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Contents

CHAPTER 1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION.....6

1.1. Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation6

1.2. Evaluation methodology.....6

1.3. Evaluation limitations7

1.4. Country context7

1.5. UNDP programme under review9

CHAPTER 2. FINDINGS 13

Programme Reset and Strategic Positioning13

Institutional Effectiveness32

Cross-cutting Issues38

CHAPTER 3. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE..... 44

3.1. Conclusions.....44

3.2. Recommendations and Management Response.....47

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CO	Country Office
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
ERRY	Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GEWE	Gender equality and women's empowerment
GRES	Gender Results Effectiveness Scale
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluations
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
LNOB	Leaving No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFI	Microfinance institutions
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
MSME	Micro, small and medium enterprise
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PVE	Prevention of violent extremism
PIAJY	Promoting Inclusive Access to Justice in Yemen
RBAS	Regional Bureau for Arab States
RC	Resident Coordinator
ROAR	Results-Oriented Annual Report
RoL	Rule of Law
SFD	Social Fund for Development

SFISH	Sustainable Fishery Development in Red Sea and Gulf of Aden
SIERY	Strengthening Institutional and Economic Resilience in Yemen
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SMEPS	Small and Micro Enterprise Promotion Service
SPCRP	Social Protection for Community Resilience Project
ToC	Theory of change
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRCO	UN Resident Coordinator Office
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VCC	Village Cooperative Council
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WRM	Water Resource Management
WUA	Water User Association
YWU	Yemen Women's Union
YPTT	Yemen Partner Technical Team
YECRP	Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project
YFSRRP	Yemen Food Security Response and Resilience Project
VBSTSP	Vocational and Business Skills Training and Support Project

Chapter 1. Background and Introduction

1. This chapter presents the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation as well as the methodology applied. It lays out the development context of Yemen before introducing the UNDP country programme.

1.1. Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

2. The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP's contributions to development results at the country level, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP's strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts for achieving development results. ICPEs are independent evaluations carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.¹

3. This is the third independent country-level evaluation for Yemen.² As the current CPD³ has a shorter cycle, the ICPE will extend its scope to examine UNDP's work starting from 2019, when an interim country programme framework was developed following the ICPE 2018. **The ICPE covers programme activities from 2019 up to October 2023**, which include project and non-project activities in the areas of livelihood and economic recovery, climate change, energy, water and the environment, governance and rule of law, and peace support processes.

1.2. Evaluation methodology

4. The ICPE was conducted according to the approved IEO process. The evaluation methodology adhered to United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards.⁴ The evaluation has four main evaluation questions (box 1), which frame the whole exercise (also see Annex 2 on Evaluation Framework). In line with UNDP's gender mainstreaming strategy, the evaluation examined the level of gender mainstreaming across the country programme and operations. The detailed methodology of the ICPE is described in Annex 1 (Terms of Reference).

5. The evaluation relied on information collected from different sources to triangulate evidence:

- The main documents consulted by the evaluation team are listed in Annex 5.
- A tabulation of the programme outcome and output indicator matrix can be found in Annex 7.
- There were 169 in-person and online interviews. The consultation included UNDP personnel (44 percent), government officials (13 percent), representatives from the UN country team and development and bilateral/multilateral partners (13 percent), and national institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs) representatives, local actors and community members (30 percent). In addition, field data collection was conducted to assess selected projects with 13 focus group discussions (61 female and 81 male) and over 25 site visits. See Annex 4 for more information.
- Interviews, focus group discussions and site visits were conducted in 7 governorates (including Abyan, Aden, Lahj, Hadhramout, Marib, Sana'a, and Taiz), and Sana'a City. Interviews also took place in Amman, Jordan.



EVALUATION 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. What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP's performance and eventually, to the sustainability of results?
4. To what extent has UNDP been able to adapt to the changing context, including the COVID-19 pandemic, to support the country's development needs and implement the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach? What has been the added value of the UNDP country programme in such a complex context?

¹ See UNDP, "Evaluation Policy," <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>.

² The IEO conducted an Assessment of Development Results in 2005 and an Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) in 2018, covering the periods 1997-2004 and 2012-2018, respectively.

³ The CPD, starting in 2023, was extended from 2024 to 2025, following the extension of the UNSDCF.

⁴ United Nations Evaluation Group, Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016), <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>.

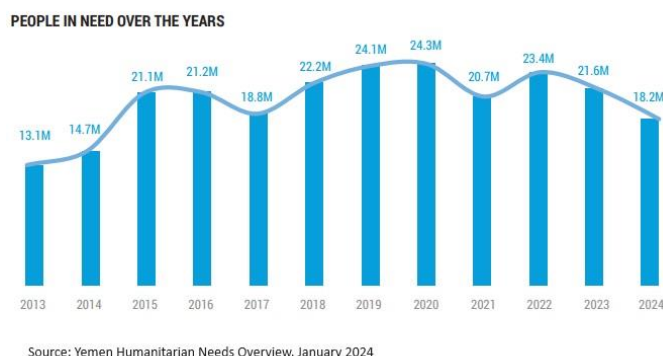
- Findings were triangulated by cross-examining internal documents and accounts with external documents, audit and evaluation reports, and interviews with independent experts, stakeholders from various governmental and non-governmental affiliations as well as international and national actors and the UNDP personnel at corporate and local levels.
 - The Geographic Information System (GIS) maps analysis was done to understand the UNDP’s programme through the humanitarian-development-peace nexus dimension (see Annex 9).
 - The ICPE also conducted a forward-looking strategic option study to better inform programming options. The study used a comparative analysis approach, and looked at practices in similar contexts, and different actors’ strategies in Yemen (see takeaways in Annex 10).
 - As the UNDP Bureau of Management Services/Operational Performance Team (BMS/OPT) conducted a comprehensive operational scan of the country office in 2023 to analyse whether its functional model is fit-for-purpose, the ICPE did not focus on the CO’s performance and efficiency in this regard.
6. The draft ICPE report was quality-assured by IEO’s senior management, internal peer reviewers and two external reviewers, then submitted to the UNDP Yemen Country Office and Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) for factual errors, corrections and comments, and finally shared with the stakeholders. The ICPE’s methodology also emphasized the necessity of informing future positioning of UNDP’s programme in Yemen.

1.3. Evaluation limitations

7. Evaluators faced significant access challenges in Yemen due to the country’s divided control between the Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) and the De Facto Authority (DFA), as well as security and political constraints. These factors limited the coverage of project sites and accessibility became a key consideration for site selection. Focus group discussions were not conducted in the DFA-controlled areas. Nevertheless, fieldwork was conducted for selected projects across all outcome areas, in both rural and urban areas. The international and national members of the evaluation team conducted field missions separately, with the national consultants focusing on more extensive fieldwork within the country and the international members focusing on national-level and international stakeholders. The international members’ field mission in Sana’a was cancelled due to last-minute visa cancellations. A number of remote interviews were conducted from October 2023 to January 2024 to complete data collection.⁵ Since October 2023, several significant contextual variables have emerged, including the escalation of the war in Gaza, the Red Sea crisis and the detention of the UN and civil society staff. The impact of these events was not covered in this evaluation.

1.4. Country context

8. Yemen is a low-income country and has been one of the poorest countries in the Middle East even before 2014, facing a wide range of development challenges.⁶ Yemen has an estimated population of 33.6 million, with 58 percent of people between 15-64, and about 61% live in rural areas.⁷ Yemeni people are facing one of the world’s worst humanitarian and development crises driven by conflict, natural disasters, climate change, hunger and diseases coupled with a collapse



⁵ The fieldwork of the international members took place from 8 to 18 October 2023, in Amman, Jordan and Aden. The fieldwork of the national members took place from October to December 2023.

⁶ United Nations Yemen: Common Country Analysis (CCA), November 2021.

⁷ 2022 data. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS>; <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.1564.TO.ZS?locations=YE>; (accessed 30 April 2024).

of the economy and public institutions.⁸ Yemen is among the countries ranking lowest in terms of gender equality and women’s inclusion and security.⁹ It is one of the world’s most vulnerable countries to climate change and among the least prepared for climate shocks.¹⁰

9. The Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024 estimates that 18.2 million people will need humanitarian assistance due to food insecurity, malnutrition, health, water and sanitation, and protection needs, decreased from 23.4 million in 2022.¹¹ More contextual information is available in the findings section, Annex 1 and 3.

Figure 1: Country context evolvement (if possible make it an infographic using a timeline)¹²

	Pre-2014	2014-2023	2030 predictions
Political situation in Yemen	There has been a cycle of conflicts, political upheaval, and institutional collapse for decades	<p>An escalation in violence between the Government of Yemen and non-state armed actors including Ansar Allah in 2014, resulted in military intervention from a coalition of countries in March 2015. Since then, the country witnessed escalating violence. The conflict in Yemen is multifaceted and has been influenced by regional and international geopolitics.</p> <p>April-October 2022: UN brokered truce.</p> <p>Post truce: Fighting largely remains on hold except on the frontlines</p> <p>2023: regional conflict dynamics increase risks to a peaceful settlement; the onset of the war in Gaza resulted in escalations in the Red Sea.</p> <p>Dec 2023: The Yemeni parties agreed to commitments on the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire though there is not a roadmap for the implementation and operationalization of these commitments.</p>	
Yemen social-economic conditions	<p>Yemen has long been the poorest country in the Middle East.</p> <p>The GDP per capita (current US\$) was \$1497 in 2013.</p> <p>In 2013, the multidimensional poverty headcount ratio was 48.5%.</p> <p>The Human Development Index (HDI) value ranked 154 out of 187 in 2013.</p>	<p>The development gains in Yemen have been reversed by over 20 years.</p> <p>Based on the study done by UNDP, the multidimensional poverty headcount ratio was 82.7% in 2021 in the 9 surveyed governorates.</p> <p>The HDI value ranked 186th out of 193 countries in 2022; and the GDP per capita (current US\$) was \$650. Gender HDI value has been decreasing since 2010, and ranked 166 out of 166 in 2022.</p> <p>Yemen’s state apparatus is fragmented, unable to perform core functions. Yemenis struggle to access basic services such as healthcare, clean water, education, etc. Yemen remains one of the countries with the largest number of internally displaced people. Nearly 250,000 people killed by fighting as well as through a lack of access to food, health services and infrastructure. Of the dead, 60 percent are children under age 5.</p>	<p>If the conflict in Yemen continues until 2030, human development will be reversed by 39 years, with a loss of USD 657 billion in economic output (2019 estimation).</p> <p>If the conflict continues through 2030, the total conflict attributable death toll will be 1.3 million – more than 70 per cent of which will be from indirect deaths such as lack of food and health services, and 80 per cent of these deaths will be children under five (2021 estimation).</p>

⁸ United Nations Yemen: Common Country Analysis (CCA), November 2021.

⁹ Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024, January 2024.

¹⁰ Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024, January 2024; <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>.

¹¹ Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024, January 2024.

¹² Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024, January 2024; Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan 2024, January 2024; Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023, December 2022; Human Development Report 2023-2024; [Human Development Index | Human Development Reports \(undp.org\)](#); UNDP Yemen: CPD Master Brief – Yemen 2021; <https://dppa.un.org/en/mission/special-envoy-yemen>; UNDP, Assessing the Impact of War in Yemen: Pathways for Recovery (2021); Assessing the Impact of War in Yemen: on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (2019); United Nations Yemen: Common Country Analysis (CCA), November 2021; UNDP, Measuring Multidimensional Poverty in Yemen (2023); <https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/MPI/YEM.pdf>, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=YE> (assessed May 2024), UNHCR (2024), Global Trends Report 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2023>.

UNDP Country Programme	UNDP 2012-2015 Country Programme Document (CPD)	UNDP CPD 2012-2015 was disrupted. A Resilience Programme was approved by the UNDP Crisis Board in 2016. Between 2019 and 2022, UNDP was guided by a Country Programme Framework and a Country Strategy Note. The official Country Programme Document (CPD) 2023-2024 was approved by the UNDP Executive Board in September 2022. The CPD was then extended to 2025. In 2023, the CO updated its Strategy Direction (2023-2025).	
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1.5. UNDP programme under review

10. UNDP started its operations in Yemen since 1960s. During CPD 2012-2015, UNDP focused on upstream policy transitioning, as well as piloting initiatives for potential replicating, such as the 3x6 community-based development approach¹³. The ICPE 2018 found that UNDP adapted to a rapidly and continuously changing country situation and linked humanitarian and development activities under a ‘resilience programme’, which focused on short-term livelihoods stabilization, strengthening people’s resilience and reliance through local economic projects, supporting the capacity of priority public services and contributing to social cohesion. The ICPE 2018 recommended the Country Office (CO) to develop a 2-3 year more comprehensive and integrated programme framework building on the Yemen Resilience Programme, given the absence of a new CPD. This entails a broad partnership extending into security and peacebuilding, engaging more with partners including the UN Resident Coordinator (RC)/Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and the UN Office of the Special Envoy. It also highlighted programming principles such as sustainability and gender equality, conflict prevention and strengthened UN joint programming.¹⁴
11. As recommended by the ICPE Yemen 2018, UNDP Yemen developed a [Country Programme Framework](#) (2019-2021), which was further extended to 2022, and a [Country Strategy Note \(2021-2024\)](#) to provide programming framework and strategic analysis for the country programme. Later, guided by the [United Nations Yemen Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2024](#), the [Country Programme Document \(CPD\) for Yemen 2023-2024](#) was approved by the UNDP Executive Board in September 2022.¹⁵ The CPD was then extended to 2025. In 2023, the CO updated its Strategy Direction (2023-2025) document, refining its programme structure and clarifying areas of focus. To accommodate the rapidly changing context of the country, these strategic documents covered shorter periods than the usual CPD. They all emphasized the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, area-based approach as well as conflict-sensitive programming and adaptive management.

Table 1: UNDP Country Programme Responses and Strategy Documents (2019-2023): numbered documents were listed in chronological order.

¹³ UNDP. 2016. ‘Global toolkit on the 3x6 approach: Building resilience through jobs and livelihoods’, available at: <https://www.undp.org/publications/global-toolkit-3x6-approach-building-resilience-through-jobs-and-livelihoods>. “The 3x6 Approach consists of three organizing principles and six fundamental steps that are implemented in three distinct phases, which aims to support the transition from emergency development efforts (such as ‘cash for work’) to sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable population groups during transition or in crisis or post-crisis contexts (for example, conflict and disaster). The 3x6 approach considers participants as active partners in their own socio-economic recovery and development. This sense of ownership and choice is an essential element of the approach.”

¹⁴ UNDP IEO. 2018. ICPE Yemen.

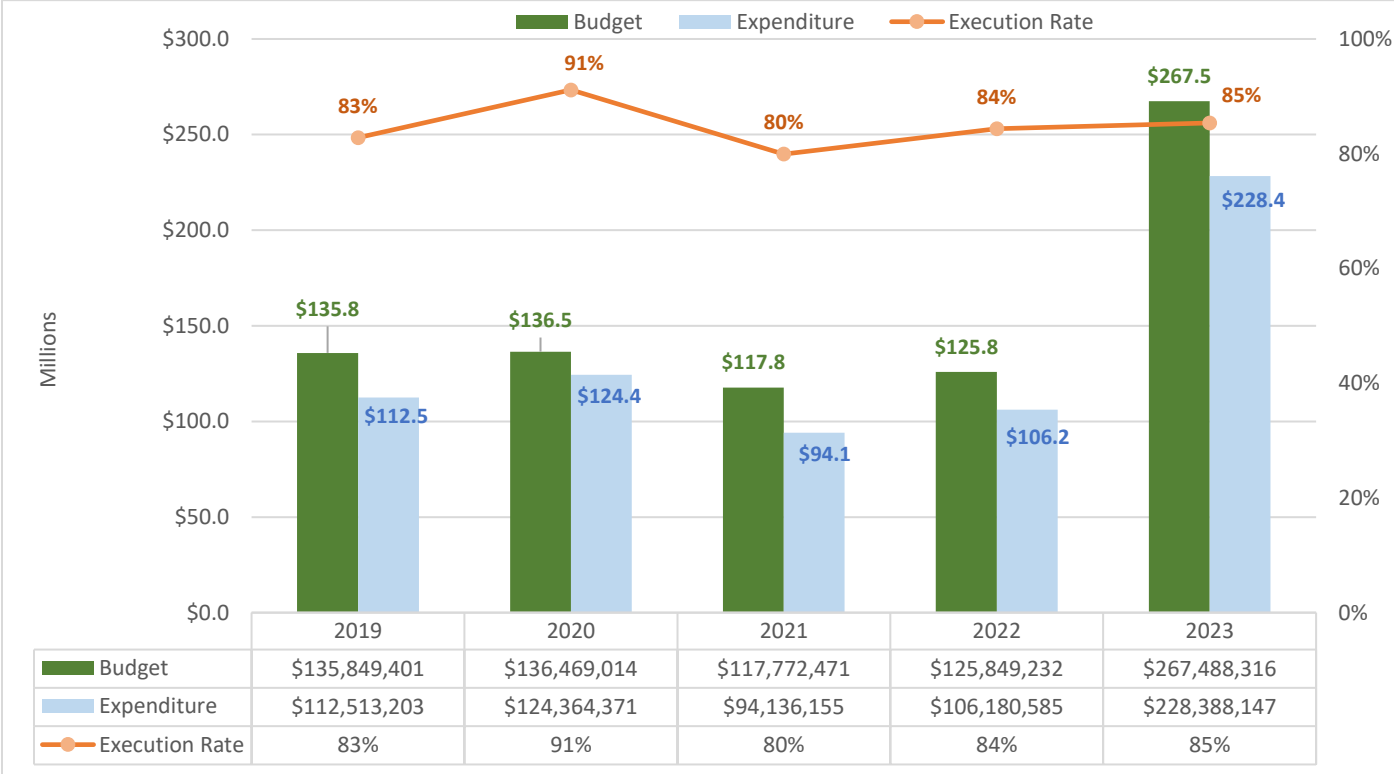
¹⁵ Country programme document for Yemen (2023-2024). DP/DCP/YEM/3, 5 July 2022. The CPD 2023-2024 was then extended to 2025.

