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Evaluation Report

Government of Albania and
United Nations Programme of
Cooperation for Sustainable
Development 2017-2021



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All those who participated in this evaluation did so in a very peculiar health pandemic context (COVID-19), which imposed the evaluation to be conducted remotely. This made it more challenging for all the actors to partake as they usually do in evaluation processes. Their efforts are even more laudable in this context.

All the Programme of Cooperation actors interviewed offered valuable information and insights, which allowed the consultants a good triangulation of information with the documentary sources. The authors hope that this evaluation report will be useful in the near future, including in the development of the United Nations Sustainable Development Partnership Framework.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Introduction, Purpose, Objectives and Scope

This report presents the results of the evaluation of the Government of Albania and United Nations Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development 2017-2021 (PoCSD) evaluation. The PoCSD focuses on four core result areas, or outcomes, which respond to development priorities aligned with the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015 – 2020 (NSDI II). These are the following: Outcome 1: Governance and Rule of Law; Outcome 2: Social Cohesion: Health, Education, Social Protection, Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence; Outcome 3: Economic growth, Labour and Agriculture; Outcome 4: Environment and Climate Change.

As such, the evaluation is considered a steppingstone, which will serve as an analytical tool, in preparation for the next United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) cycle. It suggests ways in which the next UNSDC could continue to support the country in the future in integration with the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the EU integration aspirations of Albania. The evaluation, which covers the period January 2017 to March 2020, assesses the PoCSD: a) Relevance: Are we doing the right things?; b) Coherence: How well does the PoCSD fit?; c) Results: Have we made a difference?; d) Transformation: Have we made long-lasting, systemic and society-wide changes?; e) Normative: Have we left no one behind?; and f) Looking forward.

The evaluation provides UN Partners and UN agencies an opportunity to reflect collectively on the contribution of the UN System to the development change, on the basis of the expected PoCSD outcomes, identifying the enabling factors and specific UN interventions that may have contributed to any observable result change.

The evaluation was commissioned by the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) with the support of UN Agencies, Outcome Groups and the national counterparts. It was conducted by a team of two independent consultants (an international, Mr. Christian Privat, and a national, Ms. Sabina Ymeri).

The PoCSD evaluation objectives were:

- to examine whether the UN Country Team (UNCT) is collectively prioritizing support and contributing to the country's development. The evaluation identifies synergies, gaps, overlaps and missed opportunities, ultimately assessing overall UNCT contribution to the country's achievement of SDGs.
- to use the findings strategically to inform the next programme cycle, to better integrate Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, to better align and target UN interventions that will support the country in reaching its 2030 commitments; to help the UNCT adjust to new generation of UNDAFs and the wide UN system reforms. Using a logic model (assumptions-causal links) of the Theory of Change, a common understanding of what determined the expected change, including the inputs and outputs delivered, as well as the external factors that may have influenced progress and opportunities by the UN at country level.
- to assess to what extent gender is mainstreamed throughout the programmatic work in all four Outcomes and to what extent these gender considerations are maintained in deliveries of each Outcome.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation was conducted remotely, and the data collection plan was adjusted accordingly. Some of the design adopted for the evaluation methodology and

the rationale behind were dictated by the remote character of the evaluation due to the health pandemic. Another limitation was the fact that it was conducted under a tight budget and number of working days. The evaluation methods used were carefully weighed against these constraints.

The methodology used mixed methods. Information from the different lines of inquiry was triangulated to improve the reliability of the findings and to ensure that the recommendations are well grounded and implementable.

The overview of the methodology is the following:

- Preparatory meetings with the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO).
- A desk review of key documents.
- Preparation of a detailed Inception Report, with an Evaluation matrix.
- A stakeholder analysis.
- Data collection (23 April - 15 May 2020).
- Briefing with the UN Resident Coordinator.
- Written Questionnaires for Outcome Groups, Theme Groups and CSOs.
- Remote meetings with RC, Outcome Group Co-Chairs, RCO, Government and other national stakeholders, CSOs, development partners, Outcome Groups and Theme Groups.
- Debriefing meeting with the UN Country Team.

All these sources of information allowed triangulation of information for all the evaluation criteria and questions.

Findings

Relevance: Are we doing the right things?

In terms of relevance, the evaluation found that the PoCSD reflects the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its accompanying Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The PoCSD is also relevant in terms of internationally agreed goals and human rights commitments, norms and standards.

The PoCSD is very relevant with respect to national development priorities, including the NSDI II and the overarching EU accession priorities. Several other sector strategies, part of the NSDI, are mentioned and referenced to in the PoCSD document and Joint Biennial Workplans and other working documents. Relevance is ensured through clear, explicit links to the stated strategic priorities and a highly participatory approach at design and implementation stage. The UN maintains close coordination with the Government and ensures that any changing priorities in a dynamic changing development context are addressed appropriately in the subsequent iteration of the rolling Joint Biennial Workplans.

The UN in Albania has provided support for mainstreaming of SDGs in the national agenda and for the achievement of SDG targets. The PoCSD and NSDI II have established clear links between the specific strategic priorities and outcomes and the SDGs, and work is ongoing to establish further national SDG targets. The UN has been instrumental in building policy support and partnerships to make the SDG agenda relevant in the country. Further efforts are needed to fully internalize the SDG framework into the policy delivery systems at strategic and operational level.

During the first three years of the PoCSD delivery, around 65 million USD have been deployed, or roughly 60% of the total resource envelope required for its implementation. Delivery rates have been significantly high for the majority of outcomes and outputs.

At the PoCSD design stage, core resources were estimated to amount to 15,3 million USD, less than 15% of the total budget required. The large proportion of non-core resources highlights the importance of local resource mobilisation. In 2019, the UNCT developed a resource mobilization strategy to enhance joint resource mobilization efforts and opportunities for collaboration. Resource mobilisation rates have been quite successful for Outcome 1 and 2, which take up approximately 69% of the total available budget, vis-à-vis their original relative weight of 58% in the indicative financial estimates at design stage. The largest funding gaps as a proportion of the total respective budget are for Outcome 3: Economic growth, Labour and Agriculture, and Outcome 4: Environment and Climate Change. Pledges to the PoCSD budget for 2020 – 2021 have resulted in a negative funding gap for Outcome 1 and 2, due to a surge in budgetary commitments to UN agencies in the aftermath of the November 2019 earthquake and Covid-19 crisis.¹ The SDG Acceleration Fund (until 2018 the One UN Coherence Fund) is a key vehicle to support resource mobilization for the joint programming of the PoCSD.

Joint programme resources channeled through the SDG Acceleration Fund such as the SDC supported LNB programme, the Swedish supported EAW programme; or new financial flows such as the SDG Global fund on social protection and financing projects have provided a useful platform for the consolidation of an appropriate programme strategy in the respective areas. The majority of resources mobilized from the SDG Acceleration Fund contribute to joint programming in the social inclusion outcome area where the added value of joint UN work has been established during several programme cycles and evaluations. Likewise, pledges to the earthquake recovery window of the Fund indicate the trust that donors place in the PoCSD and the UNCT to make the appropriate programmatic choices and division of work toward the expected objectives, in a situation where agile and concerted interventions are deemed necessary.

Coherence: How well does the PoCSD fit?

The evaluation found that the PoCSD Results framework is defined at outcome level through high level impact or outcome indicators for the majority of which plausible attribution of UN's contributions cannot be attested. The intervention strategy of the PoCSD is laid out in the rolling Joint Biennial Workplans (JWP), which describe the way the PoCSD and UN agencies will engage with their national counterparts in practice. JWPs, endorsed by the relevant UN agencies and government stakeholders on a biennial basis, contain a clear story of the interventions, including detailed output indicators and the available funding to meet objectives, including identification of funding gaps. Outcome goals are broadly defined at a high level. With few exceptions, it is difficult to establish straightforward causal links between outputs and outcomes. At the output level, the theory of change for how the outputs contribute to national/sectoral development priorities is, in the majority of cases, implicitly stated in the narrative layout of programme strategies, and the quality and relevance of indicators to sectoral strategies. In some instances, the outputs under the same outcome appear to be quite unrelated with each other, joined by the common thread of overarching policies only. In other occasions, the common thread linking outputs together is more solid – as is the case of Outcome 2 – where considerations of target groups appear to have brought health, education and gender and social policies together.

The PoCSD is coherent with government programmes and incorporates a number of monitoring and reporting tools and resources to keep track of development and consistently align itself with government policy. Similarly, PoCSD's interventions are complementary and consistent with other development partners and the UN is praised for its constructive role in donor coordination and aid effectiveness. PoCSD's coherence with EU assistance is of particular importance. Partners, however, express some concerns that at times the UN is overzealous about producing and delivering outputs,

1. Earthquake recovery-related contributions were all received in 2020. Most resources committed in relation with the earthquake and Covid-19 crises management have been provisionally appropriated to Outcomes 1 and 2, which has resulted in the total budget for these Outcomes surpassing the original estimates. The process for the exact allocation of funding across JWPs for 2020-2021 has not been outlined yet.

instead of focusing on the longer-term process of building institutional capacities to deliver. UN agencies work well together to the extent that they need and have to. Programme complementarities have been incorporated already at design stage, alongside a careful consideration of a clear division of labour between the different agencies, but synergies are not actively sought out over the course of implementation. There is inherent competition and territorialism over the PoCSD (and donor) resources and scope of activities. Nevertheless, smaller agencies are keener to cooperate and explore synergies than bigger ones.

Partnership with CSOs lies at the core of the designed PoCSD strategies. The PoCSD recognizes weaknesses in the Albanian civil society sector related with their organizational capacities, independence and political influence, but emphasizes their role for inclusive policymaking and the need to strengthen engagement of CSOs and the general public in local governance and decision-making processes. CSOs are identified as key partners under all Outcomes. Their involvement in the PoCSD is, however, mainly in the role of service providers- delivering advice or technical assistance to government counterparts on behalf of the UN and its programmes. Instances where CSOs are directly targeted to receive capacity building support are rather more limited. There are positive examples of how PoCSD engages with CSOs, including support for shadow reports under the UPR and strengthening the CSO sector in the gender budgeting and LGBTI rights areas. CSOs role as watchdogs and accountability seekers has been increasingly encouraged at the local level through UN women and other agencies activities. However, UN Agencies are called to intensify efforts to build and sustain the CSO sector, which is relatively weak in Albania. Recent positive examples of partnerships with the private sector are encouraging, e.g. the cooperation to establish friendly wi-fi zones in Tirana, or enhanced attention and awareness on women entrepreneurship and refugees, resulting from cooperation with the banking sector.

Results: Have we made a difference?

Overall, PoCSD performance is good. The majority of planned interventions has been implemented during the 2017 – 2019 period or are on track to be implemented until 2021. Progress is positive across all four PoCSD outcomes and towards the achievement of national objectives and SDGs. Progress was achieved in the area of compliance with international obligations in human rights, enabling framework for access to justice in particular for children and vulnerable people, and more effective local governance. A rich legal and policy framework in the area of social inclusion and social protection was complemented with efforts to sustain implementation at the local level and clarify regulatory and financing frameworks. Policy, legal and institutional changes in the employment and skills sector have progressed steadily including through UN's contributions, leading to reductions in unemployment and particularly youth unemployment. The PoCSD has contributed significantly to increasing data collection and analysis capacities at government level as well as increasing data availability and quality. The partnership with the Institute of Statistics through the Joint Data Group has been particularly productive. UN assistance has been crucial for the development and disaggregation of SDG-related indicators.

The UN's long-standing strategic partnership with government and the trusting relationship developed ensures continuous coordination and harmonisation of objectives and implementation for results by the PoCSD. Government ownership and commitment towards expected outcomes are key enabling factors for progress, in which the EU accession process plays an important role. There is often a correlation between the maturity of the policy sectors - the stage of development of national policies, institutions and systems – and the quality of PoCSD contributions. The more developed the relevant sectors are, the higher the prospects for sustainable results appear to be. In turn, bottlenecks in implementation are encountered at times due to weak human and financial resources of the government institutions.

Results have been underscored by a 5-year Communications Strategy implemented by the UN Communication Team, which develops various communication products, conducts joint advocacy campaigns, develops common messages to benefit larger UN objectives, enhances the visibility of the UN through internet-based media, organizes joint activities, field visits and events, network, and

creates relations with media groups. Nevertheless, while communication is considered important in the PoCSD implementation, it has not reached its full potential. Resources for communication remain very limited, based on agency will and contributions. Communication for Development (C4D) was not included enough in Programme areas, and communication was not integrated into programme output/outcome joint workplans, and into partnership building and resource mobilization.

Transformation: Have we made long-lasting, systemic and society-wide changes?

The UNCT work brought about systemic changes (for example, changes in the legal framework, institutions, social and economic structure), and the Outcome Groups provided many examples of such changes in all outcome areas. In many cases, however, the contribution towards the improvement of legal and regulatory frameworks, or piloting of best practices and models, needs substantial additional support to ensure sustainability.

The UNCT work has been scaled up or replicated to ensure its effects are not limited in scope. Very rarely interventions are framed as isolated projects, and the majority of contributions are at the nation- and society-wide level. Outcome Groups and interviewees provided many examples of scaling-up and replication. Nonetheless, the transition into nation- and society-wide programmes is not always a quick one, and while it requires a clear vision for sustainability and ownership by duty bearers, it also requires sustained support to ensure that advancements are solid and irreversible.

The PoCSD adequately invested in and focused on national capacity development. The PoCSD made an important contribution to capacity development of both local and central government capacities in all areas and capacity development of CSOs in specific areas. There are, however, risks that some capacities built in the past (for example work with the Roma), may be lost due to the lack of continuity of some projects, and the lack of ownership and buy-in from the Government. In several cases UN is perceived as substituting government capacity.

Normative: Have we left no one behind?

The general PoCSD programme strategies “Ensure gender equality” and “Promote fundamental human rights” have been given due attention during the implementation. As shown by the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard,² gender is well mainstreamed in the PoCSD and most programmatic areas. The Gender Theme Results Group has been effective to mainstream Albania’s gender equality commitments into the PoCSD implementation, review, monitoring and evaluation. It has been particularly active in supporting a joint approach/collaboration, not only in the area of implementation of international normative standards/commitments, but also in the area of public advocacy campaigns. The Group has, however, been less involved in supporting gender mainstreaming across all Joint Programmes and agency programmes. There are some concerns that gender still needs to be better mainstreamed in development areas that are not necessarily linked with social inclusion priorities.

UN Agencies made progress in ensuring the Government’s ability to monitor progress on implementation of recommendations from international Human Rights Conventions, Treaties and regular National Reports, improve evidence for actions taken in line with observations and recommendations and establish tracking mechanisms, and generate stronger political engagement by Parliament and Human Rights institutions to strengthen public accountability mechanisms and increase outreach to vulnerable people. There are many examples of activities and results achieved in the implementation of the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and the equity focus. The PoCSD has a marked emphasis on vulnerable groups, especially in Outcome 1 and 2. Over the

2. https://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/Gender%20Equality%20Scorecard%20final%20report_0.pdf

years an intentional effort has been made to bring the most vulnerable at the center of attention, in particular vulnerable women, the Roma, and more recently People with Disabilities (PwD)). The PoCSD has increasingly devoted attention to newly emerging vulnerable groups, such as returnees, migrants, and refugees, but the needs remain high and are not matched by the PoCSD resources.

Comparative advantage and strategic positioning

The UN comparative advantages are well recognized by UN Agencies, Government counterparts, NGOs and CSOs, and development partners. They include a close and trusting relationship with the Government due to their long-term engagement in the country; as well as a breadth of know-how and technical expertise, and ability to employ different support modalities. The UN has demonstrated strong programming, implementation, and management capacity along with the capability to pool resources, ensure coordination and complementarity.

In terms of areas of work where the UN has a comparative advantage, many interlocutors said that aid effectiveness, the SDGs, gender and women's empowerment, and human rights are all strong assets for the UN, which is a very strong ally in advancing these agendas. Development partners and national stakeholders acknowledge that normative work is definitely a UN asset, with strong experience and competence, and experts who are very specialized in the thematic areas they cover. UN Agencies have also a long history of cooperation with authorities on these issues. The UN is also a neutral voice in this normative work and can speak fairly freely about sensitive subjects without being criticized for it. Nonetheless, normative work can become a burden on the ministries and institutions involved.

UN Agencies regret a kind of a donor-contractor approach with the EU, and a lack of a strategic partnership with the EU. There is a perception of a need to establish such a partnership, and that both entities continue to not only coordinate their work but also collaborate, indicating potential areas of collaboration, and positioning the UN in a more "preferential" dealing status by the EU. On the other hand, the EU criticizes the UN for stepping in some areas for opportunistic reasons (for instance with the earthquake and the Covid 19 Pandemic). At the same time, many national stakeholders praise the UN for its capacity to act quickly and flexibly, when circumstances change. Development partners also recognize that the UN is strategically positioned, for instance in the areas of sustainable development and human rights, as well as work with key institutions. The aftermath of the November 2019 earthquake and the Covid 19 pandemic showed the fragility of the more vulnerable, and the UN is called to identify a new way of looking at vulnerabilities and the social inclusion agenda.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: The evaluation concludes that the UNCT collectively prioritizes support and contributes to the country's development. The PoCSD outcomes are relevant in terms of internationally agreed goals and human rights commitments and in line with the national strategic framework as laid out in the NSDI II and sectoral strategies. The PoCSD has made good progress in aligning the Agenda 2030 goals with the national development policies, and in making the SDG framework relevant in the country through its mainstreaming and operationalization of a set of national indicators. The advancement of the SDG agenda was fostered by the strong, high-level partnership of the RCO and UNCT with the Prime Minister's Office and Parliament. To ensure the continued commitment, at sectoral level, of the executive and other institutions, the UN agencies need to continue pursuing an explicit SDG-related agenda to overcome technical difficulties.

Conclusion 2: The PoCSD is coherent with government policies and it has built-in flexibilities that allow for timely adjustments of the interventions to accommodate any changes in the course of national policies. Contributions of the PoCSD are also coherent with other international

development partner policies, with consistent inter-linkages and complementarities identified with other partners, most frequently with the EU. The financing of PoCSD is heavily dependent on donor contributions, which makes donor coordination a key prerequisite.

Conclusion 3: The PoCSD provides a reference framework for the cooperation and coordination of work. UN agency internal cooperation is strongest at the programming phase, when interventions strategies are discussed, and information exchanged with a view to avoid duplication as well as communication overlaps with beneficiaries. The cooperation approach and modalities of programming and implementation have been tested by the UN family in Albania over more than a decade and much of the cooperation has now become inherent to the organisational culture. Cooperation is more intense in the framework of joint programmes funded by the SDG Acceleration Fund. Cross-fertilisation of approaches is more evident with joint programmes, although agencies tend to persist in employing a “division of labour” approach in terms of delivery of activities and responsibility for project components.

Conclusion 4: The PoCSD Results framework is highly consolidated at outcome level, which undermines the clarity of the intervention logic and theory of change. Typically, there are no direct links between results defined at outcome level and output level indicators, which may undermine the coherence of the results chain as well as accountability for implementation. In other cases, single outputs are directly linked with one entire national strategy and high level national institutions that are responsible for their implementation are not represented in the PoCSD management structures.

Conclusion 5: The interventions of the PoCSD are quite donor-driven, as core and regular resources finance less than 15% of its resource envelope. The viability of intervention strategies and prioritisation of actions within Outcomes is interdependent with the degree to which objectives converge with donor strategies in terms of content and time. The joint resource mobilisation strategy provides a useful framework for the joint UNCT efforts in a contracting donor environment. Individual agency resource mobilisation efforts remain particularly intense, with frequent overlaps in terms of donors and scope, which may undermine the credibility of the One Voice message.

Conclusion 6: The UN Resident Coordinator has played an effective role in leveraging the leadership and diverse expertise of the UN family to improve the relevance and impact of the PoCSD. The RC office plays a central role in the fostering of strategic partnerships with Government, and advocacy for key principles and strategic priorities, including for the setting of national objectives and financing of Agenda 2030.

Conclusion 7: The PoCSD intervention logic is based on the combination of a mix of approaches ranging from assistance to design policies and legal frameworks, to building capacities and awareness of national stakeholders, and building systems and institutions. Although heavy emphasis on drafting legal and regulatory framework persists, the UN is gradually increasing focus on building national capacities for implementation, especially at the local level. In many instances, the government calls upon UN to deliver on their behalf in cases when it fails to provide adequate human and financial capacities to comply with their commitments.

Conclusion 8: Building national institutions and capacities should be at the heart of the next programme cycle, during the course of which Albania is expected to have started EU accession negotiations. Stakeholders highlight the need for reinforcing interventions at the local level, as well as continued focus on integrated regional approaches, in cooperation with other country offices, which can help put Albania on the map and create synergies or provide more effective and efficient solutions in areas with evident spill overs such as environment or economic growth.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Government of Albania and public counterparts should be engaged in co-creating and co-developing the next UNSDCF. Key representatives and technical staff should actively participate in the design teams/working groups. This will help to have a common understanding of issues to be addressed, and how to address them, from the beginning/design stage, which will be useful for the work plan developments and the implementation of the UNSDCF.

Recommendation 2: Clearer management arrangements should be established to ensure accountability for implementation at both output and outcome level, in particular in cases where stakeholders are not represented at outcome level. The responsibility for implementing outputs could be increased further. Some kind of representation/ participation in the UNCT meetings, even on a rotation basis, would make the future UNSDCF mechanism more participatory. Some Outcome Groups comprise different Ministries, which have created an awkward situation of hierarchy among ministries, with one Ministry being the head of the outcome and main signatory of documents for another Ministry that is just as big and important. This could be addressed by clarifying the accountability of each institution and by an enhanced strategic coordination, not only at sector/line ministry level, but also at the inter-ministerial level.

Recommendation 3: As a follow up to the resource mobilization strategy, the UNCT should enhance joint resource mobilization efforts and opportunities for collaboration. The large proportion of the non-core resources of the PoCSD highlights the importance of local resource mobilization for being less donor driven. The UNCT should tap new resource potentials, including from the private sector and international financial institutions, aside from efforts to increase government cost-sharing, which became a reality for the first time in 2019. Joint programme resources channeled through the SDG Acceleration Fund should continue to provide a useful platform for the consolidation of a sound programme strategy in the respective areas.

Recommendation 4: Governmental authorities at central and local level should be brought on board to make financial contributions for planned interventions through cost sharing modalities to ensure long-term commitment and sustainability. This is all the more needed that partnership building and consultations with governmental authorities at central and local level and CSOs is an essential ingredient of success to ensure country ownership and commitment to achieve and sustain results.

Recommendation 5: Synergies between UN Agencies should be actively sought out over the course of the design and implementation of the next UNSDCF, alongside a careful consideration of a clear division of labour between the different agencies, to avoid inherent competition over the PoCSD (and donor) resources and scope of activities. The UNCT should also continue to be inclusive of Non-Resident Agencies and explore synergies. To avoid the appearance of competing and/or bundling of priorities to make intervention proposals more lucrative for potential donors, the UNCT could consider establishing an internal preliminary review process for the harmonization of resource mobilization initiatives, under the leadership of the RC.

Recommendation 6: There is a need to strengthen the strategic partnership between the UN and the EU, which would replace a donor-contractor approach. The UN, the EU and other development partners should not only coordinate their work but also strengthen their collaboration, reinforcing each-other's messages and relying on each-other's resources. Some form of strategic partnership document might be developed between the two entities, prior to the new PoCSD, indicating potential areas of collaboration and positioning the UN in a more "preferential" dealing status by the EU.

Recommendation 7: The UN is called to continue advancing the human rights agenda, supporting the improvement of the regulatory framework and the integration of human rights into the policies and strategies by the government, and accompanying the implementation of programmes and Treaty Bodies' recommendations. UN Agencies should continue to generate stronger political

engagement by Parliament and Human Rights institutions to strengthen public accountability mechanisms and increase outreach to vulnerable people. The Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and the equity focus should continue to be strengthened, with an intentional effort to bring the most vulnerable at the centre of attention, in particular the Roma, People with Disabilities, returnees, migrants, and refugees.

Recommendation 8: The UNCT should continue to implement the recommendations of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard, to ensure that gender continues to be well mainstreamed in the PoCSD and most programmatic areas. UN Agencies can also use the Gender Marker system that has proven to be a very useful tool to ensure gender is mainstreamed in the UNSDCF programmatic work, and implement the recommendations issued from this system. All UN staff is encouraged to increase their capacities in making good use of these two tools at every step of design, planning, implementation, and monitoring, as per the Outputs interventions. The Gender Thematic Results Group should play a key role to support the key phases of the new UNSDCF, including through the CCA and other key steps in the new joint planning exercise. It should also continue to be active in supporting a joint approach and collaboration, not only in the area of implementation of international normative standards and commitments, but also in the area of public advocacy campaigns, and in supporting gender mainstreaming across all Joint Programmes and agency programmes. The GTRG can also serve more as a 'policy advice platform' for the UNCT on issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women in the context of SDG localization efforts in Albania.

Recommendation 9: While CSOs are increasingly partnering with the UN as service providers rather than legitimate representatives of rights holders, the next UNSDCF should step up its efforts in building real, strategic partnerships with CSOs. UN Agencies are called to intensify efforts to build and sustain the CSO sector, which is relatively weak in Albania, building on positive examples of how the PoCSD engages with CSOs, including on the support for shadow reports under the UPR and the strengthening of the CSO sector in the gender budgeting and LGBTI rights areas. The next UNSDCF should underscore the principles of transparency, partnership, and accountability, and the commitment to work together with – among other – civil society partners in a coordinated and coherent manner, as well as the private sector, with which current partnerships are encouraging.

Recommendation 10: In order to effectively respond to the Covid19 pandemic, the UN Agencies, with the support of development partners, will need to adapt to the challenges, and focus on key priorities. The UN will need to identify needs in a proper way, and continue to listen to the right interlocutors – duty bearers, rights holders and other partners – by further intensifying policy dialogue and stakeholder inclusion, especially at local level. The pandemic showed the fragility of the more vulnerable, and the UN will need to identify a new way of looking at vulnerabilities and the social inclusion agenda.

Recommendation 11: The UNCT is called to ensure sustained support to guarantee that PoCSD advancements are solid and irreversible, and to make sure that the transition into nation- and society-wide programmes happens, even after UN's interventions stop, all of which requires a clear vision for sustainability and ownership by duty-bearers. The capacities that were built in the past (for example work with the Roma), should not be lost due to the lack of continuity of some projects, and the lack of ownership and buy-in from the Government. The Government should sustain capacity development of its institutions, NGOs and CSOs, at both local and central levels, in all areas of cooperation with the UN.

Recommendation 12: A more systematic and better structured integration of communication would be needed in all programme phases: design, planning, implementation, review and monitoring, as well as output/outcome annual workplans, and into partnership building and resource mobilization. This also requires a strengthened Communication for Development element throughout the programme areas. It is also important to dedicate well thought and planned resources.

INTRODUCTION



Outcome 1

Governance
and Rule
of Law

Outcome 2

Social Cohesion:
Health, education,
social protection, child
protection, and
gender-based violence

Outcome 3

Economic Growth,
Labour and
Agriculture

Outcome 4

Environment
and Climate
Change



This report presents the results of the evaluation of the Government of Albania and United Nations Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development 2017-2021 (PoCSD) evaluation. It is based on the Evaluation Terms of Reference. **See Annex 1: Acronyms and Annex 2: Terms of Reference for the PoCSD evaluation.**

The PoCSD focuses on four core result areas, or outcomes, which respond to development priorities aligned with the National Strategy for Development and Integration II 2015 – 2020 (NSDI II). These are the following:

- **Outcome 1:** Governance and Rule of Law
- **Outcome 2:** Social Cohesion: Health, education, social protection, child protection, and gender-based violence
- **Outcome 3:** Economic Growth, Labour and Agriculture
- **Outcome 4:** Environment and Climate Change

As such, the evaluation is considered a steppingstone, which will serve as an analytical tool, in preparation for the next United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) cycle. It will suggest ways in which the next UNSDC could continue to support the country in the future in integration with the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the EU integration aspirations of Albania.

The evaluation, which covers the period 2017 to March 2020, will assess the following criteria:

- Relevance: Are we doing the right things?
- Coherence: How well does the PoCSD fit?
- Results: Have we made a difference?
- Transformation: Have we made long-lasting, systemic and society-wide changes?
- Normative: Have we left no one behind?
- Looking forward.

The evaluation will provide UN Partners and UN agencies an opportunity to reflect collectively on the contribution of the UN System to the development change, on the basis of the expected PoCSD outcomes, identifying the enabling factors and specific UN interventions that may have contributed to any observable result change. The evaluation was commissioned by the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) with the support of UN Agencies, Outcome Groups and the national counterparts. It was conducted by a team of two independent consultants (an international, Mr. Christian Privat, and a national, Ms. Sabina Ymeri). **See Annex 6: Biography of consultants.**

The PoCSD evaluation follows the UNEG guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality and the UNEG norms and standards and international principles for development evaluation. The objectives of the PoCSD 2017-2021 evaluation are to assess the performance and contribution of the UNCT against the results framework; as well as provide recommendations and identify lessons learned and good practices that will inform the new Cooperation Framework cycle 2022-2026, in line with the new guidelines for the UNSDCF development.

The evaluation report was prepared with the guidance provided by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)³, and the Interim UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines (April 2019). It presents the Country Context, a description of the United Nations-Albania Programme of Cooperation (2017-2021), the Evaluation Context, the Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope, Evaluation Findings, Lessons Learned, Conclusions and recommendations. It ends with annexes which present complementary information and tools that were used during the evaluation.

3. Key UNEG Guidance includes: Frequently Asked Questions for UNDAF Evaluations, UNEG, 2010; Quality Checklist for Evaluation TOR and Inception Reports, UNEG, 2010; Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports, UNEG, 2010; UNEG Guidance on Preparing TORs for UNDAF Evaluations, 2012; and Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, UNEG Guide, 2014.

Country Context ⁴

Albania has undergone significant economic development during the last decades and transition to a market-based economy. The country has steadily sustained positive economic growth rates during the last 15 years despite the late 2000' recession and global economic crisis.

EU integration leading to eventual membership is the overarching policy priority for Albania. The Country was granted candidate status in June 2014. The European Council defined five key priorities (public administration, rule of law, fight against corruption and organized crime, fundamental rights) as key preconditions to meet prior to the start of accession negotiations. The European Commission has advised the opening of negotiations with Albania in 2016 and 2018. In March 2020, the European Council gave the green light to the opening of negotiations. The opening of accession negotiations was the result of Albania's reforms efforts over the years, in particular advancement of the justice reform. The first intergovernmental conferences will be convened as soon as possible after the adoption of the negotiating framework by the Council.⁵

Albania is a state party to all major UN human rights treaties. Whereas legal and institutional frameworks are in place and in line with European, as well as UN standards, enforcement and monitoring remain to be strengthened. Albania underwent its third Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle in 2019. In Albania, the political context remains deeply polarized, which further undermines confidence in, and functionality of key institutions. In the midst of this difficult environment, a deep judicial reform continues. Electoral reform is another contested topic fueling the political polarization. The next parliamentary election is scheduled for June 2021, whereas the opposition that resigned from parliament have been calling for early elections. OSCE/ODHIR recommendations from several past election cycles have yet to be implemented, and multi-layered negotiations are haltingly, underway. Several scenarios might unfold, including the possibility of early elections.

Albania's public administration reform remains a priority. Under the leadership of the deputy prime minister, the focus continues on reducing the administrative burden on citizens and businesses. Challenges include reporting of local administration vacancies and appointments, as well as local-level inspections related to appointments in accordance with the civil service law, establishment of a new structure for the Albanian School of Public Administration, along with consolidation of the legal framework and creation of relevant management information systems (MISs) and adoption of a strategy related to training and diversification at the central and local levels.

Gender equality improvements are noted in Albania during recent years. Amendments to the Law 'On measures against violence in family relations' improved legal definitions of domestic violence in line with the Istanbul Convention and CEDAW. Changes in other legislation such as the Law on Free Legal Aid, the Law on Social Housing and the Criminal Code have created a larger framework for addressing gender – based violence. Albania also made outstanding advances in integrating gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) into the Medium-Term Budget Planning cycle. The Medium-Term Budget Plan (MTBP) 2019–2021 includes 33 programmes (28 in 2017) prepared in compliance

4. Adapted with changes from Annex 2 - Albania Development Context, Cooperation Framework Roadmap 2022 - 2026

5. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7002-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

with GRB. Efforts to make gender equality an integral part of planning and budgeting at the local level benefited from the establishment of a gender-based violence (GBV) data collection system (Recording Violence in Albania, REVALB) and Community Coordinated Response Mechanisms (in 64% of municipalities) leading to an increased level of awareness and willingness of women to denounce violence and seek state support. Also, the first crisis management centre for treatment of cases of sexual violence was established in Albania in line with the Istanbul Convention.

