstreamed into the overall sustainable development-planning processes of the country.

10. **Although UNDP's contribution was instrumental in bringing all the relevant partners engaged in CCA, DRM, natural resource management, and the energy sector to one platform to work towards a common goal,**

this process requires more time and resources.

Due to multi-partner engagement and multi-disciplinary approaches, a considerable amount of time and resources are still needed to ensure that relevant partners engaged in CCA, DRM, natural resource management, and the energy sector, come together under one platform to work towards a common goal. Systems and strategies developed under CCA, DRM, and natural resource management interventions are not adequately integrated into the prevailing national and sub-national level sustainable development planning processes, institutional frameworks, and into the practices of local communities.

3.4 Data and Knowledge

One further conclusion is presented with respect to CP Outcome 3:

- 11. Considering the evident needs of the Department of Census and Statistics in securing, storing, analysing and making available all the required data for policymaking, UNDP is yet to seize the opportunity to support this institution further.**

The previous CCA, Driver 1 of the current UNSDF, and the UNDP CPD Outcome 3 all focus on the need to assist the Government to gather and use data for policy making. There is currently no effective centralised system under the Department of Census and Statistics to gather, analyse and feed information relating to all the needs of governmental, inter-governmental and CSO users of information. Despite the need to support this Department, UNDP has not adequately supported and collaborated with this Department to work towards a national data system.

CHAPTER 4: RECOMMENDATIONS

We offer eleven recommendations for consideration by the UNDP Country Office.

4.1 Overall Programme Implementation

RECOMMENDATION No. 1: UNDP should prioritise IFIs within its resource mobilisation strategy by either establishing a dedicated resource mobilisation unit, or alternatively, supporting its existing structure through a project that engages high-level external consultants with requisite expertise in securing funding from IFIs. One consultant could be an ex-WB or IADB country representative, and the second an ex-UNDP Resident Representative, who negotiated large successful agreements. Their support should be limited to two or three short missions and include their availability to assist in guiding the process. Such a project should be staffed by at least one professional at an adequate NOC level with experience in dealing with the IFIs, and one GS support staff.

RECOMMENDATION No. 2: UNDP should review the existing structure of the teams to ensure that leadership roles within them are more clearly and coherently defined to ensure that administrative and policy/technical functions are (to the extent possible) bifurcated, and the leadership roles with respect to programme delivery and quality assurance are performed by separate personnel.

RECOMMENDATION No. 3: UNDP should ensure that each M&E project framework has clear, realistic, well-defined, and measurable baseline and success indicators (for each outcome, output and sub-output), and that a common, accessible, and up-to-date reporting database is maintained from which progress reports can be produced.

RECOMMENDATION No. 4: UNDP should identify CSOs that have the potential to be long-term partners in the design and delivery of the CP and develop a strategy to invest in the organisational capacity and sustainability of these CSO partners.

RECOMMENDATION No. 5: UNDP should expand the way gender mainstreaming within

budgets is assessed by also measuring disaggregated spending on specific gender-related initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION No. 6: UNDP should assess all aspects of the CP with a view to identifying opportunities to further integrate and mainstream disability rights within the CP. This exercise should be undertaken to ensure that all related stakeholders are aware of how to incorporate this priority into social cohesion programming, CCA, DRR, natural resource management, and energy sector project implementation, and access to data interventions.

4.2 Inclusive Governance

RECOMMENDATION No. 7: UNDP should fully operationalise the recalibrated SDG16 Portfolio to enable UNDP to better align with and influence the current government's policy agenda and develop coherent and workable partnership strategies pertaining to key institutions, such as the Ministry of Justice, as part of such operationalisation.

RECOMMENDATION No. 8: UNDP should vet all interventions within the broader social cohesion programme area to ensure that protection concerns remain paramount, and to minimise involvement of security-oriented institutions within programming.

4.3 Energy, Environment & Climate Change Adaptation

RECOMMENDATION No. 9: UNDP should continue to facilitate national level state sector institutions, expand interventions to engage provincial and local government stakeholders, and CSOs as implementing partners in CCA, DRR, natural resource management, and focus more on private sector resource mobilisation for the renewable energy sector and low carbon development.

RECOMMENDATION No. 10: UNDP should ensure the systems and practices developed are integrated within the existing institutional frameworks at the national and sub-national levels, and the practices of vulnerable communities, by partnering with state and private sector stakeholders.

4.4 Data and Knowledge

RECOMMENDATION No. 11: UNDP should consider establishing a project designed to cre-

ate a unified national data gathering and analysis system under the Department of Census and Statistics, which can be the repository and analytical tool for all demographic, microeconomic, macroeconomic, social, and operational statistics.

ANNEXES

The annexes listed below are submitted simultaneously with this report, but in a separate file.

Annex 1: List of Projects and Project Information by Outcome.

Annex 2: List of Persons Interviewed.

Annex 3: Reference Material Reviewed.

Annex 4: Project Evaluation and Auditing Check List

Annex 5: Audit Trail Format

Annex 6: CPD Evaluation Terms of Reference

Annex 7: Repositioning UNDP Sri Lanka - Lessons from the RBLAC Experience