1. Country Programme Framework, July 2019-2022	2. Country Strategy Note, July 2021-2022
CPF Outcome 1: Yemenis contribute to and benefit from inclusive, accountable and gender responsive governance, at local and central levels CPF Outcome 2: Yemenis improve their livelihoods and access inclusive productive services. CPF Outcome 3: Yemenis contribute to and benefit from peacebuilding processes.	Programme priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boosting food security and green, inclusive economic development. - Preserving and strengthening Yemen’s subnational governance structures. - Support confidence building measures and national and local peace processes.
3. Country Programme Document 2023-2025 (aligned with three out of four UNSDCF programme outcomes)	4. UNDP Strategic Direction 2023-2025
Priority area/Outcome 1- Better, equal and inclusive access to nutritious food, sustainable and resilient livelihoods, environmental stability <u>through</u> boosted food security and green, inclusive economic recovery and development Priority area/Outcome 2- improved rights-based good governance, effective people-centered, equitable and inclusive gender- and age-responsive public services and rule of law, <u>through</u> strengthened and preserved national and subnational governance structures Priority area/Outcome 3- enhanced confidence in the peace processes, laying the ground for sustainable peace <u>through</u> supported confidence-building measures and national and local peace processes	Development solutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Green economic recovery and development - Governance and peacebuilding - Climate change, water, energy, and the environment

12. This evaluation assessed outcome areas in the CPF and CPD, including 35 projects – 15 for resilient livelihood and economic recovery and development (Outcome 1); 12 for governance and rule of law (Outcome 2), and 10 for peace processes support (Outcome 3) (see Annex 1 and 6). The outcome number used in this ICPE refers to those in the CPD 2023-2025. Of these thematic areas, Outcome 1 was the largest in terms of budget/expenditure, followed by Outcome 3 and Outcome 2. All projects were implemented through a Direct Implementation Modality (DIM), reflecting UNDP’s higher-level involvement. The planned resources for the CPF four-year programme cycle (2019-2022) amounted to \$498.3 million. As of December 2022, the CO had implemented projects worth around \$515.9 million. The overall budget of the CPD 2023-2024 was estimated at \$342.1 million. In terms of expenditure from 2019 to 2023, Outcome 1 accounted for 55 percent of the total expenditure (\$366.0 million), while Outcome 3 reached 33 percent (\$220.7 million), and Outcome 2 amounted to 12 percent (\$79.0 million) (Figure 3). As seen in Figure 2 and 3, in 2023, the programme benefited from a budget allocation of \$267.5 million. This figure is attributed to the peace operations support outcome (Outcome 3), including \$128.8 million mobilized for the “SAFER Salvage Operation”¹⁶.

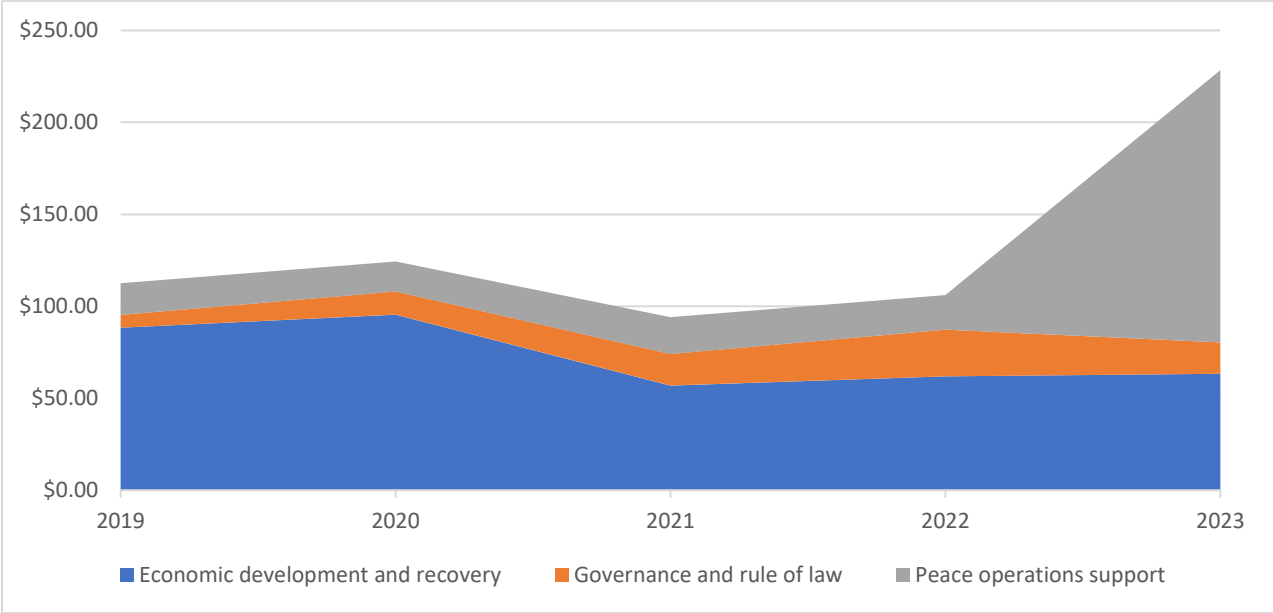
¹⁶ The total of \$128.8 million is the result of expenditures from the PSF Strategic Framework - SAFER Salvage Operation Project (Project ID 00143160) with \$124.6 million, Safer Salvage Operation (Project ID 002000179) with \$0.25 million, and Safer Salvage Operation FSP (Project ID 01000254) with \$3.9 million.

Figure 2. Programme budget, expenditure, and execution rate 2019-2023 (million, US\$)



Source: PowerBi/Atlas & Quantum as of September 2024

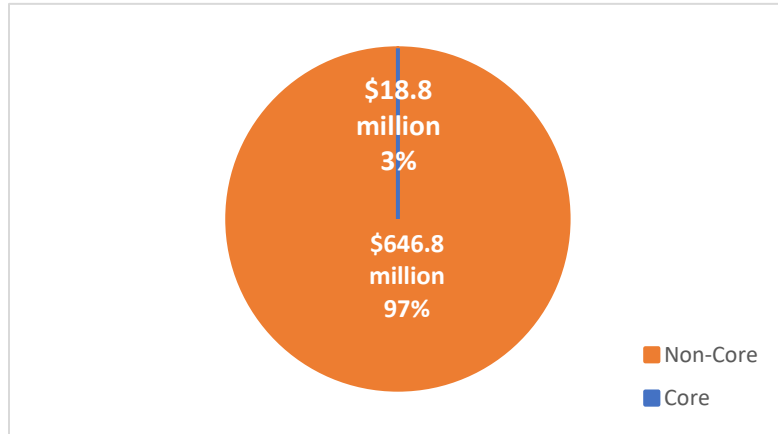
Figure 3. Evolution of programme expenditure 2019-2023 by year and thematic area (million, US\$)



Source: PowerBi/Atlas & Quantum as of September 2024

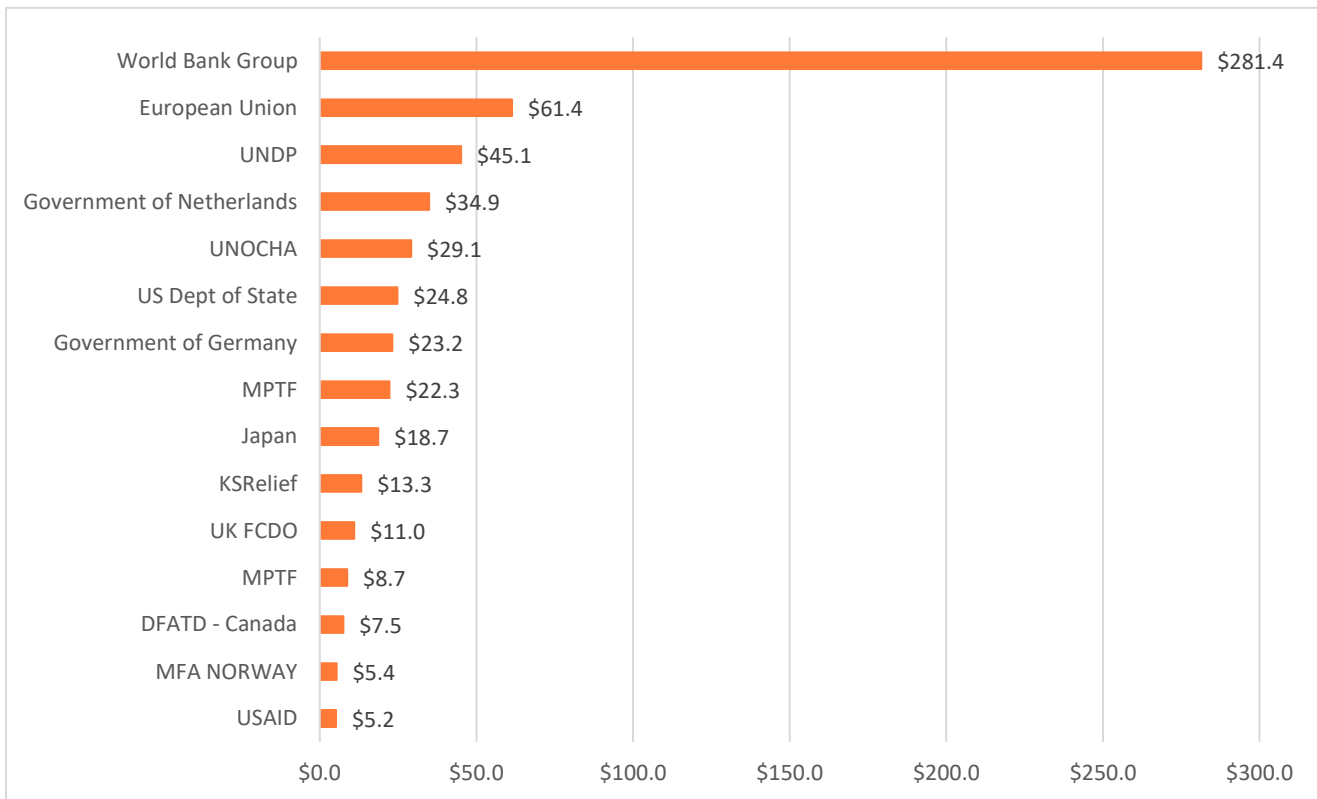
13. UNDP disbursed \$665.6 million between 2019 and 2023, with 3 percent coming from UNDP core resources. Major contributing partners to non-core resources included the World Bank Group (42 percent of expenditures), European Union (9 percent) and the Government of Netherlands (5 percent).

Figure 4. Core vs. non-Core Expenditure, 2019-2023 (Million US\$)



Source: PowerBi/Atlas & Quantum as of September 2024

Figure 5. Major donors, 2019-2023 (Million)



Source: PowerBi/Atlas & Quantum as of September 2024

Chapter 2. Findings

14. This chapter presents the results of the outcome analysis, an assessment of cross-cutting issues, as well as the main factors that influenced UNDP performance. The assessment was based on an analysis of project results, their contribution to the expected outputs, and subsequently to the outcome objectives in combination with non-project results. As the outcome areas have been evolving, findings are organized around thematic areas rather than specific outcomes. Additionally, since the HDP nexus is a key approach for the UNDP country programme, the findings also discuss UNDP's individual and joint efforts in operationalizing this approach. The country programme performance rating is listed in Annex 8.

Programme Reset and Strategic Positioning

Finding 1: Amid a protracted humanitarian crisis and volatile political and security context, UNDP successfully re-engineered an evolving programme and ensured that many of its delivery targets were met, despite significant hindering factors. It invested in strategic planning efforts to ensure the programme's relevance and the implementation's effectiveness.

Operational challenges and hindering factors

Political fragmentation requires sensitive handling to maintain cooperation with northern and southern governorates and ensure donor confidence. **International and regional geopolitical factors**, alongside the **logistical complexities of coordinating with international donors and partners**, add further layers of challenge. **Ensuring safety and security remains one of the most pressing challenges** for Yemeni society and the international actors operating in the country. Despite periods of relative stability, Yemen's **situation remains generally unstable**, threatened by various conflicts at both local and national levels. The recent crises in Gaza and the Red Sea have further exacerbated this instability.

Economic instability, marked by dual currencies and volatile exchange rates, complicates financial transactions, sometimes halting the distribution of funding. **Health and natural disasters**, such as the outbreak of COVID-19, cholera, malaria, and dengue, and heavy rains and flooding, coupled with **low resilience**, persistently hinder support to vulnerable populations, including disrupting intervention planning and implementation, and affecting infrastructure projects and delaying recovery efforts.

Limited accessibility: Implementation clearance and movement and travel permits required from the DFA often lead to delays in project implementation, procurement, and staff recruitment, including crucial positions like demining experts and gender specialists. Additionally, there were interferences related to qualitative data collection tools and beneficiary selection. The imposition of mahram requirements on female national staff significantly disrupts field missions and other critical groundwork. Severe security concerns are another factor limiting access to targeted areas.

Moreover, Yemen's **intricate local dynamics**—characterized by geographic diversity, tribal ties, urban-rural disparities, and socio-political fragmentation—wield influence over local social norms and structure, governance, security, livelihoods, resource allocation, as well as gender roles and experiences, hence requires a tailored approach from UNDP to effectively address varying local contexts and needs.

Local capacities in Yemen are frequently undermined by the underfunded and fragile nature of national institutions, which limits their ability to fully engage in development projects. The local Responsible Partners (RPs) possess valuable insights into the social and cultural dynamics of the region, however, their capacity for quality delivery was often compromised due to a lack of experience, especially in areas requiring substantial capacity building. Moreover, after years of humanitarian assistance, many of these organizations' focus was not development-oriented.

15. Following a break in 2015-2016 due to escalated conflict, UNDP launched the Resilience Programme with an increased annual funding six times higher than before.¹⁷ This scale was maintained, with an average annual budget of over \$128 million between 2019 and 2022. The UNDP programme evolved over time, as reflected in the CPF 2019-2022 and the CPD 2023-2025, along with two 'living' strategy documents developed in 2019 and 2023. This evolving and adaptable nature of UNDP's strategic documents enabled responsive programmatic planning in a highly volatile context.
16. Between 2019 and 2023, the UNDP programme expanded its thematic focus, emphasizing resilient livelihoods and bridging humanitarian, development, and peace efforts (see more in Finding 2 and findings under "UNDP Delivery in Yemen"). Amidst the highly complex and volatile conditions in the country, UNDP continued to deliver a relevant programme and successfully met or exceeded many of its outcome indicators (see Annex 7).
17. In 2023, building on previous efforts, UNDP launched a series of strategic initiatives to refine its programmatic vision and assess its operational readiness, to ensure an effective response to emerging contexts and needs. These efforts represented a strategic advancement in UNDP's direction in the country, including the updated 2023 Strategic Direction document, which was developed in collaboration with partners and donors. In addition, an internal review was conducted by UNDP BMS, engaging the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS), to evaluate business processes and functional structure through an "Operational Scan" (see more in Finding 12 on operational effectiveness). These exercises were followed by a country office functional re-alignment process to ensure operational fulfillment.¹⁸ In addition to the overall strategic visioning exercise, informed by studies on the country context, past experience, and stakeholder consultations, specific strategies and approaches were developed to guide various areas of work. These include a Strategy on Climate Change, Energy, and Environment (2023)¹⁹; A Private Sector Engagement Strategy 2024-2026 (2024); and an Advocacy and Communications Plan (2024).

Finding 2. UNDP's programme demonstrated efforts towards a humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus approach by addressing development and peace elements and collaborating with various actors. It played an active role in UNCT joint efforts and emerged as one of the few actors in the UN system capable of applying all HDP dimensions at scale.

¹⁷ ICPE 2018. The budget was increased from \$18 million in 2015 to \$114 million in 2017.

¹⁸ This ICPE covers the period from 2019 to October 2023; therefore, it could not fully assess the consequences of these exercises, as they extend beyond its time scope. As a result, any results arising from these exercises after this period remain outside the current evaluation's purview.

¹⁹ This strategy lays out three priority pillars for 2023-2027, including clean sustainable energy, climate resilience, and nature conservation.

The Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus²⁰

The HDP nexus is **an evolving concept** that has increasingly gained high-level policy commitment, reflecting a consensus that protracted crises need to be addressed **holistically** and not solely as a humanitarian endeavour.

Following the outcomes of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, and subsequent elaboration by the UN Secretary-General, the HDP nexus is intended to ensure strong cooperation, collaboration and coordination among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts at the national level.

Challenges of the HDP nexus programming include:

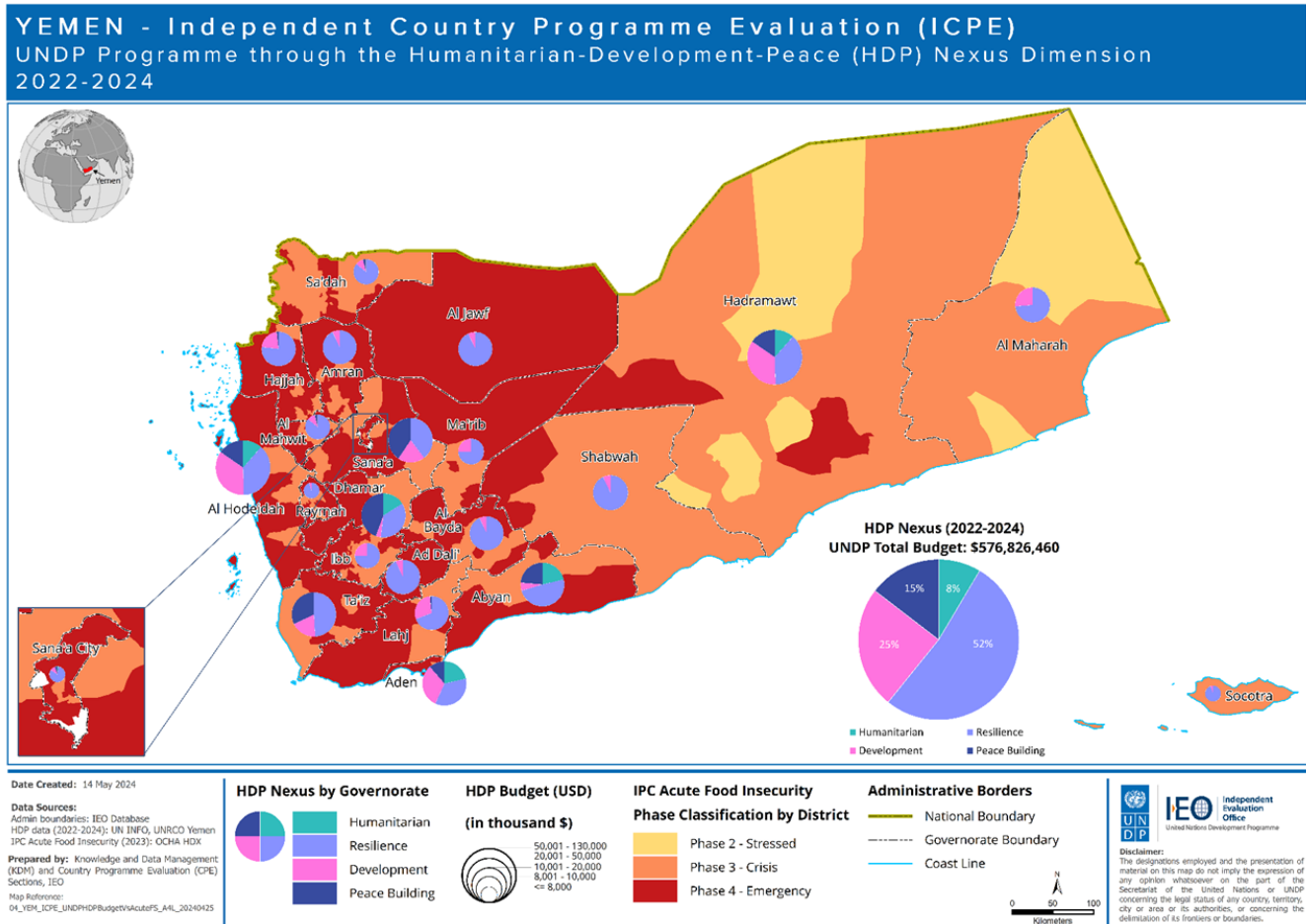
- Despite policy commitments, the HDP nexus has yet to be fully translated into concrete operational guidance. There are substantial differences in how different actors view and conceptualise the nexus, including its linkages with other frameworks/concepts, such as “resilience”.
- “P” is a relatively new element in the nexus: it has largely not yet been integrated into the strategies, tools, assessments, partnership guidelines and existing theories of change in humanitarian and development organizations.