Albania continues to make efforts with regard to vulnerable populations, including children, minorities, women in difficult circumstances, Roma and Egyptian (R&E) populations, people with disabilities, migrants and asylum seekers. The public spending for social inclusion programmes remains modest. The share of this sector's budget to GDP decreased from 1.40% in 2017 to 1.32% in 2018. Cash transfers continue to constitute about 95% of social protection sector's overall budget. When stripped of cash transfers, the social services budget constituted 0.40% of the whole government budget in 2018.

Albania's human development index (HDI) value for 2019 was 0.791, placing the country at the 69th place out of 187 countries and in the high human development category⁶. Albania is an upper-middle income country, with an average GDP per capita of 5,269 USD (WB, 2018).

By 2008, Albania became a middle-income country, with poverty declining by half compared to the early 1990s. The Albanian economy is led by the services sector, mainly construction and tourism. Agriculture still retains an important role, although its contribution to the GDP is much more modest than in employment. Annual economic growth had been projected at an average of 3.5% in the period 2019–2021.⁷ However, the COVID-19 economic crisis will undoubtedly leave its marks in the Albanian, as in the global economy. Initial estimates have downward revised the country's expected economic growth by -5% in 2020.⁸ Harnessing growth will require more progress on structural reforms as well as improving the business climate, strengthening skills of the labor force, and bringing labour demand and supply closer together. Reforms should be informed by equity considerations to ensure continued poverty reduction and inclusion. Poverty is estimated to have declined as growth and employment continued to pick up. However, poverty rates⁹ are estimated to have increased in 2018 following several years of a positive, declining trend: around 34.6% of Albanians were estimated to live in poverty in 2019.¹⁰ Employment rates in Albania remain below EU average, notably for women, young people, minorities, and job-seekers without professional education. The gender employment gap is marked, although declining.

The national Statistical Institute indicates that Albania's population during 2011-2017 declined by some 1.5% annually due to emigration, which further contributes to "brain drain" of skilled professionals and young people, many of whom have challenges finding appropriate education, jobs and future prospects at home. Albania has recently become a transit migration route used by refugees and asylum seekers en route to Western Europe.

On 26 November 2019, a devastating earthquake, the strongest in 30 years, hit Albania. It caused extensive damage in 11 municipalities, including the two most populous, urbanized and developed municipalities (Tirana and Durrës). During the following months, most of the Government's efforts were vested mainly to earthquake recovery. Damages were estimated at more than 1 billion Euro, ranging from the housing sector to public infrastructure (education, health) and loss in productivity (tourism, agriculture, employment).

6. UNDP, 2019, Human Development Index Ranking, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/2019-human-development-index-ranking>.

7. In <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/606491571341635993/Albania-Snapshot-Oct2019.pdf> and World Bank, 2018, Albania Country Snapshot; <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/492941524131007829/Albania-SnapshotSpring2018.pdf>

8. IMF, World Economic Outlook (April 2020)

9. Measured as US\$5.5/day, 2011 purchasing power parity [PPP]

10. Ibid

United Nations-Albania Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (2017-2021)

The PoCSD 2017-2021 which was formulated via inclusive and participatory processes, is aligned with the national development planning process and priorities expressed in the NSDI II as well as the SDGs. It underscores a strong partnership between the Government of Albania and the UN to join efforts towards the achievement of national development priorities, the SDGs and compliance with normative standards. The Programme of Cooperation focuses on **four strategic priority areas**: (1) Governance and Rule of Law, strengthening effectiveness and accountability of State and civil society organisations ; (2) Social Cohesion: Health, education, social protection, child protection, and gender-based violence; (3) Economic Growth, Labour and Agriculture; and (4) Environment and Climate Change. Within these priorities, cross-cutting issues of a human rights-based approach; gender equality; social inclusion; specific capacity development for policy formulation and results-based management; and improving the overall evidence base are all present. The interventions under the four strategic priority areas include but are not limited to the following:

Under Outcome 1, UN Agencies provide support to the central Government and local governments of Albania and civil society organisations to perform effectively and with accountability for consolidated democracy in line with international norms and standards, providing support for the reinforcement of constitutional, ministerial and independent mechanisms for human rights and gender equality; anti-corruption and access to justice.

Outcome 2 focuses on social cohesion, aiming for more effective and efficient investment in human and financial resources to be made and to ensure that all women, men, girls and boys, especially those from marginalised and vulnerable groups, are exercising their entitlements to equitable quality services. Activities under this outcome include providing capacity building for national actors in the health and education sectors; improving access of vulnerable groups and children in particular to national social care and protection systems; engaging with the government to build an effective and efficient social care service system as well as providing support to legal and policy framework improvements and their implementation as well as direct specialised support services in the area of gender based violence.



Outcome 3 focuses on ensuring that economic growth priorities, policies, and programmes of the Government of Albania are inclusive, sustainable, and gender-responsive, with greater focus on competitiveness, decent jobs and rural development. UN Agencies contribute, inter-alia, to developing the capacities of central and local governments to deliver effective economic support services, enhance labour market governance, as well as strengthen policies and strategies for sustainable rural development.

Under Outcome 4, the UN programme supports the GoA to find greater balance in the use of ecosystem resources, in particular by promoting knowledge and awareness about sustainable use of natural resources and supporting the government to anticipate and cope with the effects of climate change, emergencies and disasters.

Outcome level work is led by inter-agency Outcome Groups responsible for development of biennial Joint Work Plans, including their implementation, monitoring, and reporting with Implementing Partners, under the guidance of UN Country Team and the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) that provides formal oversight and management direction. At the strategic level, the JEC is co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and the UN Resident Coordinator, while at the technical level it is co-chaired by the RC and the Director of the Department for Development and Good Governance (DDGG) at the Prime Minister's Office.

The results framework of the PoCSD 2017-2021 outlines 4 outcomes and 17 outputs that respond to country needs and make use of the UN's comparative advantages. The outputs are made operational through the development of Joint biannual Work Plans (JWPs). Those are:

1

Outcome 1 Governance and Rule of Law

Output 1.1: Human rights - Constitutional, ministerial and independent mechanisms are reinforced to identify and report human rights violations and enable evidence-based policy making and response

Output 1.2: Anti-Corruption and Rule of Law - National public administration has greater capacity to improve access to information, address corruption and organised crime, and engage CSOs and media in efforts to strengthen monitoring of reform efforts

Output 1.3: Local Governance - Local Government Units (LGUs) are able to deliver equitable, quality services and strengthen influence of citizens in decision making

Output 1.4: Access to Justice - Children and vulnerable adults and groups have equitable access to a friendlier justice system, and juvenile justice is administered to international standards

Output 1.5: Mainstreaming Gender and Gender-Responsive Budgeting - State institutions have capacities and mechanisms to mainstream gender in policy-making and planning processes

Output 1.6: Migration and Asylum - Government authorities have strengthened capacities to enhance effective migration and asylum management

2

Outcome 2 Social Cohesion

Output 2.1: Health - There is increased access to quality, inclusive, equitable and affordable health-care services, and community demand is increased

Output 2.2 Education - Education policies, mechanisms, community partnerships and actions are strengthened for quality inclusive education

Output 2.3 Social Inclusion and Protection - Social protection measures and mechanisms at national and local levels are strengthened with budgets and clear targets that reflect equity and social inclusion standards

Output 2.4 Child Protection - Child protection systems are strengthened to prevent and respond to cases of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of children, with a particular focus on vulnerable children and families

Output 2.5 Gender-Based Violence - Capacity of institutions and service providers to implement legislation and normative standards on Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) and other forms of discrimination is strengthened

3

Outcome 3 Economic Growth, Labour and Agriculture

Output 3.1: Economic Development - Central and local governments are able to deliver effective economic support services and implement urban development policies that promote gender equality, the green economy and inclusive and sustainable industrial development

Output 3.2: Labour - Labour market governance, tripartite dialogue and collective bargaining are strengthened and reduce informal employment, improve occupational health and safety, and enhance the employability of youth, women and other vulnerable groups

Output 3.3: Agriculture and Rural Development - There is increased capacity to design and implement policies and strategies for sustainable rural development and modernisation of the agricultural sector that are gender sensitive and empower rural women

Output 3.4: Culture - State institutions have inclusive and equitable policies to foster cultural and creative resources, improve access to cultural markets, improve gender balance in the tourism workforce, protect cultural diversity, and improve the management of cultural heritage as drivers and enablers for sustainable development.

4

Outcome 4 Environment and Climate Change

Output 4.1: Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Scaled-up action on DRR, and climate change mitigation and adaptation across sectors

Output 4.2: Natural Resources - Central and local institutions and communities are strengthened to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources

The Joint Work Plans (JWPs) form an agreement between the UN agencies and implementing partners on the use of resources. They identify the exact deliverables, responsible parties as well as the exact costs, the available resources, and the funding gap. The design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of Joint Work Plans are coordinated at the technical level by the output working groups, which are co-chaired by the Government and the United Nations, and at the strategic level by the Outcome Groups, co-chaired by Heads of 2 UN agencies and a senior government representative (Minister or Deputy Minister of key implementing line ministry for the respective Outcome). The decision of Outcome Co-chair from the Government was based on the most relevant IPMG chair. Mid-Year and Annual Progress Reports are produced toward PoCSD implementation.

The key partners in the implementation of the PoCSD are the Government, namely the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, Department for Development and Good Governance (DDGG) within the Prime Minister Office and line Ministries, independent institutions and local governments, UN Agencies, development partners, civil society organisations, and the private sector. While the management processes are implemented by the UNCT, which is supported by inter-agency advisory bodies, including: (i) the Operations Management Team; (ii) the Communications Team; (iii) the Gender Theme Results Group; iv) UN-INSTAT Data Working Group; (v) the SDG Task Force; and (vi) UN-People's Advocate Working Group Close cooperation is being kept with the Minister of State for Reconstruction as regards UN's support to post-earthquake recovery.

The UN Country Team (UNCT), encompassing Representatives of 17 UN Agencies and Programmes, under the leadership of the RC, is responsible for the effectiveness of UN System development activities in the country. Resident Agencies include UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR, WHO and FAO; Non-resident Agencies include IAEA, ILO, UNCTAD, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNOPS and UNODC.

The UNCT has made much progress about the implementation of the UN-Albania Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (PoCSD) 2017-2021 through a collaborative and joined up work which was captured in the Annual Progress Reports and in the Mid-Year Reports of the Resident Coordinator. During the first half of 2018 the Government of Albania prepared the first Voluntary National Review (VNR), which highlights the progress that Albania has made in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals for the period 2015–2017 and highlights the results achieved thus far. Based on the National Baseline Report on SDG alignment, only 32% of the global SDG indicators can be monitored on the basis of currently available national data.

A MAPS report prepared in 2018 by the GoA in cooperation with the UN, EU and the World Bank (WB) identifies broad policy and programming platforms for accelerating progress towards EU accession and achieving the SDGs – reflecting Albania's development and partnership priorities (as articulated in the EU accession process and the GoA- UN Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development), the added value of UN agencies, complementarity with ongoing efforts, as well as the substantive challenges to be tackled as regards the SDG achievement.

The resource envelope for the implementation of the PoCSD during 2017-2021 was estimated at US\$109 million. This included USD 15 million from regular or core resources and USD 22 million from other or non-core resources. During the first two years of PoCSD implementation (2017-2018), the PoCSD has (as indicated in the signed Joint Work Plans) contributed USD 65 million, of which USD 48 million (74%) were mobilized from non-core resources; while core resources have surpassed the preliminarily budgeted level (USD 17 million compared to USD 15 million projected at the start of the 5-year programme). Thus, by end 2019, the UN has implemented already approximately 60% of the total PoCSD plan, leaving 40% or USD 44 million to be deployed in 2020-2021.

Evaluation Purpose, Objectives, Scope

The purposes of the present PoCSD evaluation are, on the one hand, to assess performance against Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development 2017-2021 framework, its strategic intent, objectives and outcomes contained in the results framework, including UNCT contribution to such results; and, on the other hand, to provide actionable recommendations, and identify lessons learned and good practices that will inform new Coherence Framework cycle 2022-2026, in line with the newly emerged guidelines for the UNSDCF development.

The objectives for this evaluation are:

- to examine whether the UN Country Team (UNCT) is collectively prioritizing support and contributing to the country's development. The evaluation will identify synergies, gaps, overlaps and missed opportunities, ultimately assessing overall UNCT contribution to the country's achievement of SDGs.
- to use the findings strategically to inform the next programme cycle, to better integrate Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, to better align and target UN interventions that will support the country in reaching its 2030 commitments; to help the UNCT to adjust to new generation of UNDAFs and the wide UN system reforms. Using a logic model (assumptions-causal links) of the Theory of Change, a common understanding of what determined the expected change, including the inputs and outputs delivered, as well as the external factors that may have influenced progress and opportunities by the UN at country level.
- to assess at what extent gender is mainstreamed throughout the programmatic work in all four Outcomes and to what extent these gender considerations are maintained in deliveries of each Outcome.

In terms of scope, this is the final evaluation of the current cycle of the PoCSD (2017-2021) and it will cover the implementation period from 2017 up to March 2020. The consultants will therefore review the results achieved during the last three years of the PoCSD implementation, and explore the lessons learned, identify areas for UN Joint Programmes, and analyze challenges and opportunities, during this period of time. This is not ideal since the implementation of the PoCSD will continue up to 2021, however, the timeframe of the UNDG roadmap towards a new UNSDCF requires the UNCT to conduct this evaluation at this time.

In terms of the actors' scope, evidence and findings of the evaluation will embrace the views of key stakeholders. In terms of geographic scope, the evaluation will deal with all levels of implementation of the PoCSD, both national and sub-national. In terms of programmatic scope, it will cover the 4 outcomes and 17 outputs.

Evaluation Approach and Methodology

A. EVALUATION APPROACH

The approach of the evaluation was participatory, flexible in design and implementation, ensuring stakeholders' participation and ownership, and facilitating learning and feedback, with a desk review, written questionnaires, (remote) interviews and meetings with key stakeholders, and triangulation of all these information sources. This inclusive approach involved a broad range of partners and stakeholders, in addition to UN staff.

UNDAF evaluations are meant to be strategic exercises. This evaluation was set at a strategic level, which means that in order to provide an answer to the evaluation questions, the evaluation focused on strategic considerations, and provided an assessment of the relevance and coherence of the PoCSD, results achieved and transformative impact of the PoCSD outcomes, interventions and strategies. The evaluation did not involve a detailed assessment of all the PoCSD outputs and activities; it focused instead on the key PoCSD achievements, and on all the other evaluation criteria and questions. In addition, the evaluation focused on assessing the cooperation and synergies between the UN system and Government, and the added value brought by the UN in the country and by the PoCSD. The evaluation used the contribution analysis to explore the cause and effect relationship and referred to John Mayne's Brief for that purpose.¹¹

B. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

This PoCSD was assessed according to evaluation criteria, some of which are inspired by the revised standard OECD/DAC (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and sustainability).¹² In addition, the evaluation looked at other criteria, based on the TOR, as follows:

- Relevance: Are we doing the right things?
- Coherence: How well does the PoCSD fit?
- Results: Have we made a difference?
- Transformation: Have we made long-lasting, systemic and society-wide changes?
- Normative: Have we left no one behind?
- Looking forward.

The methodological approach consisted in reviewing the PoCSD from the perspective of these criteria or dimensions of analysis related to the programmatic interventions of the UN. Special

11. Contribution analysis: An approach to exploring cause and effect, ILAC Brief No 16, John Mayne, May 2008.

12. Better Criteria for Better Evaluation, Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use, OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, December 2019.

attention was devoted to the assessment of the PoCSD as a joint instrument. More specifically, the contribution of the PoCSD to the development outcomes was assessed according to the set of evaluation criteria and questions, which the consultants reviewed and improved with respect to the TOR list of questions. **See Annex 4: List of Evaluation Criteria and Questions**

C. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Evaluation conducted remotely

Due to the pandemic, the evaluation was conducted remotely, and the data collection plan was adjusted accordingly. Some of the design adopted for the evaluation methodology and the rationale behind were dictated by the remote character of the evaluation due to the health pandemic (COVID-19), and the fact that it is conducted under a very tight budget and number of working days. The evaluation methods used were carefully weighed against these constraints. Some recent interesting references on methodologies for evaluation in a COVID-19 context were found to be very relevant for this evaluation, and provided some insights on the methodology.¹³

The methodology used mixed methods. Information from the different lines of inquiry was triangulated to improve the reliability of the findings and to ensure that the recommendations are well grounded and implementable. The extent to which the evaluation was able to combine methods to evaluate Human Rights and Gender Equality (HR & GE) processes and results partly depends on resources and time. However, it was possible to include at least some elements of the mixed-methods approach for addressing HR & GE.

The overview of the methodology is the following:

- Preparatory meetings with the Resident Coordinator Office
- A desk review of key documents. See **Annex 3: List of References and Background Documents**.
- Preparation of a detailed Inception Report, with an Evaluation matrix.
- A stakeholder analysis.
- Data collection mission 23 April - 15 May 2020. **See Annex 5 Evaluation Mission – Agenda of e-meetings**.
- Briefing with the UN Resident Coordinator.
- Written Questionnaires for Outcome Groups, theme groups and CSOs.
- Remote meetings with RC, Outcome Group Co-Chairs, RCO, Government and other national stakeholders, CSOs, development partners, outcome groups and theme groups.
- Debriefing meeting with RC and UNCT.

All these sources of information allowed triangulation of information for all the evaluation criteria and questions.

Preparation meetings and inception report

The consultants had initial discussions with the UN Resident Coordinator and the Evaluation Manager (Head of Office, Development Coordination Officer/Strategic Planning, and Team Leader in the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator). These inception phase discussions helped to agree on the best possible approach and methodology for this evaluation, considering the Covid-19 pandemic context, as well as the objectives and timeframe planned. The methodology was laid out in the Inception Report, which was shared with the UNCT for approval.

13. [Evaluation during Crisis: COVID-19](#), UNDP Evaluation Office; [Evaluation Implications of the Coronavirus Global Health Pandemic Emergency](#), Michael Quinn Patton, 23 March 2020; and [A quick primer on running online events and meetings](#), Emma Smith, 13 March 2020.

Preliminary analysis based on the desk review and written sources

This was an evidence-based evaluation to assess the PoCSD 's performance against the criteria and key questions outlined above and to make recommendations for the rest of the programme cycle and the next programming cycle. The evaluation drew on existing evidence from available and relevant UN system analytical documents, such as annual progress reports, annual review meetings, and agency level evaluations, mid-term reviews, as well as key external documents provided by Outcome. In light of the Covid-19 context, the evaluation had a more extended than usual desk review.

The evaluation relied on **key documentary evidence** that provided insights on relevance, coherence, results, transformation, normative work, such as the following:

- PoCSD document, including the PoCSD Results Framework
- PoCSD Joint Work Plans 2017, 2018 and 2019-2020
- PoCSD Annual Progress Reports 2017, 2018, 2019
- Joint Annual Review Meetings Reports 2017, 2018, 2019
- Resident Coordinator Annual reports 2017, 2018, 2019
- Agencies' Annual Reports, Mid-Term Reviews and Evaluations
- Joint Programmes key documents and reports
- UNCT Retreats minutes
- Outcome Groups' reports, minutes and presentations
- Inter-agencies Advisory Groups' reports or key notes for the record
- UN Communication Group's key products and reports.
- UNCT-SWAP gender scorecard report
- Reports and presentations on Delivering as One
- Business Operations Strategy
- Resource Mobilization Strategy
- Integrated M&E Plan (IMEP).

The experience of the three years and a quarter of PoCSD implementation, results reporting and functioning of the various coordination and accountability mechanisms to further strengthen the process to achieve desired results for the country were important to understand. The key document was the PoCSD and its Results Matrix. There is no M&E Framework as such, but the UNCT uses the reporting against the JWPs, which is captured in the Annual Progress Reports (in the annex on progress against PoCSD Results Framework. This information is also tracked down in UN Info. The focus of the analysis of results achieved was to check whether the expected results were on track, rather than a detailed description of the results achieved for each outcome. See **Annex 3: List of References and Background Documents**.

Stakeholders analysis

The PoCSD evaluation was conducted in a participatory manner, ensuring the participation and involvement of UN agencies and key stakeholders (mainly government officials, a few civil society organizations, and development partners) in the different phases of the evaluation. A comprehensive Stakeholder Analysis was conducted during the inception phase to identify the primary users and stakeholders of this PoCSD evaluation.

A participatory and utilization-focused approach to involve key stakeholders and boost ownership of the evaluation was adopted to incorporate the views of various stakeholders, through questionnaires, meetings and interviews with relevant internal and external stakeholder groups. Information on the PoCSD was in particular solicited from the Outcome Groups.

Questionnaire for, and meetings with Outcome Groups

The Outcome Groups, established to support each outcome are the main coordination bodies for supporting the implementation of the PoCSD, and or monitoring and reporting on PoCSD progress, and they benefit from the participation of both resident and non-resident agencies.

In addition to the desk review, the evaluation questions were answered through a **Questionnaire to each of the Outcome Groups** (Outcome 1 – Governance and Rule of Law; Outcome 2 – Social Cohesion; Outcome 3 – Economic Growth, Labour and Agriculture; and Outcome 4 – Environment and Climate Change). This questionnaire was based on the evaluation criteria and evaluation questions. Outcome groups were asked to provide a single consolidated reply to this Questionnaire per each Outcome. Responses to the Outcome Groups questionnaire were a key document used for the evaluation. In some cases, responses were provided at very detailed level. The information gathered through the questionnaire replies was complemented by **virtual meetings with each of the Outcome Group** to validate understanding of responses and with a more direct exchange with the consultants. These meetings were also an opportunity for participants to speak more freely, and express personal opinions that may not always emerge in the questionnaire reply from their group.

Questionnaire for inter-agency advisory bodies

The evaluation questions were also answered through **Questionnaires for the five inter-agency advisory bodies**, which support the UNCT in the implementation of the PoCSD: (1) the Operations Management Team; (2) the Communications Team; (3) the Gender Thematic Results Group; (4) the Data Working Group, and (5) the SDG Task Force

A specific list of questions was prepared for these bodies:

- For the Operations Management Team, the focus was on efficiency and links between operations and programming.
- For the UN Communications Team, the questionnaire focused on the role of the group in supporting the communication on the PoCSD.
- For the Gender Thematic Results Group, the focus was, on one hand, to understand how the PoCSD mainstreamed Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, and on the other hand, to reflect on how to make this evaluation as Human Rights and Gender Responsive (HR & GE) as possible.
- For the Data Working Group, the consultants inquired around the efforts in the support provided to INSTAT (including its 5-year Strategy) and other national institutions with regards to data and statistics, in the context of measuring progress in the SDGs implementation.¹⁴
- For the SDG Task Force, the emphasis of the questionnaire was to: 1) identify synergies, gaps, overlaps and missed opportunities, for ultimately assessing overall UNCT contribution to country's achievement of SDGs; and 2) use the findings strategically to inform the next programme cycle, to better integrate Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, and to better align and target UN interventions that will support the country in reaching its 2030 commitments.

Virtual interviews with key informants

A series of **targeted virtual interviews / meetings of key informants among stakeholders** were held: Government Stakeholders and Parliament, Development Partners, and Civil Society Organizations. Key informants were interviewed with the objective of getting a deeper understanding of the relevance and coherence of the Programme, its results and lasting changes, the Leave No One Behind principle, and the value addition as a joint instrument. This method helped identifying lessons learned and insights for the future, thus providing the basis for recommendations for UNCT and its stakeholders, in the implementation of the current Programme, and the design of the next United Nations Sustainable Development Partnership Framework (UNSDCF).

14. The Joint Data Group did not provide a written reply to the questionnaire, but the issues were covered extensively through the interview with INSTAT as well as through the Outcome Group Questionnaires and the relevant question on data collection capacities.

Government stakeholders included the Department of Development and Good Governance (DDGG), The Office of the Prime Minister, as well as Government co-chairs of the outcomes, National Human Rights Institutions (People's Advocate and Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination), etc. Key informants also included UN Joint Projects' Steering Committee Members (a mix of Central Government level local government, INSTAT and CSOs), and Members of Parliament.

Virtual interviews with development partners who have most heavily funded the PoCSD outcomes, or who contribute to similar outcome objectives were also held. The virtual meetings with CSOs included NGOs that have a strong collaboration with UN agencies, especially those representing vulnerable and marginalized groups, as well as those which play an important role in the relevant sectors. A virtual meeting with private sector representatives was held with companies that cooperate with the PoCSD, are knowledgeable enough on the Programme or individual UN Agencies' work. Special attention was given to ensuring a gender balance amongst the key informant interviews, and the list of participants was validated with consultative group prior to the actual data collection phase. Participation of government stakeholders and CSOs in the interview meetings was not as high as initially envisaged. The period when the evaluation data collection mission was conducted was during the peak of the pandemic, when most government employees were working remotely and there were conflicting agenda issues in several instances.

The contents of interviews and meetings were framed by the list of evaluation criteria and questions and guided by simple interview guides for these different stakeholders. Depending on the type of interlocutors, the evaluation team focused more on some criteria and questions or on others. The interviews were semi structured, relying on a list of issues to be discussed.

Debrief discussion

A Debrief discussion was conducted by the evaluation team, who will present preliminary findings and recommendations at the end of the data collection phase to the RC and UNCT.

Ethical considerations

The UNEG ethical considerations that were taken into account in meetings are the following:

- Confidentiality: The evaluators respected people's right to provide information in confidence and make participants aware of the scope and limits of confidentiality. They will ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source so that the relevant individuals are protected from reprisals.
- Avoidance of Harm: Evaluations can have a negative effect on their objects or those who participate in them. Therefore, the evaluators shall seek to: minimize risks to, and burdens on, those participating in the evaluation; and maximize the benefits and reduce any unnecessary harm that might occur from negative or critical evaluation, without compromising the integrity of the evaluation.¹⁵

Programming principles

The PoCSD was prepared with the 2010 UNDAF Guidelines, which refer to five inter-related programming principles, which were to be used in the UNDAF design and implementation: Human Rights-Based Approach, Gender Equality, Environmental Sustainability, Capacity Development and Results-Based Management.¹⁶ The implementation was also guided by the 2017 Guidelines, with similar principles. It will not be possible to look in detail at all the principles, within the timeframe of this evaluation, and priority will be given to the Human Rights-Based Approach and Gender Equality.

15. See the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (<http://www.unevaluation.org/ethicalguidelines>).

16. For details on the five programming principles and other key cross-cutting issues, refer to How to Prepare an UNDAF: Part (II) Technical Guidance for UN Country Teams, Chapter II, January 2010. For guidance on their practical application, see the Guidance Note: Application of the Programming Principles to the UNDAF, January 2010.

Indeed, it is worth noting that the more recent 2017 UNDAF Guidelines highlight the importance of programming principles, especially integrating *Human Rights, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment* in the UNDAFs as a central programming principle, responding to the overarching principle of *Leaving No One Behind* to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This principle also supports a central objective of the 2030 Agenda to “realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.” Further, the 2017 UNDAF Guidance emphasizes the role of disaggregated data collection and analysis in support of UNDAF implementation and monitoring. Hence, it is important that UNDAF evaluations integrate a gender and human rights lens to assess the extent to which UNDAFs contribute to *leaving no one behind*. Other principles in the 2017 Guidance are *Sustainability and Resilience*, as well as *Accountability*.¹⁷ In addition, the recently issued UNSDCP Guidance stress the Cooperation Framework's strong emphasis on the UN's normative role and on leaving no one behind means that the guiding principles on LNOB, HRBA, and gender equality and women's empowerment, which are now hardwired into each step of the Cooperation Framework. New guidance is available on both the operationalization of principles of LNOB and of resilience, and on the Guiding Principles.¹⁸ The importance given to these programming principles explains why this evaluation tries to reflect the views of various stakeholders, as well as possible, including non-governmental actors representing vulnerable and marginalized groups. Furthermore, the approach and methodology for this evaluation has referred to the 2014 UNEG Guidelines for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation in several sections of this report in order to make this evaluation as human rights and gender responsive as possible.¹⁹ The recently issued UNEG *Meta-synthesis of UNDAF Evaluations with a Gender Lens* was useful to inform this evaluation process.²⁰

Data analysis and interpretation

All information for all the evaluation criteria and questions was triangulated based on evidence from available documents, analysis of the written responses to the questionnaires, and inputs received during the meetings and interviews. The evaluation team used this information to draft the report, triangulating all the sources of information.

To the extent possible, the evaluation has attempted to analyze the contribution and attribution of programme interventions. Despite these efforts, in a strategic outcome evaluation like this one, the contribution to change by the UN to the expected outcomes through the delivery of outputs, is difficult to prove and the evaluation has tried to determine whether there is at least a plausible case that can be made.

Quality assurance and management process

The Steering Committee invited government counterparts of UNCT agencies to form a Consultative Group that was sufficiently inclusive to represent various sectoral interests. This role was carried out by the Outcome Groups. The key roles of the Consultative Group are to ensure that 1) the evaluation process met UNEG Norms, Standards and Ethical Guidelines and that 2) the evaluation findings were relevant and recommendations were implementable, and that 3) the evaluation findings are disseminated and available for use and learning from the evaluation.

The Steering Committee appointed an Evaluation Manager, who has not been directly responsible for implementing the PoCSD – a role carried out by the Resident Coordinator's Office. The Evaluation Team comprised independent external evaluators, with a team leader (international consultant) and a team member (local expert).

17. See: UNDAF Guidance, UNDG, 2017 -- <https://undg.org/document/2017-UNDAF-guidance/> and UNDAF Companion Guidances -- <https://undg.org/programme/undaf-companion-guidances/>

18. Guiding Principles, Cooperation Framework Companion Piece, UN Sustainable Development Group, May 2020

19. Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, UNEG Guide, 2014 -- <http://uneval.org/document/detail/1616>

20. UNEG *Meta-synthesis of UNDAF Evaluations with a Gender Lens*, UNEG, December 2019.



Evaluation Findings

A. RELEVANCE: ARE WE DOING THE RIGHT THINGS?

Relevance is defined in the Terms of Reference as the extent to which the strategies and actions of the PoCSD have been consistent with the most pressing needs of the people and the country, strategically and collectively.

Response to priority needs

Finding 1: The PoCSD is very relevant with respect to national development priorities, including NSDI II and the overarching EU accession priorities. Relevance is ensured through clear, explicit links to the stated strategic priorities, and a highly participatory approach at design and implementation stage.

The PoCSD is defined as “a framework for achieving results that will contribute to the country’s strategic priorities as spelled out in the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI II) 2015 – 2020.”²¹ The programme document is aligned with the priorities set out in the NSDI II as the national strategic framework and its vision for social, democratic and economic development, underlined by the European integration aspirations.

The NSDI II has six key strategic priorities. EU membership has been defined as an overarching strategic goal, with objectives linked with public administration reform and civil service; independent and accountable judicial institutions; fight against corruption and organized crime as well as protection of human rights. The goal of consolidating good governance, democracy and the rule of law has been defined as laying the foundations for the country’s development. The other four strategic priorities are related with Macroeconomic and Fiscal Stability (Pillar 1); Competitiveness and Innovation (Pillar II); People and Social Cohesion (Pillar 3) and Sustainable Use of Resources (Pillar 4). The PoCSD highlights explicit links of its priorities, or Outcomes to each of these six strategic priorities. (Table 1)

21. PoCSD, page 5

Table 1: **Links between PoCSD Outcomes and NSDI II**

PoCSD Outcomes	Links with NSDI II strategic priorities
Outcome I: Governance and Rule of Law	Foundations: Good Governance, democracy and the Rule of Law
Outcome II: Social Cohesion - Health, education, social protection, child protection, and gender-based violence	Pillar III: Investing in People and Social Cohesion Pillar II: Growth through increased competitiveness
Outcome III: Economic Growth, Labour and agriculture	Pillar IV: Sustainable Growth through Sustainable Use of Resources
Outcome IV: Environment and Climate Change	Pillar IV: Sustainable Growth through Sustainable Use of Resources

The development of the PoCSD was based on a highly participatory process. The design stage was informed by grassroots consultations with local governments and local communities, business, media and academia; as well as strategic discussions with Government, civil society, private sector and development partners. UN and Government Stakeholders underline that the participatory process for its development has ensured its continued relevance not only at design stage, but also during implementation.