As of March 2024, the OECD DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus (2019) was adhered to by all 32 OECD DAC members and seven UN agencies, including UNDP. According to the UNDP Evaluation of UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021, **UNDP could have three roles around the nexus**: (a) acting as a bridge between humanitarian, development and peace actors in fragile/crisis situations, (b) working towards ‘ending need’ by scaling up development and peace programming so that humanitarian responses are no longer required, and (c) helping develop financing strategies (bringing together international, national, public and private finance) for nexus approaches.

18. UNDP’s programme exemplified a strong commitment to the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus approach by integrating development and peace initiatives and fostering extensive collaboration with diverse stakeholders. UNDP programme addressed immediate humanitarian needs while focusing on building resilience to lay the foundations for sustainable development. It explored development and peace-related initiatives, aiming for a holistic and longer-term approach (see Figure 6 below and Annex 9 on UNDP’s role in the Humanitarian Response Clusters and the HDP nexus). For example, some projects that cover all 22 governorates focused on crisis responses through cash for work/nutrition and infrastructure, and financial and technical support for smallholders and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). They were meant to enhance food security and access to basic services and promote green energy and climate-smart agriculture production. UNDP also pioneered gender-responsive local governance for economic recovery and local multi-partnership to improve access to justice. In addition to mine actions and rehabilitation of key seaports in both IRG and DFA-controlled areas, it supported civil society organizations, including a gender network, community dialogues and community protection groups for local safety and peacebuilding.

²⁰ OECD (2024). Report on the implementation, dissemination and continued relevance of the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus ; Morinière, L and Morrison-Métois, S: ‘Working across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus: What can we learn from evaluations?’ ODI/ALNAP 2023, p.7. <https://alnapp.org/humanitarian-resources/publications-and-multimedia/working-across-the-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus-what-can-we-learn-from-evaluations/>; OECD (2022). The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Interim Progress Review. UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (2021). Evaluation of UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021. <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/9528>; <https://www.undp.org/crisis/humanitarian-development-and-peace-nexus>

Figure 6. UNDP Programme through the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus Dimension



Source: HDP Budget (2022-2024), UN INFO, UNRCO Yemen. IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification, People in Need 2023, OCHA HDX

19. To better understand and respond to the complex context, UNDP conducted several in-depth studies. These included three publications in the 'Impact of War' series, which assessed the impact of the conflict on Yemen and were released between 2019 and 2021²¹; The Impact of Climate Change on Human Development in Yemen (2023), to better understand Yemen's possible climate future and how climate change could affect economic and human development in the long run; and Measuring Multidimensional Poverty in Yemen (2024). These studies informed the development of UNDP's programme direction and enriched related discussions, contributing to UNDP's active role in promoting sustainable development and advancing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus in the country.
20. Informed by studies, previous efforts, and consultations with partners, the Strategy Direction for 2023-2025 emphasized the interdependency of thematic areas, aiming to push the programme in an integrated and intersectional way. The Strategy refined the outcome areas, such as the merging of "governance and peacebuilding". It emphasized green and inclusive economic development beyond short-term livelihood creation as well as "development solutions on internal displacement". It marked a significant planning and programming investment in "climate adaptation, water, energy and the environment". Additionally, it aims to deepen and

²¹ Assessing the Impact of War on Development in Yemen (2019); Assessing the Impact of War in Yemen on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2019); and Assessing the Impact of War in Yemen: Pathways for Recovery (2021).

broaden partnerships with civil society and the private sector. In addition, the CO plans to continue exploring interventions on mine action, security sector reform, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), as well as prevention of violent extremism (PVE). This reorientation continues to underscore UNDP's HDP approach in addressing the multi-dimensional crisis in Yemen by emphasizing scaling up sustainable development and peace-related programming.

21. Transitioning from humanitarian assistance to sustainable development has been increasingly expressed and discussed by various international and national stakeholders, including donors and the IRG and DFA members. The emphasis on the HDP nexus has also been reflected in recent years' Humanitarian Response Plans. However, the operationalization of such a shift is not yet a reality. There has been a notable expectation for UNDP to step up and promote sustainable development in a holistic and long-term fashion.
22. UNDP played an active role in the humanitarian and development frameworks for the country, which are crucial for the formation of a cohesive system-wide HDP approach. UNDP participated in the preparation of the Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNOs) and the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs), promoting the transition to the HDP nexus approach. Under the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), working with other UN organizations, UNDP co-chairs the Programme Management Team (PMT) and the Operations Management Team (OMT), working with other UN . Within the PMT, UNDP leads two UNSDCF results groups and chairs a team on Monitoring & Evaluation.²² Furthermore, UNDP co-chairs working groups in the Yemen Partner Technical Team (YPTT) created by the donor community, to coordinate issues on "food security and livelihoods", "water", "climate change and environment", and "peace, security, and governance".²³ In 2022, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNDP organized a one-week HDP Nexus Workshop, focusing on food security and livelihoods. The workshop engaged stakeholders including the representatives from the IRG, DFA, international and local NGOs, the UN Country Team (UNCT), and donors, and facilitated the understanding and promotion of the HDP approach in the country. In 2024, UNDP developed area-based development programming guidelines for the UNCT to support a joint area-based approach.
23. UNDP worked with the UN Resident Coordinator Office (UNRCO) and the UN Country Team (UNCT), on joint projects and initiatives. It partnered with FAO, WFP and ILO on rural resilience enhancement and climate-smart agriculture to improve livelihoods and strengthen food security. It collaborated with UNFPA on gender-based violence (GBV), and strategized internal displacement issues with UNRCO, UNHCR and IOM. In collaboration with the World Bank, UNDP operated large resilience-oriented projects, reaching out to all 22 governorates.
24. In addition to joint projects/initiatives, under the Peace Support Facility framework, a special operation on the Safer tanker project demonstrated UNDP's political savvy, coordination and integrator role in complex circumstances. UNDP, alongside its Country Office, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Yemen (OSESGY), and UNRCO, played a crucial role in averting a potential environmental catastrophe by salvaging the oil tanker FSO Safer off Yemen's coast. The FSO Safer, a 47-year-old oil storage vessel, had been neglected and at risk of rupturing, posing a significant threat of an oil spill and ecological disaster in the Red Sea due to its deteriorating condition and the 1.1 million barrels of oil onboard. This initiative underscored the importance of preemptive measures and international cooperation in safeguarding both local ecosystems and the global

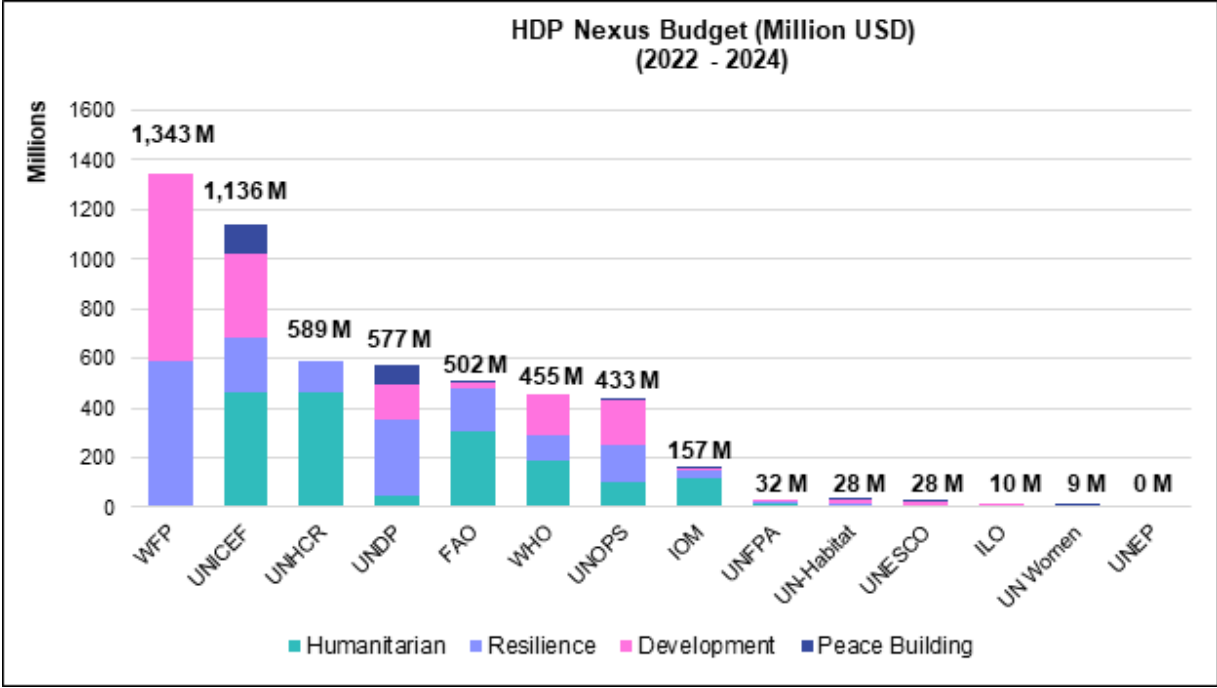
²² ROAR 2023.

²³ UNDP Strategic Direction 2023-2025. The donor community created the Yemen Partner Technical Team (YPTT) in 2022, as a technical forum and implementation arm of the Yemen Partner Group (YPG) to address coordination needs and foster coherence across the HDP nexus. Working groups were established to ensure coordination at the working and technical levels, co-chaired by the UN and donors. UNDP co-chairs the Water Sector Working Group (with Germany), the Peace, Security and Governance Working Group (with the United Kingdom), and the Food Security and Livelihoods Working Group (with the World Bank and FAO). UNDP also drove the establishment of a Climate Change and Environment sub-group under the Water Sector Working Group, as well as a Local Governance sub-group under the Peace, Security and Governance Working Group.

shipping economy, particularly near critical routes like the Bab al-Mandab Strait.²⁴ The operation successfully transferred the oil to a safer vessel in 2023, which involved extensive political efforts, fundraising, and planning. UNDP’s role in facilitating and coordinating complex operations in political sensitivity was highly commended by partners.

25. Additionally, UNDP emerged as one of the few actors covering all dimensions of the HDP nexus (see Figures 7 and Annex 9 on UNDP’s role in the Humanitarian Response Clusters and the HDP nexus). This comprehensive coverage offers opportunities to collaborate with various actors.

Figure 7. UNCT budget in HDP nexus dimension (2022-2024)



Source: Data were provided by UNRCO which were self-reported by UNCT in 2022. The budget allocation data for humanitarian, resilience, development, and peacebuilding efforts reflect varying interpretations of these dimensions within the HDP nexus.

26. In general, there were still insufficient strategic collaborations on the ground towards a joint HDP nexus approach among various HDP actors in the country, although ongoing and upcoming joint efforts were noted. For example, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP were jointly planning a social protection programme, including one intervention area on mainstreaming social protection in the HDP nexus. UNDP was engaged with UNCT and Yemen Partnership Group on joint initiatives, including piloting area-based approach in Taiz, coordinated by the UNRCO.

²⁴ UN Prevents Catastrophic Oil Spill. <https://www.undp.org/publications/un-prevents-catastrophic-oil-spill-red-sea-critical-work-continues>. However, the Safer still poses risks due to remaining oil, requiring an additional \$22 million to finalize the mission, which involves safely mooring the replacement vessel to a buoy and towing the Safer to a green recycling yard.

UNDP Delivery in Yemen

Resilience and Recovery

Finding 3 (Livelihood and resilience): The UNDP programme focused predominantly on multi-sectoral resilience-oriented interventions, represented by the World Bank funded projects. The assistance was well-received by local communities, particularly for its needs-based approach that generated temporary livelihoods through cash transfers for community assets. Whether resilience was achieved was inconclusive without proper data.

Work in a multifaceted-crisis and least-developed context

Yemen is not suffering from a single emergency but a number of complex emergencies.²⁵ As mentioned, Yemen has been suffering from high multidimensional poverty and multiple conflicts for decades. The current conflict exacerbated the already dire social-economic conditions in Yemen. In 2024, some 17.6 million people were estimated to need food and agriculture assistance, 17.8 million people need support to access critical health services, and 17.4 million people require support to access clean water and meet basic sanitation needs. The war has caused massive internal displacement with approximately 4.56 million. It is estimated that around 80 percent of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) are women and children, with 26 percent of displaced households headed by women. IDP population has decreased since a peak in mid-2022 following the truce, however climate-related displacement is on the rise.²⁶

As indicated in the *Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Yemen Crisis (2022)*, “more long-term investment in economic opportunities – ‘sustainable livelihoods’ – is urgently needed, including resilience-building at household and community levels.”

27. Projects under the livelihood and economic recovery outcome were designed to address the multiple urgent needs, combining humanitarian and resilience, and to a lesser extent, local MSMEs and market revitalization. The projects funded by the World Bank and delivered by the national institutions (namely, Social Fund for Development (SFD), Public Works Project (PWP), and Small and Micro Enterprise Promotion Service (SMEPS)) marked the largest component in this outcome in terms of budget and scope. The interventions successfully extended to all 22 governorates, covering up to over 95 percent of the country’s districts. They enabled scaled immediate assistance, covering areas and populations most in need. With thousands of sub-projects involved, cash transfers (cash for work/nutrition/social services, etc.) comprised the interventions’ cornerstone. For instance, the budget allocated on community livelihoods/short-term income generation/labor-intensive work was more than 50 percent of this Outcome total from 2016-2022 based on ICPE team’s calculation. Such interventions broadened the approach to addressing urgent humanitarian needs by incorporating resilience enhancement.
28. Projects provided cash to individuals and households, rehabilitating social assets and infrastructure related to social services and agriculture through community contracting²⁷. Women, youth, and IDP/returnees were specifically aimed for, with thresholds set (i.e. 30 percent, 20 percent, and 30 percent for each group respectively), and at times, this also encompassed the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Interventions covered various elements, including nutrition, road stone pavements, agricultural land protection, water supply and sanitation, irrigation, health, education, and women’s empowerment.

²⁵ Lackner Helen, *Yemen in Crisis: The Road to War*, Verso, London and New York, 2019.

²⁶ Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024, January 2024.

²⁷ Community contracting refers to hiring and paying local community members to improve their own infrastructure and using local resources as much as possible.

29. Expected results were generally achieved, notably in terms of the populations benefitting from cash transfers. According to the third-party monitoring (TPM) reports and the ICPE field data collection, most cash received was used for food consumption. Building or rehabilitation of small-scale infrastructure also enabled better access to basic social services. The majority of beneficiaries were satisfied with the short-term employment opportunities and the key service delivery through restored small-scale infrastructures. There were stories that some households were able to apply longer-term income generation methods benefitting from the cash transfer assistance. In general, these subprojects addressed the local needs and contexts, which was confirmed by consulted stakeholders and beneficiaries.²⁸ Community members noted increased ownership of community assets, attributing this to the community contracting approach and the establishment or reactivation of local committees responsible for asset maintenance.
30. Various project components attempted to create interconnected interventions. For example, some cash-for-work (CfW) and financial access to MSMEs assistance came along with capacity building. Training sessions and capacity building measures, including those dealing with planning, management, conflict resolution, sustainable income generation, technical skills for increased agricultural output, soft skills for women, and small business development, aimed to fortify community networks, thereby aiding local resilience and economic recovery. Despite these efforts, capacity building had a limited impact on fostering systemic and longer-term social protection and sustainable income generation, primarily due to limited budget and scope.
31. In general, project output indicators tended to prioritize the number of beneficiaries without adequately considering the potential changes brought by the interventions. Although third-party monitoring reports included some questions, such as satisfaction levels, the current monitoring and evaluation framework could not sufficiently capture systemic longer-term change and impact. The ICPE team was informed that an impact assessment is planned for the World Bank-funded projects, which also aims to serve as a basis for longer-term intervention.²⁹

Finding 4 (Smallholders and SMEs Revitalization): Interventions were designed to support smallholders and SMEs, which improved their access to funding and financial services and supported business opportunities, including for women. In particular, some projects were innovative, incorporating considerations for comprehensive livelihood, such as value chains and local economic planning. But a broader development pathway is missing to connect the dots which could limit the scale-up and sustainability of the programme.

Livelihood promotion and economic stabilization

The conflict in Yemen has led to the weakening of the Yemeni institutions and sharply impacted the economy of the country. Less than 50 percent of the total population has access to sustainable livelihoods. The lack of

²⁸ CO commissioned evaluations acknowledged that a majority of beneficiaries were satisfied with the overall interventions. For instance, according to the 2020 annual progress report of the Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project (YECRP), the activities undertaken under the WASH component (equipment of six water networks with solar energy, construction of stone water tank in Dhamar, rehabilitation of water network) led to a high satisfaction among beneficiaries thanks to a better and easier access to water. A group of women were satisfied with awareness sessions on safeguard measures and GRM. Community members in Aden, Ibb and Lahj also expressed satisfaction following a better engagement in productive works. Local authority representative in Hajr district, Hadhramaut governorate, confirmed that the activity of rehabilitating and cleaning agriculture channels was a top priority of the farmers in the area. In the same way, participants in Ash Shamaytin district, Taiz governorate, expressed their satisfaction for considering their area with road paving. However, they highlighted the importance of implementing some missing aspects such as building some culverts as well as protection fences. In Tarim district, Hadhramaut governorate, BNFs noted the importance of the protection and paving of flood drains subproject implemented in their area. This subproject aims to mitigate pollution caused by stagnant water after rainfall and protect people's properties from flood danger. Additionally, it will improve citizen mobility in the area. A school principal in Taiz stated that the water harvest tank implemented in his school met urgent needs as his school was without bathrooms for a decade affecting hundreds of students and teachers.

²⁹ Impact evaluation was launched but was paused in 2024 due to the prevailing situation.

economic opportunities is seen as the main reason behind declining livelihoods, followed by suspension of salaries and inflation. The absence of economic opportunities and the high proportion of youth among total population (60 percent), make livelihood promotion an urgent matter. In addition, only 15 percent among non-agricultural professional and technical workers were women.³⁰

The private sector played a pivotal role in mitigating the economic downturn by sustaining domestic food production and the importation of essential goods, and compensating for the lack or inadequacy of basic services traditionally provided by the government, such as infrastructure, energy, food, water, health, and education. It has maintained private employment and absorbed a significant proportion of public sector servants (69.4 percent). The private sector in Yemen has the potential to contribute to the country recovery and economic stabilization. Yet the private sector was fragilized due to the country context and the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) were the most impacted, while they were also deeply connected with the communities' local livelihoods.³¹

32. Several projects addressed the resilience and revitalization of the smallholders and SMEs, though with a smaller scale compared with the cash transfer assistance. Interventions focused on improving access to funding and financial services, and providing vocational and business skills training and promoting sustainable agriculture, fisheries and other practices.³² The interventions included financial and technical assistance, skills and vocational trainings for women and youth, revitalization of local markets and value chains, and comprehensive support for the fishery sector with long-term development goals. This demonstrated UNDP's commitment to leveraging local resources for economic recovery, and aligns with the Phase II of the UNDP 3x6 approach, going beyond urgent needs and temporary employments to enterprise development, to "support diversification of livelihoods opportunities and employment or self-employment".³³
33. According to field data³⁴, these efforts enhanced economic resilience, increased income, and improved productivity, including in the agriculture and fisheries sectors. For example, thousands of SMEs burdened by bank debts were supported, bolstering their financial resilience. Smallholders such as farmers, livestock owners, fishermen, and beekeepers were supported with grants in 19 governorates to revitalize their livelihoods, with many reported improved productivities. SMEs support helped many businesses reach a break-even point and become profitable. Grants to several microfinance institutions (MFIs) significantly reduced credit costs for end-users, with most beneficiaries seeing an approximate 80 percent increase in profits. Some projects facilitated business start-ups and expansions, and vocational and business skills trainings were provided to rural youth and women to improve employability and encourage entrepreneurship, contributing to the economic empowerment of beneficiaries. According to a prior evaluation, majority of the trainees opened their businesses and increased household income.³⁵ This demonstrated the effectiveness of skills training and business support in stimulating local economic activity. Business revitalization activities were focused on smallholders and SMEs, with attention

³⁰ OCHA et al, (IOM, UNHCR), MCLA Comprehensive Report 2018, January 2019. See Ministry of Planning & International Cooperation Economic Studies & Forecasting Sector. (2020). Yemen 2020 Socio-Economic, Issue (51) August 2020. Yemen Labour Force Survey 2013-2014, Republic of Yemen, ILO, March 2015. ERRY II EU Evaluation, 2021.