The PoCSD has maintained its relevance towards the country's development priorities expressed in the NSDI II, including EU accession. EU accession considerations drive the majority of national strategies and policies towards which the PoCSD contributes. Relevance and government ownership over PoCSD outcomes were ensured at programme and sector – level, including clearly defined linkages to sector strategies and expected outcomes. Flexibility is highlighted as a key feature of the PoCSD, which allows its interventions to be targeted to address specific sector level priorities through agreements on the Joint Biennial Workplans (JAWP).

Relevance to international commitments

Finding 2: Several PoCSD results and interventions aim explicitly to support the Government of Albania comply with the country's human rights commitments and other international conventions and treaty obligations. The PoCSD has given special focus to improved enforcement and monitoring of compliance.

Albania has ratified all major UN human rights treaties, including the optional protocols to CEDAW and the CRC. In the area of labour Albania has ratified 54 ILO international labour conventions, including eight fundamental, four governance and 42 technical labour conventions. Albania is also a state party to all three Rio Conventions and several other international environmental conventions, and a number of multi-lateral environmental treaties. The following international development goals and treaty obligations were referred to specifically in the PoCSD document or subsequent progress reports:

Human Rights

- Council of Europe's Social Charter
- Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention),
- European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- The Hague Convention
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

- Universal Periodic Review (UPR)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)
- United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)
- Convention against Torture (CAT)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
- UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
- Refugee Convention of 1951 and 1967 Protocol on Refugees, Convention on Statelessness of 1961.

Environment

- UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD)
- UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- Convention of Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution
- Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a transboundary context
- Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes
- Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents
- Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters
- Minamata convention
- Barcelona Convention

Other

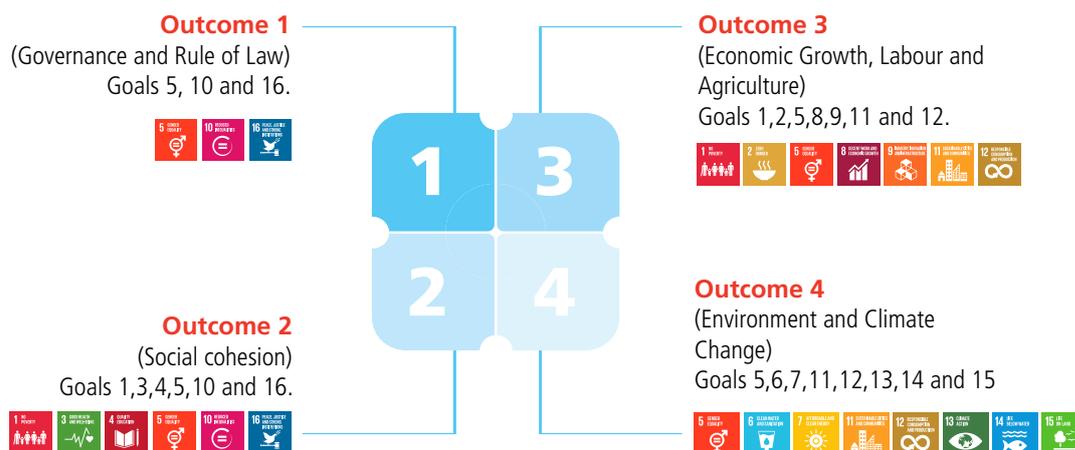
- Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
- 1970 UNESCO Convention and UNIDROIT Convention on Cultural Property.

The UN Agencies have provided important support for the implementation of human rights conventions and other international treaties. In particular, the PoCSD has assisted the preparation of regular body reports including for the 3rd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Beijing Declaration, CMW, CPRD, CRC and CEARD. The PoCSD has given specific focus to follow-up of recommendations related with the country's compliance with international obligations and increasing capacities thereof. Several specific results achieved through the PoCSD are indeed linked with such international commitments.

Relevance to SDGs

Finding 3: The UN in Albania has provided support for mainstreaming of SDGs in the national agenda and achievement of SDG targets. The PoCSD and NSDI have established clear links between the specific strategic priorities and outcomes and the SDGs, and work is ongoing to establish further national SDG targets. The UN has been instrumental in building policy support and partnerships to make the SDG agenda relevant in the country. Further efforts are needed to fully internalize the SDG framework into the policy delivery systems at strategic and operational level.

The PoCSD is well aligned with the SDGs, and the PoCSD reflects the linkages between the national priorities identified in the NSDI II 2015-2020, and the SDG goals and targets. The PoCSD priorities are tied directly to the achievement of specific SDG targets as follows:



The NSDI II refers to the vision for Agenda 2030 and highlights the linkages between its strategic priorities and the relevant SDGs they contribute to. At the time the NSDI and PoCSD were adopted, SDG indicators had not been developed yet. Hence, the Results Framework does not include specific references to SDG indicators. The PoCSD recognized this shortfall and supported the Government to take stock of the achievements and initiate the process of establishing a national SDG framework. The 2017 Report on the Harmonisation of SDGs with Existing Sectoral Policies²², the baseline report for SDGs, was followed by the Voluntary National Report delivered in 2018 at the High-Level Political Forum of the UN in New York. A Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) mission undertaken by the UN and development partners in 2018 highlighted three SDG accelerators for the country. The process, informed by multi-stakeholder consultations under the guidance of an Inter-Ministerial Committee on the SDGs chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, led in 2018 to the adoption by Parliament of a resolution embracing the Agenda 2030 and committing to the achievement of the SDGs. A Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Sustainable Development was established in February 2020.

A full review of the global SDG indicators was recently conducted by the Albanian Government with the aim of establishing the Vision 2030 and particularly the mid-term specific SDG targets (running until 2024), to inform the next phase of the NSDI. The review indicates that to date, mid-term targets have been defined for only about 17% of the SDG indicators²³; while delineation of a longer-term perspective towards the Vision 2030 is still further down the road. Several challenges persist, about availability of national level data related to the global indicators and their utilization for the scope of monitoring the national strategic framework. The SDG Baseline Report shows that regular data is recorded for 83 out of the 244 global indicators in the SDG monitoring framework (34%), while for 56 other indicators (23%) information is either partially available or requires additional calculations to be brought in line with the methodology of the SDG indicators. However, only 12 of the 50 high-level NSDI II indicators are consistent with the SDG framework. The UN has cooperated with the government to prepare the passports of the SDG indicators for which there are data available, and at the same time, define the mid-term targets for these indicators to be used for the next planning phase of NSDI III.

Efforts to advance the SDG agenda are coordinated by the SDG Task Force under the RC Office and UNDP co-chairmanship. The UN agencies have actively contributed to the identification of SDG targets and indicators in the respective areas of work, in close cooperation with the national counterparts. However, the process has been mainly driven by the RCO and the Department for Development and Good Governance at the Prime Minister’s Office. Programmatic linkages with

22. https://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/Albania_Report_on_the_Harmonization.pdf

23. Based on discussions with the Department for Development and Good Governance and the UN SDG Task Force.

SDGs and contributions thereof are frequently identified in the course of implementation by UN agencies and line ministries/institutions, but there is a general recognition among UN staff that a more proactive approach would be beneficial to ensure a more thorough mainstreaming of the SDGs at the sectoral level – through identification and monitoring of suitable national indicators and setting of national SDG targets, to guide longer term development.

Integrated funding framework and resource mobilization

The Common Budgetary Framework provides an overview of the available funds to support the results delivery of the PoCSD. The UNCT Albania and government partners report on the financial framework twice a year, providing information on progress made against results and actual expenditures.

The PoCSD had a total planned resource envelope of USD 108,9 million, of which 15,3 million USD were available from regular and core resources. At the time of PoCSD adoption, the estimated funding gap for delivery amounted to 70,9 million USD which was to be mobilised over the implementation period of the PoCSD. The large proportion of the non-core resources highlights the importance of local resource mobilisation. In 2019, the UNCT developed a resource mobilization strategy to enhance joint resource mobilization efforts and opportunities for collaboration.

Between 2017 – 2019 the actual budget of the PoCSD amounted to approximately 65 million USD for the three-year period, or roughly 60% of the total resource envelope required for its implementation.

Table 2 PoCSD indicative budget and funding gaps (per Outcome) in US Dollars

	Total Indicative Budget PoCSD 2017-2021	Actual Budget 2017-2019	Resources needed to complete the PoCSD	Secured Pipeline Resources 2020-2021	Remaining Resource Gap 2020-2021	Remaining Resource Gap 2020-2021 (in % of each outcome)
Outcome 1 Governance and Rule of Law	32 733 000	22 490 475	10 242 525	9 001 129	1 241 396	4%
Outcome 2 Social Cohesion	30 560 000	22 323 422	8 236 578	10 330 000	(2 093 422)	-7%
Outcome 3 Economic Growth, Labour and Agriculture	16 082 000	8 560 625	7 521 375	7 560 000	(38 625)	0%
Outcome 4 DRR and Climate Change	29 543 481	11 663 519	17 879 962	2 635 000	15 244 962	52%
TOTAL (USD)	108 918 481	65 038 040	43 880 441	29 526 129	14 354 312	13%

Projections as of June 2020 indicate a remaining resource gap of 14,3 million USD for the 2020 – 2021 period, or approximately 13% of the total estimated cost of PoCSD delivery. It must be noted that annual funding gaps for the programme have fluctuated between 11 million USD (2017) and 14 million USD (2018 and 2019), while the total available budget has remained stable at an average of 11,5 million USD annually.

Resource mobilisation rates have been quite successful for Outcome 1 and 2, which take up approximately 69% of the total available budget, vis-à-vis their original relative weight of 58% in the indicate financial estimates at design stage. The largest funding gaps as a proportion of the total respective budget are for Outcome 3: Economic growth, Labour and Agriculture, and Outcome 4: Environment and Climate Change. Pledges to the PoCSD budget for 2020 – 2021 have resulted in a negative funding gap for Outcome 1 and 2. This is likely due to a surge in budgetary commitments to the UN agencies in the aftermath of the November 2019 earthquake and Covid-19 crisis.

SDG Acceleration Fund

The SDG Acceleration Fund (until 2018 the One UN Coherence Fund) is a key vehicle to support resource mobilization for the joint programming of the PoCSD. The SDG Acceleration Fund supports specific joint programmes, as well as the overall joint work planning process. For the first time in 2019, the government contributed USD 0.5 million to the Fund, the first tranche of a commitment of USD 6.5 million for the remaining years of the PoCSD 2017–2021. The government contribution focuses on community social services, child protection, disaster risk management, support for the earthquake PDNA, and employability enhancement.

Figure 1 **SDG Acceleration Fund (Coherence Fund) resources 2007 – 2019 (in million USD)**



In the 2017 – 2019 period the Fund received contributions amounting to 10,12 million USD, or 86% of the resources mobilized during the previous programme cycle. The recent spike in contributions to the Fund is partially due to the establishment of a dedicated earthquake recovery window in the aftermath of the 2019 earthquake that hit the country. The main contributors to the SDG Coherence Fund include the Swiss Development Cooperation and the Swedish Government, Government of Norway. Indeed, an independent evaluation commissioned by Sida about their support to the Coherence Fund in support of gender equality work from 2012–2017 positively assessed the contributions and recommended continued Swedish contribution to the Coherence Fund.²⁴

As a result of successful resource mobilization efforts, funding from Sweden (EUR 2-3 million), Netherlands (EUR 3 million), Norway (USD 855,000), Finland (EUR 300,000), Denmark (EUR 2 million), Poland (EUR 2,7 million), United Kingdom (£ 1 million) will be channeled in 2020 through the SDG Acceleration Fund to support UN efforts for post-earthquake recovery, including education, economic recovery & resilience, including agriculture, community infrastructure, child protection,

24. Evaluation of Swedish Support to the One UN in Albania for gender equality work 2012 – 2017, available at <https://www.sida.se/contentassets/d8931a899bc94946b17ca79ed48ee2d8/22355.pdf>

social protection, gender equality, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, while seeking to integrate humanitarian and development programming where feasible and appropriate to do so. In particular, in the context of post-earthquake recovery in 2020 UNDP will manage a portfolio of 50+15 million Euro on behalf of the EU for the reconstruction of schools; while UNOPS will receive 50 million EUR to rehabilitate cultural heritage monuments affected by the earthquake. This amount will increase significantly the UN budget in 2020, including the overall 5 year budget.

The large proportion of the non-core resources of the PoCSD highlights the importance of local resource mobilization. The PoCSD delivery is hence to some extent donor driven. In 2019 UNCT developed a resource mobilization strategy to enhance joint resource mobilization efforts and opportunities for collaboration.

The resource mobilization strategy indicated the need to tap new resource potentials, including from the private sector and international financial institutions, aside from efforts to increase government cost-sharing, which became a reality for the first time in 2019. The lion-share of resources mobilized towards PoCSD outcomes is concentrated in the Outcome areas 1 and 2, which are consistent with the perceived comparative advantages of UN's work in the country as well as with the specialization and strategic positioning of the UN agencies development work vis-à-vis other development agents. Joint programme resources channeled through the SDG Acceleration Fund such as the SDC supported LNB programme, the Swedish supported EVAW programme or new financial flows, such as the SDG Global Fund on social protection as well as on financing have provided a useful platform for the consolidation of a sound programme strategy in the respective areas. Most resources mobilized from the SDG Acceleration Fund contributes to joint programming in the social inclusion outcome area where the added value of joint UN work has been established during several programme cycles and evaluations. Likewise, pledges to the earthquake recovery window of the Fund indicate the trust that donors place in the PoCSD and the UNCT to make the appropriate programmatic choices and division of work toward the expected objectives, in a situation where agile and concerted interventions are deemed necessary.

The SDG funds have complemented what the UN or separate agencies have managed to mobilize. However, several PoCSD outputs remain significantly underfunded and several strategic deliverables are carried over to subsequent annual workplans. This is the case of different outputs in support of democratization and anti-corruption; or most of the outputs in the area of economic development and cultural heritage. Joint and individual fundraising efforts have followed mainly the priorities of the donors to the extent it has matched the agency mandate and agenda. However, it is acknowledged by UN agencies that better coordination is needed to maximize the competitiveness of the proposal. Lack of collaboration and respect/compliance with respective mandates/specialization has negatively impacted the selection processes as well as the internal UN collaboration. UN staff recognize the internal competition for resources, in areas with overlapping/complementary agency mandates. The UNRC should continue to play his professional and neutral role in the coordination of programming and resource mobilization efforts with development partners and the Government of Albania, based on agency mandate and technical capacities. The constructive role of the UNRC and UNCT in coordinating the work and mandates of the agencies in cooperation with the Government counterparts is also recognized by development partners.

B. COHERENCE: HOW WELL DOES THE POCS D FIT?

Coherence has been defined in this evaluation as the extent to which the PoCSD interventions contribute to the achievement of goals. This includes a focus on how policies and strategies of the PoCSD relate to each other (chain of results); the degree to which synergies and interlinkages are discernible between the UN agencies interventions towards the PoCSD outcomes (internal coherence) as well as the consistency of such interventions with other actors (external coherence), in particular external stakeholders such as development partners and civil society.

Chain of results and causal links between the outputs and outcomes

Finding 4: The PoCSD Results framework is defined at outcome level through high level impact or outcome indicators for the majority of which plausible attribution of UN's contributions cannot be attested. The Joint Biennial Workplans are the key documents that set forth the nature of interventions at Outcome and Output level and define a series of output indicators which constitute the real result-based management framework for the PoCSD. Outcome goals are broadly defined at a high level. With few exceptions, it is difficult to establish straightforward causal links between outputs and outcomes. At the output level, the theory of change for how the outputs contribute to national/sectoral development priorities is in the majority of cases implicitly stated in the narrative layout of programme strategies and the quality and relevance of indicators to sectoral strategies.

The PoCSD Results Framework contains 4 Outcomes and 17 outputs. The formulation of outcomes and outputs is clear and transparent, with clear linkages to national strategic priorities and based on a set of risks and assumptions. The PoCSD Results Framework includes high level Outcome indicators that are clearly defined and are anchored into the national statistical/data reporting system or refer to internationally recognized indicator frameworks. The Outcome level indicators are not fully consistent with the NSDI II monitoring framework and SDG indicators, which were finalized after the PoCSD adoption.

The four PoCSD outcomes are very broadly defined and arguably encompass the entirety of the NSDI. The programme strategies described for each outcome area delineate the scope of outputs under each outcome and the mix of approaches to be used to achieve objectives, but output level indicators were not included in the Results Framework. The design of the PoCSD – like most planning processes – is based on imperfect information and assumptions on the flow of resources that would eventually underpin its delivery. The intervention strategy of the PoCSD is laid out in the rolling Joint Biennial Workplans (JWP), which describe the way the PoCSD and UN agencies will engage with their national counterparts in practice. JWPs, endorsed by the relevant UN agencies and government stakeholders on a bi-annual basis contain a clear story of the interventions, including detailed output indicators and the available funding to meet objectives, including identification of funding gaps.

In contrast with the Outcome level indicators, output indicators are clearly linked with the actions to be undertaken, often aligned with existing national indicators and/or derived from the project level activities. At the output level it is possible to understand the linkages between interventions and how these are intended to contribute to objectives. However, more often than not, it is difficult to piece together a story about the existence of interlinkages or dependencies between the different outputs under the same outcome; or how these contribute together towards the higher-level outcomes.

In some instances, the outputs under the same outcome appear to be quite unrelated with each

other, joined together by the common thread of overarching policies only.²⁵ In other occasions, the common thread linking outputs together is more solid – as is the case of Outcome 2 – where considerations of target groups appear to have brought health, education and gender and social policies together.²⁶ Under Outcome 4, interventions are smaller in nature and programmatically scattered due to the scarcity of funding.

Coherence with Government and development partner policies

Finding 5: The PoCSD is coherent with government programmes and incorporates a number of monitoring and reporting tools and resources to keep track of development and consistently align itself with government policy. Similarly, PoCSD's interventions are complementary and consistent with other development partners and the UN is praised for its constructive role in donor coordination and aid effectiveness. PoCSD's coherence with EU assistance is of particular importance and the UN should increasingly focus on strengthening national institutions, systems and capacities rather than getting things done.

The PoCSD entails an effective monitoring, reporting, and evaluation system that enables stakeholders involved in implementation, in particular the Government of Albania, JEC and UNCT to compare actual progress against expected results. Government ownership of the PoCSD outcomes is ensured through its leadership of the JEC and technical role as co-chair of OWGs. These monitoring and reporting processes are designed to enable stakeholders to periodically take stock of achievements and use performance information for learning, managing, and adjusting strategy and resources for greater impact. A number of tools are used for this purpose, ranging from routine progress monitoring and reviews; to annual and mid-term reviews that focus on assessing achievements against expected outcomes, as well as annual progress reports. However, the essential tool that ensures PoCSD coherence with government policies is the consistent dialogue and coordination that rests at the foundation of the strategic partnership between the UN agencies and the government institutions: the way outcomes work with co-chairs and biennial rolling plans: enabling multi-annual planning – while also testing relevance and adjusting on the road.

UN has a long-standing presence in Albania and has played an important role in development as well as donor coordination. Over the course of the years, a natural division of labour has developed among donors which enables them to avoid big overlaps. As the PoCSD delivery is increasingly dependent on external donor resources, issues of coherence with other development partners are discussed and embedded into the programmes already at design stage. It is worth noting that the UN in general and the UN agencies with bigger representations in the country in particular are regarded as having capacities and know-how and should capitalize on their resources more to ensure larger scale interventions – as opposed to the appearance of somewhat scattered interventions.

PoCSD's coherence with the EU assistance is of particular relevance, as the UN agencies have increasingly positioned themselves towards assisting the country's EU accession process. In this regard, PoCSD interventions have been instrumental in assisting the government update its policy framework and more recently assist institutions for EU IPA budget support operations. Some international partners have voiced the concern that the UN is at times too close to government and does things on their behalf, instead of providing support. The UN is often involved in leading policy review and policy making processes that serve as pre-conditions for the allocation of EU financial assistance to Albania, whereas at the current state of development it is expected that the country should have the capacity to lead and deliver policy processes with limited technical support only.

25. Such is for example the case of the human rights, local government and anti-corruption/organised crime outputs under Outcome 1; or cultural heritage and agriculture outputs under outcome 3.

26. In the case of education, it has been suggested that the current architecture of the outcome and the Outcome group may undermine increased government ownership of the output interventions. There are as many – if not more – common motives between output 2.2 Education and 3.1 Labour and Skills if one were to view the issue of inclusive education as a comprehensive matter of increased quality education to improve future life outcomes vs. an issue confined to children in precarious situations.

Synergies between UNCT agencies

Finding 6: UN agencies work well together to the extent that they need and have to. Programme complementarities have been incorporated already at design stage, alongside a careful consideration of a clear division of labour between the different agencies, but synergies are not actively sought out over the course of implementation. There is inherent competition and territorialism over the PoCSD (and donor) resources and scope of activities. Nevertheless, smaller agencies are keener to cooperate and explore synergies than bigger ones.

The PoCSD and JWPs set the foundations and mandates for how the UN Agencies work together, in line with their respective mandates and contributing with their piece of the puzzle to the larger context. Working together and exploring synergies is easier to do in the case of joint programmes such as the EAW and LNB programme, or the SDG supported programme on municipal social protection. UN agencies agree that the joint work plans become the narrative of agencies working together rather than a list of activities supported by the different agencies.

In practice, according to Outcome Groups, the PoCSD chain of results is crafted in such way to avoid overlaps between different agencies. There is acknowledgment that in the absence of sustained and unified funding internal synergies are not actively sought out and remain superficial, even forced when needed, when the UN needs to demonstrate inclusiveness over programmatic reasoning.

Overall, it may be concluded that the majority of UN agencies appreciate the relatively clear terms for internal division of labour that underpin the “rules of engagement” in the PoCSD. However, in a context of scarce funding resources there are underlying tensions on the scope of activities for each agency and the clear delineation of mandates on the ground. Some partners indicate that there may be too many “thinly represented” UN agencies present in the country and not all have the adequate capacities to play their role well. It is worth noting, however, that smaller agencies are keener on exploring synergies and innovation in cooperation than bigger agencies, which have more capacities and resources to allow them to expand the scope of their programmes. A number of good practices of cooperation have however been pointed out in the framework of the PoCSD, such as the cooperation in the UN - INSTAT Data group; cooperation with the Ombudsman and CPD offices; joint advocacy campaign led by UNICEF and UNFPA on child marriage; UN Women, FAO and ILO joining efforts in the design of two joint programmes related to economic empowerment of rural women (GREAT project - UNW, FAO) and Social Enterprises (UNW ILO - still in drafting process), etc. However, there are also examples of flagrant missed opportunities, such as the process for the development of the National Gender Equality Strategy developed with UN support, which failed to invite internal consultations with UN agencies prior to submission for adoption..

Partnerships with civil society

Finding 7: Partnership with CSOs lies at the core of the designed PoCSD strategies. CSOs are more frequently involved in the PoCSD to provide advice, technical assistance or services on behalf of UN organisations and they are less often as service providers, rather than as direct targets of capacity building activities. There are positive examples of how the PoCSD engages with CSOs to strengthen their watchdog role and overall capacity, including support for shadow reports under the UPR and strengthening the CSO sector in the gender equality, budgeting and LGBTI rights areas. However, UN Agencies are called to intensify efforts to build and sustain the CSO sector, which is relatively weak in Albania. Recent positive examples of partnerships with the private sector are encouraging.

The PoCSD reinforces the strong relationship between the UN and the Government of Albania. At the same time, it underscores the principles of transparency, partnership, and accountability and the commitment to work together with – among other – civil society partners in a coordinated and coherent manner.

UN's partnerships with CSOs is more prominent in the area of human rights and social inclusion. Through the PoCSD, the UN (UNFPA and UN Women) have supported the preparation of CSO shadow reports for the UPR, CEDAW, Beijing+25, and GREVIO. In addition, following the adoption of a National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) 2018–2020, a monitoring process on the implementation of the WPS Agenda at the country level was conducted with UN Women support, intending to institutionalise systematic reporting, and to strengthen accountability for the implementation of the Agenda at the country level.²⁷ In the frame of the Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) project, UN Women's continued support to the Coalition of CSOs on WPS resulted in the Coalition's development of a joint work plan (JWP), through a participatory process, for active engagement in implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in partnership with other stakeholders. Other examples of engagement with CSOs include UN Women's work to build CSO capacities in gender budgeting and support to the establishment and Monitoring Network Against Gender-Based Violence, a platform of approximately 50 organizations²⁸; UNFPA's work with CSO for LGBTI rights and sexual & reproductive health and rights; CSO engagement in activism days, etc.

However, the PoCSD should step up its efforts in building real, strategic partnerships with CSOs. There are limited instances when interventions are targeted at building CSO capacities and/or assisting them play a watchdog role for government behaviour. In contrast, CSOs are increasingly partnering with UN as service providers rather than legitimate representatives of rights holders.

Extending partnerships with the private sector has been at the focus of the UN work throughout 2019, while promoting the SDG Global Compact to align the actions of companies with SDG-oriented actions. For example, in May 2019, on its 20th anniversary, the Albanian Association of Banks organised an international conference to discuss Banks for Sustainable Development. This event aimed to ensure the participation of reputable international institutions and national policymakers, financial institutions and the UN to discuss recent developments among a broad array of topics on sustainable development, as well as to rekindle the Global Compact. Previously the UN partnered with companies to increase awareness on SDGs and to implement child – friendly policies. The companies met by the evaluation team reiterated their willingness to further explore collaboration opportunities with the UN.

C. RESULTS: HAVE WE MADE A DIFFERENCE?

In this section a review of the results achieved through the PoCSD will attempt to highlight the main achievement for each outcome, including the enabling factors and possible bottlenecks; contribution towards changes and the role of the UNRC and UNCT in pursuing the UN agenda.

Overall performance in programme delivery

Finding 8: Overall, PoCSD performance is good. The majority of planned interventions has been implemented during the 2017 – 2019 period or is on track to be implemented until 2021. Progress is positive across all four PoCSD outcomes and towards the achievement of national objectives and SDGs. Progress was achieved in the area of compliance with international obligations in human rights, enabling framework for access to justice in particular for children and vulnerable people, more effective local governance. A rich legal and policy framework in the area of social inclusion and social protection was complemented with efforts to sustain implementation at the local level and clarify regulatory and

27. A desk review of existing documents and reports produced by the Albanian authorities on the WPS Agenda was examined and is considered a solid basis and used for informing the monitoring process. The desk research intended to take stock of the work done by the government authorities (including all line ministries: MoI, MoHSP, MoFA, MoD) on the WPS Agenda, as well as the work plans of 31 CSOs on implementation of NAP for UNSCR 1325.

28. The network was established in the framework of an EU funded project implemented by Albanian NGO Center for Civic and Legal Initiatives and Un Women support, accessible at <https://rjetikunderdhunesgjimore-monitorime.al/>

financing frameworks. Policy, legal and institutional changes in the employment and skills sector have progressed steadily, including through UN's contributions, leading to reductions in unemployment and particularly youth unemployment. The UN's role in economic development activities was small. Targeted contributions in the agriculture and environment area have been effective and highly appreciated by stakeholders. UN was instrumental in mobilising resources and technical assistance in the aftermath of the humanitarian crisis of the earthquake.

OUTCOME 1

GOVERNANCE AND RULE OF LAW

State and civil society organizations perform effectively and with accountability for consolidated democracy in line with international norms and standards.

Outcome 1 consists of six outputs focusing on 1) Human Rights, 2) Anti-Corruption and Rule of Law, 3) Local Governance, 4) Access to Justice, 5) Mainstreaming Gender and Gender-Responsive Budgeting, and 6) Migration and Asylum. The PoCSD document states that interventions under this outcome aim at supporting a well-functioning legal and regulatory framework, leading to greater transparency, accountability and public participation. The PoCSD delivers expertise and support for the application of international norms and standards and encourages analysis and planning to reach vulnerable groups. The programme strategies designed to address the challenges under this outcome area include:

- Strengthen institutional capacities for national and local level institutions to improve implementation and monitoring of policy implementation, strengthen public service delivery and increase public participation
- Increase access to quality inclusive legal aid services and support building of a child-friendly justice system
- Support policy development and implementation for migration and asylum policies, mainstreaming of gender budgeting, access to justice, etc.
- Strengthen capacity of national institutions and LGUs to improve data quality and collection, reporting, and use; Development of systems to monitor and report on progress to implement recommendations from UN and regional human rights mechanisms and recommendations from independent state oversight institutions to state and public institutions, through investments in the capacities of human rights bodies: the Office of the People's Advocate (Ombudsman), the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (CPD), the Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data, and the strengthening of the public oversight role of the Parliament.

By the end of 2019, implementation for Outcome 1 was showing good progress, with implementation for 90% of the indicators being on track.²⁹ Interventions under this Outcome are particularly broad and encompass a broad spectrum of sectors, subject matters and interlocutors such as independent National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI), Parliament, Ministry For Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEFA), Ministry of Justice (Mojo), Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Finance and Economy (MFE), local governments, independent executive or regulatory institutions, etc.

Support to strengthening the capacities of Albanian institutions to further improve legal, policy and institutional frameworks and mechanisms to ensure the protection of human rights is at the core of this outcome. The UN Agencies have worked closely with independent institutions as well as the

executive, such as the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs to enhance their coordinating capacity to report to UN Treaty Bodies in a timely manner as well as to increase their capacities to advocate and raise awareness about the outcomes of such reports. By the end of 2019, the UN contributed to the preparation of several reports (regular and alternative/shadow reports) under international convention obligations as follows:

- The 3rd cycle report to the UN Human Rights' Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR). UN Women and UNFPA supported the preparation of the report and assisted the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs establish an online platform Human Rights Action Plan and Monitoring Mechanism to facilitate the monitoring process of the implementation of the UPR recommendations of the second cycle, and other treaties-based bodies recommendations. The UN Women supported the preparation and submission of a shadow report by CSOs to the UPR session.
- The 5th and 6th Periodic Reports on implementation of the UNCRC and its Optional Protocols to the UN Committee of Experts on the Rights of the Child, supported by UNICEF
- National Review on the implementation of the Beijing+25 Declaration and Platform for Action including a shadow report prepared by the CSO Monitoring Network Against Gender Based Violence.
- UNCT report to CEDAW Committee on Albania's follow-up report on CEDAW including a shadow report from the Monitoring Network Against Gender Based Violence.
- UNCT Albania, National Human Rights Institutions and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) submitted alternative and shadow reports to the UPR session, Beijing+25, Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (submission on 4 recommendations).
- Albania received Concluding Observations from the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW), and Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD).
- The Albanian Parliament headed the national delegation and country's commitments to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)+25 at the Nairobi Summit
- National report submitted to the Council of Europe (CoE)'s Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) and a follow-up CSO report on GREVIO's urgent recommendations prepared by the Monitoring Network Against Gender Based Violence. UN Women engagement with the empowerment of women as leaders at the national and local level, and public oversight institutions, mostly civil society, media and women beneficiaries, focused on developing capacities to monitor, report and advocate on gender equality commitments. In this regard, the National Alliance of Women Councillors was established and supported to develop its statute, common platform and workplan. 8 Women Councilor Alliances were established in five municipalities (Diber, Mallakaster, Patos, Permet and Roskovec), while a regional alliance for Elbasan County was established in 2018.

The PoCSD has a dedicated focus to strengthening the role of public oversight mechanisms under this output, such as the Parliament of Albania, the Ombudsperson, and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination. A joint coordination group between the UN Agencies and Ombudsman was established, co-chaired by UNICEF and the Ombudsman, with the aim to mobilize and coordinate support towards the development and implementation of Strategy and Action Plan of the People's Advocate.

Considerable efforts have been made to support the development of appropriate regulatory framework and policies. A number of UN agencies continued their support to the parliamentary "Friends of Children" caucus, as well as the Law Commission and the Human Rights Sub-commission to bring forward joint advocacy, legislative and public oversight agendas. Examples include the joint successful advocacy of UNICEF and UNHCR for changes in the Civil Status Law to ensure birth registration and prevent statelessness of children, and the joint list of questions to guide parliamentarians in their interaction with the People's Advocate as part of the annual reporting of this NHRI to the Parliament. The UN also contributed to the development of two parliamentary resolutions adopted in December 2017, "On the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030" and "On Condemnation of Violence Against Women and Girls and Increased Effectiveness of the Legal Mechanisms for its Prevention".

Other accomplishments include the participation of a UNHCR delegation to the Global Refugee Compact Conference in December 2019 and the pledges made, the establishment of a Database for DfAC, which is a requirement from EC, disaggregated data on mix migration flows and management, increased capacities of Ombudsperson in border management matters, changes on Law on Asylum, and help and support to the Border Police in managing the migration flow and proper identification and referral of asylum seekers and vulnerable groups arriving.

The UN in Albania continued to support the implementation stage of the new juvenile criminal code and improve the national Free Legal Aid (FLA) legislation framework that would adequately respond to the needs of the most vulnerable populations. Therefore, a comprehensive FLA law was developed with the technical support of UNDP in partnership with EURALIUS project, which entered into force in June 2018 and requires adequate implementation by responsible bodies. Other important achievement includes the development of the National Strategy on Migration 2019-2022 and Action Plan.

Significant achievements were noted in the increased uptake of Gender-Based-Budgeting in the public financial management system in the country. UN Women advocated for the inclusion of GRB as a mandatory requirement for the local government financial management cycle as well as led the process of engendering the Albanian Financial Management Information System (AFMIS). More than 350 officials were trained on gender budgeting and usage of performance indicators at the central and local level. By 2019, 7.2% of the total state budget was engendered influencing the lives of Albanian women and men in several sectors, including agriculture education, health, art and science.

A number of interventions targeted direct support to improving governance and public service delivery at the central level. By the end of 2019, under outputs 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 the UN has:

- Helped establish integrated service delivery offices in 12 of the 61 municipalities
- Supported establishment of one-stop-shops for administrative services in 51 of the 61 municipalities
- Supported the adoption of national standards in local archiving, increased transparency through publication of local council decisions on-line
- Ensured improved access to free legal aid centers at six district courts making services available to 851 vulnerable people, of which 472 people at risk of statelessness; and
- Helped improve infrastructure and capacities for the registration and temporary accommodation of irregular migrants, improvement of migration data

OUTCOME 2

SOCIAL COHESION

All women, men, girls and boys, especially those from marginalized and vulnerable groups, are exercising their entitlements to equitable quality services, in line with human rights, while more effective and efficient investments in human and financial resources are being made at central and local levels to ensure social inclusion and cohesion.

Outcome 2 consists of five outputs focusing on 1) Health, 2) Education, 3) Social Inclusion and Protection, 4) Child Protection and 5) Gender-Based Violence. The PoCSD highlights that it will contribute “to provide access to good practice global policies and models, expertise and support for the implementation of international norms and standards, and will promote new skills, and more inclusive systems and ways of working that can help to reach vulnerable groups.”³⁰ Some of

30. PoCSD 2017 – 2021, p. 24

the programme strategies highlighted in the PoCSD to address the challenges under this outcome include a mix of support for reform of legal, regulatory and financial frameworks. Other strategies include strengthening capacities of institutions at the national and local level for – among other data and skills for evidence-based policy making; implementation and scale up of social protection instruments, monitoring and supervision capacities; and finally strengthening families’ capacities to cope with socio-economic hardships.

By the end of 2019, implementation progress for interventions under Outcome 2 was very good, with 27 of the 29 indicators fully on track. Progress lagged behind for only one indicator³¹. The PoCSD appears to have played a key role in national developments in the area of social protection and social inclusion. Stakeholders indicate that the UN is strategically positioned to provide key strategic advice for policymaking as well as support in implementation. Indeed, the PoCSD has contributed to the development of a number of key policies, as follows:

- In the area of health, PoCSD contributed to the development of the National Health Strategy 2016–2020, draft Primary Health Care (PHC) Strategy and revision of PHC standards. In addition, several UN agencies supported the completion of the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS).
- In the area of education, the UN contributed to the mid-term review of the Pre-University Education Strategy (2014 – 2020) and has started support to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) for the development of a new comprehensive education strategy. Significant contributions were made by the UN to mainstream principles and practices of inclusive education through the introduction of new instructions on quality of education, inclusiveness, innovation in education technology for learning, new curricula, new training, protocols, and standards for learning and for teaching.
- In the area of social inclusion, the Leave No One Behind (LNB) joint programme has assisted the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) update its Social Protection Strategy and Action Plan (2020 – 2022), as well as develop for the first time an Elderly Action Plan (2020 – 2024). The UN contribution has been instrumental for the development of a number of other legal and policy documents during the 2017 – 2019 period, such as the regulatory framework for social housing (still pending) following earlier support for the adoption of a Social Housing Law; the development and adoption of the regulatory framework for the Social Care Service Law, regulatory framework for social enterprise financing.
- The UN’s work in the area of social inclusion has increasingly focused towards assisting implementation. Indeed, a number of stakeholders point out the proliferation of a vast array of policy documents that are not implemented in practice, often due to the lack of financial means to support their implementation. This is also acknowledged in the recent evaluation of UNICEF’s contribution to the social care reform in Albania³² which indicates that “... the agency has invested ... into the policy normative framework setting up the basis for the building blocks of the SCS system... There is persistent uncertainty and growing tensions between the levels of government around the funding responsibilities for the provision of social care services.” The UN is contributing towards provision of direct technical support at the local level to fulfil obligations linked to the provision and management of social care policy and services at the local level. This has included support that benefits all municipalities in Albania (e.g., methodologies linked to the planning, mapping and monitoring of local services, plus tools, guidelines and training materials to support detailed policy implementation), as well as specific support provided in selected municipalities to pilot test different mechanisms at the local and/or regional level, so as to learn practical lessons prior to facilitating the wider roll-out and scaling up of the range of initiatives to be undertaken by the partners in the next years. The UN continued its work in supporting social inclusion of Roma and Egyptian minorities in

31. Private household out-of-pocket expenditure as a proportion of total health expenditure. Strictly speaking, this high level outcome indicator is outside of PoCSD’s scope and may not directly be attributed to its interventions. In this perspective, the indicator is not suitable for measuring progress.

32. Massey, C. Poni, M. Sammon, E. (2020) “Evaluation of UNICEF’s Contribution to the Normative Policy Framework of the Social Care Services Reform 2013-2019 in Albania”. UNICEF in Albania

Albania. Notably, the three year ESERE³³ project aimed at promoting their economic and social empowerment by standardizing an integrated approach at the policy level; and supporting implementation models at the municipal level in four regions of the country (Tiranë, Durrës, Shkodër and Berat).

- In the area of Gender Based Violence (GBV), the UN Joint Programme to End Violence Against Women in Albania (EVAW), focuses particularly on support provided to central and local government to strengthen coordinated response mechanisms and improving legislation. A number of interventions in the current programme cycle have aimed at addressing shortcomings and legal loopholes in the existing legal framework to make the system more effective and reliable. The UN contributed to the improvement of several laws and policies related to GB-VAW to align with international human rights standards and practices, such as the 2017 amendments of the Albanian Penal Code guaranteeing more comprehensive rights for victims of crimes, GBV and with UNDP technical support, provide comprehensive provisions on the rights of victims of crimes including in particular victims of GBV and sexual violence/human trafficking. Further amendments to the DV law were adopted in 2018 leading to better protection for women in situations of immediate danger is ensured, followed by secondary legislation for its implementation. In addition, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)s for GBV were reviewed with UNFPA support to align them with the legal changes to DV Law. Through a UN Women supported regional programme on EVAW, at least 10 women's organizations were involved in ensuring a more enabling legal and policy environment for survivors of violence. They contributed to changes in EVAW related legislation, including inclusion of survivors of violence as preference categories under the Law on Social Housing. CSOs also monitored implementation of the National Gender Equality Strategy (2015-2020), Specific Objective 3 on ending violence against women to hold government institutions accountable to their legal and policy commitments, especially at the local level.
- At the local level, EVAW has contributed to the further consolidation of Coordinated Referral Mechanisms (CRMs), as an institutional response to VAW at the local level. Through UNDP support, eight new CRMs were established in 2019, bringing the total number established across the country to 49 (80% of 61 municipalities) by end of 2019, while four existing CRMs were consolidated. Monitoring of existing CRMs in 6 municipalities by civil society organizations highlighted a clear link between monitoring and accountability seeking with performance of public institutions. As collected data shows, in some of the municipalities there was an increase of 500% of cases tackled by the CRMs between 2017 and 2019. Through UN Women's regional EVAW programme, direct support is provided for civil society organizations to strengthen their voice and agency in influencing policies, supporting survivors, and challenging negative social norms on gender-based violence to ensure that progress is being made, monitored and reported on from all sides, reaching out to more than 2000 citizens and training around 300 service providers from several municipalities on duties and responsibilities stemming from domestic violence related legislation and its recent amendments in particular. Lastly,
- MoHSP with UNDP and UN Women support established the first pilot centre "LILIUM" by end of 2018 which became functional during 2019 thus providing specialized multi-sectorial services to survivors of sexual violence and awareness raised on its services at central and local level actors. As a result, within the first pilot year, 39 survivors of sexual violence (24 children and 15 adults; 30 females and 9 males) are supported with a range of specialized integrated emergency support services and referral is provided for medium and long-term support. The centre upgraded the database recording sexual violence cases in compliance with adopted national standards and operational procedures of services for victims and increased professional capacities of the multi-disciplinary, including psycho-social, staff at Mother Theresa University Hospital (23 persons).

33. Economic and Social Empowerment for Roma and Egyptians, an EU funded project was a three year project concluded in early 2019.

OUTCOME 3

ECONOMIC GROWTH, LABOUR AND AGRICULTURE

Economic growth priorities, policies, and programmes of the GoA are inclusive, sustainable, and gender-responsive, with greater focus on competitiveness, decent jobs and rural development.

Outcome 3 consists of four outputs 1) Economic Development; 2) Labour; 3) Agriculture and Rural Development and 4) Culture. The intended PoCSD strategies to achieve goals under Outcome 3 include support to developing the capacities of central and local governments to deliver effective economic support services, draw on the convening skills and expertise of the UN to enhance labour market governance, including tripartite dialogue and collective bargaining, strengthening policies and strategies for sustainable rural development and agricultural modernization that also empower rural women, and introduce measures to promote cultural diversity and heritage as a vehicle for increased and sustainable tourism.

BY the end of 2019, implementation progress for interventions under Outcome 3 was good, with 11 of the 13 indicators fully on track and the remainder two indicators partially on track. Under Outcome 3, the lion-share of interventions is carried out in the area of Labour (output 3.2) and Agriculture and Rural Development (3.3).

In the area labour, interventions under this outcome have made good progress in the field of policy support. In view of the lack of extensive funding opportunities, the programme footprint on economic development, has been insignificant especially at the local level. Nevertheless, the employment and skills sector witnessed significant progress in the regulatory and policy framework, supported by UNDP and ILO primarily, as follows:

- Contribution to Mid-Term Review of National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS) 2014–2020 and Revision of the Action Plan of the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2019–2022, based on the findings of the mid-term review and wide consultations with stakeholders,
- Support to drafting a new Employment Promotion Law, followed by a thorough revision of Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMP) and adoption of a set of revised and new ALMPs to better adapt to the needs of the target beneficiaries. In particular, the PoCSD provided technical assistance to the MFE for the establishment of a Social Employment Fund financed through administrative fines for enterprises that fail to comply with statutory employment quotas for people with disabilities.
- The UN has been a key actor in the revamping of the institutional architecture in the employment and skills area in the recent years. Previous support for the development of a new VET law and its bylaws was followed during 2019 by a comprehensive VET review and an outcome analysis of the system expected to guide further consolidation in the sector. On the employment side, UNDP has assisted the reorganization of the National Agency for Employment and Skills, to take over a series of new functions and deliver programmes more effectively and efficiently.
- ILO has provided technical support to the Secretariat of the National Labour Council (NLC), the highest platform of social dialogue established under the Ministry of Finance and Economy with regard to Labour Dispute Resolution in line with the provisions in the Labour Code of Albania. In 2017, ILO has assisted the preparation of an Albanian Labour Code Commentary, the submission of secondary labour legislation to the National Licensing Centre for adoption, and the development of the strategic policy framework Key Business Constraints in Albania
- In the area of agriculture and rural development, FAO has supported the government with the design of an integrated service to farmers, which led to a more inclusive and efficient government financial support programme.
- FAO contributed to the Law 'On Quality' adopted in 2017, which regulates geographic indicators and traditional products. FAO has provided support to smallholders for diversification of their economic activities, supporting local governments deliver promotion and training activities on safety and quality standards, geographic indications (GIs), and organic and traditional

products to a total of 200 farmers and agro-processors, along with the extension service, in six municipalities of Albania.

- UN Women and FAO supported the economic empowerment of women and secured resources for the project 'Gender Equality in Rural Development and Tourism' to empower and strengthen rural women's role in rural development, complementing the government's project '100 villages'.
- FAO contributed to the improvement of the nutritional status of schoolchildren and developed food safety and quality capacities of small scale dairy farmers through linking smallholder dairy producers to a sustainable school food and nutrition pilot programme.
- A new Law on Cultural Heritage and Museums was adopted by Parliament in May 2018 with support from UNESCO.

OUTCOME 4

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Government and non-government actors adopt and implement innovative, gender-sensitive national and local actions for environmental sustainability, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and disaster risk reduction.

Outcome 2 includes two outputs: 1) Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Scaled-up action on DRR, and climate change mitigation and adaptation across sectors; and 2) Natural Resources - Central and local institutions and communities are strengthened to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

Environment and Climate Change is a broad area and requires substantial investment to ensure compliance with international standards and the EU acquis. The PoCSD's contribution to the environment area is relatively modest in terms of size and scope due to limited funding. The UN has focused on the introduction and enforcement of win-win sustainable solutions like the work in renewable energies i.e. solar energy promotion, and strategic environment and social assessment to the development of the small hydro related investments. Investment and promotion of models of nature-based solutions to fight climate change and promotion of natural assets linking into eco-tourism development and benefit of communities from access and benefit sharing of genetic resources, have been the core of the UN work. Another important element has been investment in functional models of transboundary cooperation to enforce the cooperation and build successful models of cooperation among western Balkan countries for them to become mutually competitive and share responsibilities like in the case of Drini River basin. Key achievements in the environment and climate change area over the 2017 – 2019 period include:

- Support to the approval of a new legal framework for protected areas that establishes the legal context for declaration, conservation, administration, management and use of such areas.
- UNDP provided government with a position paper and technical advice on Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, in the framework of the 2019 Climate Action Summit.
- Direct contributions to the protection and sustainable use of resources such as national parks, through the development of a national planning framework for the institutional development of the National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA) and a medium-term Financial Plan for the Protected Area System. Business plans were prepared in the country's four main national parks: Dajti, Divjaka–Karavasta, Llogara, and Karaburun–Sazan. Leading to increased number of tourists and revenue generation.
- Contribution to the Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analysis of the Drin Basin Diagnostic to feed into the Drin Strategic Action Plan, to be developed and adopted by Drin Riparians.
- Albania's first draft country programme to engage with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) was developed with UNEP support, with the aim to explore additional environmental financing resources.

Support in the aftermath of natural disasters; 2019 earthquake and Covid-19 crises

On 26 November 2019, Albania experienced a powerful earthquake of magnitude 6.4, which killed 51 people and is estimated to have affected 220,000 people, or some seven percent of the population, were affected by the quake. The UN Albania quickly mobilized its resources and provided its support. A post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA) was undertaken by the EU, UN, World Bank and Government of Albania to assess damages and to serve as the basis for mobilizing the donor community for the recovery phase. UN's contribution to the earthquake recovery included the deployment of a team of international advisers for the post-disaster emergency response and early recovery efforts. It supported national health authorities assess medical needs and repurpose facilities and personnel; mobilized core relief items; and addressed critical child protection and education needs and provided direct services to affected children and families. The UN provided broad support to the PDNA process alongside the EU and the Government of Albania and the different UN agencies were in charge of co-leading the process in different sectors.

In relation with the Covid-19 crisis, the UN family also worked closely with Government of Albania and other agencies to identify areas of emergency support, aiming to reduce the impact on the poorest and other vulnerable groups. WHO has played an important role in coordinating the response to the healthcare crisis, training of healthcare workers and establishment of new Covid-19 protocols. Other agencies are now working together with the government on the assessment of the socio-economic impact and ways to overcome it and have adjusted activities

Factors affecting implementation

Finding 9: The UN's long-standing strategic partnership with government and the trusting relationship developed ensures continuous coordination and harmonisation of objectives and implementation for results by the PoCSD. Government ownership and commitment towards expected outcomes are key enabling factors for progress, in which the EU accession process plays an important role. The maturity and degree of development of national policies, institutions and systems mark a difference in terms of prospects for sustainable results. Bottlenecks in implementation are encountered at times due to weak human and financial resources.

The contributions of the UN agencies to the country's development are highly appreciated by stakeholders across the board. The UN's long-term presence in the country has contributed to the building of a trusting relationship with government and other stakeholders in the country. The UN is considered as a reliable partner with good technical expertise in all areas of development. Existence of government commitment and ownership over the desired objectives of interventions are key preconditions to ensure successful implementation. The PoCSD is well aligned with the national strategic framework and development priorities, and has promptly adapted its programmes and interventions to the changing development context in each outcome area, due in part to the strong partnership developed with national counterparts and the flexibilities incorporated into its design through the mechanism of joint biennial work planning.

The PoCSD builds on the country's strategic development priorities, for which the EU accession process itself is an important driver. In this context, the PoCSD has positioned itself to assist the country meet its EU accession requirements through targeted assistance to national institutions. The convergence of development goals of the Government and its international partners (including the UN) has created a fertile territory for good progress in the development of policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to which the Government is highly committed. However, systemic shortcomings identified in implementation may indicate that the country still lacks the appropriate systems for a careful balancing of its aspirations and capacity to deliver. These bottlenecks have been indicated by UN staff, international development partners as well as recognized by national

counterparts themselves. The most obvious manifestation of this discrepancy is the lack of national funding appropriated to meet obligations arising from endorsed policies, such as the case of consistent underfunding by the state budget of NHRIs and social protection policies to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. Inappropriate levels of funding hamper effective achievement of results in the rural development area and environment as well. In general, the lack of financial and human resources may be a serious detriment to the effectiveness of results.

Finally, the degree of development and maturity of national policies in each sector is a crucial factor underlying the prospects to achieve results effectively and efficiently. In relatively more mature sectors national institutions are likely to be more adequately equipped to understand development challenges and address them effectively, including through support from the UN. In less mature sectors, institutions are often not capacitated to fully absorb the assistance provided and hold its partners accountable for their contributions.

Capacities for data collection and analysis

Finding 10: The PoCSD has contributed significantly to increasing data collection and analysis capacities at government level, as well as increasing data availability and quality. The partnership with the Institute of Statistics through the Joint Data Group has been particularly productive. UN assistance has been crucial for the development and disaggregation of SDG-related indicators.

Data collection and analysis is an important aspect of the contribution of UN agencies' work in the country. The Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) is an important partner to the UN in Albania. A joint UN-INSTAT Data Group was established to serve as a forum for discussion on issues related to data collection and analysis, including a coordination/info sharing function as well as a support function. The Joint Data Group has played an important role for Instat for ensuring overall donor coordination and harmonization of UN workplans with Instat objective. At the outset of the work, during the drafting of Instat's five-year statistical programme (2016 and 2017), the Data Group met monthly to discuss government needs in terms of statistics. A number of positive achievements have been recorded over the recent years, including the first publication of statistical indicators and the launch of the Dashboard platform on the INSTAT website, made possible through UNDP's continuous support to the institution in its SDG-related efforts. UN agencies are engaged in supporting the preparation for the 2020 Albanian Population and Housing Census, and UN agencies through continuous support for capacity development of INSTAT, and participation of institute staff in regional and global workshops, among other efforts.

In addition to the support provided to INSTAT, UN agencies assist statistics development in various sectors and areas, including gender equality, gender-based violence, child protection, health, migration, social inclusion, education, environment, agriculture, rural development, human rights, and employment, with focus on vulnerable or marginalized groups, as follows:

- Support to measuring and assessing organized crime in the Western Balkans, which established a mechanism to collect available data from the national institutions and developed a standard framework to produce regular, evidence-based analytical reports on organized crime in the Western Balkans, including in Albania (UNODC).
- Supporting the establishment of partnership between INSTAT and Ombudsman relating to collection of data to the benefit of NHRI and their monitoring and reporting (UNFPA, UN Women).
- Development of the prototype of an information system linking all relevant justice chain institutions with information on children alleged to have committed a criminal offence, children victims or witnesses to crime. The prototype influenced Parliament and Government legislation and normative acts to make such an Integrated System of Data on Criminal Justice for Children obligatory for all the law-enforcement and justice institutions (UNICEF).

- Survey on Access to Justice in 2017,³⁴ to identify key factors that contribute to a fragile framework for access to justice in Albania (UNDP).
- UNICEF's and UNFPA's assistance to gather qualitative and quantitative evidence on child marriage; and gender biased sex selection – also reported in INSTAT's Annual Population report.
- UN Women has consistently supported INSTAT to collect, produce and use sex disaggregated data that analyze gender gaps in various sectors and has supported the publication Women and Men on a yearly basis including the production of an online platform, with a long list of gender indicators harmonized with related gender indicators for the SDGs, NSDI II 2015–2020 and the monitoring framework for the National Gender Strategy 2016–2020. In 2018, the third population-based national survey on violence against women and girls, was conducted by INSTAT in cooperation with UNDP and UN Women, establishing baselines for GBV related indicators under SDGs 5 and 16.
- Support for the Household Migration Survey undertaken by IOM with INSTAT.
- Technical support to INSTAT to improve its data collection and management systems linked to indicators on social inclusion, vulnerability and poverty, including assistance for the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC). INSTAT has also received support to enrich its child-focused indicators module, which will allow for the reporting of a broader number of indicators on an annual basis, and for conducting the secondary data analysis on demographic and health changes in Albania.
- Support to the renewed and strengthened normative framework around data collection on child rights and child protection, related to the law on the Rights and Protection of the Child.
- National Population Based Survey on Violence against Women and Girls in 2018 and establishing the baselines for monitoring and reporting including SDG indicator 5 (5.1, 5.2, 5.3). With UN Women's support, evidence has been generated on other forms of violence, such as violence and sexual harassment in public spaces.
- Post-earthquake survey carried out by INSTAT in affected area (i.e. mini-SILC survey) with UNDP's assistance to inform the assessment process.
- Establishment of a national environmental monitoring and information system, providing for an integrated and transparent environment information that is open to the public and supports decision making, reflecting SDG indicators.

Work on data gathering and improving data system have been continuous. Many important UN – Government studies have contributed to better data and evidence. The digitalization of many services under UN support have contributed to increased democratization of data. A weakness remains – the culture of data for continuous improvement of policies.

During 2019, the UN in Albania became part of the UN INFO platform, a planning, monitoring and reporting system to track how the UN system at the country level supports local and central governments to deliver on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. The system is currently available to UN personnel only. A public version of the system will be available in 2020, included in the new, revamped UNCT Albania website.

Role of communication

Finding 11: A 5-year Communications Strategy was implemented by the UN Communication Team, which speaks with one voice on programme results, impact, challenges, develops various communication products, conducts joint advocacy campaigns, develops common messages to benefit larger UN objectives, enhances the visibility of the UN through internet-based media, organizes joint activities, field visits and events, network, and keeps constant working relations with national, local and international media. Communication is considered important for enhancing PoCSD results. Resources for communication need

34. UNDP Publication, Survey on Access to Justice in Albania, 2017, <http://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/survey-on-access-to-justice-in-albania.html>

to be further increased, and communication should be systematically integrated already at programming stage to ensure additional value added.

Experiences from Albania and other pilot countries have found that “speaking with one voice” makes the UNCT more powerful, focuses messages better on issues that interest the public at large, and ensures that core messages are based on a consensus of the UN system’s top priorities.

As indicated in the PoCSD document, the successful implementation of the PoCSD requires effective communications. A UN Communications Team guided by a communications strategy assists UN Agencies and the GoA to communicate in a more coordinated way to explain the work of the UN in Albania, demonstrate results, support policy advocacy and resource mobilization, and help raise awareness about key development challenges.

The UN Communications Team contributed to the design and development of the Programme of Cooperation, through its participation in working groups and outcome/output discussions, consultations with stakeholders, inputs into programme documents and theory of change. The Communications Team advocated for integrating communications in the programme throughout all phases.

The UN Communication Team has developed a 5-year communications strategy during the previous One Programme cycle³⁵, which has continued to be implemented during this PoCSD cycle. The overall approach mentioned in the strategy indicates that it promotes the work and impact of the United Nations’ interventions by speaking with One Voice and provides information about UN’s contribution to national priorities of the country. In terms of objectives, it aims at: i) spreading information and awareness around the work and impact of the UN work in Albania through the Programme of Cooperation; ii) speaking and advocating as one, on key national policy issues; and iii) increasing the visibility and the diversity of UN agencies through the promotion of their comparative advantages and technical expertise. Given the emergency situations in Albania in the last couple of years (flooding, earthquakes etc.), the UN Communications Team worked to revise and update the UN Communications Strategy, including a section on “Communications in Crisis”.

The strategy was implemented by the UN Communications Team, comprised of communications focal points of UNCT members, and chaired by the Communications Specialist of the Resident Coordinator’s Office. The team has met periodically and ensured a coherent approach to communications in the DAO context through information-sharing and coordination of joint initiatives. The team developed and disseminated various communication products related to programme work, conducted joint advocacy campaigns, developed common messages to benefit larger UN objectives, enhanced the visibility of the UN through internet-based media including the UN website, organized joint activities, field visits and events, networked, and maintained working relations with media in the country.

The strategy is implemented through annual communication workplans agreed and approved by the UNCT. These workplans include annual joint activities of all UN agencies participants in the joint UN programme, resident and non-resident agencies, and support to programme through a variety of communication tools and channels. The communication strategy and accompanying annual workplans feature activities to increase public awareness, government, media and donors’ understanding and support for the PoCSD, advancement of human rights, and UN’s interventions to support national priorities, including the EU integration agenda and SDGs achievement. The Communication Team reports on what has been achieved in the Mid-Year Reviews and in the Annual Progress Reports.

35. Communicating As One, Communications Strategy, 2012 – 2016, Albania

The following UNCT advocacy campaigns were undertaken, with the support of the Communications Team:

- Promotion of Gender Equality through extensive public awareness campaigns.
- Environment protection and climate change events.
- Human rights: promotion, observance mechanisms, advocacy events and campaigns.
- Development of a public awareness and advocacy including ground breaking partnerships with high profile private sector entities in Albania³⁶; SDG weeks every year to bring SDGs at the local level.
- Joint events to mark UN anniversaries.

During the PoCSD implementation, more agencies came to realize the importance of communications for programme results and resource mobilization, by investing in human resources in the field of communication. The Communications Team also supported programmes by communicating their results through various channels and tools, focusing on changes in people's lives/putting the programme beneficiaries in the spotlight.

Nevertheless, in their evaluation questionnaire reply, the team noted that resources for communication remain very limited. Communication for Development (C4D) was not included enough in Programme areas. In addition, communications remained a separate topic, with separate plan and reporting tool and separate limited budget (based on agency will and contributions). There is a need to integrate communications into programme output/outcome joint workplans, and to increase the role of communications in partnership building and resource mobilization. The systematic integration and inclusion of communications element into the PoCSD JWPs would help Outcome Groups better plan, budget and implement their activities, enhance their understanding of communications, improve resource allocation, achieve realistic and meaningful communication goals, increase Programme results visibility, and better advocate for increased support and partnerships.

The evaluation team concludes that communication is considered important in the PoCSD implementation and has played an instrumental role in conveying the work of the UN in Albania. There is ample space to further instrumentalise communication to enhance PoCSD outreach, awareness and advocacy campaigns as well as partnership building.. A more systematic and better structured integration of communications would be needed in all programme phases: design, planning, implementation, review and monitoring. It also requires a strengthened Communication for Development element throughout the programme. It is also important to dedicate well thought and planned resources, including funding throughout the programme. A strong communication also requires the full participation and better engagement of all agencies' focal points strategic communications efforts.

36. Some stories, videos and articles about these campaigns and partnerships are as follows:

SDGs at cinemas: <https://www.un.org.al/news/cinema-millennium-networks-and-cineplex-join-un-campaign-make-sustainable-development-goals>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2Z0MTrO400>

SDGs and Sophie Caffè: <https://www.un.org.al/news/sophie-caffe-chain-joins-un-campaign-raise-awareness-about-sustainable-development-goals>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rx9VsfaFfl>

SDGs and Telekom: <https://www.telekom.com.al/kompania/media/news/united-nations-and-telekom-albania-announce-partnership-to-drive-the-global-goals-agenda-in-albania/article54001>

Video: <https://www.un.org.al/news/hundreds-people-night-run-support-sustainable-development-goals-albania-run4sdgs>

SDGs and AGNA Group: <https://www.un.org.al/news/united-nations-and-agna-group-announce-partnership-raise-awareness-and-drive-actions-support>

Videos produced for joint programmes: <https://www.youtube.com/user/UnitedNationsAlbania>

Role of operations

Finding 12: The Operation Management Team (OMT) has intensified its efforts to regularly identify and expand the areas of inter-agency collaboration in the operational areas, in order to support PoCSD delivery. The OMT supported the development of a Business Operating Strategy (BOS) 2017-2021, which took a strategic results-oriented approach to planning, management and implementation of harmonized business operations. Six BOS working groups (procurement, finance, ICT, logistics, human resources and administration/facilities), were led by different agencies, to review the common services, which led to generating savings, reducing transaction costs, and getting enhanced quality.

Albania has been a United Nations Delivering as One (DaO) country since 2008. One pillar of the DaO initiative is One Set of Management Practices. The importance for the UNCT to collectively contribute toward the country's development, and the need to support the country in reaching its 2030 commitments, have led to the necessity for a stronger Operation Management Team (OMT) role to support the UNCT. During the implementation of the PoCSD, the OMT has intensified its efforts to regularly identify and expand the areas of inter-agency collaboration in the operational areas, in order to support PoCSD delivery. The operational support is important for a successful implementation of projects and programmes.

Within the framework of DaO and the PoCSD 2017–2021, the OMT supported the development of a Business Operating Strategy (BOS) 2017-2021, which took a strategic results-oriented approach to planning, management and implementation of harmonized business operations. The BOS, implemented by the UNCT, also served as a basis of institutionalization of the OMT common efforts to provide timely, efficient and effective operational services. The OMT Annual Work Plans (AWPs) are prepared in close harmonization and coherence with the UNCT and the PoCSD Joint Work Plans. The implementation progress of AWP is monitored regularly by the OMT.

UN Albania has been working on harmonizing business practices and establishing common services and premises since 2008. Common services were established in the following areas: (a) facility services, (b) procurement, (c) ICT, (d) finances including HACT. Since then, 17 LTAs for 13 common services are established with the participation of all UN Agencies in country (UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, IOM, UNWOMEN, ILO, WHO, UNODC, UNDSS, UNRC, FAO, UNEP). UNDP has led the procurement process for the majority of these LTAs. The results of these joint LTAs were bulk discounts, economy of scale, time efficiency of staff, and operational effectiveness for UN System. The largest procurement volumes (52%), ensured approximately USD 40,000 in savings in 2019 due to reduced transaction costs, cost avoidance of staff time and prices from economies of scale (bigger procurement volumes). In 2018, 19 ongoing LTAs covering 13 areas, with event management having the largest procurement volumes (49%), ensured approximately USD 70,000 in savings, due to reduced transaction costs, staff time and prices from economies of scale (bigger procurement volumes). The joint Local Committee on Contracts is considered a success.

One of the most important achievement in term of common services, is the establishment of the UN Common Premises in 2012 designated as UN House with the initial participation of six UN Agencies, and now ten (UNDP, UNRCO, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, UNDSS, UNEP, ILO, UNODC). Sharing the same premises has contributed both in term of tangible and intangible achievements. Considerable cost savings were made, as a result of sharing the same premises and common management of UN House operational aspects. The UN House has contributed to increased level of UN cohesiveness in programme implementation and operations practices and procedures, including the introduction of more efficient common services. Co-location of UN Agencies has also increased the performance and cost efficiency in the delivery of results by the UN. The UN House has the potential to expand and welcome other UN Agencies.

The Business Operations Strategy focused on common ICT services and common administration and facilities management. The OMT conducted a preliminary operations analysis for common services for priority areas in the UNSDCF, especially joint programmes, and for non-programmatic common

services opportunities. The OMT has agreed to have six BOS working groups, one per each common service line (procurement, finance, ICT, logistics, human resources and administration/facilities), led by different agencies, to review the common services with the main objective of generating savings, reducing transaction costs, and getting enhanced quality. The preliminary stocktaking involved the recording of common services, volumes and value by all agencies, for each Common Service Line, which was followed by an assessment of the quality and status of common services among agencies. Such efforts led to the establishment of various new LTAs, common roster of translators and interpreters, a common roster of communication experts and other common services, all of which contributed to the reduction of transaction costs for UN agencies and their partners. The expansion of collaboration and identification of new services that can be handled jointly is a factor that can contribute to further reduction of the transaction's costs.