³¹ World Bank (2023). Yemen - Connecting the Yemeni Private Sector to the World (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099032024141038420/P17763112a6d5d0a518fdc1db18e0368bfd>

³² These include the Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project (YECRP), Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen (ERRY), Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project (YECRP), Strengthen Institutional & Economic Resilience in Yemen (SIERY), and Vocational and Business Skills Training and Support Project (VBSTSP).

³³ UNDP. 2016. 'Global toolkit on the 3x6 approach: Building resilience through jobs and livelihoods', available at: <https://www.undp.org/publications/global-toolkit-3x6-approach-building-resilience-through-jobs-and-livelihoods>.

³⁴ Such as third-party monitoring reports, evaluations and impact assessment.

³⁵ The Vocational and Business Skills Training and Support project. According to the project evaluation, 77% of the beneficiaries reported opening their own businesses and 87% reported increased income.

paid to empowering women and youth. Examples showed that women and youth were targeted and engaged in the planning and implementation, and their specific needs were considered.³⁶

34. UNDP also piloted several initiatives. For instance, multi-agency joint programming with FAO, ILO and WFP on the Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen (ERRY) project (3 phases) focusing on the resilience of rural communities, which reported positive results in income improvement among sampled beneficiaries. UNDP also leveraged resources from different donors for the fishery sector, focusing on the entire value chain and incorporating rehabilitation, training, and collaborations across sectors for comprehensive livelihood, job creation and food security support. In the Strengthening Institutional and Economic Resilience in Yemen (SIERY) project, in addition to value chain investment³⁷, public infrastructure (like building markets) and grants to small and medium enterprises, UNDP focused on enhancing the capabilities and frameworks of local authorities and private sector players for collaborative local economic planning (see finding 7). This included training in local economic development for local authorities and establishing Local Economic Development Councils. Additionally, some projects integrated renewable energy initiatives, particularly solar solutions, to meet public service energy needs and promote climate-resilient livelihoods, showcasing a multifaceted approach to sustainable development and economic recovery (see finding 5).
35. Challenges or concerns included interventions being supply-driven with limited comprehensive local economy and market assessments in the planning phases, as well as limited MSMEs' access to broader markets, restraining the potential for them to sustain and expand in the long run. Additional follow-up support was requested by beneficiaries, which could assist their effective market integration and sustain their gains. It was noted that the coordination among various stakeholders, including UN and international organizations, government bodies and local partners, was suboptimal, which affected the efficiency and impact of the efforts. Other individual concerns included improvement in beneficiary selection, emphasizing the importance of ensuring transparency of targeting; the training content not necessarily adapted to local context/market demand or personal preference, and the lack of financial support after the training.
36. While the immediate results were generally positive, it is not clear how this small-scale and diverse support can affect positively the overall livelihoods of the smallholders and SMEs, and how these efforts contribute to broader food security, job creation, and local market and economic recovery. While these projects were designed to address important needs in Yemen, they were not yet grounded in a clear development pathway for private sector revitalization and economic recovery.³⁸

Finding 5: Through a phased approach, UNDP promoted the use of renewable energy, linking solar energy to improved services, better living conditions, and enhanced employment and business opportunities. The results were positive, though with sustainability challenges.

Livelihood and solar empowerment

The crisis has resulted in a total lack of electricity from the national grid and consequently, all the basic facilities, the schools house and the other productive assets have to depend on other alternative source of energy. The national grid collapsed as the war broke out in 2014 and has still been malfunctioning.³⁹ The subsequent fuel shortages led to long electricity blackouts. In response to this main challenge, few projects (such as Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen (ERRY), Social Protection for Community Resilience Project (SPCRP), and Renewable Energy Improve Access to Health Services and Livelihood Opportunities (HEAL) Project) addressed the need to

improve access to renewable energy sources, in particular, through solar system empowerment. Additionally, in 2024, UNDP released the National Mixed Renewable Energy Investment Plan in 2024, aimed at positioning the Country Office to prepare bankable projects in the coming years and to attract funding from various sources.

38. Efforts were made to enhance access to renewable energy, particularly solar power, for instance, for basic healthcare facilities, and ice production and energy generation for fishery facilities.⁴⁰ The ERRY project progressed through three phases, each building upon the previous phase to enhance access to renewable energy, improve public services, and foster income-generation opportunities. It demonstrated a pivotal shift from merely providing service delivery to improving livelihoods, with a focus on vulnerable groups including women and youth.
39. ERRY I and II enabled the provision of solar systems to public facilities, schools and health centers, including the distribution of solar vaccination refrigerators, and the establishment of micro-businesses. During ERRY II, trainings were provided to women in solar engineering, empowering them to operate solar panels and distribute solar electricity. This women-led and run business has been running since 2020.⁴¹ This phase also explored waste-to-energy solutions, water desalination, and the recycling of plastics, marking a significant move towards diverse renewable energy sources and sustainability. ERRY III is characterized by the scale-up of the Solar Inventers online platform for nationwide renewable energy programming, the activation of a gender-balanced Solar Working Group at Sana'a and Aden hubs, the capacity building of public service representatives on operation and maintenance of solar service provision, and the initiation of a comprehensive energy needs assessment.
40. According to the ERRY II impact assessment, the highest percentage increase in income among beneficiaries was among the technicians, who were supported with solar micro-grid businesses (100 percent), followed by technicians trained in the installation and operation of solar energy (93 percent). This demonstrated the potential for longer-term self-reliance. Considering its technical complexity, the project sometimes encountered delays due to the time needed to identify implementing partners. In addition, there was a lack of efforts for safe disposal/recycling of solar panels and their related materials.

Finding 6: To a limited extent, UNDP interventions addressed natural resource management, climate change, and their links to agricultural productivity.⁴² The focus was mainly on capacity-building activities and infrastructure for water and land protection, as well as on improving water availability and access. UNDP also

³⁶ For example, in Hadramout, a training program was established for young women interested in tailoring and embroidery, equipping them with the skills to start their own businesses in the textile industry. A group of young entrepreneurs in Aden received seed grants to launch a local bakery, focusing on traditional Yemeni bread. This initiative not only provided employment for the youth involved but also supported local food security. A partnership with a local microfinance institution enabled women who completed vocational training in beekeeping to access small loans. These loans were used to purchase beekeeping supplies, helping them to establish their own honey production businesses. Women from coastal communities were involved in the design of a project that aimed to improve the preservation and marketing of fish products. Their input led to the development of a community-led fish drying and packaging facility. Recognizing the restrictions on women's mobility in some areas, a mobile training unit was deployed to rural communities, offering women training in agricultural best practices and small-scale livestock management without them having to travel far from home. The 2,693 entrepreneurs trained included 1,185 that had been selected by the UNDP 3x6 project. About 50% of the beneficiaries were illiterate – especially women – and could have not fully exploited the classroom teaching (ERRY I evaluation).

³⁷ Such as handmade textiles, dates, fish processing, henna, health, honey, and wheat.

³⁸ The ICPE team was informed that UNDP is working with ILO on the labour market assessment.

³⁹ Conflict and Environment Observatory. April 2021. Report: Groundwater Depletion Clouds Yemen's Solar Energy Revolution. Available at: <https://ceobs.org/groundwater-depletion-clouds-yemens-solar-energy-revolution/>.

⁴⁰ Such as Social Protection for Community Resilience Project (SPCRP) and (Sustainable Fishery Development in Red Sea and Gulf of Aden) SFISH projects.

⁴¹ In this regard, a success story has even been presented at the COP27 and one woman has been selected as one of the most influential women over 100 by the BBC.

⁴² A few projects explicitly deal with natural resources management, such as the Yemen Stabilisation Project (YSP), the Yemen Food Security Response and Resilience Project (YFSRRP), the Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project (YECRP) and the Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen (ERRY) projects (I, II and III).

contributed to mitigating and preventing water-related conflicts in the targeted areas by strengthening water resource accessibility and management. Nevertheless, support for the continued functionality of these facilities was overlooked.

Water-related natural resource management and climate change

Yemen faces tremendous challenges related to climate change and access to natural resources, such as water. Climate change, water scarcity and land conflict are likely to exacerbate the existing conflict drivers. Yemen is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world. Climate change is expected to further decrease the availability of water through reduced rainfall and increased evaporation. This scarcity could exacerbate existing conflicts over water resources, as communities and tribes compete for limited supplies. Yemen also relies heavily on agriculture, which is vulnerable to changing weather patterns. Increased temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns can lead to crop failures and reduced agricultural productivity. This not only threatens food security but also the livelihoods of many Yemenis, potentially leading to increased poverty and social unrest. The economic toll of climate change in Yemen can be profound, given its already fragile economy. Damage to infrastructure due to extreme weather events, loss of agricultural productivity, and increased health care costs can strain the country's financial resources. Climate change can lead to displacement as people are forced to move due to water scarcity, crop failures, or extreme weather events. This displacement can increase tensions in areas where resources are already scarce, potentially leading to conflict.

41. A Water Availability in Yemen study was published in 2022, featuring existing knowledge on water resources, identifying knowledge gaps and proposing recommendations to improve water resources management. The study highlighted the needs to address three wadi catchments (Abyan Delta, Hadhramaut, and Rima/Siham). Several projects rehabilitated water infrastructure and irrigation networks, enhancing water availability and access for both drinking and agricultural use, and provided targeted training for climate resilience and adaptation.⁴³ They also pioneered climate-smart agricultural practices and resilient water management techniques. A project evaluation⁴⁴ revealed improvements in water access and management, which positively affected the agricultural sector by reducing water consumption.
42. In addition, efforts were made on water governance to prevent and reduce water conflict⁴⁵, in an ecologically and culturally appropriate way, bringing together conflict management with water infrastructure development. Informant sessions on disaster risk reduction awareness and preparedness, early-warning training, water resource management, women's involvement in Water User Associations (WUAs) and Water Resource Management (WRM) were held. Conflict management workshops were also organized, which addressed small-scale water conflicts with local stakeholders and WUA members.⁴⁶ Administrative, financial and other essential skills trainings were provided for WUAs. Ten disputes were chosen for mediation and resolution in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, which also necessitated rehabilitation efforts. These interventions not only resolved the disputes but also offered broad benefits to the beneficiary farmers. For instance, the irrigation channels were at risk of overflow and clogging due to debris, which disrupted the water distribution, causing unequal access and resulting in conflicts. In Abyan Delta, the UNDP's timely support was valued, coming when the local community grappled with budget constraints for managing floodwaters, alongside infrastructure maintenance challenges and a scarcity

⁴³ Such as YECRP, YFSRRP,ERRY, projects.

⁴⁴ YECRP 2019 evaluation.

⁴⁵ FAO Resilience Programme in the Irrigation and Agricultural Sector project; Enhancing Resilience Through Sustainable Water Resource Management project.

⁴⁶ FAO RESILIENCE PROGRAMME IN THE IRRIGATION AND AGRICULTURAL SECTOR PROGRESS REPORT JUL – DEC 2022

of necessary machinery. The assistance instituted a fair water distribution system, which played a crucial role in quelling tensions by providing equitable water access to involved farmers.⁴⁷

43. In general, interventions primarily emphasized improving water access and availability through infrastructure, while less on resource management and sustainable agricultural practices, though some of these areas are included for future programming. For example, the final evaluation of the ERRY I showed that, although the project's focus was not on natural resource conservation, the project missed the opportunity to apply a systematic approach for the conservation of natural resources or reduction of pollution. This observation is consistent with the ICPE interviews. The establishment of an awareness committee and the creation of WUAs and WUGs demonstrated progress in building local capacity and encouraging community ownership. However, concerns about the sustainability of these projects were prominent, with stakeholders emphasizing the need for maintenance tools and resources to ensure the continued functionality of water and irrigation systems, and adequate trainings to communities on its use and maintenance.

Local Governance

Finding 7: Some projects demonstrated potential scaling-up models linking support for service delivery and livelihood and recovery to local governance at sub-district and district levels, enhancing ownership and governance capacity for local resilience and development. Stakeholders were satisfied with the participatory and locally sensitive approach. Significant delays occurred, especially in the DFA-controlled areas, mainly due to restrictive operating space.

Local authorities in different regions in Yemen operate under various local governance traditions (i.e., modes of community representation), political allegiances, capacity constraints, resources, and needs. In DFA-controlled areas, there is a stricter hierarchy between central and local authorities. In IRG-controlled areas, ongoing fragmentation has led to a shift from the center to the regions. Some regions, particularly in the southern and eastern parts of the country, are functioning de facto independently.⁴⁸

44. Given the different contexts, supporting and strengthening local institutions is a critical building block for public service delivery and local economic recovery. UNDP's local governance approach mainly focused on livelihood and economic recovery and service delivery. For instance, community committees were established to manage and maintain rehabilitated community assets and committee members were trained in this regard. Capacity building was provided to the implementing partners with the activities related to restoring service delivery by strengthening the capacities of local authorities for planning, coordination, and monitoring. In addition, UNDP worked with local authorities at the district and governorate levels. In particular, ERRY and SIERY projects included local governance as a key component, with ERRY, using SFD's Tamkeen ("empowerment") methodology to support local resilience and development plan led by Village Cooperative Councils (VCCs) in selected rural areas, and SIERY at the district level in selected rural/peri-urban/urban areas focusing on improving the social contract by a model of sequenced "capacity development - district development planning - grants for public service priorities". Local authorities and communities were motivated to conduct local planning.
45. Through ERRY projects, Sub-District Development Committees were established, VCCs were formed or revitalized, and Community Resilience Plans were developed. UNDP provided local authorities with capacity-building

⁴⁷ WASH Field Data Collection.

⁴⁸ UNDP (2023). UNDP Yemen Strategic Direction 2023-2025.

measures to enhance their skills in planning, monitoring, coordinating gender and conflict-sensitive resilience building, and participatory approach, among others. Local authorities participated in assessing community needs to develop village and sub-district resilience plans, in which for example, the priorities for cash for work were identified.

46. While ERRY projects concentrated on rural and sub-district systems, primarily targeting community and sub-district structures, the SIERY project broadened its focus to encompass both institutional and economic resilience across rural to urban areas, emphasizing formal governance at district and governorate levels. Following EU recommendations, SIERY shifted its economic emphasis from micro to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to avoid duplication with the ERRY focus, implementing a systematic governance approach that facilitated the development of a replicable model for gender-sensitive district-level development plans.⁴⁹ These plans appear as being locally sensitive and led to a high-level satisfaction according to the ICPE interviews. This model was supported by extensive groundwork, allowing phased capacity building in local governance, leading to innovative local solutions through cross-regional and South-South cooperation, such as in waste management, water and sanitation, and energy management with Rwanda's local government institutions. SIERY also fostered relationships with local authorities and civil society organizations by engaging them in stakeholder meetings and trainings, opening room for future collaboration, and enhancing social accountability. With scale-up in mind, the SIERY generated standardized tools, manuals and curricula for broader applications beyond initial targets. As of 2023, the SIERY project collaborated with 38 districts in both IRG and DFA-controlled areas to enhance district-level authorities' capacities in planning, budgeting, managing, and monitoring basic services. In the IRG-controlled area, 22 gender-responsive district capacity development plans were developed and implemented across five governorates (Aden, Lajh, Hadramaut, Marib, and Taiz), with 21 of these districts experiencing an increased per capita investment budget.⁵⁰
47. These projects made commendable strides, and piloted different models (including joint efforts within the UN system on an area-based approach through ERRY III) with ambitions to scale up. Lengthy funding disbursements and procurement, alongside external factors such as the pandemic, security concerns and permission needed from the DFA, hindered timely implementation as planned.

Rule of Law and Access to Justice

Finding 8: Amidst major challenges, rights and community-based approach proved its effectiveness in the rule of law and access to justice activities. Communities were mobilized to enhance justice. Interventions were limited, primarily focusing on Sana'a and Aden, two urban centers.

In Yemen, the line between formal state justice and informal tribal justice has always been blurred, with tribal figures often holding key positions within state institutions. Before the conflict, the state attempted to integrate informal elements into the formal framework, as seen with the Department for Tribal Affairs and the accreditation of public notaries. However, the fluid and hybrid nature of justice governance in Yemen varies across locations, with different groups exerting control in areas like Sana'a and Aden. In Sana'a, the De-Facto Authority dominates the security and justice sectors, while in Aden, the government struggles with fragmentation and capacity gaps, leading to a rise in community-driven justice.⁵¹ The armed conflict in Yemen has led to the politicization and weakening of rule of law institutions, significantly reducing community

⁴⁹ Some district educational plans in the IRG areas and capacity development plan were also developed.

⁵⁰ CPD 2023 Results Reporting Working Sheet.

⁵¹ PIAJY Evaluation

protection and institutional justice capacities. The diminishing capacity of formal justice institutions has led to a culture of impunity and a gap in accountability and justice mechanisms. This situation has increased the risk of human rights abuses, especially for vulnerable groups like female and juvenile detainees. Women in detention face gender-based violence and societal ostracization post-incarceration, while juveniles are being detained in the same prisons as adults. The conflict has also increased the need for community justice, with economic crises and deteriorating living conditions causing a rise in family, civil, and criminal disputes.⁵²

48. UNDP Rule of Law (RoL) and Promoting Inclusive Access to Justice in Yemen (PIAJY) projects started with addressing basic needs and rights within prisons and other detention centers, including the reintegration of female and juvenile detainees back into society. Detainees often spend months to years in these cells without due process, leading to overcrowding and inhumane conditions. Achievements included the rehabilitation of water and sanitation systems in the prisons of Sana'a, Hodeida, and Aden.⁵³ Further, in aiding the reintegration of juveniles and female detainees, the interventions provided comprehensive support that encompassed their release, re-assimilation into communities and families, shelter protection, as well as literacy and vocational education. This assistance aimed to equip them with the necessary skills and resources for economic reintegration post-release. The support package also included aid for initiating small businesses, thereby facilitating income-generating ventures for women who had been released from prison.⁵⁴ The PIAJY project, in continuation of the RoL project, improved the construction of prosecution building, police stations and prisons. These upgrades also introduced vocational training, enhanced food production system, water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities, benefiting inmates directly. Based on the fieldwork, some prisons and inmates were able to generate revenues and make profits by selling products using the skills and resources provided. UNDP also established strategic partnerships with organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Save the Children to address detainee rights, alongside maintaining its relationship with the Penal Reform Institution. This collaboration resulted in the implementation of community policing in Aden and Sana'a, where police forces work closely with community mediation committees. These efforts enhanced the capabilities of over 600 justice and rule of law professionals through human rights and policing training, and rehabilitated key infrastructure across seven governorates.⁵⁵
49. Gradually, interventions started engagement with community representatives. This progression reflected a strategic adaptation to the realities on the ground, with a pivot towards a more rights-based approach that recognizes the importance of local ownership and participatory planning. Standard Operating Procedures for community mediators were developed and six community mediation committees, with 60 mediators (28 females), were established, collaboratively working with local police forces and six female lawyers who provided legal counselling for over 1,200 pre-trial detainees at 15 police detention cells in Aden. Based on qualitative data, this introduced both an increase of trust and confidence between rights holders and duty-bearers, as well as amongst duty-bearers themselves, a move towards decreased gender discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards detainees and women after release.⁵⁶ Crafted through a collective and interactive process, the initiatives were aligned with the interests of the communities served.⁵⁷

⁵² RoL project document.