Albania was one of the selected countries for the common back office country studies and consultations in the context of advancing common business operations in UNCTs. Analytical data on expenditure, personnel numbers, time allocation and quantitative indicators were provided by each agency for six back-office service areas (administration; finance; human resources; information and communications technology; logistics; and procurement). The Common Back Office Synthesis Report mentioned that a lot of common areas of collaboration are in place, however, there are areas with limited collaboration, due to the application of various procedures, systems and modalities by the respective agencies. In Finance, for example, the main impediment to common financial services is the differences in ERP applications between Agencies. UN agencies in Albania have very few joint implementing partners / CSOs during the current programme cycle, which has not allowed for planning joint micro-assessments. However, in a few cases, existing micro assessments have been shared among different agencies in order to eventually piggy-back on other agencies micro-assessments.

The UNCT is determined to comply fully with the requirements of the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) Framework, with increased focus on risk management and capacity building, as well as costing for joint assurance activities to serve as a benchmark in measuring efficiency gains in HACT implementation. Implementation of the framework was guided by a joint HACT working group, established in 2018 with staff from UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women.

In term of procurement collaboration, the areas where inter-agency alignment of thresholds would help local cooperation include harmonized low value procurement thresholds, harmonized delegations, harmonized (local/regional/HQ) committee review thresholds, and aligned procurement policies. Differences in the way Agencies handle recruitment of international consultants are also considered to be a major impediment to process improvements.

Agencies are required to comply with their own rules and regulations. The harmonization initiatives are beyond their competencies at local level and require intervention at headquarters' levels. However, common efforts to establish LTAs can reduce the burden of Agencies undertaking separately the competitive procurement process. Furthermore, the OMT has tried to see the potential of benefiting from various initiatives introduced, such as the Mutual Recognition.

Improvements for the next UNSDCF could be made in the quality of actual common services and the expenditure of areas of services. One of the OMT goals is to work on identification of opportunities so to ensure that more common services in various operational areas can be performed jointly, with the aim to improve performance and reduce costs. The involvement of the OMT at the inception phase of potential projects and programmes can be improved further. The necessity of harmonization of procedures could also contribute further to the successful joint implementation of the PoCSD.

D. TRANSFORMATION: HAVE WE MADE LONG-LASTING, SYSTEMIC AND SOCIETY-WIDE CHANGES?

The transformation criteria aims at analyzing if the PoCSD has brought about systemic changes (for example, changes in the legal framework, institutions, social and economic structure), and if the UNCT's work has been scaled up or replicated to ensure its effects are not limited in scope, but nation- or society-wide. This criterion also evaluates if the PoCSD adequately invested in, and focused on, national capacity development, and to what extent and in what ways did it contribute to capacity development of government, NGOs and civil society institutions.

Systemic changes and high-level and policy work

Finding 13: The UNCT work brought about systemic changes (for example, changes in the legal framework, institutions, social and economic structure), and the Outcome Groups provided many examples of such changes in all outcome areas. In many cases, however, the contribution towards the improvement of legal and regulatory frameworks, or piloting of best practices and models, needs substantial additional support to ensure sustainability.

OUTCOME 1

Output 1.4 (UNICEF, UNDP) – UNICEF technical assistance made possible the development and approval of the Criminal Justice for Children Code and of the first National Justice for Children Strategy (2018-2021) – both were two tasks that were part of the Justice Reform Strategy. For the first time, children were involved in criminal justice processes through legal provisions tailored to their status and needs, and not with provisions made for adults. Based on these developments, new institutions and mechanisms are being set up, such as the National Juvenile Criminality Prevention Centre, the Institute for the Education Measures for Children In Conflict with the Law, the Integrated Data System on Criminal Justice for Children Cases, the Inter-agency Monitoring and Coordination Mechanism on Justice for Children.

UNDP'S interventions provided support to the GoA on improving national Free Legal Aid (FLA) legislation framework that would adequately respond to the needs of the most vulnerable populations. This improved legal framework provides sustainable enabling environment for making Access to Justice (A2J) equitable and inclusive for the most vulnerable individuals, with the establishment of six FLA centres at district courts piloted with UNDP Albania support.

Output 1.5 (UN Women, UNICEF) – UN Women supported changes in the legal framework related to Gender responsive budgeting (Organic Budget Law Local Finance Law, Budget standard Instructions) and with the introduction of Gender equality and GRB module in ASPA official curricula targeted at public administration. UNICEF support to Ministry of Health and Social Protection resulted in integration of the Gender Module into the accredited training programme of home visiting health personnel.

Output 1.6 (IOM) - Changes at policy level were enabled through the development of the National Strategy on Migration 2019-2022 and Action Plan. Changes to institutional capacities were enabled by the improvement of infrastructure and capacities for the registration and temporary accommodation of irregular migrants. A review of the Law on Aliens and the Law on Emigration of Albanian Citizens for Employment Purposes were carried out in parallel with the development of the National Strategy on Migration.

OUTCOME 2

Output 2.2 - The whole reform of preschool education has been supported and designed with significant UN support, in a consorted effort with the Government.

Output 2.3 (UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA) - The PoCSD has been one of the main vehicles of support for change in the country's policy reform and legal framework on social inclusion, social care and social services (e.g., the Strategy for Social Protection has been extended till 2023; the same is expected for the Social Inclusion Policy Document; the Law No.121/2016 on Social Care Services, Law No.18/2017 on Child Protection, Law No. 22/2018 on Social Housing, Law on Social enterprise is fully operational with the completion of secondary legislation), supporting partners in terms of the further implementation and consolidation of the reform and legal framework. Although the legal and regulatory framework has drastically improved, with considerable UN support, there is still a long way to go towards the consolidation of institutions in the social inclusion area. Work for the social and economic empowerment of the Roma and Egyptian community indicates that more support will be needed to mainstream models and practices in the institutional framework at the central and local level.³⁷ The holistic approach of the LNB programme, addressing macro, meso and micro level contributes to sustainability. By working with the central government and national services and with the local government and service providers, PoCSD contributes towards systemic change by working to ensure that social inclusion policies are suitably anchored, promoted, monitored, and financed at the system and operational level. This finally made possible that the government allocated for the first time (in 2019) about 1,3 million USD in a competitive grant fund to support municipal social care services.³⁸

Albania's recent legislative changes for the promotion of social enterprises and the creation of a related state fund, was supported by UN Women. In addition, UN Women interventions, through LNB programme, focused on raising awareness and ensuring that municipal plans and budgets respond to the needs of vulnerable women and girls. Nine municipalities were targeted and approximately 500 vulnerable women and young girls benefited from training and awareness events, defining a list of selected gender-responsive priorities. A total of 2,500 women citizens engaged in the public budget consultations. Being continuously engaged with the municipalities, UN Women has noticed that women and young girls now have a better understanding of Gender-Responsive Budgeting and are able to define lists of selected gender-responsive priorities for voicing their needs in the participatory planning and budgeting processes

Output 2.4 - Bringing about systemic change and strengthening the systemic response to child protection risks and harm to boys and girls is at the heart of the cornerstone legislation for child protection – the Law on the Rights and Protection of the Child and the Criminal Justice for Children Code – and 23 by-laws were developed and adopted with a strong contribution of UN agencies in past years, constituting the major systemic change with regards to child protection in Albania. In addition, amendments to the Law 'On Civil Status' were drafted with UN support and endorsed by the Albanian Parliament in 2018, addressing the legal barriers that contribute to the phenomenon of statelessness. In addition, the national strategy on child rights and protection (National Agenda on the rights of the child 2017-2020) whose main pillar is the elimination of all forms of violence against children, was developed with the support of the UNCT. This new legal framework brings the Albanian legislation in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other major human rights instruments, and paves the way to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

Output 2.5 (UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA) - UN Agencies contributed to systemic change through the development of policies and laws in promoting GE and outing and end to GB/DV. Through the UN JP EVAWIA, they facilitated the implementation of gender-related policies, laws and action

37. Final evaluation, ESERE project, 2019

38. However, by the end of 2019 less than 70,000 USD was allocated to 6 municipalities. This is an indication of the many setbacks of reforms.

plans as their enforcement is still inadequate by governmental authorities. Through the UN Women regional EVAW programme, civil society organizations, especially women's organizations were empowered to increase their voice and agency in combating violence against women through advocacy for a better legal and policy framework, ensuring quality and equal access to services for survivors of violence and combating harmful gender stereotypes at societal level, including through innovative communications approaches.³⁹

Furthermore, the March 2020 Mid-Term Review of the Programme "Leave No One Behind" in Albania concludes that overall, the progress to date to ensure the sustainability of the results and benefits after the end of the programme is satisfactory. The alignment of LNB with national/local policies and needs is a major factor contributing to the sustainability of results. The holistic approach of the LNB programme, addressing macro, meso and micro level, also contributes to sustainability. In addition, valuable technical support/ advice has been provided to government partners linked to its development of funding mechanisms for social inclusion, the results of which are integral to building national/local financing capacity to ensure the long-term sustainability of the programme results. Major factors that influence the non-achievement of sustainability of the programme results are: (1) financial sustainability; (2) the capacity of governmental partners to ensure social inclusion and social care policy planning, monitoring and evaluation; (3) staff turnover and the failure to internalise capacity building programmes. Finally, the MTR considers that it is important for the programme to develop a clear results achievement strategy linked to the sharing of good practice and to identify how the results may be scaled up by the partners in the future.

In addition, the recent April 2020 Evaluation of UNICEF's Contribution to the Normative Policy Framework of the Social Care Services Reform 2013-2019 in Albania, observed that the contribution of UNICEF to Albania's policy normative framework on Social Care Services (SCS) has fostered the emergence of expectations towards SCS that could be a driving force, however, these expectations are not yet satisfied. The SCS workforce, particularly at the municipal level, is acting as a buffer in the current transitional period of the reform. This could in turn endanger the sustainability of this building block in the SCS, and one of the key successes of UNICEF in Albania. UNICEF therefore needs a renewed, strong role as advocate and advisor in the final negotiations for the SCS policy normative framework, and for its implementation in the lives of rights holders.

OUTCOME 3

In this area, UN Agencies contributed to systemic change through the following outputs:

- The new Law on Cultural heritage and Museums.
- The management of World Heritage properties in Albania, in accordance to the new law on territorial management in Albania.
- The ongoing consolidation of the out of Court Labour Dispute Resolution System.
- The use of the Participatory Inclusive Assessment (PIA) of the active labour market measures by the National Employment Service, which reached out to the most vulnerable groups.
- The value chain skills anticipation as a standard methodology to be used by the sector skills committees established by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Qualifications to feed their decisions on the skills/ curricula to be introduced in the VET schools and centres, which addresses the labour market demand/offer mismatch.
- The land consolidation strategy, which accelerates land reform.
- The Law on Employment Promotion (2019) and secondary legislation.
- The Mid-Term Review of the National Strategy of Employment and Skills and annual reports (2019).
- The upgrade of National Employment Agency to the National Agency for Employment and Skills (2019).

39. Also elaborated in the Final Evaluation of the EU-UN Women Regional Programme "Ending Violence against Women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds", Just Governance Group, 2020.

OUTCOME 4

Systemic changes were achieved at two levels in Outcome 4: at central level, and at the local government unit level, for gradually consolidating the responsibility to act for the present protection and the future resilience of the environment. Work with the line ministries focused on building a broader ownership of the climate agenda and stronger inter-institutional partnerships. This provided the governance basis for the establishment of innovative funding mechanisms that can incentivize and help to pay for improved energy efficiency and renewable solutions (SDG 13 and 7) in synergy with international and regional financial institutions. The work with the scientific community mapped climatic risks and the cooperation with communities especially women and youth, and helped local authorities identify and implement adaptation measures (SDG 9). Such practices have reinforced the development of the Gender Action Plan on adaptation and mitigation (SDG 5). Albania's partnerships with homologue institutions of the riparian countries of the Drin River (South-South cooperation) were institutionalised and developed implementing procedures for management of this transboundary basin. Management structures for protected areas and water management are now established and functional, reinforcing the role of local authorities and prefectures, as an important institution standing between local and central government.

Scaling up or replication

Finding 14: The UNCT work has been scaled up or replicated to ensure its effects are not limited in scope. Very rarely interventions are framed as isolated projects, and the majority of contributions are at the nation- and society-wide level. Outcome Groups and interviewees provided many examples of scaling-up and replication. Nonetheless, the transition into nation- and society-wide programmes is not always a quick one, and while it requires a clear vision for sustainability and ownership by duty bearers, it also requires sustained support to ensure that advancements are solid and irreversible.

The UNCT's work has been scaled up or replicated to ensure its effects are not limited in scope, but nation- or society-wide. As a general rule, UN agencies in Albania and the PoCSD address systemic improvements and changes, and very rarely interventions are framed as isolated projects. Therefore, the majority of contributions are at the nation- and society-wide level. Some examples include the following.

OUTCOME 1

Output 1.4 (UNICEF, UNDP) – UNICEF partnered with local NGOs to offer legal and psychological assistance to children in conflict or contact with the law, to organize parenting programmes for their families, to provide restorative justice services and promote the approach of victim-offender mediation, to support the socio-economic reintegration of children in conflict with the law in the community, to offer support during execution of alternative/non-custodial sentences for juveniles, etc. These experiences shaped the approach reflected by Albanian decision-makers in the Criminal Justice for Children Code and the National Justice for Children Strategy, for scaling up nationally or for replication in some jurisdictions.

During 2017-2018 four FLA Centres in Durres, Fier and Lezhe that were piloted and established with UNDP support in close partnerships with NGOs and District Courts, providing primary and secondary FLA services to up to 1500 vulnerable individuals (F 685/ M 773) and during 2018-19, UNDP supported expansion of the FLA centers in the District Courts of Shkoder and Peshkopi, reaching by the end 2019 around 851 vulnerable persons (F 428 / M 523), through free primary and secondary legal aid services. Furthermore, for the Durres, Fier and Lezha FLA centres, the process of revitalization started by end 2019 and they are expected to be fully operational during 2020 and onwards. These pilots have served as a good practice for scaling up in other regions in the country where the demand for such services is considerably high.

Output 1.5 (UN Women) - Although it is still too early to analyse the impact, there is some first spill-over effects of GRB interventions at the central and local levels. GRB is influencing the lives of women and men in several sector of the local life, and municipalities have endorsed GRB and carried forward the application of engendered budgets even beyond the support of UN Women, emphasising the echo of GRB in local life. The CSOs gender watchdog capacity building component initially introduced by UNW in the country has been replicated by two networks of CSOs, which work at local level and are replicating the UNW methodology to draft gender budget watchdog reports and hold governments accountable in at least 10 new municipalities.

OUTCOME 2

Output 2.3 (UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA) – The LNB programme has a clear strategy linked to the sharing of good practice and how the results may most effectively and efficiently be scaled up by the partners over the next years. This is most notable in terms of scaling up of actions to develop policy dialogue and advocacy forums / participatory mechanisms to support local decision-making, which could also evolve into regional networks and a national platform to promote awareness, dialogue, and advocacy linked to social inclusion / protection. It is also evident in terms of the potential to share and support the transfer of good practice between LGUs and/or service providers, notably in similar socio-economic or geographical environment, and in terms of their experience, at the local level, with the models for delivery of services. With regard to the inclusion of Roma and Egyptian minorities, representatives of the target municipalities confirm that the blended approach of the ESERE project, targeting multiple aspects of deprivation and needs of the beneficiaries has produced positive results. However, the “capacity of municipalities to continue delivering services is altered by the poor implementation of several sectoral reforms by the central government, especially the allocations of funds that are expected to accompany the transfer of wider responsibilities over enlarged territorial responsibilities.”⁴⁰

Output 2.4 (UNICEF) - The Child Helpline, which was initially established and set up by UNICEF, was subsequently, scaled up to the national level and legally recognized a key child protection service, and is now financially supported from state budget. The emergency service for children at high risk of violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect is another example. The first emergency service was set up by UNICEF in collaboration with Tirana Municipality through the in the House of Colors. Ever since, this model has been replicated in other municipalities and has been used as the standard service model for the national standards of emergency services. A third example is the curricula for the on-the-job training of child protection workers, developed by UNICEF in partnership with other international child rights organisations, which after being piloted and updated with the new legislation, was integrated as part of the curricula of the Albanian School of Public Administration. The transition into nation- and society-wide programmes is not a quick one, and while it requires a clear vision for sustainability and ownership by duty bearers, it also requires sustained support to ensure that advancements are solid and irreversible.

Output 2.5 (UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA) - As mentioned earlier in the framework of the UN JP EVAWIA, the Coordinated Referral Mechanisms (CRMs) now serve as an institutional response mechanism at municipal level to prevent and handle in a coordinated multi-sectorial way domestic violence cases. This work created an excellent basis for coordinating work, with similar support provided by CSOs specialized in this area in establishing new CRMs where they did not exist. The UN Women Regional EVAW programme Implementing Norms, Changing Minds (2017-2019) will continue to a second phase with a wider scope and increased geographic coverage to replicate positive results achieved in the first phase of the programme, including increasing capacities of members of the CRMs to better respond to the needs of women survivors of violence and contribution toward heightened awareness of right, self-confidence and self-advocacy of women.⁴¹

40. Final Evaluation, ESERE project, 2019

41. Final Evaluation of the EU-UN Women Regional Programme “Ending Violence against Women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds”, Just Governance Group, 2020

OUTCOME 3

The UN work in this area is always planned to ensure multiple effects and benefits from the community at the local level, to the regional level, and then to the national level. Examples of scaling up and replication include:

- The recent inscription of the natural and cultural heritage of Ohrid Region to the World Heritage list of UNESCO, creates benefits for concerned communities and for the national level.
- UN/ILO interventions are always crafted to produce multiple effects and benefits via their replication at the national level, regional and municipality levels.
- The ILO project on Amicable Labour Dispute Resolution is reaching out to not just the traditional beneficiaries like vocational schools students to create a culture of dialogue and conflict resolution in the world of work, but it is going beyond to general high schools where the majority of future employers and employees come from.
- The ILO has been providing support to up-skill the employers 'and workers 'organizations so that they provide, in turn, better services to their members at the company level, all over the country.
- A UNDP pilot that supported youth self-employment and start-ups was included after three years into the active labour market measures to be run and financed by the National Agency for Employment and Skills.

OUTCOME 4

The work on marine and coastal protected areas started with the proclamation of the first marine park and provides now an exemplary management integrated in coastal zone management throughout the coastline, tackling also issues of pollution and hazardous waste, expanding further to the maritime sector development.

Solar upscale co-founded at local level culminated with accumulated 69 public buildings in 18 municipalities with 1,278,209 tCO₂ reduction, saving 70% of the energy used for hot water.

The Drin Basin Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis provided a thorough assessment of pollution, biodiversity, hydrology, and Drini water budget including flows and discharges, as well as the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus. All fed into to the Drini Strategic Action Plan that was endorsed in April 2020 by all Drin riparian.

Finally, the work on Sustainable Land Management is expected to be upscaled with the development of Land Degradation Neutrality targets.

Capacity development at national and local levels

Finding 15: The PoCSD adequately invested in, and focused on national capacity development. It also greatly, and in many ways, contributed to capacity development of government. The PoSCD made an important contribution to capacity development of both local and central government capacities in all areas and capacity development of CSOs in specific areas. There are, however, risks that some capacities built in the past (for example work with the Roma), may be lost due to the lack of continuity of some projects, and the lack of ownership and buy-in from the Government. In several cases UN is perceived as substituting government capacity.

Outcome Groups and interviewees provided many examples where the PoCSD strengthened national and local capacity development, not only for institutions but also for NGOs and CSOs. UN agencies strengths include a good knowledge of national institution and systems. The intervention approach is in general participatory and flexible.

The capacity development progress is, however, dependent on the maturity of the different sectors, and on the sustainability of interventions (for example work with the Roma). Development partners stressed that the UN spends a lot of money on consultants, and it is unclear if it has made an analysis on how much money is spent on expertise – and its impact. Of course, there is a strong dimension on government capacity building in UN's work, but there is a feeling of the UN coming with their projects, and not looking sufficiently at reinforcing the structures and teams in the administration. For the EU, this is an issue in every country, but especially in Albania. The EU is in Albania to build a country that becomes a member of the EU, and the Delegation has no appetite to build alternative systems where there is no ownership.

When there is good capacity on the side of the Government, its investment is more influential, i.e. employment and VET. However, development partners observed that for Roma, they have invested for more than 15 years, but now that there is no project on Roma, one does not hear anything from the Government or other organisations. There is very high risk that achievements will be lost, and meanwhile, there is an expectation in Government that the UN should continue to undertake projects for the Roma. This is concerning and shows that even after 15 years, there is no sustainability in this area, and the capacities are getting lost.

Some specific examples provided by the Outcome Groups and interviewees of strengthened national and local capacity development, include the following.

OUTCOME 1

Output 1.1 (UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women) – To support the monitoring reports of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) on children deprived of liberty and on discrimination and children's access to justice, UNICEF mobilized international expertise, its own staff expertise, civil society expertise and also the NHRIs staff to develop a solid methodology for monitoring of children's cases. This developed the capacities of the People's Advocate staff, which was able to repeat a similar monitoring exercise on the conditions and treatment of children deprived of liberty. UN Women in cooperation with its civil society partners has supported the capacities of the Ombuds' office to prepare and present monitoring reports on the implementation of CEDAW and Istanbul Convention as well as reporting under the UPR. Similarly, UN Women's expertise was provided to build the capacities of NHRI's on human rights indicators and the use and standardisation of gender-sensitive data and indicators for their monitoring and reporting functions.

UN Women supported the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs submitted a mid-term report on implementation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations. With UNFPA and UN Women support the ministry subsequently established an online monitoring platform for UPR and the CEDAW Action Plan, ensuring the reporting and monitoring of international human rights obligations by line ministries and human rights institutions in the country.

UNICEF has provided technical assistance through a national consultant and through its own staff to the Parliament of Albania. In discussions of legislative agenda or in public hearings with various officials (particularly for holding members of the executive to account) UNICEF has provided them with various briefs of international standards on any given child rights area, of the latest international developments and best practices, of the situation of children on the ground based on various civil society and international partners reports, etc. These have equipped the members of parliament with the knowledge, the awareness and the capacity to demand responsiveness for child rights or provide meaningful contributions to the public discussions and decisions affecting children.

UNFPA has contributed to the capacity building of CSO's to monitor SRHR related issues including the capacities of service providers in the health sector especially relating to SRHR with focus on the LGBTI community, key population like men having sex with men, injectable drug users, sex workers, as well as men and women in prison settings. It has also supported capacity building for shadow reporting to UN Treaty bodies (CEDAW, UPR).

Output 1.4 (UNICEF and UNDP) - UNICEF has supported the capacities of the Ministry of Justice of Albania in their role as designers of the normative framework on criminal justice for children, as well as on children's equitable access to justice. To this end, representatives of the Ministry and their subordinate entities, such as the Probation Service have been exposed to international exchange opportunities on various aspects of restorative justice, architecture of justice for children institutions and legislation, implementation challenges of countries going through similar development steps. Upon entry into force of the Criminal Justice for Children Code, UNICEF and other development partners trained Police Academy lecturers and probation officers. UNICEF has also invested in building the capacities of the local level professionals of various disciplines handling cases of children in conflict or contact with the law.

Output 1.5 (UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women) – UNICEF and UNFPA have supported the capacities of education and health personnel in mainstreaming gender equality and non-discrimination elements into the school curricula and in the training programmes of health personnel, particularly of the nurses tasked with visiting children and their families at home. UNFPA has supported training of primary health care providers in mainstreaming gender equality and non-discrimination elements with focus on LGBTI community, as well teacher training with focus comprehensive sexuality education.

Capacity development has been the focus of UN Women interventions throughout the gender mainstreaming process, mentoring and training staff from MoFE, line ministries, CSOs and Members of Parliament for understanding and applying the process in budgets, and institutionalizing and improving relevant legal and operational frameworks related to GRB. In this regard, 150 officials from the Finance and Budget Departments at the central level, 200 at the local level, and twelve gender-equality employees from all the line ministries have been systematically trained and mentored in the new methodology of budgeting and the best ways to successfully integrate GRB into the MTBP through gender-specific goals, objectives, targets and outputs. Some 75 budgetary experts from institutions other than line ministries (anti-discrimination commissioner, ombudsman, high court of audit) have been trained on how to monitor GRB. Meanwhile, some 20 Albanian CSOs have developed capacities to serve as gender budget watchdogs.

MPs are also playing an increased role in demanding accountability on GRB, with thirteen MPs and the Parliamentary sub-commission on Gender Equality and the Prevention of Violence against Women informed on GRB in the MTBP, and have used GE and GRB analysis in the Parliamentary Commission hearings and budget discussions, thanks to UN Women support for training and a study visit to the Austrian Parliament. Following the visit, the sub-committee called a hearing in November 2019 to demand accountability of MoFE and line ministries on application of GRB in the 2020 budget and proposed to MoFE concrete amendments to the Organic Budget Law (2016) to enhance gender key performance indicators in the budget preparation format. Such initiatives enhance transparency, accountability and participation by legislators in determining the spending priorities in government policies. UN Women has continued to support the implementation of the European Charter for Equality of women and men in local life and provided technical expertise to five municipalities (Durrës, Elbasan, Korça, Shkodra and Tirana) for the preparation of local gender action plans, which have been approved by the Municipality Councils.

Output 1.6 (IOM) - Capacity building to government institutions was mainstreamed across projects, both in terms of capacity building to individuals (training of officials) and structural capacities.

OUTCOME 2

Output 2.2 - The capacity development of local and central government capacities was achieved through a considerable number of teachers at all levels of education, who were trained to improve their classroom practices.

Output 2.3 (UNDP, UNW) UN Women - The provision of tailored and customized capacity building support responding to the real needs and priorities of partners ensured that knowledge transfer and the quality of outputs is high. The main programme instruments ensure knowledge transfer, ownership and embeddedness of social service modes, standard and procedures by national authorities, LGUs and service providers (CSOs).

The strengthening of organizations (for social services provision, adapting and monitoring policies, providing financial support), the introduction and improvement of coordination mechanisms between institutions at central and local level, and the development of capacities of individuals (service providers, policy makers, beneficiaries of social services, etc.), together with strengthened governance, participatory policy, monitoring capacities, and willingness to innovate and adapt the policy, are expected to have effects beyond the project's duration.

Further to the approval of the Law 'On Social Enterprises', best practices were explored regarding the legal and financial mechanisms required for its implementation. In this regard, UN Women supported an exchange visit to Zagreb by an Albanian delegation to explore Croatia's support mechanisms to social enterprise start-ups, including approaches to social and economic re-integration of vulnerable categories of women and men, as well as EU funding modality opportunities. At the local level, the municipal governments of Elbasan, Korca, Kukes, Tirana, Korca, Shkodra, were trained in the concept of social enterprises as an effective mechanism to address vulnerability and promote social re-integration, with 2,000 people and civil society activists reached through dedicated public campaigns. Nine municipalities, were also supported during the budget preparation process to raise awareness and ensure that municipal plans and budgets respond to gender equality and women's empowerment issues. Some 60 trainings and awareness meetings were conducted in these municipalities, reaching 500 women who were also engaged in the municipal participatory budgeting processes facilitated by UN Women. A total of 2,500 women citizens (45% of participants) engaged in the public budget consultations, including those from the most vulnerable groups.

Output 2.4 – The system strengthening pillar of child protection work significantly contributed to developing the capacities of child protection workers, social welfare workers, police officers, digital forensics professionals, non-governmental organisations and human rights institutions in addressing different aspects of child protection needs of children. Private companies have also been targeted with the aim of strengthening their capacities in providing safe digital environments to children.

Output 2.5 (UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA) – Several interventions brought some tangible results, by capacitating governmental authorities at central level, particularly oversight bodies in law enforcement and accountability on GB/DV as well as following up the recommendations made by international treaties (UPR, CEDAW, GREVIO, Istanbul Convention, etc.). The development of a comprehensive support programme for municipalities led to operationalize at local level the legal framework on GB/DV, in particular by implementing models and mechanisms such as CRMs for addressing GBV, enhancing work complementarity and interaction between CRM and Child Protection Units (CPUs) system to address domestic violence, providing funds and incentives for economic empowerment of women, enhancing accountability, and improving service delivery for women. Institutional and professional capacities were strengthened in disaggregated data collection and analysis aligned with EU accession priorities on GE/GBV, to inform evidence-based policy and monitor compliance with international standards. CSOs' strengthened capacities contributed in awareness raising and advocacy for GBV, in monitoring and holding governmental authorities accountable on their performance, and also in providing specialized services particularly for survivors of GBV that are not provided by governmental authorities at central and local level.

The evaluation of the first phase of the UN Women Regional EAW programme progress toward political empowerment among women's organizations, especially smaller and grassroots organizations, and among women beneficiaries. The Programme created resources and opportunities for women's organizations to strengthen their EAW advocacy through training, knowledge sharing and engagement with government officials. As a result, their agency or ability to advocate for EAW in reform processes at different levels has increased and they have positioned themselves as point of reference on EAW in their communities, nationally and regionally. The Programme also strengthened their capacities to report to international bodies, especially among small NGOs. UN Women established the Monitoring Network Against Gender-Based Violence, a platform of 48 organizations that focused especially on advocacy and lobbying efforts. Through collaboration with civil society organizations the programme also increased capacities of local referral mechanism representatives to better tackle cases of violence reported and effectively be informed of their new duties and responsibilities stemming from changes in the legal framework.

OUTCOME 3

In this area too, UN agencies consider that national capacity development was adequate and aligned with the country requirements and needs. For instance, UNESCO activities greatly contributed to the enhancement of capacities national government, local communities, NGOs and CSOs sector partners. In the case of ILO, strengthening the social dialogue institutions and platforms is one of the main objectives at country and regional levels. Bearing the tripartite principle of the ILO, its interventions have targeted in a tripartite manner the relevant government institutions and social partners (the workers' and employers' organizations). The EU accession approach is nation wide.

Through MoARD and UN Women, intensive training and outreach campaigns have been conducted in nine regions of Albania (Devoll, Durres, Korca, Maliq, Pogradec, Puka, Shkodra, Tirana and Vau i Dejes), with 150 extension specialists from Agriculture Information Centres capacitated to reach out to rural women and offer gender-oriented services. Meanwhile, 700 women farmers have been equipped with practical knowledge and know-how on (i) accessing the market, credit and subsidy schemes, (ii) business management, and (iii) growth and moving up the value chain. In addition, more than 500 rural women and 100 relevant stakeholders have been actively engaged in information sessions organized by UN Women to raise awareness of Albanian rural women's unrecognized contribution to agriculture and rural economy and to promote their role.

Government capacity development at all the levels (policy and legislation, institutional as well as individual) has been the main thread of UNDP's support to the employment and skills sector through dedicated outputs – benefiting also from a long-term support from a donor that has been investing heavily in the sector (Switzerland).

OUTCOME 4

Capacity development has focused on exchanges and hands on training, promotion of a triangular knowledge sharing, and involvement of academia in environmental and climate data collection, processing and distribution tested through 3 MOU with Polytechnical, Agriculture and Gjirokastra Universities. The decentralization and transfer of natural resource management competencies at local level has increased the need for capacity building and knowledge transfer. Due to the lack of human and financial resources, the process is, however, facing significant challenges.

E. NORMATIVE: HAVE WE LEFT NO ONE BEHIND?

The normative criterion for this evaluation aims at analyzing the PoCSD achievements in the area of gender and human rights. It aims at understanding if the PoCSD properly mainstreamed gender equality and women's empowerment. It also tried to examine if the PoCSD properly addressed human-rights issues and the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), and how have those who most need assistance have benefitted from the PoCSD (including vulnerable groups, e.g., marginalized women and children, persons with disabilities, minority groups, Roma community, older persons, refugees / asylum seekers, migrants, low income families, LGBTI community, etc.).

Programming principles

The PoCSD was prepared with the 2010 UNDAF Guidelines, which refer to five inter-related programming principles, which were to be used in the UNDAF design and implementation: Human Rights-Based Approach, Gender Equality, Environmental Sustainability, Capacity Development and Results-Based Management.⁴² The implementation was also guided by the 2017 Guidelines, with similar principles. It was not possible to look in detail at all the principles, within the timeframe of this evaluation, and priority was given to the Human Rights-Based Approach and Gender Equality.