⁵³ RoL Final Evaluation.

⁵⁴ RoL Final Evaluation

⁵⁵ Country Programme Performance Summary 2019-2022, UNDP Yemen Donor Report PIAJ, PIAJY Field Data Collection.

⁵⁶ PIAJY mid-term evaluation and field data collection.

⁵⁷ RoL I& II Final Evaluations and PIAJY mid-term evaluation and field data collection.

50. Through UNDP initiatives, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) gained better access to protection and services, especially thanks to the expansion of shelters in Aden managed by Yemen Women’s Union (YWU), which was refurbished to include an additional floor, doubling its capacity from 15 to 30 beds.⁵⁸
51. The projects’ approach—fostering ownership among local stakeholders, building capacity, improving access to justice systems and infrastructure, and empowering women—has the potential to enhance enduring benefits.⁵⁹ Due to the political context, the mediation committee limited its services to economic-related issues. Without a fully functional government and judicial system, the limited services provided were unlikely to catalyze transformative change, yet they remain important for maintaining basic stability, meeting immediate community needs, and supporting women’s rights and their voices being heard. Without indicators and data at the outcome level to measure changes in people’s perceptions and lived experiences, the impact of the projects is unclear beyond anecdotal evidence. The projects primarily focused on Sana’a and Aden.

Peace processes support/Peacebuilding

Finding 9: Overall, UNDP is regarded as a neutral and credible partner, appreciated for its technical assistance and coordination role in mine action, bridging national bodies and international organizations. Despite consistent UNDP efforts, the need is still huge and the national mine action work structure remains fragile and fragmented.

Mine Action

Much of Yemen’s population now lives in or near areas heavily contaminated by unexploded ordinance (UXO). Explosive remnants of war (ERW) and mines have worsened the living conditions. Schools’ and hospitals’ grounds are contaminated, and agricultural lands cannot be used, affecting people’s livelihoods and prohibiting IDPs from returning home. Since 1999, UNDP had supported the Yemen Executive Mine Action Center (YEMAC) in addressing these dangers and aiding the National Authorities. The widespread use of mines by all conflict parties, coupled with the lack of mapped minefields and technical survey constraints, left over a high amount of territory estimated as mine-contaminated, affecting 6.9 million people⁶⁰. The reduction in violence post-2022 truce paradoxically increases the need for demining due to spikes in casualties as civilians return to previously contested areas. The impact of landmines extends beyond casualties, causing psychological and physical disabilities, hindering access to healthcare and education, exacerbating economic hardships, destroying infrastructure, and obstructing agricultural production in a country where arable land is scarce. These challenges underscore the importance of demining not only for safety but also for facilitating humanitarian aid and supporting Yemen’s recovery and development.⁶¹ Key informants from both the national authorities and mine action agencies – the Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre and UNDP, together with organizations such as the HALO Trust, Danish Refugee Council, Norwegian People’s Aid and Handicap International – highlighted the severity of the problem.

52. UNDP’s emergency mine action projects in Yemen combined immediate humanitarian actions with educational campaigns and long-term capacity building for national mine action agencies. UNDP supported Yemen Executive Mine Action Center (YEMAC) with long-term planning and capacity development, assisting in reactivating

⁵⁸ Field data collection.

⁵⁹ Field data collection

⁶⁰ Humanitarian Needs Assessment 2024.

⁶¹ UNDP Strategic Direction, 2023-2025; Evaluations on Emergency Mine Action.

operations after the conflict. These projects improved YEMAC’s operational capabilities by enhancing survey and land release methodologies, and providing trainings to reduce demining casualties. In the initial stage of the project in 2019, 21 governorates and 233 districts underwent land surveys and clearance operations, resulting in the clearing of over 23 million square meters. In 2022 alone, around 6.5 million square meters of land were cleared.⁶² While victim assistance was not an active component of the project due to funding restrictions, UNDP supported YEMAC in screening casualties and referring them to medical facilities for long-term care and rehabilitation.⁶³ Cleared land contributed to improved quality of life and economic well-being in decontaminated areas⁶⁴, crucial for a country where only 3 percent of the land is arable and the majority rely on agriculture. Mine action efforts were reportedly minimal in the northern areas, hindered by a lack of political will, restricted access and scarce resources.⁶⁵

53. At the institutional level, UNDP worked to develop legal and institutional frameworks for mine action, collaborating with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) to establish national level standards. The standards were embodied in the reestablished Yemen Mine Action Coordination Centre (YMACC) in Aden, which formulated a common strategy for international standards, and monitors and evaluates mine action activities. According to the project phase I evaluation and stakeholder interviews, the establishment of YMACC in Aden reportedly led to more effective mine action implementation and coordination among various sectors. Partnerships with various actors, including donors, UN agencies, INGOs, national NGOs, and private companies, contributed to implementing training and capacity-building interventions, bringing their own value added in survey, mine dog detection, manual and mechanical clearance, community policing initiatives as well as explosive ordnance risk education/clearance activities. UNDP interventions also paved the way for more women participation in trainings. The establishment of a coordination body in the DFA-controlled areas is ‘on hold’.

54. Allegations of banned antipersonnel mine use and the haphazard placement of minefields without proper documentation added to the complexity of mine clearance operations. Mine action in Yemen faces challenges due to the ongoing conflict, the vast scale of mine contamination, and the absence of comprehensive minefield maps. Efforts were often constrained by scarce resources, restricted access, especially in areas controlled by DFA, and the fragmented feature of mine action efforts between the northern and southern branches of YEMAC. Administrative delays, fuel shortages, and salary delays for civil servants further impeded effective action. The lack of national ownership and coordination, coupled with donor fatigue and budgetary constraints, undermined the sustainability of these initiatives. In 2023, UNDP mine action activities concluded due to funding exhaustion. According to a joint global expert mission by the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office (RCO) and UNDP, as well as key informant interviews (KIIs), a “reset” is necessary to restructure the mine action sector and streamline the overall mine action support in Yemen.⁶⁶

Finding 10: The Peace Support Facility (PSF) project presents a unique mechanism to support the peace processes at various levels. It shifted to focus on small “p”⁶⁷, featuring collaborations with and the

⁶² UNDP (2023) Yemen’s Landmines: Involuntary Displacement and Untold Suffering. <https://www.undp.org/yemen/stories/yemens-landmines-involuntary-displacement-and-untold-suffering#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20UNDP's%20national%20partner,and%20benefiting%20over%20one%20million>

⁶³ Emergency Mine Action Evaluation Phase 1.

⁶⁴ Emergency Mine Action Evaluation Phase 1; Emergency Mine Action Evaluation Phase 2.

⁶⁵ Emergency Mine Action Evaluation Phase 2; ICPE data collection.

⁶⁶ UNDP Strategic Direction 2023-2025.

⁶⁷ There are two main types of approaches to peace in the nexus: ‘big P’ refers to political solutions and securitised responses to violent conflict; and ‘little p’ involves building the capacity for peace within societies. See Morinière, L and Morrison-Métois, S: ‘Working across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus: What can we learn from evaluations?’ ODI/ALNAP 2023.

empowerment of local organizations and networks. However, both external and internal challenges prevented the project from fully fulfilling its potential.

Peace agreement and OSESGY

The Stockholm Agreement, reached in December 2018, was a significant milestone in the UN-led Yemen peace process. It was negotiated between the parties to the conflict with the intent to alleviate the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen. The agreement was a response to the stark humanitarian conditions in Yemen, particularly in Hodeida province. The UN struggled in monitoring the Agreement and ensuring adherence.

The mandate of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Yemen (OSESGY) is to “enable the resumption of a peaceful, inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led political transition process that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people”.⁶⁸

55. The PSF project was initiated following the 2018 Stockholm Agreement, aiming to support the peace process by accelerating the implementation of agreements reached by the parties to the conflict during negotiations led by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Yemen (OSESGY). The initial focus was on the first set of priorities discussed by the parties during December 2018 peace consultation in Stockholm. The ambition was to expand to support priorities identified in the following UN-led negotiations. Initially, it included supporting the infrastructural rehabilitation of the port of Hodeida. However, it is difficult to measure the impact of the Hodeida port reconstruction on the peace process as the objective wasn't measured against a conflict analysis i.e. how it would contribute to addressing key driving factors of the conflict in and around Hodeida. In its second phase, the project localized support through partnerships with local organizations⁶⁹, using a small grant mechanism, sought to enhance community and school safety.
56. Because the peace agreement was not realized, the ambitious project outputs and the actual situation on the ground were not well-aligned,⁷⁰ and the activities envisioned in this project were less effective than expected. For example, one of the PSF original components involved backing transitional governance and post-peace agreement plans as the involved parties were to reach consensus. Yet, ongoing conflict and deadlock prevented the identification of any initiatives in this component.⁷¹ The absence of a comprehensive peace agreement also impeded the vertical integration of grassroots peacebuilding activities with higher-level peace negotiations.
57. Concerns regarding management were raised regarding delayed feedback and decision-making, limited flexibility and agility in project implementation in the fast-changing context, and lack of communications and coordination on political strategy that may affect the alignment project activities with the overall peace process. For example, while the 2022 UN-brokered truce offered a chance for confidence-building activities, a lack of unarmarked funding led to a missed opportunity.⁷²

⁶⁸ <https://osesgy.unmissions.org/>

⁶⁹ For example, Enhancing Community Safety and Protection: This initiative, proposed by CIVIC, is dedicated to improving the protection of civilians in Yemen; Enhancing Local Security: Put forward by the Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG), this initiative seeks to foster better dialogue and trust between local communities and government authorities; The Safer Schools - Safer Yemen initiative: Launched in late 2020 by Safer Yemen, this initiative focuses on support and advocacy to raise awareness among students, allowing them to safely return to school and effectively communicate and address safety concerns.

⁷⁰ The Initial three components of the PSF were to: 1: Support initiatives to build confidence between the parties, in the peace process and to support the implementation of the Stockholm agreement or any other future agreement; 2: Support discreet activities emerging out of existing Track II initiatives are implemented with the goal of catalyzing the political process; 3: To support transitional governance arrangements when a more comprehensive peace agreement is reached by the parties.

⁷¹ Peace Support Facility for Yemen 2022 Annual Report

⁷² PSF Annual Report 2022, <https://www.undp.org/yemen/publications/peace-support-facility-yemen-2022-annual-report>; PSF mid-term review; KII interviews.

58. **Gender-focused initiatives** under this project experienced mixed results. They brought advancements in advocacy and capacity building among women-led organizations but also faced significant cultural and institutional hurdles in integrating gender inclusively into national and local peace agreements. A broader understanding of what gender means to the peace process, rather than just the inclusion of women is missing.
59. The PSF worked on the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) for the Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, with a gender self-assessment working group established within the police department of the 8 districts of Aden. The adaptation of WPS discourse to the local context and the incorporation of gender perspectives in broader development work emerged as critical areas for improvement. The lack of cultural and political contextualization also hindered the implementation of the NAP, which faced challenges due to a lack of specificity and alignment with the local context. There was also an ongoing need for enhanced coordination between UNDP and other UN bodies on addressing gender inequalities, including a unified advocacy approach with involved parties.
60. Through the PSF, initiatives such as a gender stand-alone project were launched, establishing a peacebuilding network embedded in Aden University's Women, Research, and Training Centre, with 75 percent women and 25 percent men members. This was coupled with the fortification of the gender studies program at the university and efforts to build the capacity of women-led organizations, better-engaging women in consultations and training them on how to conduct risk assessments.

Finding 11: Port reconstruction in Aden and Mukalla was undertaken with the aim of reducing shipping costs and making cargo delivery more secure. This potentially allows more ships to enter the ports, contributing to food security and economic development when circumstances permit.

High shipping, insurance, and demurrage costs significantly inflate the price of food imports into Yemen, making necessities unaffordable for many. Yemen, which imports about 90 percent of its food, depends on its seaports to regulate food commodity prices. In 2020, Hodeidah and Salif ports handled 58 percent of Yemen's total food imports, followed by Aden with 35 percent, and Mukalla with 3 percent. Deteriorated port infrastructure and complex inspection processes are major contributors to inefficient imports and high food prices.⁷³

61. In addition to Port Hodeidah rehabilitation, UNDP assessed and rehabilitated the ports of Aden and Mukalla. However, these initiatives spotlighted critical challenges stemming from conflict, maintenance neglect, and administrative inefficiencies, exacerbating vessel delays and inflating costs, including insurance rates higher than normal. Restrictions on importing items perceived as having dual-use potential item imports also disrupt some critical spare parts supply.⁷⁴ To address these issues, a comprehensive master plan featuring an emergency rehabilitation plan was launched, focusing on improving customs efficiency, reducing insurance premiums through a guarantee fund, and ensuring the timely importation and utilization of essential spare parts. UNDP support was noted for its coherence, with a well-managed timeline and excellent coordination among the service company, port authorities, and brought-in high-expertise consultants. While early rehabilitation efforts, like storage shed rehabilitation commenced, an uptick in port activities remained anticipated. Trainings were provided to the Yemen Coast Guard and rehabilitation of maritime authorities enhanced capacities for maritime security, regional communication for ship registration and smuggling prevention.

⁷³ UN Famine response: reduce the cost and delays of transporting food from overseas to Yemen

⁷⁴ Site Visit Report for Development of Master Plan for the Ma'alla Multipurpose Terminal, Port of Aden, Yemen Diagnostic phase

Institutional Effectiveness

Finding 12: The complex country context hindered the operations. UNDP demonstrated remarkable strengths in delivering at scale under challenging circumstances, with room for improvement, particularly in ensuring timely implementation (when contextual factors permit) and in enhancing internal communication for cross-organization collaboration and learning.

Table 2: External factors negatively affecting project delivery and management

High level of insecurity or centralized control	Political fragility and governance	Economic drivers	local context and discriminatory norms	Health and climate resilience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to project sites Mahram requirements and interference in DFA-controlled areas Difficulties in hiring staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political fragmentation Weak governance and malfunctioning public institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dual currencies and currency depreciation Conflicts caused by competition over resources Insufficient institutional capacity due to underfunding/underpayment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex local context requires additional efforts to understand Social norms not in favor of equal gender roles and non-discrimination Insufficient local capacity in development projects Dynamic between IDP and hosting communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 and other diseases coupled with low health services and access Vulnerability enhanced by climatic stressors

Table 3: UNDP adaptive management – use a triangle graph to indicate interconnectedness

Conflict-sensitive programming	Risk mitigation and management	Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence-based and area-based approach, responding to local needs and priorities Participatory approach to enhance ownership, sustainability and co-benefits adjustments made based on evolving circumstances and M&E findings Local governance and local partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two-track approach in IRG and DFA-controlled areas Safeguards instruments, including Environmental and Social Management Framework and action plans; enhance in-house oversight and quality assurance for infrastructure projects where possible Third-party monitoring Develop a management information system Grievance and complaint mechanisms Communications with various stakeholders, to ensure common understanding and enhance trust; continued political negotiations Business continuity plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge products (research, study, assessments, lessons learned) were produced Projects applied learning from previous experiences. Learning and adaptation during project implementation Learning during M&E and from M&E findings

62. Implementing development projects in Yemen presents multifaceted challenges, as indicated in Finding 1, including political fragmentation, severe security conditions, fluctuating local currencies, limited accessibility, low resilience to climate and health crises, and complex stakeholder relationships. These challenges hindered operations, leading to delays and inefficiencies in both management and procurement processes.

63. Despite these obstacles, UNDP managed to meet or exceed some of its project indicators on time, with an average programme execution rate of over 82 percent (2019-2023), showcasing its commitment and capacity to deliver in a challenging context. Despite operational challenges, the in-country network of offices was expanded, including offices in Aden, Hodeidah, Mukalla, and Sana'a.⁷⁵ In addition, the Amman sub-office facilitates UNDP's partnership

⁷⁵ There are plans to extend offices to Marib and Taiz as part of a planned UN presence. UNDP Strategic Direction, 2023-2024 (August 2023).

management and strategic positioning,⁷⁶ as many international stakeholders do not operate in the country. The total personnel in 2023 was 327 (vs. 127 in 2016), including 47 percent staff, 32 percent personnel service agreement/service contract, and 21 percent UN Volunteers which increased from 3 percent in 2016,⁷⁷ reflecting scaled-up programme and operational services needed in the crisis context. The management expenditure over the total expenditure ratio was 13.37 percent in 2022, slightly higher than the UNDP global average of 12.67 percent.⁷⁸

64. In 2023, the Bureau of Management Services (BMS)/Operational Performance Team (BMS/OPT) conducted a comprehensive operational scan of the country office to analyze whether its functional model is fit-for-purpose. To avoid duplication, ICPE does not assess internal operational issues in depth. The Operational Scan found that ineffective cross-team communication limited cross-organizational collaboration and learning, which was in line with the findings of this ICPE. Additionally, two other issues identified by the Operational Scan include: an unclear division of labor and overlapping responsibilities between teams, and a lack of clarity and understanding regarding the organizational and project team structures.⁷⁹
65. Additionally, other causes for delays include lengthy processes for the release of funds, delayed donor funding disbursements and abrupt funding termination, and intricate yet poorly communicated procurement procedures. For instance, after completing an activity, some responsible partners waited months for the next installment of funds, disrupting the continuity of project execution. Additionally, the lengthy process for validating or approving documents, such as social and environmental management plans contributed to these delays. There is also room for improvement in procurement, including conducting better market research and streamlining processes to minimize delays.

Finding 13: UNDP’s adaptive management, which centered around local systems and a needs-based approach while considering conflict sensitivity, was generally fit-for-purpose and enabled UNDP to deliver under challenging conditions. However, some practices were not consistently applied across the programme.