Indeed, it is worth noting that the more recent 2017 UNDAF Guidelines highlighted the importance of programming principles, especially integrating *Human Rights, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment* in the UNDAFs as a central programming principle, responding to the overarching principle of *Leaving No One Behind* to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This principle also supports a central objective of the 2030 Agenda to "realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls." Further, the 2017 UNDAF Guidance emphasized the role of disaggregated data collection and analysis in support of UNDAF implementation and monitoring. Hence, it is important that UNDAF evaluations integrate a gender and human rights lens to assess the extent to which UNDAFs contribute to *leaving no one behind*. Other principles in the 2017 Guidance are *Sustainability and Resilience*, as well as *Accountability*.⁴³

The importance given to these programming principles also explain why this evaluation tried to reflect the views of various stakeholders, as well as possible, including non-governmental actors representing vulnerable and marginalized groups. Specific e-meetings took place with non-governmental actors. Furthermore, the approach and methodology for this evaluation has referred to the 2014 UNEG Guidelines for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation in order to make this evaluation as human rights and gender responsive as possible.⁴⁴ The recently issued UNEG *Meta-synthesis of UNDAF Evaluations with a Gender Lens* was also useful to inform this evaluation process.⁴⁵

To support the achievement of outcomes, the PoCSD document describes the general programme strategies expected to be employed, included "Ensure gender equality" and "Promote fundamental human rights". Each outcome has also specific strategies, partners, and vulnerable groups expected to benefit from programme results. These are described below.

42. For details on the five programming principles and other key cross-cutting issues, refer to How to Prepare an UNDAF: Part (II) Technical Guidance for UN Country Teams, Chapter II, January 2010. For guidance on their practical application, see the Guidance Note: Application of the Programming Principles to the UNDAF, January 2010.

43. See: UNDAF Guidance, UNDG, 2017 -- <https://undg.org/document/2017-UNDAF-guidance/> and UNDAF Companion Guidances -- <https://undg.org/programme/undaf-companion-guidances/>

44. Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, UNEG Guide, 2014 -- <http://uneval.org/document/detail/1616>

45. UNEG *Meta-synthesis of UNDAF Evaluations with a Gender Lens*, UNEG, December 2019.

Mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment

Finding 16: The general PoCSD programme strategies “Ensure gender equality” and “Promote fundamental human rights” have been given due attention during the implementation. As shown by the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard, gender is well mainstreamed in the PoCSD and most programmatic areas. The PoCSD has put in place the Gender Marker system that has proven to be a very useful tool to ensure gender is mainstreamed in the PoCSD programmatic work. The Gender Thematic Results Group has been effective to mainstream Albania's gender equality commitments into the PoCSD implementation, review, monitoring and evaluation. It has been particularly active in supporting a joint approach/collaboration, not only in the area of implementation of international normative standards/commitments, but also in the area of public advocacy campaigns. The Group has, however, been less involved in supporting gender mainstreaming across all Joint Programmes and agency programmes. There are some concerns that gender still needs to be better mainstreamed in development areas that are not necessarily linked with social inclusion priorities.

Ensuring gender equality: the UNDAF document indicates that the goal of gender equality and the practice of gender mainstreaming focus on how females and males experience problems in society differently, and how they relate to the societal forces that shape power relationships. It aims to identify the societal behaviors and structures that sustain gender inequality and make changes that are institutional and systemic. Albania is a signatory to several important and binding international documents, which guarantee the equality of men and women and prohibit gender-based discrimination. Gender equality is included in the NSDI II but it has only been mainstreamed thereof to the extent it has been reflected in the sector strategies.⁴⁶ Despite the progress that has been made to establish a legal and policy framework for the advancement of women's rights and gender equality, inequalities are pervasive. Traditional patriarchal attitudes are still prominent, gender inequalities are present in all spheres of social and economic life, and violence against women is still widespread. In 2013, Albania ranked 44th out of 149 countries in the Gender Inequality Index. To accelerate implementation, the UN planned to work with the GoA to establish a centralised national entity for the advancement of women with a clearly defined mandate, responsibilities, and resources. The UN also planned to support the mainstreaming of gender-sensitive analysis, indicators, and monitoring instruments in the NSDI II and in legislation, policies, and programmes.

The UNDAF document also stipulates that the Gender Theme Group works to mainstream Albania's gender equality commitments into the implementation, review, monitoring and evaluation of the PoCSD. Its members support the outcome groups, output working groups, and provide advice to the UNCT and JEC, as appropriate. Key responsibilities are to: Keep UNCT and UN agencies abreast of and share knowledge about Albania's gender equality commitments; Facilitate informed and substantive discussions among UN agencies on national gender equality commitments and implementation measures; Provide technical support on gender issues to UN agencies and ensure that gender equality commitments are fully reflected in PoCSD results and indicators and joint work plans; Strengthen UN staff capacities; Serve as the custodian of the UNCT Gender Scorecard and performance indicators; and Organise and promote UNCT coordinated and joint advocacy activities for gender equality. The group is composed of Gender Focal Points of all agencies signatories of the PoCSD. It is chaired by UN Women and prepares an annual work plan, approved by the UNCT. UN Agencies have put in place the Gender Marker system that has proven to be a very useful tool to ensure gender is mainstreamed in the PoCSD programmatic work. Therefore, all UN staff can benefit from increasing their capacities in making good use of this tool at every step of design, planning, implementation and evaluation and monitoring work as per the Outputs interventions.

46. An assessment of the gender equality elements in the NSDI carried out by UN Women in June 2017, find that only 6 of the 50 indicators are gender-sensitive (12 percent), in the majority of cases stemming from well engendered sectoral strategies, such as the National Employment and Skills Strategy. The Gender equality section of the NSDI adequately reflects the four main objectives of the National Gender Equality Strategy.

Based on information provided to by the Group, the consultants observe the following:

- The GTRG has been particularly active and effective in supporting a joint approach/collaboration in the area of implementation of international normative standards/commitments (e.g. Beijing PfA, ICPD, UPR, CEDAW, CSW and more).
- The GTRG has also been active in supporting a joint approach/collaboration in the area of public advocacy campaigns (e.g. 16 days, IWD, SDG week)
- The overall spirit of the group has been very collaborative. While the formal membership is rather large, a smaller group of agencies are more regularly involved in contributing to the work of the GTRG.
- Mainly due to staff time limitations of GTRG member entities, the group has been less involved in supporting gender mainstreaming across all JPs and agency programs, and at this stage it remains to be seen if it will be possible to step up engagement in the context of the next Cooperation Framework
- The level of interaction with, support to and from the UN RCO has been very satisfactory on various aspects (gender marker, UNCT SWAP Scorecard, public outreach campaigns etc.).
- The GTRG should play its role fully to support the key phases of the new UNSDCF. The Group noted that the joint conversation with the evaluation team is a good example of this role, which should also continue through the CCA and other key steps in the new joint planning exercise.
- It is hoped that moving forward the GTRG can serve more as a 'policy advice platform' for the UNCT on issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women in the context of SDG localization efforts in Albania.

The GTRG was also instrumental in the conduct of the UNCT Albania SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard⁴⁷, which was finalized at the end of 2019. The UNDG UNCT-SWAP Gender Performance Framework methodology is a global methodology, which has been standardized to make it possible to compare inter-agency progress on gender equality across countries and regions.⁴⁸

The scorecard exercise was an opportunity for the UNCT to internally assess progress on interagency work on gender. As the UN in Albania was one of the first One UN pilot countries, this scorecard exercise was another useful way to track progress, across all indicators on the UNCTs commitment to gender equality. The overall results demonstrate that Albania has met or achieved minimum requirements in 13 of the indicators.

The Scorecard report is organized around seven dimensions that address key gender equality and empowerment of women: planning; programming and monitoring & evaluation, which includes communications and advocacy; partnerships; leadership and organizational culture; gender architecture and capacities; resources; and results.

An action plan was drafted by the UN Gender Thematic Result Group for UNCT Albania to implement the Gender Scorecard in 2020, aiming to further improve gender mainstreaming practices and performance, to exceed minimum standards in all seven dimensions, as mentioned in the PoCSD 2019 Progress Report.

The PoCSD implementation was also informed by the Evaluation of Swedish Support to One UN for Gender Equality Work, 2012-2017, which focused on the previous Programme of Cooperation (2012-2016). One of the interesting findings of this evaluation was that the EU accession process and related policy and legal developments have created an enabling environment for UN's work on gender equality. The UN also has several comparative advantages, which have been capitalised on. One of the drivers that contributed to this was that the EU integration and accession process

47. UNCT SWAP Scorecard Assessment Results and Action Plan United Nations Country Team, Albania – 2019, at <https://www.un.org/al/publications/unct-swap-scorecard-assessment-results-and-action-plan-united-nations-country-team>

48. UNDG UNCT-SWAP Gender Scorecard methodology 2018. https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/UNCT-SWAP_Gender-report_Web.pdf

and related reforms have emphasized human rights and vulnerable groups, as one of the key areas for Albania to address.

The recent April 2020 Evaluation of UNICEF's Contribution to the Normative Policy Framework of the Social Care Services Reform 2013-2019 in Albania, observed that some positive gender transformative results, though unplanned, have materialized, including a stronger involvement of men in the SCS sphere, a topic often associated with a female role.

The Outcome Groups stressed that while the UNCT has a group of dedicated gender equality professionals that also participate in the working groups and play the role of internal advocate or in-house experts to ensure mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment, the entire programme staff is also supposed to have the knowledge and to take the training opportunities that each agency has available that enable the staff to mainstream gender equality and women's (and girls') empowerment in various aspects of their programme. This has resulted in a PoCSD, biannual plans, budgets and reporting that has mainstreamed these elements to a large extent. The new UNSDCF should be viewed as a new opportunity to build on the gains so far, and to further deepen gender mainstreaming into programming. In every planning and intervention phase, UN agencies take stalk of the international body of normative work inclusive of human rights, which have been ratified by Albania, and against which the country regularly reports. Nevertheless, some stakeholders expressed concerns that gender is not sufficiently mainstreamed across all areas of the PoCSD, in particular in sectors that are not traditionally engendered, e.g. in the case of the UN's support to local governments following the territorial reform. Positive examples were also brought up by stakeholders, such as the efforts to mainstream gender in the environment sector, or the initiative on women's role in agriculture.

In the questionnaire replies, the Outcome Groups also provided many examples of activities and results achieved in the implementation of the mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Human Rights-Based Approach and equity focus

Finding 17: UN Agencies made progress in ensuring the Government's ability to monitor progress on implementation of recommendations from international Human Rights Conventions, Treaties and regular National Reports, improve evidence for actions taken in line with observations and recommendations and establish tracking mechanisms, and generate stronger political engagement by Parliament and Human Rights institutions to strengthen public accountability mechanisms and increase outreach to vulnerable people. There are many examples of activities and results achieved in the implementation of the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and the equity focus. Over the years an intentional effort has been made to bring the most vulnerable at the centre of attention, in particular the Roma, and more recently People with Disabilities (PWD). Emerging issues with other vulnerable groups, such as returnees, migrants, and refugees call for additional attention and support, beyond what is already being provided.

Promoting fundamental human rights: the UNDAF document explains that the human rights-based approach (HRBA) to development aims to support better, more sustainable development outcomes by analysing and addressing inequalities and discriminatory practices. At country level, a HRBA proceeds from the commitments of the state on the basis of its ratified human rights conventions. It works to ensure that human rights standards and principles guide development cooperation with a focus on developing the capacities of 'duty-bearers', primarily the state, to meet their obligations and of 'rights-holders', especially vulnerable groups, to claim their rights. Albania is a state party to all main UN human rights treaties. And while the legislative and institutional framework for the observance of international human rights law is mostly in place, implementation is underfunded and inconsistent. Further efforts are needed to ensure full implementation of the legal

framework and international instruments. Across all priorities, the UN support planned to help develop and institutionalise new capacities to implement the recommendations of both UN human rights mechanisms as well as recommendations from independent state oversight bodies.

In terms of equity focus, the vulnerable groups are clearly identified in the PoCSD document for each of the four priority areas (pages 23, 28, 32 and 37). The evaluation team finds this very useful.

During the PoCSD, the UN Agencies made progress in ensuring the Government's ability to (i) monitor progress on implementation of recommendations from international Human Rights Conventions, Treaties and regular National Reports, (ii) improve evidence for actions taken in line with observations/recommendations and establish tracking mechanisms, and (iii) generate stronger political engagement by Parliament and Human Rights institutions to strengthen public accountability mechanisms and increase outreach to vulnerable people. The Strategic Summary of Coordination Reports (2017, 2018 and 2019) reported on all this work.

Highlights of progress for 2019 include advancing human rights monitoring and reporting. In close cooperation with OHCHR Geneva, the UNCT submitted the compilation report for the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council, as Albania was preparing its review in the third UPR cycle in May 2019. The UNCT also reported to the 97th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). Joint support was also provided to the People's Advocate in strengthening capacities for proper monitoring of the human rights agenda in the country, and in preparing its strategic institutional framework.

The UNCT also supported in 2019 the fulfillment of reporting and monitoring obligations of government and national Human Rights institutions with regards to human rights, including child rights, gender equality and ending violence against women. The Coalition of CSOs on Women Peace and Security developed a joint National Action Plan to implement the UN1325 Resolution. The Monitoring Network Against Gender Based Violence prepared a shadow report to the UPR Pre-Session. Technical expertise was provided to the People's Advocate Strategic Plan 2018-2022. The UNCT submitted the reporting on the Convention for the Rights of People with Disabilities and the CEDAW Committee; UNCT provided a brief submission to provide information supplementing the information received from Albania in June 2019 under the procedure on follow-up to concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee. The UNCT also delivered a joint statement read during the Consideration of UPR outcome for Albania during the 42nd HRC plenary session on September 2019. The joint statement highlighted efforts needed with regards to women's rights, gender equality and gender-responsive budgeting and the National Strategy for Gender Equality (2016-2020).

In the questionnaire replies, the Outcome Groups also provided many examples of activities and results achieved in the implementation of the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and the equity focus.

While the UN is a very strong ally of development actors in advancing the human rights agenda, development partners noted that over the years an intentional effort has been made to bring the most vulnerable at the centre of attention, in particular the Roma, and more recently People with Disabilities (PwD). Good progress has been made on the regulatory framework, the integration into the policies and strategies of the government, and implementation of programmes. A number of international mechanisms have been used for reporting in annual shadow reports, and the People's Advocate has also been active, together with civil society actors. Nevertheless, in the area of Social Inclusion, other vulnerable groups have not benefitted from the same attention, such as returnees, migrants, refugees, etc. These development partners call for a better balance of direct support versus building a strategic framework to uplift all the left behind, and achieve a better balance with very targeted interventions, and UN Agencies working better with each other.

F. LOOKING FORWARD

This criterion aims at analyzing the UN's comparative advantages in the country, and how the new UNSDCF should position the UN more strategically vis-à-vis the EU and other development partners in the national development process. It also aims at pointing to any intervention areas that actors would like to pursue more in the future, and what could be added, dropped or changed.

Comparative advantage

Finding 18: The UN comparative advantage is well recognized by UN Agencies, Government counterparts, NGOs and CSOs, and development partners. It includes a close and trusting relationship with the Government due to the long-term engagement in the country; as well as a breadth of know-how and technical expertise, and ability to employ different support modalities. The UN has demonstrated a strong programming, implementation and management capacity, along with the capability to pool resources, and ensure coordination and complementarity. The SDGs, gender and women's empowerment, human rights are all strong assets for the UN, which is a very strong ally in advancing these agendas.

The UN development system's assets and comparative advantage, highlighted by the Outcome Groups, interviewees and documents, include the following:

- The UN benefits from a long-term engagement in Albania, and from being a trusted partner able to mobilise fast and exercise an agile approach in responding to development needs and government priorities, linking short term needs with long term sustainable development.
- The required knowledge - the UN provides a breadth of know-how needed to help the country address its multidimensional socio-economic aspects. It can connect the Government to expertise, in house and beyond. The provision of national, regional and international technical expertise is available for the work on legal amendments, strategies, action plans, major reports (such as the CEDAW shadow report), guidelines and capacity building (for instance on GBV/DV data collection and gender statistics), etc. UN's expertise has been instrumental in promoting and applying international standards and principles in legal reviews and national strategies.
- The UN's convening and supporting role to the relevant national and local governmental entities in providing guidance, technical expertise and needed support to enhance capacities of duty holders in adequately preventing and responding to the GB/DV and provide accessible specialized support to GB/DV victims.
- UN's presence in Albania has contributed to building trust and partnerships with governmental authorities and its work has capitalized on past results in a long-term and consistent way. The results achieved so far particularly in addressing gender-based violence among other areas is an excellent fundament for future work in this area. UN's convening role and strategic focus on building partnerships and networking with a broad range of stakeholders (central and local government agencies, public oversight bodies, and CSOs, donors) helps donor coordination, avoid overlapping, and maximizes synergies and results. Strong partnerships facilitates a greater reach and impact. Beyond its own expertise and resources, the UN can use its significant reach to help mobilize the vast network of partnerships required for a whole of society engagement. The UN has extensive connections with civil society organizations, which play an indispensable role in reaching out to vulnerable people, in getting to remote places.
- A wide and flexible range of support modalities - support to the government can be tailored to the capacity and needs in the country. Support to the government can include: coordination of international engagement; data and analytics, including comprehensive multi-dimensional and gender-responsive analysis and forecasting; sector specific and cross-sector policy advice, technical assistance on design and delivery of context specific solutions; facilitation of partnerships and dialogue, and access to expertise; coalition building, notably on financing; and direct project implementation and delivery as required. UN's flexibility in programming and implementation ensures responsiveness to new developments and emerging needs and

priorities. For instance, TAR was an opportunity to expand the CRM mechanisms in the newly defined municipalities in the whole country.

- UN's advocacy at different levels has been a decisive factor in the progress made towards GBV/DV and challenging gender stereotypes.
- UN has demonstrated strong programming, implementation and management capacity and measures along with the capability to pool resources, ensure coordination and complementarity and communicate with one voice.
- With its integrated, coordinated support as One UN development system, and through the strengthened RC system, the UN connects the analysis and responses across sectors, and builds continuity between current programmes and longer-term support.
- The UN is a trusted impartial and neutral partner and 'honest broker' for the government and donor community. Its normative approach triggers the integration of international norms and standards in the design and implementation of programmes, ensuring a focus on the needs of the most vulnerable people, the protection of their rights, and strengthening of their capacity to access services and have their rights fulfilled.
- A transparent operational system supports fair and impartial business processes.

In terms of areas of work where the UN has a comparative advantage, many interlocutors said that aid effectiveness, the SDGs, gender and women's empowerment, human rights are all strong assets for the UN, which is a very strong ally in advancing these agendas. Development partners and national stakeholders acknowledge that normative work is definitely a UN asset, with strong experience and competence, and experts who are very specialized in the thematic areas they cover. UN Agencies have also a long history of cooperation with authorities on these issues. Nonetheless, normative work can become a burden on the ministries and institutions involved. The UN is also a neutral voice in this normative work and can speak fairly freely about sensitive subjects without being criticized for it.

Development partners recognize also that some specific agencies have a strong reputation/mandate, for instance WHO. With the Covid 19 crisis, this agency was asked to play a very strong role of strategic support to the Ministry of Health. It did not, however, play that role fully, and these partners would have thought that WHO would have guided the process more effectively.

Development partners also point out that the PoCSD is too wide, and should be more focused on Albania needs, which is no longer a developing country, but rather one preparing for EU accession. There needs to be a better division of labour between the international organisations that are present – development banks, bilateral partners (mainly European), and the UN system. The comparative advantage of the UN is taking care of the poorest, social systems, advocacy, giving voice to the most vulnerable. Meanwhile, there is a need to work in this area because there is lack of attention to it – the social dimension is neglected in Albania, which does not focus on the poorest. Development banks and development partners are less keen to work in this area and are paying more attention to supporting standards for EU admission.

Strategic positioning

Finding 19: UN Agencies regret a kind of a donor-contractor approach with the EU, and a lack of a strategic partnership with the EU. There is a perception of a need to establish such a partnership, and that both entities continue to not only coordinate their work but also collaborate, indicating potential areas of collaboration, and positioning the UN in a more "preferential" dealing status by the EU. On the other hand, the EU criticizes the UN for stepping in some areas for opportunistic reasons (for instance with the earthquake and the Covid 19 Pandemic). At the same time, many national stakeholders praise the UN for its capacity to act quickly and flexibly, when circumstances change. Development partners also recognize that the UN is strategically positioned, for instance in the areas of sustainable development and human rights, and works with key institutions. The Covid 19 pandemic showed the fragility of the more vulnerable, and the UN is called to identify a new way of looking at vulnerabilities and the social inclusion agenda.

There is consensus among the Outcome Groups for the need to establish a strategic partnership with the EU, instead of a donor-contractor type of approach. It is important that the UN and the EU (but also other development partners) continue to not only coordinate but also collaborate, reinforcing each-other's messages and relying on each-other's resources. Some form of strategic partnership document might be developed between the two entities, prior to the new PoCSD, indicating potential areas of collaboration and positioning the UN in a more "preferential" dealing status by the EU. This would avoid any potential risk of equalizing the UN with NGOs or private entities, and would facilitate channeling more EU resources, and in a less burdensome or competitive fashion towards the UN agencies. Even the EU recognize that they are using the UN almost as the service provider/vehicle for implementation, rather than a real development partner.

This partnership would ensure alignment and full synergies, between the 2030 Agenda and the EU accession process. The UN's scope of work will have to be revisited now that the country gets closer to the EU. The support to negotiations and enacting EU acquis legislation could be the milestones of UN support. Most importantly, connecting these processes with the implementation and results, is also something that UN is well equipped to do with its national capacities and as the experience.

The Albanian integration processes would be strengthened by a strong interinstitutional coordination and collaboration, which would contribute to the effective use of energies, resources and inputs to the benefit of the country for expediting the EU integration processes and the achievement of the SDGs. International synergies and the absence of competition would best benefit Albania, its institutions and its civil society.

The UNSDCF should be framed considering EU accession priorities, and align these to the SDGs, as well as harmonize them with development partners priorities. Cooperation between the UN and EU is key to achieving the national priorities and accession aspirations of countries and jurisdictions in the Western Balkans. Continued cooperation and consultation with the EU should be an integral part of the programme delivery.

To strengthen the UN's strategic positioning, some Outcome Group member indicated that the UNSDCF should ensure strategic partnership with the Government that would enhance the country's institutions and services, and avoid weakening them, as it happens sometimes by taking competences away from the government, and implementing activities on its behalf. Similarly, some development partners observed that in the area of strategic and policy work, the EU Delegation has been very cautious in saying that the Government should define its own strategies and policies, and that international organizations should only provide support at a later stage to review/adjust these strategies and policies. Meanwhile, a number of UN agencies do not hesitate to step in, for instance writing documents on behalf of the Government, and occupying the ground for opportunistic reasons.

Development partners also recognize that the UN is strategically positioned and works with key institutions. For instance, in the areas of sustainable development and human rights, the UN has managed to position itself in a very political and strategic way, following the 2030 agenda. They make a very good contribution on donor aid effectiveness and coordination – bringing together the donor community and helping dialogue with the Government. In some respects, the UN Agencies are very supportive and keep the EU in a central position, because the EU accession is the strategic direction of the country. At the same time, when looking at the actions of specific agencies, there is a strong dimension of opportunism perceived by these partners, as agencies are looking to occupy the space, whenever there is an opportunity for action and financing, as well as public profile. This happened recently with the earthquake and the Covid 19 Pandemic. At the same time, many national stakeholders interviewed by the evaluation team praised the UN for its capacity to act quickly and flexibly, when circumstances change.

Both UN agencies and development partners consider that although Albania is progressing economically and politically, the human rights gains are still fragile and that some accompaniment of the GoA by a long and trusted partner like the UN is still needed in order to consolidate the gains achieved so far, and to prevent any lapse.

The UN comparative advantage could be reinforced by a neutral and balanced cooperation among the agencies, with full respect of their mandates and technical competencies. The administrative capacities of agencies (especially NRAs), should not be in the future the most important factor for their participation in Joint UN programmes and activities. Their enhanced value added could be the integrated technical and development know-how ensured by the individual profiles and expertise brought by the individual UNCT member agencies.

In the Post-Covid 19 period, to boost the effectiveness of UN joint interventions, some partners stressed that it would be important to be on the side of the institutions, and see to what extent some of the policies need to be readapted and reviewed, including on governance and local governance. It will be important that as key partners of many institutions in the country, the UN Agencies and development partners adapt to the challenges caused by the Covid19 pandemic and focus on key priorities. They will need to identify needs in a proper way, and to listen to the right interlocutors, which raises the issue of policy dialogue and inclusion of stakeholders, especially at local level. The pandemic showed the fragility of the more vulnerable, and the UN will need to identify a new way of looking at vulnerabilities and the social inclusion agenda. The UN is also called to balance the analytical work – assessments over the years – with the need to look at the impact of development work.

Priorities for the next UNSDCF

Finding 20: The current scope of PoCSD interventions appears to remain relevant for the country's development needs and well-aligned with the main national development pillars, as defined in the country's strategic framework going forward. The PoCSD is quite broad and encompasses virtually every aspect of development included in the UN agencies' mandates. The current architecture of the PoCSD may need to be changed subject to consultations with GoA and other partners based on the perceived prioritisation of interventions, including possible shifts in resource allocation due to the recent earthquake and Covid 19 crises. Outcome Groups have some suggestions with respect to their priorities for the next UNSDCF in the different areas.

The PoCSD is very broad and encompasses virtually all areas of development pertinent to the UN agencies' mandates. As noted earlier in the report, the actual interventions of the PoCSD are defined through the JWPs. However, some stakeholders outside UN pointed out that there is a trade-off between a broad PoCSD, as a framework for cooperation; and a more focused programme which would provide more targeted support in key areas of development where UN has a clear mandate and added value. It is outside the scope of this evaluation to determine the exact scope of the future UNSDCF, but this should be subject to partner consultations. A more focused PoCSD may serve as an effective vehicle to advocate for more donor resources in specific development areas. In contrast, a broader PoCSD may enable UN agencies to adapt more easily to changing development needs and flow of donor resources. In the wake of the earthquake and pandemic emergencies in late 2019 and throughout 2020, some programmatic uncertainties will arise and the PoCSD may need to shift its focus more strongly towards innovative solutions for development. For all the Outcome Groups and the interviewees, the current intervention areas of the PoCSD make sense and continue to respond to the needs of the country. Therefore, it should serve more or less as the framework for the next UNSDCF. The framework of previous interventions seems to be adequate, so no extension of the focus to other areas is foreseen. Outcome Groups provided examples of their priorities for the next UNSDCF.

OUTCOME 1

For Outcome Group 1, issues that could be strengthened in the future PoCSD include implementation of normative commitments in the area of gender equality, gender responsive governance including gender responsive planning and budgeting at local level and monitoring and oversight work, work with media, child marriage, blood feud, cyber security, support in areas of GoA negotiations with the EU, public budgeting for children and generally human rights.

UNODC would like to pursue interventions on the treatment of persons with drug use disorders and on corruption and organized crime, in particular via global programmes on firearms, smuggling of migrants, and container control.

Strategic interventions responding to the needs of vulnerable populations for unhindered, equitable and inclusive access to justice need to remain a priority area in the upcoming UN interventions. IOM suggest maintaining migration as a separate output and mainstreaming it in other outputs. UNHCR should be part of the Social Inclusion component of the new framework or mainstream asylum seekers and refugees in all the programme and outcomes. The management of mix migration flows now has become important and will continue as long as the crisis is not over in the countries of origin.

OUTCOME 2

For the Outcome 2 Group, priorities remain the same in the area of GBV. UN agencies (UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, IOM, ILO) efforts will aim to contribute to the overall goal of eliminating violence against women, girls and children in all its forms through supporting the adoption/reform and implementation of laws, by-laws, policies and strategies to respond to, and prevent violence against women/girls and children, including victims of trafficking, as well as harmful practices, such as child marriage.

Ending Violence Against Women will remain an important challenge for the Albanian society. In light of the situation created by the COVID-19 crisis, it is essential to broaden the focus of interventions in the area of EVAW, by including violence against women during crisis (environmental, humanitarian and otherwise). The impact of the current crisis will be felt in its aftermath too, therefore the next programming cycle could explore this issue further, as many PoCSD programmes already have during the first half of 2020⁴⁹. Additionally, while domestic violence constitutes the majority of VAWG cases, other forms of violence should be effectively studied and addressed in Albania, including sexual harassment stalking, sexual violence, violence in adolescent relationships and among youth more generally, violence against the elderly, psychological violence, etc. Finally, while prevention is the hardest to address and measure, focusing on prevention could be less costly than responding to violence. Therefore, more programming could focus on prevention and awareness raising to reach a wider set of the population. Ongoing work carried out by UN agencies to ensure an enabling environment, support to improve public and non-public service provision and support to civil society organizations should continue, as it has proven effective and efficient in tackling VAWG.

The Group would also like to support the government to strengthen the function and delivery operations (effectiveness/ efficiency) of the recently established set of state financing mechanisms for social inclusion and social care services. Support the development of social care models, notably to strengthen the take-up of service integration and the operation of a multi-service approach to social service delivery, and in the development of models and financing mechanisms for the sharing of social services between two or more LGUs. This would include supporting networking, knowledge sharing, and the capitalization of experiences and results achieved so far between local and central governments, through facilitating the feedback flow from local to central government and follow up mechanisms.

49. Virtually all UN agencies were quick to respond to the government and vulnerable groups needs in the wake of the crisis, including LNB, EVAW, S4D, as well as other initiatives in education, health, agriculture, etc.

Other activities would be to: develop relevant and timely analyses that inform local and national programming; support and participate in the dialogue between policy makers, implementation agencies, civil society organizations and groups of interest on social care services' needs and responses; emphasize to all actors the human rights norms and standards that must guide the needs' response if they are to be effective, fair and sustainable and respectful of public liberties; speak out against discrimination and stigmatization; advocate for the removal of policy barriers to reach the most vulnerable; identify and facilitate funding to civil society organizations especially those active in vulnerable or underserved communities; and connect local communities and cities for the design of integrated responses to the needs for social care services.

Overall, there has been major progress on the level of the legal framework on child protection in the country. Thus, the future priority focus should rather be on implementation and translating the legal framework into results for children in Albania. Some of the areas that we would like to pursue more in the future, and which are in continuation of already achieved investments include: Alternative care for children without parental care (complete full De-institutionalization) and for unaccompanied foreign children; Protection from online sexual abuse and exploitation and other online risks such as cyber-bullying; particular focus on the investigation and prosecution of online crimes against children; System building (strengthen system's responsiveness including for child protection in emergencies – through lesson learned from earthquake and COVID-19); Improve data collection, reporting and analysis on child protection to ensure reliable and systematic data. New areas to pursue include: Strengthening inter-sectoral work to address violence against children, and the systemic response of health and education sectors in particular; and preventing and addressing mental health issues of children, adolescents, and their parents. Other issues that could be explored and addressed more in the future PoCSD include gender responsive budgeting at local level, social economy and social enterprises.

An increased focus in education and skills building would also be needed. Education is a contribution to all other areas of development. Education and skills building is a key driver to achieve social equality and promoting the rights of all individuals and society. Investments in education are key to reduce poverty among generations and promote prosperity both of individual and of the country, in general.

Within education some subthemes to focus more could be: an Increased focus on second decade learning and skills for job and employability including VET; Early childhood development as an area cutting across education, health nutrition, gender equality, early development, known for the equalizer effects among vulnerable children; innovation and technology: how to make innovation work for better learning outcomes to have a skilled workforce, equipped with academic and transferrable skills competing in today's and future global markets.

A bigger focus on DRR across all areas of UN work comes as a lesson learned from the last emergency which caught Albania unprepared. In Albania, specific focus and DRR interventions are included in Outcome 4, where a specific output will be introduced to include earthquake recovery interventions.

OUTCOME 3

The areas that Outcome Group 3 would like to pursue more in the future are the following. First, the Group recommend a stronger focus on SDG achievement acceleration. Second, following the COVID-19 pandemic, more focus could be put on the enhancing (1) Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) in the workplace and (2) the digital skills in Albania, (3) ILO C190 mainstreaming. The ILO would like to continue to pursue on the ongoing interventions in the area of decent working conditions, social dialogue, social partners (EOs and WOs), the Amicable Labour Disputes Resolution system, etc. to best feed into the achievement of primarily SDG 8, as well as the EU Accession talks of Albania (Chapter 19).

In the area of gender, some areas could still be featured and strengthened, such as women economic empowerment, rural women, women' employment, self-employment, and social enterprises.

UN Women and FAO and ILO joint work will focus on development of gender equitable and sustainable rural development and poverty reduction strategies and value chains. This will include awareness raising and recognition of women's pivotal role in the rural economy and agriculture, with EU standards and the monitoring process of SDG indicators It will also support rural women to promote proactive policy instruments that address women's rights to natural and financial resources, employment creation, diversification of rural economies, and the provision of related extension services for women and women's employment and promotion of green and social enterprises.

UNDP would like to work on competitiveness and innovation, digitalization of the economy, upgrading of the VET system and local economic development, as well as the regional cooperation for youth exchanges, mobility and employment. The post-COVID recovery will have to be the main driver of support. FAO plans to focus on green economy and digitalization.

OUTCOME 4

The priorities for the next UNSDCF recommended by the Outcome Group 4 suggest first a further upscale of successful interventions and potential for strengthening transboundary initiatives, an increased focus on preparedness and response to disasters caused by natural and biological hazards, as well as ensuring the prioritization of environment and climate mainstreaming, and the strengthening implementation and monitoring capacities at central and local level.

The level and magnitude of exposure to disasters and their impact on the Albanian society (earthquake, floods, and COVID-19 pandemic) have increased the need for an enhanced scientific information base for improved preparedness and response, as well as investments to increase resilience at different levels – bringing at the forefront innovative financing mechanisms for protection of public goods that provide the foundations of economic development.

Lessons Learned

A. LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson 1: It is important that a strong commitment and meaningful engagement of government counterparts is nurtured and secured, already from the early stage of the UNSDCF, to set the right way for an effective biannual work planning and implementation.

Lesson 2: Consolidation of outputs and activities under very high-level outcomes may risk creating a disconnect between the goals and activities and may undermine the underlying logic of interventions. Ownership of national counterparts over the PoCSD outcomes may be strengthened when there are more clearly defined linkages between the output and outcome level objectives. This strict consolidation of outcomes may bring uncertainties and lack of transparency in implementation. For example, the responsibility for implementing outputs is not reflected in some kind of representation/ participation in the UNCT meetings, which makes the current mechanism less participatory than it could be and reduces the effective implementation of the PoCSD. Similarly, some Outcome Groups are made up from different Ministries, which have created an awkward situation of hierarchy among ministries, with one Ministry being the head of the outcome and main signatory of documents for another Ministry that is just as big and important.

Lesson 3: Partnership building and consultations with governmental authorities at central and local level and CSOs is an essential ingredient of success to ensure country ownership and commitment to achieve and sustain results. It is important that governmental authorities at central and local level are brought on board to make financial contributions for planned interventions through cost sharing modalities to ensure long-term commitment and sustainability.

Lesson 4: Joint programme resources channeled through the SDG Acceleration Fund, such as the SDC supported LNB programme and the Swedish supported EAW programme, and UN global funds – SDG Fund, such as UNCT projects on social protection service delivery and SDG financing, have provided a useful platform for the consolidation of a sound programme strategy in the respective areas. The SDG Acceleration Fund is an important mechanism to strengthen synergies, complementarities and joint programmes and programming.

Lesson 5: The UN mobilized considerable support for the SDG agenda in the country. The early focus on the localization and mapping of SDGs within the national strategic and financial framework helped understand and garner support at the highest political levels, leading to Albania's submission of the Voluntary National Report in 2018. The focus on identification, mainstreaming and capitalization of the SDG agenda for additional investment in national development helped maintain the momentum and interest of national counterparts. Maintaining the mapping and planning against SDGs and related prioritizing for the country context will further enhance the contribution of the next UNSDCF.

Lesson 6: UN agencies have different work and reporting modalities, and different business models. In a country that evolves in a very dynamic manner, in order to be relevant, the UN needs to reinvent itself and engage in problem solving and agile programming and delivery. Light coordination mechanisms with efficient, responsive and value added programmatic approaches are necessary.

Conclusions and Recommendations

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1: The evaluation concludes that the UNCT collectively prioritizes support and contributes to the country's development. The PoCSD outcomes are relevant in terms of internationally agreed goals and human rights commitments and in line with the national strategic framework as laid out in the NSDI II and sectoral strategies. The PoCSD has made good progress in aligning the Agenda 2030 goals with the national development policies, and in making the SDG framework relevant in the country through its mainstreaming and operationalization of a set of national indicators. The advancement of the SDG agenda was fostered by the strong, high-level partnership of the RCO and UNCT with the Prime Minister's Office and Parliament. To ensure the continued commitment, at sectoral level, of the executive and other institutions, the UN agencies need to continue pursuing an explicit SDG-related agenda to overcome technical difficulties.

Conclusion 2: The PoCSD is coherent with government policies and it has built-in flexibilities that allow for timely adjustments of the interventions to accommodate any changes in the course of national policies. Contributions of the PoCSD are also coherent with other international development partner policies, with consistent inter-linkages and complementarities identified with other partners, most frequently with the EU. The financing of PoCSD is heavily dependent on donor contributions, which makes donor coordination a key prerequisite.

Conclusion 3: The PoCSD provides a reference framework for the cooperation and coordination of work. UN agency internal cooperation is strongest at the programming phase, when interventions strategies are discussed, and information exchanged with a view to avoid duplication as well as communication overlaps with beneficiaries. The cooperation approach and modalities of programming and implementation have been tested by the UN family in Albania over more than a decade and much of the cooperation has now become inherent to the organisational culture. Cooperation is more intense in the framework of joint programmes funded by the SDG Acceleration Fund. Cross-fertilisation of approaches is more evident with joint programmes, although agencies tend to persist in employing a "division of labour" approach in terms of delivery of activities and responsibility for project components.

Conclusion 4: The PoCSD Results framework is highly consolidated at outcome level, which undermines the clarity of the intervention logic and theory of change. Typically, there are no direct links between results defined at outcome level and output level indicators, which may undermine the coherence of the results chain as well as accountability for implementation. In other cases, single outputs are directly linked with one entire national strategy and high level national institutions that are responsible for their implementation are not represented in the PoCSD management structures.

Conclusion 5: The interventions of the PoCSD are quite donor-driven, as core and regular resources finance less than 15% of its resource envelope. The viability of intervention strategies and prioritisation of actions within Outcomes is interdependent with the degree to which objectives converge with donor strategies in terms of content and time. The joint resource mobilisation strategy provides a

useful framework for the joint UNCT efforts in a contracting donor environment. Individual agency resource mobilisation efforts remain particularly intense, with frequent overlaps in terms of donors and scope, which may undermine the credibility of the One Voice message.

Conclusion 6: The UN Resident Coordinator has played an effective role in leveraging the leadership and diverse expertise of the UN family to improve the relevance and impact of the PoCSD. The RC office plays a central role in the fostering of strategic partnerships with Government, and advocacy for key principles and strategic priorities, including for the setting of national objectives and financing of Agenda 2030.

Conclusion 7: The PoCSD intervention logic is based on the combination of a mix of approaches ranging from assistance to design policies and legal frameworks, to building capacities and awareness of national stakeholders, and building systems and institutions. Although heavy emphasis on drafting legal and regulatory framework persists, the UN is gradually increasing focus on building national capacities for implementation, especially at the local level. In many instances, the government calls upon UN to deliver on their behalf in cases when it fails to provide adequate human and financial capacities to comply with their commitments.

Conclusion 8: Building national institutions and capacities should be at the heart of the next programme cycle, during the course of which Albania is expected to have started EU accession negotiations. Stakeholders highlight the need for reinforcing interventions at the local level, as well as continued focus on integrated regional approaches, in cooperation with other country offices, which can help put Albania on the map and create synergies or provide more effective and efficient solutions in areas with evident spill overs such as environment or economic growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Government of Albania and public counterparts should be engaged in co-creating and co-developing the next UNSDCF. Key representatives and technical staff should actively participate in the design teams/working groups. This will help to have a common understanding of issues to be addressed, and how to address them, from the beginning/design stage, which will be useful for the work plan developments and the implementation of the UNSDCF.

Recommendation 2: Clearer management arrangements should be established to ensure accountability for implementation at both output and outcome level, in particular in cases where stakeholders are not represented at outcome level. The responsibility for implementing outputs could be increased further. Some kind of representation/ participation in the UNCT meetings, even on a rotation basis, would make the future UNSDCF mechanism more participatory. Some Outcome Groups comprise different Ministries, which have created an awkward situation of hierarchy among ministries, with one Ministry being the head of the outcome and main signatory of documents for another Ministry that is just as big and important. This could be addressed by clarifying the accountability of each institution and by an enhanced strategic coordination, not only at sector/line ministry level, but also at the inter-ministerial level.

Recommendation 3: As a follow up to the resource mobilization strategy, the UNCT should enhance joint resource mobilization efforts and opportunities for collaboration. The large proportion of the non-core resources of the PoCSD highlights the importance of local resource mobilization for being less donor driven. The UNCT should tap new resource potentials, including from the private sector and international financial institutions, aside from efforts to increase government cost-sharing, which became a reality for the first time in 2019. Joint programme resources channeled through the SDG Acceleration Fund should continue to provide a useful platform for the consolidation of a sound programme strategy in the respective areas.

Recommendation 4: Governmental authorities at central and local level should be brought on board to make financial contributions for planned interventions through cost sharing modalities to ensure long-term commitment and sustainability. This is all the more needed that partnership building

and consultations with governmental authorities at central and local level and CSOs is an essential ingredient of success to ensure country ownership and commitment to achieve and sustain results.

Recommendation 5: Synergies between UN Agencies should be actively sought out over the course of the design and implementation of the next UNSDCF, alongside a careful consideration of a clear division of labour between the different agencies, to avoid inherent competition over the PoCSD (and donor) resources and scope of activities. The UNCT should also continue to be inclusive of Non-Resident Agencies and explore synergies. To avoid the appearance of competing and/or bundling of priorities to make intervention proposals more lucrative for potential donors, the UNCT could consider establishing an internal preliminary review process for the harmonization of resource mobilization initiatives, under the leadership of the RC.

Recommendation 6: There is a need to strengthen the strategic partnership between the UN and the EU, which would replace a donor-contractor approach. The UN, the EU and other development partners should not only coordinate their work but also strengthen their collaboration, reinforcing each-other's messages and relying on each-other's resources. Some form of strategic partnership document might be developed between the two entities, prior to the new PoCSD, indicating potential areas of collaboration and positioning the UN in a more "preferential" dealing status by the EU.

Recommendation 7: The UN is called to continue advancing the human rights agenda, supporting the improvement of the regulatory framework and the integration of human rights into the policies and strategies by the government, and accompanying the implementation of programmes and Treaty Bodies' recommendations. UN Agencies should continue to generate stronger political engagement by Parliament and Human Rights institutions to strengthen public accountability mechanisms and increase outreach to vulnerable people. The Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and the equity focus should continue to be strengthened, with an intentional effort to bring the most vulnerable at the centre of attention, in particular the Roma, People with Disabilities, returnees, migrants, and refugees.

Recommendation 8: The UNCT should continue to implement the recommendations of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard, to ensure that gender continues to be well mainstreamed in the PoCSD and most programmatic areas. UN Agencies can also use the Gender Marker system that has proven to be a very useful tool to ensure gender is mainstreamed in the UNSDCF programmatic work, and implement the recommendations issued from this system. All UN staff is encouraged to increase their capacities in making good use of these two tools at every step of design, planning, implementation, and monitoring, as per the Outputs interventions. The Gender Thematic Results Group should play a key role to support the key phases of the new UNSDCF, including through the CCA and other key steps in the new joint planning exercise. It should also continue to be active in supporting a joint approach and collaboration, not only in the area of implementation of international normative standards and commitments, but also in the area of public advocacy campaigns, and in supporting gender mainstreaming across all Joint Programmes and agency programmes. The GTRG can also serve more as a 'policy advice platform' for the UNCT on issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women in the context of SDG localization efforts in Albania.

Recommendation 9: While CSOs are increasingly partnering with the UN as service providers rather than legitimate representatives of rights holders, the next UNSDCF should step up its efforts in building real, strategic partnerships with CSOs. UN Agencies are called to intensify efforts to build and sustain the CSO sector, which is relatively weak in Albania, building on positive examples of how the PoCSD engages with CSOs, including on the support for shadow reports under the UPR and the strengthening of the CSO sector in the gender budgeting and LGBTI rights areas. The next UNSDCF should underscore the principles of transparency, partnership, and accountability, and the commitment to work together with – among other – civil society partners in a coordinated and coherent manner, as well as the private sector, with which current partnerships are encouraging.

Recommendation 10: In order to effectively respond to the Covid19 pandemic, the UN Agencies, with the support of development partners, will need to adapt to the challenges, and focus on

key priorities. The UN will need to identify needs in a proper way, and continue to listen to the right interlocutors – duty bearers, rights holders and other partners – by further intensifying policy dialogue and stakeholder inclusion, especially at local level. The pandemic showed the fragility of the more vulnerable, and the UN will need to identify a new way of looking at vulnerabilities and the social inclusion agenda.

Recommendation 11: The UNCT is called to ensure sustained support to guarantee that PoCSD advancements are solid and irreversible, and to make sure that the transition into nation- and society-wide programmes happens, even after UN's interventions stop, all of which requires a clear vision for sustainability and ownership by duty-bearers. The capacities that were built in the past (for example work with the Roma), should not be lost due to the lack of continuity of some projects, and the lack of ownership and buy-in from the Government. The Government should sustain capacity development of its institutions, NGOs and CSOs, at both local and central levels, in all areas of cooperation with the UN.

Recommendation 13: A more systematic and better structured integration of communication would be needed in all programme phases: design, planning, implementation, review and monitoring, as well as output/outcome annual workplans, and into partnership building and resource mobilization. This also requires a strengthened Communication for Development element throughout the programme areas. It is also important to dedicate well thought and planned resources.

Concluding remarks ON UN reform and coordinating UN assistance

On 1 January, 2019, the reform of the United Nations Development System went into effect worldwide, guided by resolution 72/279, dated May 2018, mandating the system to strengthen its capabilities and coordination systems to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁵⁰ The reform created a full-time UN Resident Coordinator, focused on coordination, advocacy and dialogue with partners, managed by the UN Secretariat in New York. Restructuring is just the first step, with the longer-term objective set on more efficient business operations and interoperability, continuously improving coordination, whole-of-UN accountability to government and partners, increased use of pooled funding mechanisms and increased attention to regional links for sustainable development, among other measures. The Albanian Government and its development partners have been continuously briefed in various fora with updates on the UN reform.

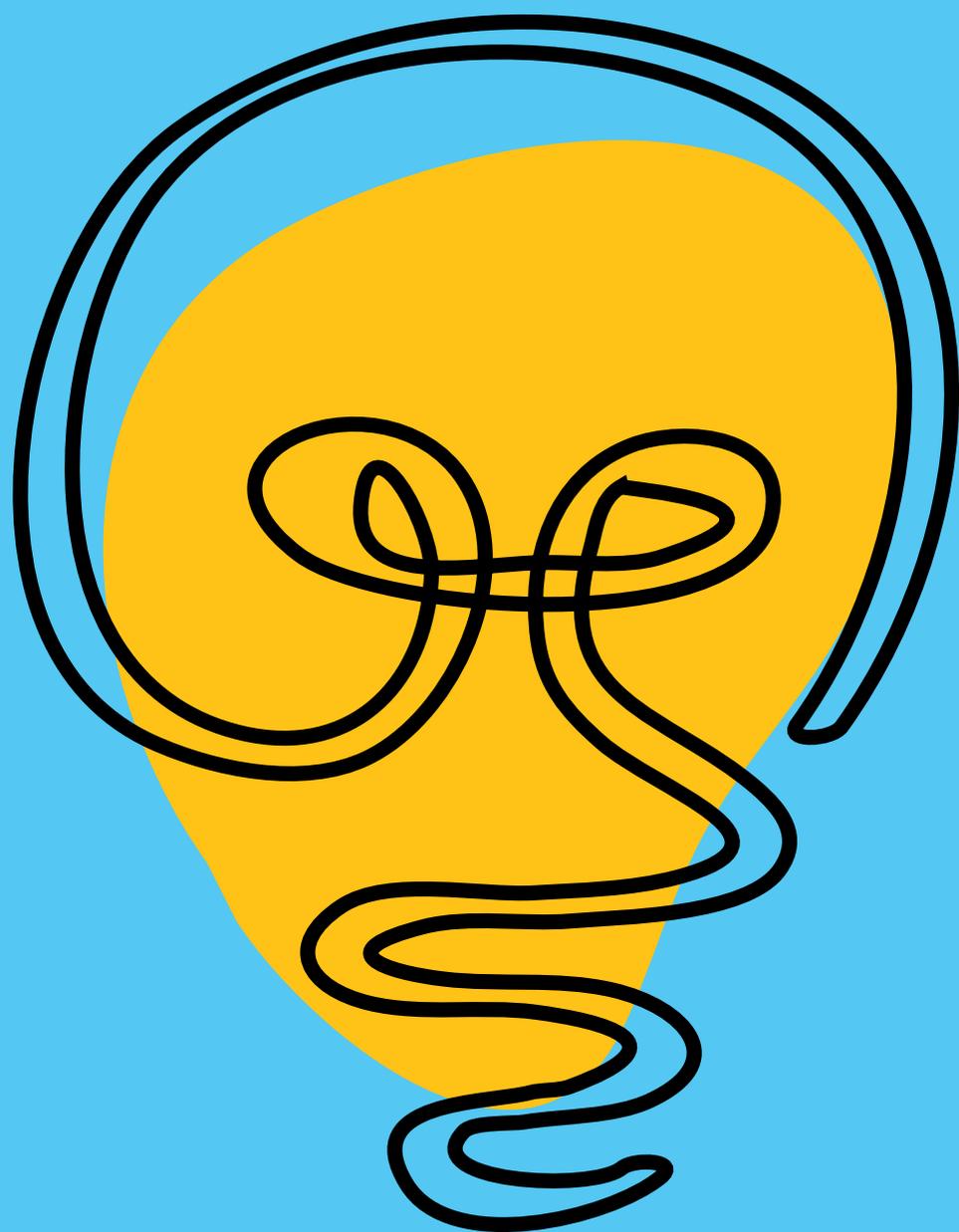
The UNCT used the donor coordination fora, the Donor Technical Secretariat, development and integration partners, as well bilateral engagement with the EU Delegation and EU member states, to articulate common positioning on the synergies established between the EU and the SDG agenda. The UNCT's annual retreats increased interaction with various partners on EU integration and the SDGs. In parallel, the UN continued an active engagement in the thematic and sector working groups, e.g., on agriculture, health, and social inclusion.

In the UN reform context, cooperation at the regional level is taking on an increased dimension. This is demonstrated through the participation of Resident Coordinators from the region in UNCT Albania's annual retreat, and the workshop on regional application for eligibility to access the long-term window of the UN Peacebuilding Fund, organised in Tirana in February 2020 and continued preparations further to the workshop.

Part of the UN reform also involves strengthening the capacity of the Resident Coordinator's Office, including through the recruitment of a Strategic Planner and Head of Office, a Results Monitoring and Reporting Officer, a Communications Officer, an international Economist and a Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation Officer. The last two posts are being deployed in 2020.

50. The resolution restructures the UN development system by creation of a full-time UN Resident Coordinator focused on coordination, advocacy and dialogue with partners, managed by the UN Secretariat in New York, while empowering UNDP with its own Resident Representative.

ANNEXES



Acronyms

CCA	Common Country Analysis
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DaO	Delivering as One
DDGG	Department for Development and Good Governance
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EVAW	Elimination of Violence against Women
GE	Gender Equality
GoA	Government of Albania
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HoA	Head of Agency
HR	Human Rights
JEC	Joint Executive Committee
JWP	Joint Work Plan
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MAPS	Mainstreaming, Acceleration, Policy Support
NSDI	National Strategy for Development and Integration
PoCSD	Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development
RBM	Results Based Management
RCO	Resident Coordinator Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USD	United States Dollar
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WB	World Bank

Annex 2

Terms of Reference for the PoCSD Evaluation

Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of the Government of Albania and United Nations Programme of Cooperation 2017-2021

Duty Station: Albania

Contract Type: Individual Contract for an Evaluation Team – One international consultant and one local consultant

Reporting to: Office of the Resident Coordinator / Consultative Group

Duration: 40 expert days/each consultant during the period January - February 2020

Context

Albania is one of eight countries around the world selected in January 2007 to pilot the ‘One UN’ Programme. So far, Albania has undertaken three programme cycles- the first One UN Programme signed in October 2007 until 2011, the second, the so called Programme of Cooperation 2012-2016, and the current Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development 2017-2021. During this period, the three programme documents have served as the main strategic result framework to guide UN integrated actions in support to country’s development priorities. Achievements and lessons learnt during the implementation period, have served to strengthening joint UN agencies work around key priority areas.

A comprehensive development context of the country is provided in the MAPS Report⁵¹ (September 2018), Voluntary National Review on Sustainable Development Goals⁵² (July 2018), the 2018 Government of Albania and United Nations Progress Report⁵³ and several reports/assessments conducted by UN agencies and development partners in the country that are included in Annex 1 – Desk Review Materials of this ToRs.

The results framework of the PoCSD 2017-2021 outlines 4 outcomes and 17 outputs that respond to country needs and make use of the UN’s comparative advantages. The outcomes Outcome 1 Governance and Rule of Law; Outcome 2 Social Cohesion; Outcome 3 Economic Growth, Labour and Agriculture; Outcome 4 Environment and Climate Change, are guided by EU integration and SDG Agencies, whilst applying the ‘delivering-as-one’ approach.

Key elements of the approach include: Outcome level work, led by inter-agency Results Groups responsible for development of biennial Joint Work Plans, including their implementation, monitoring, and reporting with Implementing Partners, under the guidance of UN Country Team and the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) that provides formal oversight and management direction. At the strategic level, the JEC is co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and the UN Resident Coordinator, while at the technical level it is co-chaired by the RC and the Director of the Department for Development and Good Governance (DDGG) at the Prime Minister’s Office.

One level down, each outcome is comprised of specific outputs varying 2-6 per each Outcome. The Programme’s outputs are made operational through the development of joint biannual work plans (JWPs) which form an agreement between the UN agencies and implementing partners on the use of resources. The JWP identifies the exact deliverables, responsible parties as well as the exact costs and the available resources. The design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of JWPs are coordinated at the technical level by the output working groups, which are co-chaired by the Government and the United Nations, and at the strategic level by the Outcome Groups, co-chaired by 2 UN HoAs and a senior government representative (Minister or Deputy Minister of key implementing line ministry for the respective Outcome). The Programme also envisages joint programme reviews, mid-year and annual, that allow for timely measurement of progress and performance thereby allowing for adjustment of programme implementation. The UN programme supports the government of

51. https://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/MAPS_Report_web.pdf

52. https://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/20257ALBANIA_VNR_2018_FINAL2.pdf

53. https://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/GoA-UN-Progress%20Report%202018_1.pdf

Albania to roll out the national development agenda by mainstreaming international norms and values such as human rights, gender and the social inclusion into its interventions.

The key partners in the implementation of the PoCSD are the Government, namely the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, Department for Development and Good Governance (DDGG) within the Prime Minister Office and line Ministries, UN Agencies, development partners, civil society organisations, and the private sector. While the management processes are implemented by the UNCT, which is supported by inter-agency advisory bodies, including: (i) the Operations Management Team; (ii) the Communications Team; (iii) the Gender Working Group; iv) Data Working Group and (v) the SDG Task Force.

The agencies participating in the current programme, which represent the UNCT in Albania members are 16 specialised UN agencies and programmes: Resident Agencies include UNDP, UNICEF, UNWomen, IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR, WHO and FAO; Non-resident Agencies include IAEA, ILO, UNCTAD, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO and UNODC.

At the onset, full implementation of the PoCSD 2017-2021 was estimated to require a total of USD 109 million. This included USD 15 million from regular or core resources and USD 22 million from other or non-core resources. During the first two years of PoCSD implementation (2017-2018), the PoCSD has (as indicated in the signed Joint Work Plans) contributed USD 65 million, of which USD 48 million (74%) were mobilized from non-core resources; while core resources have surpassed the preliminarily budgeted level (USD 17 million compared to USD 15 million projected at the start of the 5-year programme). Thus, by end 2019, the UN has implemented already approximately 60% of the total PoCSD plan, leaving 40% or USD 44 million to be deployed in 2020-2021.

One key financial funding mechanism, to support financing of joint work is the One Fund. Its purpose has evolved, since its establishment in 2007. At the time, the so called the One Coherence Fund aimed to provide un-earmarked, long term predictable financial resources, serving as the main financing source in support of One Programme outcome work. Through the years, the mechanism served as a driving force to incentivize integrated work through soft-earmarked funding, which compliments agency specific funding.

In 2018, the Fund was re-branded to Albania SDG Acceleration Fund to better respond to Agenda2030 priorities. Currently the SDG AF includes funding from government of Albania, Sweden, Switzerland and Norway. Any allocation from the SDG Acceleration Fund to participating UN agencies is based on the budget information provided by the signed JAWPs.

A Resource Mobilization Strategy 2017-2021 has been developed (2019) and serves as a guiding tool in support of UNCT resource mobilization efforts. Key strategic considerations and specific actions to be taken are identified in order to target the most viable donors and/or other partners to UN resource mobilization potential in a challenging and evolving development landscape.

An interim BOS (transition document until receipt of new UN reform operational guidelines) is adopted by UNCT Albania in October 2018.

Purpose

The UNCT Albania in close partnership with the Government and other National Counterparts is currently in process of preparing the UNDAF/PoCSD 2017-2021 Evaluation (summative), which is mandatory in the penultimate year of the UNDAF cycle and should serve as a major input for the planning process of next United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) cycle.

The rationale for this UNDAF/PoCSD evaluation is twofold:

- will examine whether the UN Country Team (UNCT) is collectively prioritizing support and contributing to the country's development. The evaluation will also identify synergies, gaps, overlaps and missed opportunities, ultimately assessing overall UNCT contribution to country's achievement of SDGs.
- will assess the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator in addressing the political challenges faced by UNCT, as well as the UNCT's support for collective objectives on programming and resource mobilization
- will use the findings strategically to inform the next programme cycle, to better integrate Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, to better align and target UN interventions that will support the country in reaching its 2030 commitments; to help UNCT to adjust to new generation of UNDAFs and the wide UN system reforms. Using a logic model (assumptions-causal links) of the Theory of Change, a common understanding of what determined the expected change, including the inputs and outputs delivered, as well as the external factors that may have influenced progress and opportunities by the UN at country level.

National counterparts will be major partners in the evaluation contributing both through data from national systems and validation of UNDAF evaluation results. The main users of the UNDAF Evaluation will be the UN partners, i.e. the Government, UNCT, other development partners and civil society participating in UN programmes.

The UNDAF evaluation process will also seek to capitalise on other evaluations that took place earlier or at the same time, including Mid Term Reviews, Annual Reviews and Progress Reports. Human rights and gender equality assessments will be mainstreamed throughout all aspects of the UNDAF evaluation.

The UNDAF evaluation will be independent. It will adhere to the highest possible professional standards in evaluation. It will be responsive to the needs and priorities of the Republic of Albania and provide accountability and learning opportunities to the UN system. The evaluation will be conducted in a consultative manner and will engage the participation of a broad range of stakeholders. The geographical coverage of the evaluation will be national - Albania.

Scope

The evaluation will cover the implementation period 2017 to present, at all levels- outcome, output, deliverable/activity, assessing the contribution from all UN agencies which are part of the Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development 2017-2021. The scope covered by the evaluation includes examining UNDAF programming principles (human rights-based approach, gender equality, environmental sustainability, results-based management, capacity development), overall strategies and outcome/output specific strategies included in the UNDAF itself.

Objectives

The objectives of UNDAF evaluation are:

- Assess performance against Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development 2017-2021 framework, its strategic intent, objectives and outcomes contained in the results framework, including UNCT contribution to such contribution.
- Based on this assessment, the evaluators will provide actionable recommendations, and identify lessons learned and good practices that will inform new Coherence Framework cycle 2022-2026, in line with the newly emerged guidelines for the UNSDCF development.

These evaluation objectives are defined by the structured set of evaluation questions (See Annex 3 and incorporate the cross-cutting dimensions of gender, equity, and child rights).

Methodology and Approach

The UNDAF Evaluation will be conducted in close collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, UNCT, Result Groups, and national counterparts.

METHODOLOGY

Once the Evaluation team for the UNDAF evaluation has been selected, a thorough preparatory work should be conducted by the team to define the specific evaluation strategies, data collection methods and required evaluation tools. An Evaluation Plan will be developed accordingly.

Data collection - The UNDAF evaluation will use a multiple method approach, which could include the following: desk reviews of reference material, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including key government counterparts (central and local level), MPs, donor community members, representatives of key civil society organisations, UNCT members, and implementing partners; surveys and questionnaires including participants in development programmes, UNCT members, and /or surveys and questionnaires involving other stakeholders; Focus Group discussions involving groups and sub-groups of stakeholders, decision-makers; Other methods such as outcome mapping, observational visits, etc.

Stakeholder participation – The UNDAF evaluation will be conducted in a participatory manner, ensuring the involvement of key stakeholders (e.g. government, civil society organisations, beneficiary/vulnerable groups⁵⁴, and donors) in all phases of the evaluation, based on a comprehensive in country visit/mission agenda prepared by UN RCO and UNCT.

Validation - All findings should be supported with evidence. Triangulation will be used to ensure that the information and data collected are valid. A report will be prepared including identified constraints, lessons and challenges in relations to the priority interventions as well as specific recommendations made both to the UNCT and to individual agencies.

In general, the evaluation approach should follow the UNEG guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality, UNEG norms and standards and international principles for development evaluation⁵⁵. In particular, in line with the UN System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP)⁵⁶ on gender equality, data collection methods and process should consider gender sensitivity. The final report should be compliant with UNEG quality checklist of evaluation reports⁵⁷ and acknowledge how inclusive stakeholder participation was ensured during the evaluation process and any challenges to obtaining the gender equality information or to addressing these issues appropriately. Data should be systematically disaggregated by sex and age and, to the extent possible, disaggregated by geographical region, ethnicity, disability, migratory status and other contextually-relevant markers of equity. Adherence to a code of ethics and a human right based and gender sensitive approach in the gathering, treatment and use of data collected should be made explicit in the inception report. Perspective from both rights holders and duty bearers shall be collected.

Processes:

The evaluation will be conducted in three phases:

54. The consultants will work with UN agencies to identify beneficiary/vulnerable groups at focus.

55. <http://www.uneval.org/document/guidance-documents>

56. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability>

57. <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/607>

Phase 1 - Preparation:

- Collection of reference material: The UN RC Office in close consultations with UNCT members will compile a list of background material, documents, and reports relevant to the UNDAF evaluation.
- Identification and selection of an Evaluation Team: The UNCT will jointly identify and select the appropriate consultants, one international and one local, for the UNDAF evaluation. The UN RC Office will take the lead, jointly with UNCT, in soliciting CVs of consultants.
- Development of inception report: To be conducted prior to the main data collection phase and after the Desk Review - the UNDAF Evaluation team, facilitated by UNCT, will a) develop an operational plan (an *evaluation plan*), which will include a design matrix, data collection and analysis methods, potential sites for field visits, b) assess the availability of logistical and administrative support; and v) further identify and collect relevant reference material. This evaluation plan will be shared with the UNRC and the UNCT for approval.

Phase 2 - Conduct of data collection activities and the preparation of the evaluation reports:

- Desk review of reference material: The evaluation team is responsible for reviewing the reference documents, reports and any other data and information provided by the UN RC Office.
- Main data collection: The evaluation team will conduct data collection activities as guided by the evaluation plan. They will conduct agreed-upon interviews with stakeholders and site visits. At the end of the data collection activities, a meeting will be organized by the evaluation team, participated by key stakeholder representatives, to present preliminary findings and obtain feedback from the stakeholders.
- Data analysis and reporting: The evaluation team will conduct further data analysis based on all information collected and prepare a draft evaluation report for the UNDAF Evaluation within three weeks upon completion of the main data collection and analysis activities. The UNDAF Evaluation team will submit the report to the UNCT.
- Review of the draft report and finalization of the report: the draft UNDAF Report will be submitted for factual correction and feedback to key stakeholders, including the PSG. The UNDAF Evaluation team, in consultation with the UNCT, will prepare an audit trail to indicate how the comments were taken into account, and will finalize the UNDAF evaluation report.

Phase 3 - Follow-up:

The UNCT together with the UNRC Office will conduct follow-up activities, as guided by their respective processes and mandates.

In the context of the UNDAF Evaluation:

- **Preparation of the Management Response** - once the report is finalized, the Steering Committee and the UNCT must coordinate to prepare the formal Management Response to the evaluation. It should contain general remarks from the Steering Committee and the UNCT on the content of the report, followed by a response to each recommendation (normally prepared in tabular format) and a follow-up mechanism.
- **Dissemination of the evaluation findings and recommendations** through the stakeholder workshop - an opportunity to generate buy-in of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations, as well as the management response. Through open discussion, the workshop ensures the UNCT, national counterparts and development partners to be on the same page in terms of future strategic direction. The participation of the team leader in the workshop is advisable. A broad range of partners should be invited to the workshop. These include high-level government officials, representatives of funding partners and civil-society organisations, local-government officials from areas where there were programme activities and representatives of other stakeholder groups, as appropriate. Ideally, the invitation should be extended by the highest-ranking government official possible, together with the RC, to encourage participation. The evaluation report and the management response should be presented at the workshop and the way forward should be discussed.
- **Implementation of a follow-up plan**, in particular focusing on the design of a new UNSDCF cycle.