66. UNDP took adaptive measures addressing the contextual challenges, featured by needs-based interventions and local systems approach to strengthen the relevance of the interventions and enhance conflict-sensitivity. This approach was backed up by a business continuity plan which has been an instrumental guide for operating in the complex conflict situation.
67. This adaptability was rooted in **evidence-based programming and learning**. UNDP conducted studies and assessments, such as *the impact of war series*, studies on the impact of climate change on human development, multidimensional poverty, multidimensional livelihoods assessment and local governance, to inform and guide its interventions, as well as the discussion on these issues. In general, needs assessments were conducted to different extents and a participatory approach with consultations with local stakeholders was applied particularly during the inception phase of projects, to leverage local knowledge and capacity and ensure project relevance and stakeholder buy-in. This approach allowed for timely adjustments in project focus and operational approaches in response to evolving contexts. Some projects’ intervention focus and operational

“**Conflict sensitivity** refers to the capacity of an organization to: (i) understand the context in which it operates; (ii) understand the interaction between the organization’s interventions and the context; and (iii) act upon these understandings to avoid negative impacts (do no harm) and maximize positive impacts.”

-UN Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action, “UN Conflict Sensitivity Advanced E-Course” (<https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=1288>)

⁷⁶ UNDP Strategic Direction, 2023-2025 (August 2023).

⁷⁷ UNDP Corporate dashboard: UNDP at a glance, using end of the year data for respective years.

⁷⁸ [Executive Snapshot Home Page \(undp.org\)](#)

⁷⁹ UNDP Yemen Operation Scan, 2023.

approaches were adjusted based on changing contexts (i.e. repurposing resources where necessary) and/or lessons learned from previous phases or other similar projects, such as ERRY and RoL/PIAJY projects. According to ICPE interviews, UNDP allowed for an open dialogue and continuous exchanges with the responsible partners, which enabled effective communications for adaptation when needed.

68. UNDP programme opted for an **area-based approach** due to issues of local complexity, emphasizing the need to coordinate with local partners and establish local-driven priorities through local systems (councils and committees at different local levels), leading to successful initiatives. Sector-specific interventions were based on needs. For example, value chain support was explored and selected in different districts, such as grape, coffee, fish, henna, and date. However, such an **area-based approach was project-driven**, except for projects funded by the World Bank, which are working on a further elaborated geo-bundling approach⁸⁰ between different interventions and requiring synergies of initiatives between different implementing partners. There was no concrete guidance yet guiding an area-based approach across UNDP projects and different thematic areas. This led to missed opportunities in integrated approaches in intervention locations.⁸¹

Area-based programming refers to “[targets] specific geographical areas in a country, characterised by a particular complex development challenge, through an integrated, inclusive, participatory and flexible approach”.

-UNDP (2023): Fit for Purpose? Area-Based Programming in Contemporary Crisis and Development Response; UNDP/RBEC (2003). See also Area-Based Development Practitioners Workshop, Crimea, Ukraine, 29-31 October 2003: Main Outcomes. Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme.

69. In addition, as there are major differences in the operational context, some projects adopted a **two-track approach** working with the IRG and DFA separately, adjusting planning, design, implementation, and management accordingly while targeting identical project outcomes. This required the management to split its focus to maintain relationships and monitor progress, with Project Board Meetings and project representations established in both Aden and Sana’a. The two-track approach presented a flexible and necessary solution to the fragmentation. However, it may introduce potential imbalances due to uneven progress and performance.

70. Despite the challenges in collecting monitoring and evaluation data on the ground (restrictions, interference and security risks), UNDP provided a strong M&E component in various projects. UNDP used **Third-Party Monitoring (TPM)** Agents to facilitate access, with periodic monitoring reports to assess the progress and quality of project implementation (see Finding 14). The TPM reports also informed regular meetings on technical review and programmatic and operational issues, being used as the basis for discussion and decisions on implementation. Such mechanisms were reported as helpful for ensuring that the project remained on track and responsive to needs and the situation on the ground, as well as making necessary adjustments. In addition, the country office is in the process of building and populating a Management Information System (MIS), an online platform based on monitoring data.

71. During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, UNDP Yemen mobilized or repurposed funds to meet immediate health needs. It provided technical leadership for the development of the UN socio-economic response framework to COVID-19. It trained healthcare personnel on safe environmental and medical waste management; provided technical support to the Ministry of Health in epi-surveillance, infection prevention and control, risk communication and community engagement; equipped health facilities with solar-power equipment to ensure uninterrupted COVID-19 response; signed small and micro enterprises (SME)-support agreement for non-medical masks production and made infrastructural adjustments in prisons. UNDP engaged Yemeni civil society organizations (CSOs) in the

⁸⁰ WB Geo-Bundling Approach, Overview document. Geo-bundling refers to “simultaneous targeting of a variety of interventions within a defined geographical area. The focus lies on the complementarity of interventions that reinforce one another to allow for a comprehensive, concurrent approach to tackle structural issues leading to food insecurity.”

⁸¹ UNDP developed area-based programming guidelines for the UN system in 2024.

delivering COVID-19 support based on their areas of specialization and geographical location. It also employed digital tools for socio-economic impact assessments, helping identify and support the most vulnerable communities and integrate gender and social inclusion into recovery efforts.

72. Due to weak capacity and potential high risks in implementation, UNDP implemented **safeguard instruments** like the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) to identify risks and solutions, although the screening procedures and standards varied across projects. Such procedures require long preparation and lengthy clearance process by the World Bank sometimes delaying the project initiation. In this regard, some streamlined procedures were proposed, such as clustering ESMPs by type and geographical areas. For example, simplified Environmental and Social Action Plans (ESAPs) and specific clauses were developed to expedite the clearance process for low-risk activities, while ensuring thorough compliance and monitoring for projects classified as medium to high risk.
73. In addition to spot checks and field missions, UNDP further offered the possibility to receive grievances concerning project implementation through the **Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)**. This mechanism was mentioned positively especially in relation to the WB funded projects. However, the application of such mechanism was not consistent across the country programme. Negative feedback was heard as targeted communities didn't know, or didn't know how, or were not comfortable reporting misconduct of implementing partners or other issues. It was also reported that female voices remained at a lower rate in the GRM.⁸² The ICPE Team was informed that the CO will set up a GRM with a dedicated staff member who reports directly to the UNDP Resident Representative. Project participants will be able to interact through a telephone hotline, a dedicated website, and a WhatsApp number.⁸³

Finding 14 (M&E and communication): Circumventing limitations, UNDP Yemen demonstrated overall solid M&E mechanism at the project and programme level, although it was not sufficient to monitor and evaluate the impact of projects. External communication with key stakeholders and digital communication was considered positive.

74. UNDP demonstrated a robust M&E system at both the project and programme levels. The M&E Analyst played a key role in ensuring bi-annually M&E plan review, updating and reporting on programme results, implementing evaluation plans, and conducting M&E capacity-building initiatives. M&E focal points were established within many projects, responsible for managing indicators, including their development, tracking, reporting, and coordinating with implementing parties. To ensure coherence at the programme level, M&E inputs were integrated into the review of the Annual Work Plans (AWPs) and various programme meetings. Between 2019 and 2023, the country office completed 13 project evaluations, with eight out of the 12 quality-assessed evaluations rated as Satisfactory. Notably, two evaluations received UNDP outstanding and gender-responsive awards. As of April 2024, 80% of key actions based on evaluation recommendations were completed, and 12% were initiated. Additionally, some project-based lessons learned were produced. However, no outcome or thematic evaluations were conducted⁸⁴.
75. The issue of accessibility made it difficult for M&E teams and evaluators to physically access areas for data collection due to political restrictions or security concerns. To circumvent the limitations, many projects worked in collaboration with Third-Party Monitoring Agencies (TPMA) or piggybacking with other UN agencies for

⁸² Field data collection missions and ROARs.

⁸³ UNDP (2023). UNDP Yemen Strategic Direction 2023-2025.

⁸⁴ There is one thematic evaluation planned on Environmental and Social Safeguards.

monitoring data collection and remote verification⁸⁵. M&E findings were utilized for learning and informing project adjustments, such as adjustment of operational manuals based on TPMA findings to better target vulnerable groups. The level of community and beneficiary satisfaction was also assessed through Third Party Monitoring (TPM). However, accessibility to information (for example, beneficiary databases for all RPs of the same project) was not always timely. There are differences in data collection methods in the IRG and DFA-controlled areas, with technological restrictions in the northern governorates necessitating the use of paper forms. This introduces issues with human error and delays in data collection.

76. Aligning the monitoring efforts of various actors (i.e. management team, RPs, TPM) remained a challenge. M&E focal points worked closely with various stakeholders, including donors, implementing partners and beneficiaries to ensure work was done in line with the project goals. They also facilitated knowledge exchange and capacity building to enhance the M&E practices. When it is a joint project, like ERRY⁸⁶, collaborative efforts to harmonize M&E practices across partners resulted in a consistent M&E framework and plan. Indicator-tracking tools were developed to manage and monitor large volumes of data.
77. While good efforts and results were made in M&E, there was not yet a comprehensive approach to monitoring and evaluating the performance and impact of projects and activities. Data and insights gained from the M&E processes were not systematically collected and used to inform knowledge management. The developed Management Information System (MIS), updated in quarterly basis, made progress in synchronizing data on types of interventions, targeted geographical areas and number of beneficiaries across projects. However, the utility of this MIS so far has been limited. As discussed in previous findings, the project indicator frameworks were oriented around numbers of targeted populations or activities, insufficient for assessing changes made by the interventions.
78. The country office was equipped with over 15 communication officers/analysts, including the office's core team and those associated with various projects, located in Amman, Aden and Sana'a. The country office won third place in the Best Story and Best Long Video categories in the UNDP 2023 Digital Communication Awards. There are over 95,600 followers under the UNDP Yemen twitter account. Fluid communication between UNDP and partners about project updates, achievements and challenges contributed to project results. Knowledge-sharing sessions were conducted in various projects, along with formal and informal ongoing consultations with local organizations and casual discussions with local experts. At the time of evaluation, the country office was preparing a communication strategy.⁸⁷

Finding 15 (Synergies): The implementation of UNDP projects exhibits notable fragmentation. Some projects showed promise in increasing synergies, but the overall lack of a consistent approach for cross-project collaboration limits the optimization of outcomes and collective impact.

79. The implementation of UNDP projects, although intended to collectively contribute towards the overarching programme outcomes, exhibits notable fragmentation, with projects primarily focusing on their specific aims without fully leveraging the potential for interconnectedness and collective impact. This fragmentation, underscored by a lack of systematic collaboration across projects, hampers the realization of synergies that could optimize outcomes.

⁸⁵ Due to the lack of an independent mine action organization in Yemen, third party monitors were selected based on a piggybacking process from other UN agencies. While this provided a decent source of data, challenges remained in accessing certain areas due to restrictions imposed by national counterparts and coordination bodies.

⁸⁶ ERRY's Joint Coordination Unit (JCU) has a dedicated M&E Officer to coordinate monitoring within the joint project.

⁸⁷ The communications & advocacy strategy was adopted in early 2024.

80. Efforts to foster complementarity and integrated approaches among diverse projects, funded by various donors, were observed, though yet sporadically. The project design did not sufficiently capitalize on potential areas of complementarity, resulting in low inter-project connections. Despite the recognition of synergy and partnerships in project documentation as crucial for optimizing outputs, practical evidence of comprehensive cross-project collaboration remains limited. The evaluation team noted that the Strategic Direction 2023-2025 underlined the importance of interdependence and an integrated approach, providing examples of possible synergies.⁸⁸

81. Certain initiatives, like the geo-bundling approach among the World Bank-funded projects and the fishery projects, show promise in increasing project synergies, particularly when they are managed by the same team. The synergies between the two fishery projects also allow a unified approach with the authorities and encourage coordination between partners and institutions. Within the joint project like ERRY, a Joint Coordination Unit (JCU) with other UN agencies (FAO, WFP, and ILO) was set up to provide support, oversight, harmonization, and enhancement of collaboration among UNDP and other three UN agencies and many other implementing partners. However, the area-based approach was yet applied only within individual projects, limiting overall coherence and synergies across UNDP projects and with other UN agencies within the same geographic areas.

Finding 16 (Sustainability): Demonstrating a commitment to sustainable development and community empowerment, some intervention models showed potential for longer-term and broader results. There was no systematic transition or exit strategies placed in the interventions.

82. Interventions such as rehabilitation of local infrastructure, recapitalizing MSMEs and building value chain and markets, were well received by local communities and have the potential to provide a foundation for a broader and longer impact on the community. Strengthening productive value chains showed potential, as seen in the support provided to farmers, livestock owners, beekeepers, and fishers, which resulted in productivity increases. If these gains can be maintained, they could play a crucial role in the recovery and transformation of respective sectors.

83. Some qualitative evidence of strengthened community resilience was available. The community-based approach sought to reinforce collective coping mechanisms, social cohesion, and peacebuilding through a participatory process of dialogue, mobilization, and cooperation. Such methods ensured the involvement of affected groups, including women, youth, and IDPs, fostering inclusion, a sense of collective ownership and responding to the realities and needs of communities. In addition, building capacity and resilience of local authorities and institutions was also a component of several projects, although often with limited scope. The local ecosystem model that the SIERY project was exploring displayed an approach to build capacities of local authority and communities and link local governance institutions with other sectors (CSOs, unions, and the private sector, etc.) for gender-sensitive economic recovery and development. The SIERY project also put in place an exit pathway, aiming at being able to strengthen local capacity and ownership and offer a “template” for future scaling up. Its effectiveness and efficacy across different governorates and the quality and accountability of the recovery plans have yet to be thoroughly assessed. In addition, based on the ERRY II evaluation, ERRY III developed a sustainability and exit strategy, including engagement with communities, local institutions and capacity building. It also lays out household/individual graduation standards. However, in general, there were no “exit strategies” in place across projects to facilitate transition beyond project closure.

84. Amidst socioeconomic and political uncertainties, the financial sustainability of interventions poses a considerable challenge. National and local stakeholders heavily rely on international aid to consolidate institutional capacities.

⁸⁸ The evaluation team was informed that ongoing efforts are being made following the Strategic Direction 2023-2025.

Sometimes small-scale local financing was mobilized, such as funding provided by the Chamber of Commerce in the PIAJY project, or local community cost-sharing and in-kind support for community assets infrastructure.

Cross-cutting issues

Finding 17: UNDP Yemen integrated women’s empowerment through initiatives addressing economic empowerment, justice service delivery, and peace support initiatives. The programme focused on gender-targeted and gender-responsive interventions, with some potential transformational approaches to address structural barriers to gender equality.

Gender status in Yemen

Before the conflict escalated in 2015, Yemeni women and girls were already experiencing systematic discrimination and marginalization. Yemen’s significant gender disparities are highlighted by its ranking of 155th out of 156 countries in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum.⁸⁹ Yemen’s Gender Inequality Index value in 2022 ranked 166th out of 166 countries.⁹⁰ This gap is evident in several areas. Women’s representation in public office and decision-making roles was exceedingly low, with women comprising only 0.3 percent of the former parliament and holding a mere 4.1 percent of managerial positions.⁹¹ Labor force participation marked with only 5 percent of female participating compared to 60 percent of male.⁹² Women’s access to financial assets and accounts is alarmingly low at 7% and 2% respectively⁹³. Furthermore, there is a significant urban-rural divide in women’s literacy rates, with urban women having a higher literacy rate (69.2percent) compared to rural women (36.5 percent), against men’s rates of 89.9 percent in urban areas and 79.4 percent in rural areas⁹⁴. The conflict has severely limited women’s access to health services, including reproductive health.

Violence against women, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), has been on the rise during the conflict, with limited access to services and a lack of trust in the police for protection exacerbating the issue. The establishment of shelters and legal aid for women survivors of violence is minimal, highlighting a broader issue of inadequate support and protection. Social norms and the legal framework in Yemen further constrain women’s rights, with discriminatory norms prevailing and preventing women from accessing justice, and social, political, and economic resources. Based on the Gender Social Norms Index, 98.36 percent of Yemeni people had at least 1 bias (political, educational, economic, or physical integrity) against women, based on 2010-2014 data.⁹⁵ These challenges are intensified for women and girls in displacement and female-headed households, who face heightened safety risks and food insecurity.⁹⁶

85. Effectiveness in terms of gender results was satisfactory due to the gender approach in programme design and the use of gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation. Analysis of gender markers for the projects assessed within the programme 2019-2023⁹⁷ indicates that approximately 96 percent of programme expenditures (\$591.4 million) had gender equality as a significant objective (GEN2), 3 percent (\$16.3 million) had gender equality as the main objective (GEN3), and 1 percent (\$8.7 million) expected to contribute to gender equality in a limited way (GEN1).

⁸⁹ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report, 2021

⁹⁰ Gender Inequality Index | Human Development Reports (undp.org)

⁹¹ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report, 2021

⁹² Labour force participation rates among females and males in Yemen (15+ years of age), modeled ILO estimate, International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT database. Data as of April 2024, found at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.MA.ZS?locations=1A>.

⁹³ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report, 2021; <https://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/Promoting-womens-financial-inclusion-May%202017.pdf>

⁹⁴ Situational Analysis of women and girls in the MENA and Arab States region, 2010-2020, UN agencies, 2021

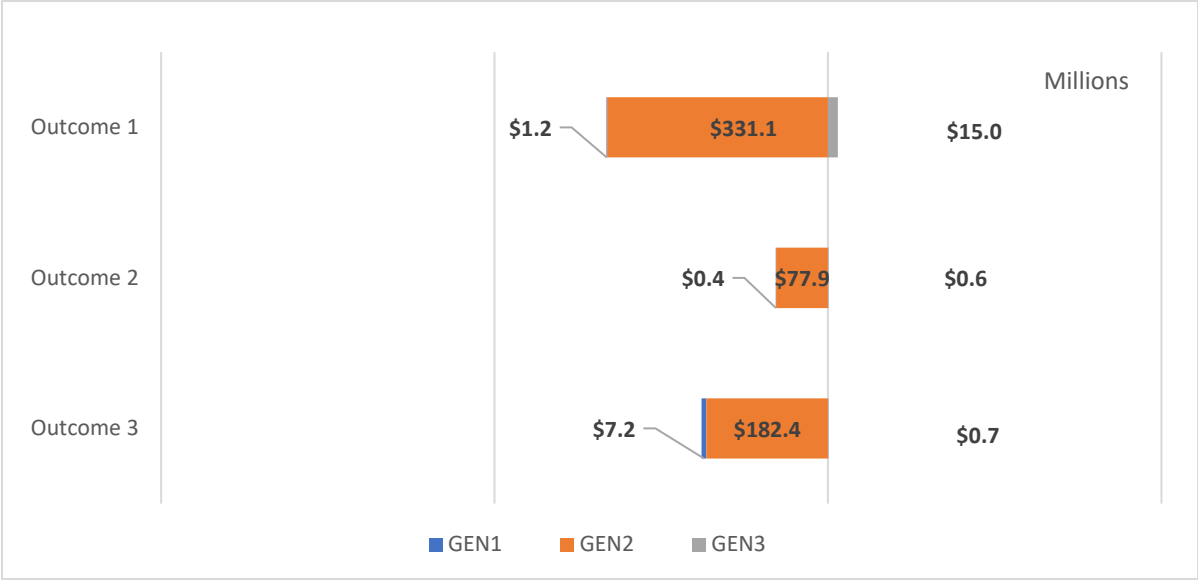
⁹⁵ UNDP, 2023 Gender Social Norms Index.

⁹⁶ UNDP, Gender Brief Yemen.

⁹⁷ The ICPE Yemen assessed outcome areas in the CPF and CPD, including 35 projects – 15 for resilient livelihood and economic recovery and development (Outcome 1); 12 for governance and rule of law (Outcome 2), and 10 for peace processes support (Outcome 3).

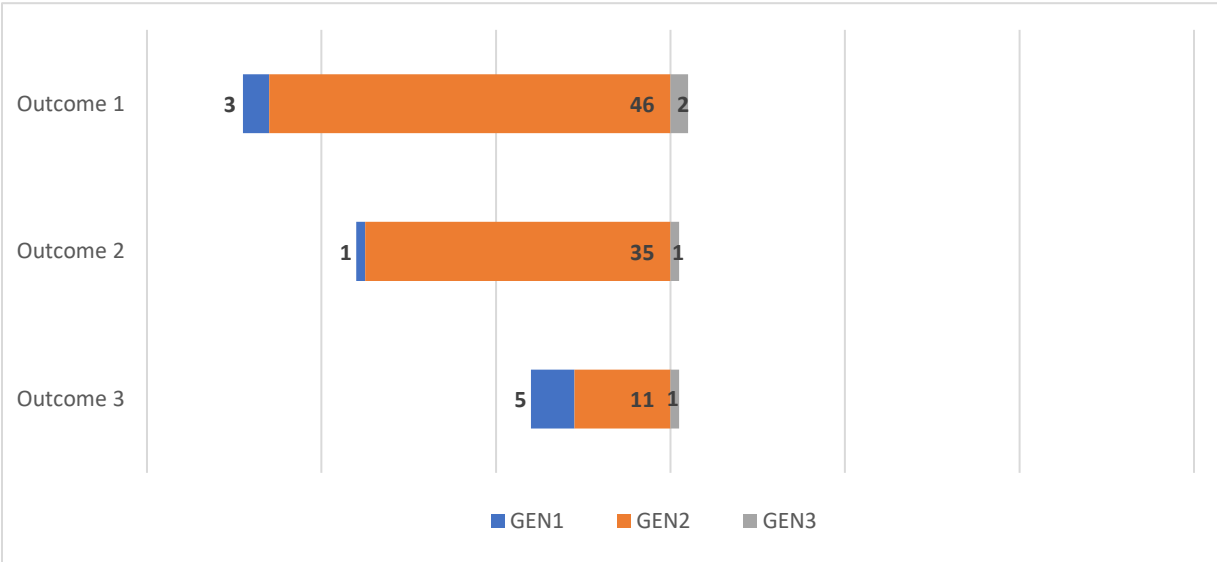
Figure 9 illustrates⁹⁸ that 92 project outputs (88 percent) were envisaged significant contribution to gender equality (GEN2), 9 project outputs (9 percent) fell under GEN1, and 4 project outputs (4 percent) under GEN3⁹⁹.

Figure 8. Expenditure by Gender Marker (2019-2023)



Source: PowerBi/Atlas & Quantum as of September 2024

Figure 9. Number of Project Outputs by Gender Marker (2019-2023)



Source: PowerBi/Atlas & Quantum as of September 2024

86. Based on the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) analysis, UNDP Yemen programme was in general gender-responsive, making efforts to target female population or female-headed households and considering different

⁹⁸ 35 projects with 105 outputs were assessed.
⁹⁹ UNDP Yemen projects with GEN3: Project ID 00097850 - Yemen Emergency Crisis Response; Project ID 00118265 - Peace Support Facility; Project ID 00138574 Promoting Inclusive Access to Justice in Yemen; Project ID 00141815 - Emergency Social Protection Enhancement and COVID-19 Response Projects

needs of women and men. Unconditional cash transfers were provided to approximately 122,000 lactating and pregnant women and children under 5 years¹⁰⁰ and about 29 percent of total cash for work workers were women¹⁰¹. Success stories on women's economic empowerment and women-led business were reported. Under the ERRY joint project, women were trained on good agriculture practices for selected crop and livestock value chains, and were educated in the use and maintenance of dairy equipment, enhancing their processing and marketing capacities¹⁰². While women's engagement is an important component of the fisheries projects, it took several attempts to identify appropriate entry points of engaging women in the process instead of recognizing them as fisherwomen. In addition to economic empowerment, women were engaged in participation in community life and contributed to social cohesion. For instance, as members of village cooperative councils, women were trained in resilience planning, conflict resolution, and project management, and participated in identifying the needs and priorities of their communities through participation in the project cycle and decision-making at the community level.¹⁰³ The ERRY III built the capacity of consultants, including women to facilitate community-level dialogue and mediation among community representatives to reduce local conflicts and enhance peacebuilding¹⁰⁴. UNDP also promoted community-level dialogue that reduced conflicts and enhanced peacebuilding at the local level. As a result, 120 local forums to discuss communities' security and safety needs were held¹⁰⁵, which contributed to the PSF's identification of key needs and priorities of women within the areas of protection, law enforcement, and community policy¹⁰⁶.

87. Promoting gender justice and protecting vulnerable women at the community level have constituted a challenge in a crisis context. UNDP built the capacity on human rights for women justice professionals and subnational justice institutions in Aden, increased women's representation in the security and judiciary system, advocated for the promotion of women police officers to managerial posts by the Aden Chief of Police, and assisted in the rehabilitation and reintegration of women detainees¹⁰⁷. With considerable female community members and six lawyers' participation, the access to justice project empowered the community in addressing community judicial needs for both women and men.
88. Under the SIERY project, 41 districts in 9 governorates produced gender-sensitive local development plans through a participatory and inclusive process. Downstream, in 2021, UNDP Peace Support Facility (PSF) supported the Yemeni government with the implementation plan for the WPS National Action Plan (NAP)¹⁰⁸.
89. Promoting gender equality and women's political participation in general was not successful. It was particularly challenging in the DFA-controlled areas, where there is stronger control over programme interventions and

¹⁰⁰ UNDP Project 'Emergency Social Protection Enhancement & COVID19 Response (Project ID 00128217). Yemen Country Programme Performance Summary for the period 2019-2022

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Empowering Yemen's Most Vulnerable Towards a Brighter Future. <https://www.undp.org/yemen/news/empowering-yemens-most-vulnerable-towards-brighter-future> and ROAR 2022 information.

¹⁰³ UNDP Yemen. Empowering Yemen's most vulnerable towards a brighter future. <https://www.undp.org/arab-states/stories/empowering-yemens-most-vulnerable-towards-brighter-future>; Final Evaluation of the Social Protection for Community Resilience in Yemen Project (SPCRP), 2021

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ UNDP Yemen toward Gender Equality 2022 factsheet

¹⁰⁶ UNDP Yemen toward Gender Equality 2022 factsheet and UNDP Yemen Country Programme Performance Summary for the period 2019-2022.

¹⁰⁷ ROAR 2023 and ROAR 2022 information; 'Promoting Inclusive Access to Justice in Yemen' (PIAJY) second report (1 Jan 2022 to 31 Decr 2022) submitted to the Kingdom of the Netherlands; and UNDP Ymene Country Office - minutes of PIAJY project board meeting in Aden on 30 November 2022. Building upon the positive results of the promoting inclusive access to justice programme, by the end of 2023, UNDP and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) of the Republic of Korea have signed a new agreement to empower women justice professionals and support justice service delivery among vulnerable communities in Yemen. UNDP and KOICA support women's leadership in ensuring access to justice in Yemen, November 2023. <https://www.undp.org/yemen/press-releases/undp-and-koica-support-womens-leadership-ensuring-access-justice-yemen>.

¹⁰⁸ UNDP support the Yemeni Government (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Local Administration, Ministry of Human Rights, Ministry of Justices, National Women Committee, etc) in the institutionalization the WPS NAP.

reservations against the concept of gender¹⁰⁹. However, some initiatives, such as empowering local institutions or gender networks, displayed the potential to mobilize local capacities to address structural barriers. That was the case of the partnership with the women-led academic institution ‘Women Research & Training Center’ at Aden University and a gender network. Some network members reported increased female employees in their institutions through their advocacy and expressed the desire to connect with gender networks in other governorates. Despite the challenges in the DFA-controlled areas, a gradual transformation in the attitude towards gender issues was observed, through technical support of local authorities and constant communications. As a result, the programme managed to support women leaders to amplify their voices at a formal consultation meeting with authorities¹¹⁰.

Gender Strategy

90. Taking into consideration the contextual factors, changes in stakeholders mapping, and programming, the country office developed the Gender Strategies for 2019-2021 and 2022-2025 in alignment with the UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025.¹¹¹ It was accompanied by a Gender Action Plan in 2023. UNDP Yemen was awarded the UNDP Silver Gender Seal Certification for 2018-2020 and 2021-2023, from a score of 29 out of 42 benchmarks (72.5 percent) in 2020 to 26 out of 30 (86.6 percent) in 2023¹¹².
91. UNDP Yemen had a Gender Focal Team (GFT) led by the Resident Representative and composed by a full-time gender analyst and gender focal points across programmatic and operational teams, although the gender analyst post was vacant since May 2023¹¹³. The GFT monitored the implementation of the strategy and reported results achieved and challenges encountered. Capacity development on gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) was conducted for the staff to ensure that gender mainstreaming was integrated in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation work. Evaluators recruited were provided with guidance on gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation¹¹⁴. Guidance on communication materials to assist mainstreaming gender-sensitive communications¹¹⁵ and gender fact sheets, booklet, and videos were produced, and awareness raising activities such as campaigns and panel discussions were organized.¹¹⁶
92. Although the lack of a full-time dedicated gender specialist, the GFT is committed to implementing the GEWE initiatives of the UNDP Yemen gender strategy and action plan.. These efforts include building the capacity of the GFT on gender analysis, the prevention of sexual harassment (SH), and on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA); conducting gender review on an annual basis to assess the overall CO performance; and planning and coordinating with Human Resources and the staff association initiatives that promote an enabling environment for women and men to perform equally¹¹⁷.

¹⁰⁹ ROAR 2023 information and UNDP Yemen toward Gender Equality 2022 factsheet and UNDP Yemen Country Programme Performance Summary for the period 2019-2022.

¹¹⁰ ROAR 2023 information

¹¹¹ UNDP Yemen Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025

¹¹² ROAR 2023 information was validated with interview.

¹¹³ The evaluation team was informed later by the CO that a gender Analyst joined the CO in January 2024.

¹¹⁴ Gender Induction to evaluators.

¹¹⁵ UNDP Yemen Gender Sensitive Communication Materials. <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-08/PSEA%20Posters%20-%20%28EN%29.pdf>

¹¹⁶ UNDP Yemen gender fact sheets: <https://www.undp.org/yemen/publications/2022-annual-gender-fact-sheet>. UNDP Yemen gender booklets: <https://www.undp.org/yemen/publications/women-catalyst-innovation-yemen>

¹¹⁷

Finding 18: UNDP Yemen applied the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ in its programme, with ‘equity’ and ‘equality’ considerations guiding interventions, focusing on women, youth and IDPs. However, ‘non-discrimination’ was rarely addressed.

“Leave no one behind” Principle

“Leave no one behind” (LNOB), a principle set by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development, represents the political commitment of UN member states to eradicate discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities that undermine the potential of individuals and humanity. UNDP Strategy Plan 2022-2025 includes LNOB as one of three “directions of change”. There are three interrelated elements (equality, equity and non-discrimination) to address LNOB,¹¹⁸ as well as 5-factor framework for identifying those left behind¹¹⁹.

93. Applying LNOB principle was reflected in the selection criteria for targeted populations in many projects. Although some had clearer criteria based on the needs and vulnerabilities, others were less consistent and transparent. In particular, the country office’s resilience-oriented projects responding to immediate needs (such as cash transfers and temporary job creation) reflected attempts to “reach those furthest behind”. In such efforts, a ‘distress index’ that is a compound of multiple indicators including the severity of food insecurity, emergency needs (such as malnutrition) and scale of IDPs were used for targeting. This ensured that the projects were able to reach the areas where those populations’ vulnerability is high and caused by multiple factors. For cash for work, some criteria used for participation were related to the level of poverty and vulnerability, level of food insecurity and malnutrition, level of livelihood, and groups (i.e. female headed households, youth, IDP, people with disabilities). To ensure those in most need were targeted and participated, a wage rate at slightly below the market rate was set up. In addition, the projects explicitly seek to maximize the inclusion of specific population groups across all components of the projects, notably women, youth and displaced populations (to a lesser extent, people with disabilities), through the provision of livelihood opportunities, access to services and inclusion in community-based decision-making. Despite such efforts being made towards inclusion, discriminatory norms have not been sufficiently addressed to challenge the underlying biases and practices and structural barriers that perpetuate discrimination. In addition, some concerns were raised in terms of the untransparent selection of beneficiaries (such as for trainings) and local committee members. It was also mentioned that some activities were not able to better serve those furthest behind, such as illiterate rural females.
94. It is worth mentioning that such high-coverage targeting was made possible due to available humanitarian data. For development-focused interventions, additional human development data will be needed. In this regard, the newly published multi-dimensional poverty index is a good step in this direction.

Finding 19 (Partnership and resource mobilization): UNDP is recognized as a trusted partner by both national and international counterparts. It was valued for its technical and operational strengths. The country programme’s heavy reliance on the World Bank funding for livelihood and resilience initiatives represents a risk for its financial sustainability.

95. The partnerships between UNDP teams, donors/development partners and implementing partners, were overall referred to as being strong, based on mutual trust. The recognition of UNDP’s role at the local level was usually

¹¹⁸ United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, Sustainable Development Goals, ‘Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development, A Shared United Nations System Framework for Action’, New York, 2017. Three interrelated elements: Equality (“the imperative of moving towards substantive equality of opportunity and outcomes for all groups”), Non-discrimination (“the prohibition of discrimination against individuals and groups on the grounds identified in international human rights treaties”), and Equity (which refers to fairness in the distribution of costs, benefits, and opportunities).

¹¹⁹ UNDP, ‘What Does It Mean To Leave No One Behind? A UNDP discussion paper and framework for implementation’, UNDP 2018. The five factors are: social-economic status, geography, vulnerability to shocks, governance, and discrimination.

low unless UNDP worked directly with stakeholders at that level. The engagement with the private sector was mainly related to smallholders and SMEs as beneficiaries, with some partnerships with business associations, chambers of commerce, etc.¹²⁰ UNDP worked with local authorities through various projects, supporting their capacity and engaging them for inclusive local economic development. Due to the complex political realities, UNDP deliberately limited its work in upstream institutional and policy strengthening. However, some concerns were expressed during the ICPE interviews regarding the lack of engagement with central/ministry-level government partners.

96. The selection of responsible partners (RPs) was deemed relevant. They were chosen for their subject matter expertise and project alignment. Partnerships with local NGOs such as Nadha Makers Organization (NMO), For All Foundation (FAF), Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF) and CIVIC as well as others with local authorities showed adaptability and good level of effectiveness in implementation, contributing to institutional dialogue, and enhancing local knowledge. While communities and RPs were mainly engaged in identifying local needs and priorities, they were less engaged in the design of the project. There was a recognized need for timely communication regarding progress, challenges, and risks to allow for necessary adaptations, and for more consistent consultation with domestic stakeholders.
97. Since 2016, UNDP's collaboration with the World Bank and national institutions like SFD, PWP, and SMEPs¹²¹ has been pivotal for large-scale project delivery, leveraging substantial funding and national institutions' well-established operational and delivery mechanisms. This co-leveraging of diverse organizational strengths¹²² facilitated successful project outcomes, expanding UNDP's role beyond fiduciary management to risk management, coordination, contingency, business continuity mechanisms, as well as technical and capacity support to RPs. However, this model also prevented direct engagement with smaller-scale CSOs and local entities, potentially limiting opportunities to bolster local capacities. In addition, UNDP's role has been confined to management and coordination, with minimal involvement in implementation. This limited its ability to fully capitalize on the potential benefits of the partnership in the field and its programmatic or operational added value to other partners.
98. The country office developed a resource mobilization strategy and donor mapping analysis in 2020, as well as standard operating procedures (SOPs) for communications, existing partnerships and new proposals. The Country Office made crucial investment in engaging with donors and the international community outside of the country. In addition to virtual and Yemen Partner Technical Team (YPTT) meetings, the CO Senior Management conducts quarterly visits to donors in Amman and Riyadh. In partnership with the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group, UNDP has been working with the IRG in providing legal counsel for the preparation of the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) model for the first two private sector funded renewable energy projects in Al Mahrah and Abyan. Some new partnerships were being built, including those with the Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen and Gulf Cooperation Council, and with IFC in fishery investment projects for women. WB funding composed a large portion in Outcome 1 in large-scale resilience and livelihoods programming, which leads to concerns in terms of sustainability if the World Bank, a key development actor, resumes its presence and activities within the country. The ICPE team was informed that the country office is actively mobilizing resources including for "climate change, water, energy, and the environment", and diversifying donors,

¹²⁰ The evaluation team was informed that UNDP launched a consultative private sector engagement Strategy in 2024.

¹²¹ Focus on participatory approaches, SFD and PWP were providers of social protection, short-term employment opportunities and other services since 1990s, with demonstrated results and a track record of political neutrality.

¹²² Such as the World Bank's fiduciary procedures, social and environmental safeguards, SFD and PWP's established operational and delivery mechanisms across the country, and UNDP's risk management, coordination, contingency and business continuity mechanisms.

including the private sector. As a result of its efforts, during this programme cycle, UNDP diversified its resource base, receiving funds from 16 donors in 2019 to 31 donors in 2022.

Chapter 3. Conclusions, Recommendations and Management Response

99. This chapter presents the evaluation’s conclusions on UNDP’s performance and contributions to development results in Yemen, recommendations, and the management response.

3.1. Conclusions

Conclusion 1 (Positioning): UNDP developed a programme that responds to both humanitarian and development needs, addressing all elements of the HDP nexus. Its approach was anchored in local systems, contributing to food security, public service delivery, and local recovery and development, while also addressing climate change and environmental considerations. These aspects are crucial to the HDP nexus approach¹²³, aiding the transition to sustainable development. However, strategic collaboration with other actors within the HDP nexus framework was limited.

100. Despite the complex context, UNDP mobilized resources and managed to achieve a programmatic response that addressed both immediate needs and those required for longer-term development. The programme was conflict-sensitive and the projects applied an area-based approach, considering local circumstances, capacities, and needs. UNDP accumulated a unique experience in Yemen, benefiting from the interventions it piloted as well as from the lessons generated. In addition to cash transfer and smallholder and MSMEs support, the programme also embedded solar energy utility, irrigation and water resource management to enhance basic service delivery, agricultural productivity, income improvement, and conflict resolution at the local level. Discussions on local governance, access to justice, climate change, water, and durable solutions are also being incorporated into UNDP’s programme. Overall, UNDP interventions increased temporary livelihoods, assisted public service delivery, and facilitated local recovery and development, demonstrating the potential for creating sustainable synergies and outcomes at the local level. UNDP played an active role in the UNSDCF and conducted joint initiatives with other actors, including OSESGY, UNRCO, and other UNCT members. However, these efforts were insufficient to demonstrate an HDP nexus operationalization model.

Conclusion 2 (Programming): The needs- and area-based approach ensured the relevance and delivery of the UNDP programme. Positive results were achieved, although changes made were often not captured properly. Implementation delays were frequent, often due to both contextual and management reasons, and there were sustainability challenges. The project-driven nature of the UNDP programme led to fragmentation and a lack of cross-programme collaboration and synergies.

101. Despite many external constraints, the needs-based local systems approach achieved results across the UNDP country programme. ICPE interviews and quantitative and qualitative data collected through country office monitoring reports and evaluations indicated high-level satisfaction among targeted groups and communities, with some demonstrated “changes” brought by the interventions. For instance, more stable income is possible due to surplus funding from cash transfers; increased income profit due to funding and technical support provided; reported more disputes absorbed by community mediation committees and more female employees in the workforce through individual-level advocacy. In terms of governance, at the local level, in addition to community-level interventions, UNDP tried to build capacities and ownership of local authorities above the sub-

¹²³ According to the OECD HDP Interim Progress Review (2022), areas that still need attention include: Investing in national and local capacities and systems cannot be an afterthought; collective support and optimal use of public delivery systems for basic social services at national and local levels must remain a priority, even in times of crisis. The HDP nexus should integrate gender equality, climate change and other relevant considerations.

district level for gender-sensitive economic recovery. Local governance approach could potentially enhance local capacities and ownership, and provide a certain level of stability and policy environment for public service delivery and economic recovery and development. Some output indicators were not met, such as those related to women's empowerment in national and local decision-making, and those measuring peace support processes, reflecting a lack of clearly analyzed theories of change in the programme's design.

102. In general the results focused on targeted numbers. These are important indicators to measure the reach of interventions but they are not sufficient to reflect changes made at the outcome level. There was a lack of data issues such as the effects on the economic situation, the jobs created, the reduction of local conflicts, the impact of interventions in building public trust and confidence in the public sector, including police and justice system, making local communities feel better served. Delays occurred due to political restrictions and constraints, particularly in DFA-controlled areas, as well as management and procurement inefficiencies. In addition, post-event follow-up for maintaining the gains, including additional technical and financial support for infrastructure/facility continued functionality, responses for relevant emerging needs in training and capacity development, and safe disposal of renewable energy equipment, was generally absent. Exit strategies were also generally missing.

103. UNDP various projects were envisioned to harness collective strengths and resources to address the multifaceted dimensions of the country's humanitarian and development needs. Despite isolated instances of effective collaboration—such as joint initiatives within the ERRY project and attempts at geo-bundling approaches among the World Bank-funded projects—and some ad hoc cross-project collaborations, the broader landscape of UNDP's operations reveals a piecemeal approach. This fragmented implementation limits the potential for projects to leverage mutual strengths, share learnings, and amplify impact. Critically, while projects were designed with complementary objectives, the absence of a systematic and strategic framework for integration resulted in operational siloes. This not only diminishes efficiency but also restricts the ability to address interconnected challenges in a holistic manner. The new Strategy Direction paper emphasized the interdependency of pathways across the country programme, indicating a positive upcoming direction to strengthen synergies between complementary programme areas.

Conclusion 3 (Partnership): UNDP is seen as a reliable collaborator. However, partnerships with national and local partners were suboptimal, requiring more innovative and inclusive efforts. High dependency on a limited number of funding sources posed risks to financial sustainability and priority setting.

104. UNDP built collaborative relationships with the UNCT members and international actors, donors, different levels of government, and implementing partners. These relationships were bolstered by effective communications and consultations, though the consistency of these interactions was variable.

105. Considering the political fragmentation, upstream institutional and policy strengthening was limited. UNDP in general worked at the community and local level and with local formal and informal authorities (sub-district, district and governorate levels), supporting their capacity and engaging them for inclusive local economic development. Partnerships with the three national institutions (namely, SFD, PWP and SMEPS) were mature after years of collaboration and these partnerships enabled large-scale interventions. However, innovative strategies are needed to capitalize on the unique strengths of each partner, including UNDP itself, to minimize overlap and competition in roles.

106. UNDP worked with local partners and civil society organizations in project implementation across its programme and engaged them in local resilience and recovery plan development and peacebuilding discussions. However, these organizations were often engaged more as contractors or beneficiaries than as true partners in

the design and implementation phases of interventions. Challenges regarding identifying local partners with proper capacity for project implementation reflect the need to better understand the CSOs landscape and engagement strategy in the complex context. This also applies to UNDP's engagement with the private sector. UNDP provided support to MSMEs to strengthen their resilience and foster local economic recovery. However, a clear theory of change has not yet been established to outline how these interventions will lead to broader economic recovery and development, although some work is ongoing.

107. As mentioned in Conclusion 1, UNDP collaborated with the UNCT members, but a joint HDP nexus operationalization model supported by strategic partnerships among different actors did not exist. The UNDP programme was predominantly funded by several donors, posing risks to both the financial sustainability of the programme and UNDP's ability to set its own priorities. Ongoing efforts have been made for joint actions (i.e. area-based programming in Taiz by the UNCT), and mobilizing resources (i.e. for climate, energy and water-related initiatives).

Conclusion 4 (Adaptive management): UNDP's adaptive management was effective in addressing hindering factors for programme delivery, such as the area-based and two-track approaches. However, there was room for improvement, particularly in terms of consistent and efficient practices in applying safeguard measures. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and communication contributed to the achievement of the outputs. However, they didn't effectively facilitate programme-wide knowledge management and learning. The M&E framework lacked a proper system to capture a 'programme-wide' overview of its performance.

108. Following the Strategy Note 2019-2022, the country office updated its Strategy Direction document for 2023-2025 to respond to the evolving context, reflecting active planning in addressing development issues in a crisis context. In addition, the adaptive management implemented by UNDP Yemen ensured the programme delivery. These measures, grounded in participatory approaches and local systems engagement, reflect the vision of tailoring interventions to the nuanced realities of Yemen complex context. However, they were not always successful. Costly delays occurred due to political, security and logistical constraints, especially in the DFA-controlled areas. Sometimes delays in decision-making also prevented to translate timely adaptive measures into action to keep pace with the evolving context. Some adaptive measures require improvements. These include applying them consistently across UNDP programme, such as preparation and application of the Environment and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) and grievance and complain mechanisms to ensure risk management.

109. The programme demonstrated a strong commitment to and capacity for project evaluations. The use of Third-Party Monitoring Agencies (TPMA) helped overcome some difficulties in data collection posed by political and security restrictions. It enabled needed adjustments and provided some sample data beyond targeted numbers. However, the programme lacked a proper framework to connect project and outcome level indicators, limiting CO's ability to capture 'programme-wide' overview of its performance and to exercise its oversight role across various intervention areas. The Management Information System (MIS) was a positive step in streamlining project level monitoring data, but its utility remains limited.

110. UNDP Yemen achieved good results in sharing and promoting project stories through digital channels. However, internal communications within UNDP were less effective, which hampered cross-organizational collaboration and learning. Both M&E and the internal communication system missed the opportunity to systemize knowledge management and learning across the programme and the country office.

Conclusion 5 (Gender and LNOB): UNDP Yemen continued its efforts in gender equality and women's empowerment, as demonstrated by its two-time Silver Gender Seal recognition. Projects targeting women, youth and IDPs demonstrated a strong commitment to the "Leave No One Behind" (LNOB) principle. However, other vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, were overlooked. Gender equality and addressing discriminatory norms require strengthened efforts given the country's context.

111. UNDP Yemen integrated women's empowerment across its programming, despite the challenging context characterized by significant gender disparities. Projects were designed with a gender lens, ensuring the inclusion and participation of women in economic, social, and community life. For instance, cash transfers targeted lactating and pregnant women, and women-headed households, while vocational trainings were provided supporting women, including female detainees. Efforts towards economic empowerment included supporting women-led businesses and training in agriculture practices and dairy equipment use. Female members were engaged in committees at sub-district and district levels to form local resilience and recovery plans. Women's network was supported, empowering gender equality advocacy. The achievement of gender equality and the effective integration of women into the peace and decision-making processes faced considerable social and institutional hurdles, reflecting focusing on women alone is not sufficient to overcome the substantial challenges women face.

112. Adhering to the LNOB principle, UNDP Yemen aimed to reach vulnerable populations through resilience and cash transfer interventions. A needs-based approach, leveraging a 'distress index', enabled targeted assistance to areas and populations facing acute vulnerability due to conflict, food insecurity, and displacement. Special attention was given to women, youth, and IDPs, promoting their participation in community decision-making and ensuring their access to livelihood opportunities and basic services. Other marginalized groups were often overlooked, such as persons with disabilities. Challenges persist in fully operationalizing the LNOB principle, particularly in reaching the furthest behind, such as illiterate rural women. This highlights the importance of tailored and inclusive interventions.

113. Both gender-targeted and gender-responsive initiatives and the LNOB approach encountered challenges stemming from Yemen's complex context, including discriminatory social norms, political restrictions and fragmentation, and operational constraints. Efforts to empower women and target marginalized groups often faced limitations in inclusion, scalability and sustainability, underscored by the broader economic and security instability. Participatory approaches and strengthening data for programming generated positive results in mainstreaming gender equality and implementing LNOB principles. Areas for improvement include extending beyond merely targeting women or other LNOB groups as it is important to consider gender dynamics at play within communities and address discriminatory social norms that impact girls and women, as well as boys and men.

3.2. Recommendations and management response

Recommendation 1 (Strategic Planning): Based on its programme experience, UNDP should consider developing an HDP nexus strategy to bridge development with humanitarian and peace elements. This strategy should include a clear theory of change that clarifies both short-term and longer-term objectives, guiding UNDP's programme as well as its partnerships with other actors.

114. A key challenge facing international development cooperation in Yemen is that of making a sustainable transition from high dependence on humanitarian assistance to development cooperation, while enabling peace

to the extent possible. The call for an HDP nexus approach and shifting the focus from short-term relief to long-term sustainable development is increasingly prominent among both international and national stakeholders. Some efforts are ongoing. However, addressing such a transition presents several challenges. The scale of the humanitarian and development needs in Yemen is significant. After years of conflict, humanitarian assistance is embedded in the institutional framework, the coordination mechanisms and the mindset of government officials and the public in the country. The UNCT and donor coordination mechanisms are also deeply steeped in humanitarian clusters and recurring appeals. Specifically, for example, despite UNDP's support for peace processes indicating that the local approach could yield progress, the broader peacebuilding framework's effectiveness in such a volatile context is still unproven. The ongoing crisis has aggravated existing social and economic issues such as food security and malnutrition. These are deep-rooted problems that require structural and long-term solutions targeting their fundamental causes. Practical hurdles hamper this transition, including a lack of systematic coordination and synergies between international humanitarian and development actors at institutional and operational levels. In addition, the political fragmentation, paired with a lack of fully functioning governments, severely restricts the implementation of development initiatives looking for structural and durable solutions.

115. UNDP should continue to support the transition from humanitarian-oriented assistance to the HDP nexus approach. This entails addressing short-term objectives, while also tackling the root causes of the conflict and strategically collaborating with other actors, bearing in mind the limits of political will as well as current or potential accelerants of the conflict.

116. Furthermore, the country office should prepare a strategy/theory of change to bridge the nexus elements within its programme, as well as with other humanitarian, development and peace actors. This will be based on conflict and political economic analysis as well as UNDP's experiences and lessons learned in the past years. This will require strategic thinking and planning to conceptualize and operationalize efforts. It could potentially demonstrate a viable HDP nexus model. It could also start with pilots at the local level (see Recommendation 2).

Recommendation 2 (Programming): UNDP should apply the two-track approach in IRG- and DFA-controlled areas from the outset of project design, taking into account different operating environments. Additionally, UNDP should consistently include exit strategies beyond project closure. Continuing with a conflict-sensitive and adaptive approach, UNDP should also pilot area-based programming within its programme, and with other UNCT members, to enhance coherent planning and implementation and strengthen synergies and intersectionality across different programme areas.

117. UNDP should continue its conflict-sensitive programming based on its experience as well as previous and upcoming analysis and study on conflict, development and political economy. These analysis tools should include how interventions could interact with the conflict drivers and identify opportunities for contributing to peace and social cohesion, even in projects not primarily focused on peacebuilding. UNDP should apply the two-track approach starting from the project design. This would entail taking into consideration different hindering factors in different areas, possibly with different implementation methods and timelines.

118. UNDP projects should incorporate transition or exit strategies to ensure the sustainability of outcomes beyond project completion. These strategies could include analyses on sustaining results, plans of engagement and capacity building of local partners and target groups, resource allocation for the transition period, and transparent communication with stakeholders about the transition process, including clear roles, responsibilities, and timelines.

119. While crafting enduring solutions at the national level remains an intricate endeavor, the localized efforts are crucial steps towards broader and more sustainable change and provide a special foundation for sustainable development and the HDP nexus approach. UNDP's areas of work such as livelihood and economic recovery, empowerment of women, local governance, access to justice, demining and little "p", climate resilience, energy and environmental sustainability, can all be integrated into the area-based programmes. Area-based programming can holistically facilitate coherent planning and implementation. It can contribute to creating the right environment to strengthen partnerships with local organizations and private sector actors, which would enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the initiatives. From an operational standpoint, area-based programming can enable joint activities and streamline processes, including needs assessment, conflict and political economic analysis, social and environment standards screening, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

120. UNDP Yemen can identify models of areas based on their geographic, political, and social-economic conditions, while balancing what is feasible.¹²⁴ Existing experiences, lessons learned and models should be reflected and learned from.

Recommendation 3 (Partnership): UNDP should persist in collaborating with UNRCO and UNCT to advocate for an enabling programming environment that addresses key operational challenges. UNDP should seek innovative partnerships to enhance programming delivery and impact. In addition, UNDP should continue to diversify its funding sources.

121. UN agencies do not always appear to act in unison when confronted by political threats to operational independence.¹²⁵ UNDP should continue working closely with UNRCO and other UN agencies to advocate for a UN system-wide approach to enable a feasible and safe programming environment, including implementation clearance, freedom of travel and movement, mahram requirement, "gender" approach, especially in the DFA-controlled areas. This helps achieve collective gain and avoid countereffects due to inconsistent approaches among actors.

122. Programmes should emphasize collaborative partnerships with other international and national agencies to leverage capacity and resources as much as possible. Innovative partnerships should be further developed with national and local actors, as well as the private sectors¹²⁶. This could also include engaging central-level government agencies to mitigate the risks of a capacity vacuum. To the extent that it builds confidence and trust, continued transparency in UNDP's prioritization and decision-making is to be encouraged.

123. UNDP Yemen should diversify sources of funding, including continuing to seek vertical funds and new climate finance opportunities¹²⁷. It is also possible to mobilize vertical funds by connecting environment and

¹²⁴ For instance, UNDP Yemen has identified five politically neutral "agro-ecological" regions characterised by historically shared values and economic linkages to avoid unintended political consequences. In addition, UNDP's upcoming political economy analysis can provide great foundation for area-based programming.

¹²⁵ Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Yemen Crisis, 2022. Field data collection.

¹²⁶ The ICPE welcomes the development of the Private Sector Engagement Strategy and the Communication and Advocacy Plan. Additional thoughts and innovative approaches can also be explored such as microfinance loans or partnership with large firms. For examples, according to the 2024 World Bank report, "Connecting the Yemeni Private Sector to the World"

(<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099032024141038420/P17763112a6d5d0a518fdc1db18e0368bfd>), large, dominant firms in Yemen are potential drivers of private sector performance and economic growth due to their market resilience and ability to navigate the complex political and regulatory environment. On the one side, their close ties with the political establishment and dominant market position hinder competition, making it challenging for smaller or newer companies to thrive. On the other side, they can help MSMEs by facilitating their entry into the formal economy, elevating performance standards, and providing access to essential knowledge, markets, and financing.

¹²⁷ For instance, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/understanding-stakes-climate-talks-countries-conflict#:~:text=Although%20its%20mandate%20covers%20several,factor%20in%20making%20its%20grants>.

climate-linked solutions with livelihoods and poverty reduction in the conflict context¹²⁸. Areas-based programming can facilitate such an approach.

Recommendation 4 (Adaptive Measures): UNDP should consistently apply adaptive measures to mitigate risks. UNDP should enhance its programme-wide data and knowledge management and learning.

124. UNDP should consistently apply its adaptive measures, including social and environmental standards (SES) screening and grievance and complaint mechanisms. This can be built on the experience and the templates generated, i.e. those of the World Bank-funded projects, with streamlined processes for efficiency and mechanisms to ensure that complaints are submitted without concerns and addressed timely.

125. Efforts to support a transition to sustained peace and development must acknowledge the high likelihood of setbacks due to numerous risk factors. These risks must be clearly communicated to all stakeholders, including donors, who should formally recognize these challenges, including potential corporate and reputational ones, as well as help mitigate them wherever appropriate and possible.

126. The country office should improve its results framework by establishing indicators, in addition to targeted number, to appropriately measure the programme results. Based on such a framework, the Management Information System (MIS) could be improved by including data analysis for decision-making, and other relevant data.¹²⁹ It should also establish a system to capture lessons learned and good practices, integrating these insights into future programming. UNDP should therefore reinforce its M&E system and teams, continuously developing M&E capacity and ensuring exchange between the M&E focal points and the project management teams for learning and adjustments (in addition to other communication mechanisms recommended by the Operational Scan)¹³⁰. If possible, impact assessments can be designed and conducted for large or pilot projects/programmes.

Recommendation 5 (Gender and LNOB): UNDP Yemen should continue implementing its Gender Strategy and Action Plan and integrate “Leave No One Behind” principle into its programming. It should take concrete measures to address the gender implications of conflict and development. UNDP should promote a common UN gender approach to ensure collective gains on advocacy to address gender issues in the country.

127. In addition to women’s economic empowerment, jointly with other UN agencies and local partners, UNDP should thoroughly analyze how underlying causes and entrenched structural problems impact gender inequality and discrimination, examining how policies, political and social norms, and institutional and social practices might differentially affect women and men. This would help develop clear theories of change/pathways for developing effective interventions in a complex environment and address gender issues comprehensively, feasibly and sustainably. UNDP should consistently promote an inclusive and transparent approach to the selection of community committee members, ensuring that different vulnerable groups, including women, youth, IDPs, persons with disabilities and other groups, participate in the sub-district and district level committees and that their voices and needs can be heard in the local planning and decision-making process. Gender-responsive mechanisms, such as targeted engagement for (illiterate) women, should be provided to overcome specific

¹²⁸ UNDP upcoming Reflection paper on HDP nexus.

¹²⁹ For instance, it could include analytical tools that allow users to perform complex data analysis and generate actionable insights. This could include tools for forecasting and trend analysis. In addition, it could have demand-driven reporting features that allow users to generate custom reports to meet diverse managerial needs. This includes the ability to create dashboards, real-time reports, and standard periodic reports. Other relevant data could be incorporated and synchronized into the MIS, such as the crisis dashboard, political economic analysis, and financial data.

¹³⁰ The Operational Scan suggested the country office to 1) improve the interaction between the teams by clarifying existing pain points in key organizational processes and team roles and responsibilities; 2) increase cross-organization communication, collaboration, and decision-making mechanisms; and 3) increase transparency of the organizational structures that support programmes and operations.

obstacles faced by these groups. The ICPE welcomes the fact that the a full-time gender specialist were recruited in early 2024.

128. Given the current political constraints, UNDP should advocate for a common UN strategy in addressing gender issues in the country, including communication approaches, consistent terminology use, as well as advocacy strategies.