Evaluation Team Structure for the Undaf Evaluation

The PoCSD evaluation **Steering Committee** will be the body responsible for the proper conduct of PoCSD evaluations. The **Joint Executive Committee** (JEC) of PoCSD, co-chaired by the RC and a government representative, will typically assume this role.

The Steering Committee will appoint an **Evaluation Manager**. The Evaluation Manager should not be responsible for implementing a programme or a project to be evaluated and should have some knowledge of the evaluation process and methodology. This role will be carried out by the Resident Coordinator's Office.

The Steering Committee will invite government counterparts of UNCT agencies to form a **Consultative Group**. The Consultative Group should be sufficiently inclusive to represent various sectoral interests. In Albania's PoCSD, this role will be carried out by the **Outcome Groups**. The key roles of the Consultative Group are to ensure that 1) the evaluation process meets UNEG Norms, Standards and Ethical Guidelines and that 2) the evaluation findings are relevant and recommendations are implementable and that 3) the evaluation findings are disseminated and available for use and learning from the evaluation.

The **Evaluation Team** comprises independent external evaluators. It will have a team leader (international) with extensive evaluation expertise and one member (local expert).

Each UNSDCF evaluation should have a designated **Evaluation Advisor** in UNDCO⁵⁸ to safeguard the independence and quality of the evaluation and to intervene in case of dispute.

Evaluation Team Roles and responsibilities

The **Steering Committee** is responsible for ensuring the PoCSD evaluation is conducted in a timely manner and through proper process, so as to meet quality standards and be useful to the UNCT and to stakeholders. Specifically, the Steering Committee will:

- decide on the timing of the evaluation in consultation with government counterparts and invite the counterpart officials to form a Consultative Group;
- inform UNDCO of the launch of the evaluation, so that an Evaluation Advisor can be designated, and inform UNEG in order to obtain necessary support;
- appoint the Evaluation Manager;
- provide sufficient resources to conduct the evaluation, based on estimates provided by the Evaluation Manager;
- ensure that office staff give the Evaluation Team their full support;
- approve the Evaluation Team proposed by the Evaluation Manager;
- ensure the Evaluation Team has access to information and stakeholders;
- comment on the draft report, using an audit trail;
- approve the final report;
- prepare the Management Response, in consultation with all UNCT members;
- organize a stakeholder workshop once the final report is ready (please see Section 13 on Stakeholder workshop);
- transmit the report to UNDCO to be placed on global/regional platforms and to relevant offices at regional level, at the agency headquarters; and
- take measures to promote the use of evaluation and lesson learning.

58. The UN Evaluation Group upon request can allocate an evaluation advisor to the exercise while awaiting a decision on where this capacity will be located in the UN Secretariat.

The **Evaluation Manager** is responsible for managing the entire process: ensuring that the evaluation is properly conducted, managing the validation and quality-control process, and making sure that the report fulfils the terms of reference. The Evaluation Manager will:

- conduct the preparatory work needed to define the scope and the evaluation questions by mapping activities, stakeholders and available secondary data (such as evaluation reports, results monitoring data and statistics);
- draft the terms of reference, circulate them to the Steering Committee and Consultative Group for comment and obtain clearance from the Steering Committee and the Evaluation Advisor at UNDCO;
- draw-up the initial budget estimate based on the number and levels of Evaluation Team members, the estimated cost of activities required and the availability of secondary data, and obtain clearance from the Steering Committee (see Section 16 on *Budget*);
- recruit the Evaluation Team and obtain approval of Team choices from the Steering Committee and the Evaluation Advisor at UNDCO;
- provide the Evaluation Team with all the information it needs to conduct the evaluation efficiently and effectively (activity map, stakeholder map, secondary data, etc.) and arrange briefings by UNCT members and Programme Managers on their respective programmes and activities;
- organize theory-of-change workshops with the Evaluation Team and UNCT members (see Section 9 on *Theory-of-change workshops*);
- receive and review the inception report prepared by the Evaluation Team and advise the Evaluation Team on revisions, if needed;
- facilitate evaluation activities, assist the Evaluation Team in gaining access to stakeholders and additional information, and arrange meetings and logistics;
- receive the consolidated first draft of the evaluation and conduct a pro forma quality check (structure and format, compliance with the terms of reference);
- send the first draft to the Evaluation Advisor at UNDCO for the record;
- manage the validation process by circulating the draft for comment to the Steering Committee, Consultative Group and any other key stakeholders, ensuring all comments and responses are properly recorded, using an audit trail;
- send comments to the Evaluation Team for draft revision;
- send the revised draft and the audit trail to the Evaluation Advisor for an external quality check and request that the Evaluation Team revise the report if necessary;
- send the final report to the Evaluation Advisor and obtain clearance for payment of the Evaluation Team (if the report has met the criteria of the external quality check);
- prepare for and manage the stakeholder workshop (see Section 13 on *Stakeholder workshop*);
- arrange a debriefing of individual UNCT members to obtain Evaluation Team feedback in a safe space;
- complete the Evaluation Report for publication and dissemination; and
- support the dissemination activities of the Steering Committee.

The **Consultative Group** will support the evaluation process, ensuring, in particular, that the evaluation properly reflects the views of the government involved and that the evaluators gain access to relevant informants and information sources in government. In addition to promoting ownership of and buy-in to the evaluation results, the Consultative Group will also:

- review and comment on the terms of reference;
- facilitate the evaluation process, helping the team to identify and gain access to government stakeholders;
- comment on the draft report;
- support the organisation of the stakeholder workshop; and
- facilitate maximum in-country dissemination of the report.

The **Evaluation Advisor** will oversee the process to ensure the independence and quality of the evaluation. The Evaluation Advisor will:

- approve the selection of the Evaluation Team, confirming the professional credentials of the team members and the absence of any conflicts of interest;
- establish a hotline for the Evaluation Team, to be used if the Team encounters risks to the independent conduct of the evaluation;
- receive the first and final draft of the report and the audit trail to ensure the transparency of the process and ascertain that the Evaluation Team was not subject to undue pressure to alter the contents of the report; and
- conduct an external quality check of the draft report and clear payment to the Evaluation Team once any outstanding issues have been addressed satisfactorily.

Furthermore, **UNDCO** should:

- provide a global platform for the public dissemination of the report;
- occasionally synthesize findings and compile lessons learned from UNSDCF evaluations and feed them back into advice to UNCTs, agency management and governing bodies, as appropriate;
- keep a record of the drafts and audit trail in a depository.

UNEG, in its supporting role, will:

- provide technical advice for guidance materials, as well as for individual cases, on request;
- support UNDCO in its oversight role, if necessary providing in-kind support (staff time) from its members during the transition period;
- support the development of further guidance materials, tools and templates, a draft policy framework and other supporting materials during and after the transition period; and
- coordinate agency evaluations, to the extent possible, as inputs to the UNSDCF evaluations.

EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

The evaluation team is expected to produce the following deliverables:

- Desk Review & Inception report (7 days) produced by the Evaluation Team to elaborate on how it will conduct the evaluation. It normally contains: an elaboration of the evaluation questions into methodological sub-questions (by programme or project, by data-collection method, etc.); sources and methods for collecting data for each methodological sub-question; and a concrete plan of evaluation activities and a timeline, possibly with a tentative list of interviews to be arranged or plans for travel to other locations (e.g. municipalities, project sites). Specific stakeholder contributions are mapped out and presented in the inception report
- Data collection & Field visit (10 days) - Evaluation Team will gather data through group and individual interviews, including visits outside of Tirane; at the end of the mission, presentation with preliminary findings and recommendations will be presented to the UNCT/UNDAF Evaluation Steering Committee. Details of how this process will be conducted/handled will be included in the Evaluation Team inception report.
- A theory-of-change workshop during the first week of the in-country work - a great opportunity for the Evaluation team and the UNCT members to develop a common understanding of what ought to happen to achieve the goals, what the UN's activities are expected to achieve, what interaction will be required with other actors, including government, and so on. Having a common understanding of this kind at the start of the exercise is critical to avoiding dispute at a later date.
- A presentation with preliminary findings to be shared in a JEC meeting;
- Evaluation Report (40-60 pgs) (15 days- draft and 6 days- final) - A first draft report for circulation and identification of factual corrections from stakeholders; A second draft report for circulation to the external Evaluation Advisor for quality assurance; A final review report and presentation to be shared with the Evaluation Advisor. The evaluation report should be written in a clear and concise manner that allows readers to easily follow its logic. It should not be overly filled with factual descriptions, especially those available elsewhere. The focus of the

report should be to present the findings, the conclusions and the recommendations in a logical and convincing manner. It should contain:

- Title Page
 - List of acronyms and abbreviations
 - Table of contents, including list of annexes
 - Executive Summary
 - Introduction: background and context of the programme
 - Description of the program – its logic theory, results framework, assumptions and external factors likely to affect success
 - what was evaluated and why (purpose and scope with information on limitations and de-limitations);
 - how the evaluation was conducted (objectives, approach and methodology);
 - what was found and on what evidence (findings and evidences/analysis and interpretation);
 - what was concluded from the findings and in response to the main evaluation questions (conclusions);
 - what was recommended (recommendations); and
 - what could be usefully learned, if any (lessons learned)
 - Annexes
- Preparation of the Management Response (2 days) - Once the report is finalized, the evaluation team should assist the Steering Committee and the UNCT to prepare the formal Management Response to the evaluation. It should contain general remarks from the Steering Committee and the UNCT on the content of the report, followed by a response to each recommendation (normally prepared in tabular format) and a follow-up mechanism.
 - Dissemination of the evaluation findings and recommendations (2 days) in the Stakeholder Workshop to generate buy-in of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations, as well as the management response.

TIMEFRAME

Deliverable	Number of expert days	Timeperiod
Desk Review & Inception report	7 days	6 January - 14 January 2020
Presentation to Steering Committee/UNCT for validation.		
Data collection & Field visit including a theory-of-change workshop		15 January - 28 January 2020
Presentation of preliminary findings	10 days	
Draft Evaluation Report	12 days	29 January - 14 February 2020
Quality review of draft Evaluation Report by the Steering Committee	3 days	14 February – 19 February 2020
Final Evaluation Report and the Stakeholder Workshop, including support to preparation of the Management Response	8 days	19 February - 28 February 2020

Duration of the Consultancy

The UNDAF Evaluation will be undertaken by a team of international and national consultants between January - February 2020 with an indicative time frame of 40 working days for each consultant.

Budget & Support

Funding for the PoCSD evaluation will be provided by the Special Purpose Trust Fund (SPTF) allocation to the RC Office.

The UNDAF Evaluation will be commissioned by RC Office and overseen by the UNCT and Joint Executive Committee. Day-to-day management will be ensured through the RC Office.

Support of the RC Office/UNCT to the Evaluation Process

The RC Office/UNCT will support the Evaluation Consultant with the following:

- Securing relevant background documentation required for a comprehensive desk review
- Provision of list of contacts in advance and additional upon request
- Provision of vehicle and driver for field visits –
- Organisation of group consultative meetings, briefing and debriefing sessions
- Provision of office/working space during the assignment. The consultant will however have to use his/her own computer/laptop

Qualifications of the Consultant – Team Leader

One international consultant, in her/his role as the UNDAF Evaluation Team Leader, is needed with the following skills and experience:

- Advanced university degree (Masters and equivalent) in development studies, economics, international relations, or related field; PhD an asset.
- 10 years of relevant professional experience is highly desirable, including previous substantive involvement in evaluations and/or reviews at programme and/or outcome levels in related fields with international organisations, preferably in DaO countries.
- Specialized experience and/or methodological/technical knowledge, including some specific data collection and analytical skills, particularly in the following areas: understanding of human rights-based approaches to programming; gender considerations; environmental sustainability, Results Based Management (RBM) principles; logic modelling/logical framework analysis; quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis; participatory approaches; including also on political economy and financing for development;
 - Good understanding of the SDGs and their implications for development cooperation;
 - Good understanding of the role of the UN System in development cooperation in the context of the country in question;
 - Sound knowledge of the country context and an in-depth understanding of at least one area of work of UNCT members; collectively, Evaluation Team members should broadly cover all areas of UNCT activity;
 - Demonstrated ability to write and communicate clearly in languages appropriate for the country; and an absence of conflicts of interest (never employed by UNCT members or implementing partners, nor expected to be employed in the near future, no private relationships with any UNCT members).
 - Excellent written and spoken English.
 - Excellent report writing skills as well as communication and interviewing skills.

Qualifications of the Consultant - National

One national consultant, in his assisting role to the UNDAF Evaluation Team Leader, is needed with the following skills and experience:

- Advanced university degree (Masters and equivalent) in development studies, economics, international relations, or related field;
- 7 years of relevant professional experience is highly desirable, including previous substantive involvement in evaluations and/or reviews.
- Excellent knowledge of the UN system and UN common country programming processes;
- Good knowledge and experience with the national development frameworks, especially
- SDGs, NSDI, etc.;
- Specialized experience and/or methodological/technical knowledge, including some specific data collection and analytical skills, particularly in the following areas: understanding of human rights-based approaches to programming; gender considerations; Results Based Management (RBM) principles; logic modelling/logical framework analysis; quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis; participatory approaches
- Excellent written and spoken English.
- Excellent report writing skills as well as communication and interviewing skills.

Corporate Competencies:

- Demonstrates integrity by modelling the UN's values and ethical standards;
- Promotes the vision, mission, and strategic goals of UNDP;
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability;
- Treats all people fairly without favouritism.

Core Competencies:

- Communication - Facilitate and encourage open communication and strive for effective communication.
- Organizational Awareness - Demonstrate corporate knowledge and sound judgment.
- Teamwork - Demonstrate ability to work in a multicultural, multi-ethnic environment and to maintain effective working relations with people of different national and cultural backgrounds.
- Accountability – Takes ownership of all responsibilities and delivers outputs in accordance with agreed time, cost and quality standards.

Evaluation Procedure

UNDP applies a fair and transparent selection process that would consider both the technical qualification of Individual Consultants as well as their financial proposals. The contract will be awarded to the candidate whose offer:

- Is deemed technically responsive / compliant / acceptable (only technically responsive applications / candidates will be considered for the financial evaluation)
- And has obtained the highest combined technical and financial scores.

Technical Criteria - 70% of total evaluation – max points: 70

Criteria A: Education Background – max points: 20

Criteria B: Relevance of work experience – max points: 30

Criteria C: Expertise in conducting UNDAF evaluations/and or other programme reviews - max points 20

Financial Criteria - 30% of total evaluation – max points: 30

Application Procedure

Interested applicants are advised to carefully study all sections of this ToRs and ensure that they meet the general requirements as well as specific qualifications described. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Please make sure you have provided all requested materials

The application should contain:

- **Cover letter explaining why you are the most suitable candidate for the advertised position** . Please paste the letter into the “Resume and Motivation” section of the electronic application.
- **Letter to UNDP Confirming Interest and Availability**-please fill in the attached form... www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/IC_Offerors%20Letter%20to%20UNDP%20Confirming%20Interest%20and%20Availability.docx
- **Latest personal CV, including past experience from similar projects or completed and signed UN Personal History Form (P11)** for Service Contracts (SC) and Individual Contracts (IC) – Blank form Download [here](#).
- **Financial Proposal in ALL/USD** - specifying a **total lump sum** in Albanian Lek and/or US Dollars <http://www.un.org.al/doc/Financial%20Offer%20template.doc> (The financial proposal shall specify a total lump sum amount, and payment terms around specific and measurable -qualitative and quantitative- deliverables . Payments are based upon output, i.e. upon delivery of the services specified in the TOR. In order to assist the requesting unit in the comparison of financial proposals, the financial proposal will include a breakdown of this lump sum amount-including travel, per diems, and number of anticipated working days).- **Please note that with regard to travel component you may provide an average estimated travel cost for one circuit with and without accommodation.**
- Copy of Diplomas and copy of Passport.

How to Submit the Application:

To submit your application online, please follow the steps below:

- Merge your CV or P11, Financial Proposal Letter to UNDP Confirming Interest and Availability and cover letter into a single file. The system does not allow for more than one attachment to be uploaded;
- Click on the Job Title (job vacancy announcement);
- Click “Apply Now” button, fill in necessary information on the first page, and then click “Submit Application;”
- Upload your application/single file as indicated above with the merged documents (underlined above);
- You will receive an automatic response to your email confirming receipt of your application by the system.

ANNEX 1

PoCSD 2017-2021 Evaluation - Desk Review of Reference Materials

Title of Documents
GoA – UN Programme of Cooperation 2017-2021
Annual Progress Report 2017-2019
Mid-Year Review Reports 2017-2019
Joint Work Plans 2017-2021
Minutes UNCT Retreat 2017-2020
ToRs Outcome Groups
ToRs Joint Executive Committee
OMT ToRs
Business Operations Strategy 2017-2021
UN Communications Strategy 2012-2016
Resource Mobilization Strategy 2017-2021
UN Coherence Fund Guidelines Albania 2012-2016 (revised Jan. 2013)
JEC Minutes 2017-2020
RCAR 2017-2020
UNCT WorkPlan 2017-2020
UNDAF 2022-2026 Roadmap
National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020
Ministry of Finance – Albania Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2017-2019
EC - Albania Progress Reports 2017-2020
EU Country Strategy Albania – 2014-2020
Other

ANNEX 2

Outcomes and Outputs Structure

Outcomes and Outputs Chairmanship	
Outcomes	Outputs
I. Governance and Rule of Law UNDP Resident Representative UNHCR Representative Deputy Minister of Interior	Output 1.1 Human Rights - Elsona Agolli, UNFPA
	Output 1.2 Anti-Corruption & Rule of Law - Vladimir Malkaj, UNDP
	Output 1.3 Local Governance - Vladimir Malkaj, UNDP
	Output 1.4 Access to Justice - Emira Shkurti, UNICEF
	Output 1.5 Mainstreaming Gender and Gender Responsive Budgeting - Erisa Cela, N Women
	Output 1.6 Migration and Asylum - Genci Pjetri, IOM; Artur Marku, UNHCR
II. Social cohesion: Health, education, social protection, child protection, and gender-based violence UNICEF Representative UNDP Resident Representative Minister of Health and Social Welfare	Output 2.1 – Health - Gazmend Bejtja, WHO
	Output 2.2 – Education - Mirlinda Bushati, UNICEF
	Output 2.3 – Social Inclusion & Social Protection - Entela Lako, UNDP Alternate Chair – Alketa Zazo, UNICEF
	Output 2.4 - Child Protection - David Gvineria, UNICEF
	Output 2.5 - Gender-based Violence - Entela Lako, UNDP
III. Economic Growth, Labour and Agriculture UN Women Representative FAO Assistant Representative Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development	Output 3.1 Economic Development - Eno Ngjela, UNDP
	Output 3.2 Labour - Zhuljeta Harasani, ILO
	Output 3.3 Agriculture and Rural Development - Arben Kipi, FAO
	Output 3.4 Culture - Sinisa Sesum, UNESCO
IV. Environment and Climate Change UNDP Resident Representative FAO Assistant Representative Minister of Tourism and Environment	Output 4.1 DRR and Climate Change - Elvita Kabashi, UNDP
	Output 4.2 Natural Resources - Elvita Kabashi, UNDP

ANNEX 3

Evaluation Questions

For evaluations, the evaluation questions should assess the following four dimensions.

RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE: ARE WE DOING THE RIGHT THINGS?

- Has the UNCT been addressing the most pressing needs of the people and the country, strategically and collectively, as identified by CCA and other relevant sources, in design and in implementation?
- Have the resources been mobilized and used to meet the priorities of the UNCT, proportionately rather than opportunistically (i.e. based on funding availability and the agenda of each agency)?

RESULTS: HAVE WE MADE A DIFFERENCE?

- What has been achieved for each UNSDCF outcome and where were the gaps? Identify factors that have affected UNCT's implementation (enabling factors and bottlenecks) and on that basis provide actionable recommendations for improving UNCT's contribution to results in the future. Provide an overview of the assumptions underlying the causal links between the outputs and outcomes.
- What are the changes observed at national level, including changes in relevant statistical indicators, and what is the UN's plausible contribution to these changes? Validate the suitability of indicators and other verification tools used to measure progress towards results.
 - Have the UN RC's leadership and the collective effort of the UNCT helped to overcome political challenges to pursuing the UN agenda?
 - Have the synergies between UNCT agencies helped to achieve broader-based results and greater value for money than would have been the case, had the work been done individually?

TRANSFORMATION: HAVE WE MADE LONG-LASTING, SYSTEMIC AND SOCIETY-WIDE CHANGES?

- Has the UNCT's work ensured national and local ownership, so that the changes will last beyond UNCT intervention?
- Has the UNCT's work brought about systemic changes (for example, changes in the legal framework, institutions, social and economic structure)?
- Has the UNCT's work been systemic, scaled up or replicated to ensure its effects are not limited in scope, but nation- or society-wide?

NORMATIVE: HAVE WE LEFT NO ONE BEHIND?

- Has the UNCT prioritized the needs of those who need assistance most (for instance, the most vulnerable, the poor and the marginalized)? Assess the differential progress made by the UNCT in addressing the most marginalized segments of population (e.g. marginalized women and children, persons with disabilities, Roma community, older persons, refugees/ asylum seekers, migrants, low income families, LGBTI community etc.)

- Has the UNCT's work properly mainstreamed gender?
- Has the UNCT's work properly addressed human-rights issues?
- Has the UNCT ensured that unintended or negative effects on the population or social groups outside the programme's scope have been properly addressed and/or minimized?

Value addition of UNSDCF as a joint instrument

In addition to the four dimensions highlighted above, below can be used to assess UNSDCF as a tool:

- Has the UNSDCF strengthened the position, credibility and reliability of the UN as a partner for government and other actors in their efforts to achieve the SDGs?
- Has the UNSDCF enabled the UNCT to deliver quality, integrated, SDG-focused policy support?
- Has the UNSDCF acted effectively as a partnership vehicle?
- Has the UNSDCF facilitated the identification of and access to new financing flows at scale for national partners?
- Has the UNSDCF contributed to greater clarity and transparency of results achieved and resources used?
- Has the UNSDCF enabled greater UN coherence and discipline and reduced transaction costs for partners?
- Was the UNSDCF supported by an integrated funding framework and by adequate funding instruments? What were the gaps?
- What risks and/or opportunities have materialized through the implementation of UNSDCF? How were they seized upon or addressed?

Additional **evaluation topics of interest** are:

- **Enabling / explanatory factors:** While assessing performance using the above criteria the evaluator needs to identify the various factors that can explain the performance. This will allow lessons to be learned about why the UNCT performed as it did.
- **UN Coordination.** Did UN coordination reduce transaction costs and increase the efficiency of UNDAF implementation? To what extent did the UNDAF create actual synergies among agencies and involve concerted efforts to optimise results and avoid duplication?
- **Delivering as One.** To what extent the UNCT applied UNEG Standard Operating Procedures for Delivering as One (DaO) Approach to ensure greater effectiveness and better delivery of results under such approach?
 - In the context of DaO, what is the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the One Programme and its contribution and results, including any impacts on the realization of the human rights for the poor and people in vulnerable situations?
 - What is the extent of integration and mainstreaming of the United Nations programming principles and other relevant crosscutting issues in the One Programme, including its contributions to equitable, inclusive, transparent, participatory and accountable development processes?
 - What is the coherence of the United Nations system in addressing national priorities, and contributions to informed decision making and knowledge generation?
- **Five UNDAF Programming Principles.** To what extent have the UNDAF programming principles (human rights-based approach, gender equality, environmental sustainability, results-based management, capacity development) been considered and mainstreamed in the UNDAF chain of results? Were any shortcomings due to a failure to take account of UNDAF programming principles during implementation?
 - To what extent did the UNDAF make use of and promote human rights and gender equality standards and principles (e.g. participation, non-discrimination, accountability, etc.) to achieve its goal?
 - To what extent did UNDAF strengthen the capacities for data collection and analysis to ensure disaggregated data on the basis of race, colour, sex, geographic location, etc. and did those subjects to discrimination and disadvantage benefited from priority attention?

- Did the UNDAF effectively use the principles of environmental sustainability to strengthen its contribution to national development results?
 - Did the UNDAF adequately use RBM to ensure a logical chain of results and establish a monitoring and evaluation framework? Validate the suitability of indicators and other verification tools used to measure progress towards results. Assess the reliability of the disaggregated data.
 - Did the UNDAF adequately invest in, and focus on, national capacity development? To what extent and in what ways did UNDAF contribute to capacity development of government, NGOs and civil society institutions?
- **Other factors.** A number of country-specific factors that have affected the performance of the UNCT in the framework of the UNDAF need be examined:
 - How well did the UNCT use its partnerships (with civil society/private sector/local government/ parliament/national human rights institutions/international development partners) to improve its performance?
 - Regarding ownership of objectives and achievements, to what extent was the “active, free, and meaningful” participation of all stakeholders (including non-resident agencies) ensured in the UNDAF process? Did they agree with the outcomes and continue to remain in agreement? Was transparency in policies and project implementation ensured? What mechanisms were created throughout the implementation process to ensure participation? Ensure that specific stakeholder contributions are mapped out during the inception phase and presented in the inception report.
 - Did the UNCT undertake appropriate risk analysis and take appropriate actions to ensure that results to which it contributed are not lost? To what extent are the benefits being, or are likely to be, maintained over time?
 - How adequately did the UNCT respond to change (e.g. natural disaster, elections) in planning and during the implementation of the UNDAF?
 - To what extent harmonisation measures at the operational level contributed to improved efficiency and results?
 - What are the limitations to the evaluation (methods, sources of info, disaggregated data, time, budget, in case vulnerable groups will not be actively involved, justify why).

In addition to these core questions, the evaluation team will develop context-specific sub-questions during the inception phase of the UNDAF evaluation. To this purpose, during the inception mission the evaluation team will conduct a stakeholder analysis followed by ample in-country consultations with all key response stakeholders, to ensure that their views on issues that need to be considered, potential sub-questions, etc. are incorporated into the UNDAF evaluation. The inception report will also confirm the objectives around which to assess results and consider the preparation for the new UNSDCF. The evaluation is intended to be forward looking and therefore needs to take into consideration what is important for the future, including with regard to the 2030 Agenda.

The applying candidate is invited to submit a technical and financial proposal.

ANNEX 3

Evaluation Criteria and Key Questions

The criteria and evaluation questions below were adapted from the TOR, which had a much longer list inspired by recent guidance. The evaluation will concentrate on the following.

RELEVANCE: ARE WE DOING THE RIGHT THINGS?

- Has the UNCT been addressing the **most pressing needs** of the people and the country, strategically and collectively, as identified by the CCA and other relevant sources, in design and in implementation?
- Are the **SDGs incorporated** into the PoCSD and its Results Framework (RF)? To what extent? Are the RF indicators aligned with the national monitoring frameworks and the SDGs? Could you highlight some good practices and challenges?
- Are **Gender considerations** incorporated into the PoCSD and its RF? To what extent? Are gender-related indicators appropriate? Could you highlight some good practices and challenges?
- How **relevant** UN's contributions through the PoCSD are, in the result areas, for the country's priorities, including international commitments?
- Have the **resources** been mobilized and used to meet the priorities of the UNCT, proportionately rather than opportunistically (i.e. based on funding availability and the agenda of each agency)?

COHERENCE: HOW WELL DOES THE POCSD FIT?

- To what extent is the PoCSD **chain of results coherent**? How well are the various outputs and interventions under each Results Area and the various agencies working together towards the expected results?
- To what extent were **internal synergies** between UNCT agencies sought/materialised? What was the value added and/or missed opportunities?
- To what extent is the PoCSD implementation **coherent with the government's policies and other development partner policies**; including in the context of the EU accession process?
- Has the PoCSD strengthened the **position, credibility and reliability** of the UN as a partner for government and other actors in their efforts to achieve the SDGs?
- Was the PoCSD supported by an **integrated funding framework** and by adequate funding instruments? What were the gaps? Have pooled funding instruments (i.e. SDG Acceleration Fund; global SDG Fund) helped respond to PoCSD priorities?

RESULTS: HAVE WE MADE A DIFFERENCE?

- **What has been achieved** for each PoCSD outcome and where are the gaps? Identify **factors** that have affected UNCT's implementation (enabling factors and bottlenecks)
- Are gender-disaggregated targets set and achieved by the PoCSD? Are outcomes, outputs and indicators gender-sensitive?
- Provide an overview of the **assumptions** underlying the causal links between the outputs and outcomes.
- What is the **UN's plausible contribution** to **changes observed at national level**, including

changes in relevant statistical indicators? Can you validate the **suitability of indicators** and other verification tools used to measure progress towards results.

- Have the UN RC's leadership and the collective effort of the UNCT helped to **overcome political challenges** to pursuing the UN agenda?
- What are some **lessons learned** and what would you suggest to improve UNCT's contribution to results in the future?

TRANSFORMATION: HAVE WE MADE LONG-LASTING, SYSTEMIC AND SOCIETY-WIDE CHANGES?

- Has the UNCT's work ensured **national and local ownership**, so that the changes will last beyond UNCT intervention?
- Has the UNCT's work brought about **systemic changes** (for example, changes in the legal framework, institutions, social and economic structure)?
- Has the UNCT's work been systemic, **scaled up or replicated** to ensure its effects are not limited in scope, but nation- or society-wide?

NORMATIVE: HAVE WE LEFT NO ONE BEHIND?

- Has the PoCSD properly mainstreamed **gender equality and women's empowerment**?
- Has the PoCSD properly addressed **human-rights** issues and the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)? How have those who need assistance most have benefitted from the PoCSD (including vulnerable groups, e.g., marginalized women and children, persons with disabilities, minority groups, elderly, refugees/ asylum seekers, migrants, low income families, LGBTI community, etc.)

LOOKING FORWARD

- How can the PoCSD help to strategically position the UNCT in the national development and EU accession process (with national institutions, UN partners, other development partners, Academia, and NGOs)?
- What will the UN's comparative advantages in the country be during the next programme cycle?
- What should be the scope of the UNSDCF beyond 2020?
- What should the management arrangements be?
- What are the financing flows expected to be for the next UNSDCF? What are the advantages to pooled funding instruments?

ANNEX 4

List of references and background documents

UNCT and Albania

- GoA – UN Programme of Cooperation 2017-2021
- Annual Progress Report 2017, 2018, 2019 Draft
- Mid-Year Review Reports 2017, 2018, 2019
- Joint Work Plans 2017-2021
- Minutes UNCT Retreat 2017-2020
- ToR Outcome Groups
- ToR Joint Executive Committee
- OMT ToRs
- Joint Data Group, Draft TOR
- Business Operations Strategy 2017-2021
- UN Communications Strategy 2012-2016
- Resource Mobilization Strategy 2017-2021
- UN Coherence Fund Guidelines Albania 2012-2016 (revised Jan. 2013)
- JEC Minutes 2017-2020
- RCAR 2017-2020
- UNCT WorkPlan 2017-2020
- UNSDCF 2022-2026 Roadmap
- UNCT-SWAP Scorecard, Assessment Results and Action Plan, United Nations Country Team, Albania, December 2019
- UN Agencies evaluations or mid-term reviews (e.g., Leave No one Behind Mid-Term Review, Evaluation of Swedish Support to One UN for Gender Equality Work 2012-2017, Coherence Fund review, etc.
- National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020
- Ministry of Finance – Albania Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2017-2019
- EC - Albania Progress Reports 2017-2020
- EU Country Strategy Albania – 2014-2020
- Budget Analysis of SDG Related Spending in Albania: 2015 - 2017
- MAPS Report 2018
- VNR 2018
- SDG mainstreaming through the National Strategy for Integration and Development 2015-2020 (NSDI II)
- Government of Albania Economic Reform Programme 2019-2021
- GoA Economic Reform Programme 2018-2020
- GoA Economic Reform Programme 2016-2018

Guidance material related to UNDAF evaluations

- UNDAF Guidance, UNDG, 2017 -- <https://undg.org/document/2017-UNDAF-guidance/>
- UNDAF Companion Guidance -- <https://undg.org/programme/undaf-companion-guidances/>
- Theory of Change, UNDAF Companion Guide, UNDG, 2017
- UNDG Guidance and Policies on Programme, UNDG, 2017 -- <https://undg.org/programme/undg-guidance-on-programing/>
- Programming principles, UNDAF companion Guide, UNDG, 2017
- UNDG Guidance and Policies on Human Rights -- <https://undg.org/human-rights/>
- UNDG Guidance and Policies on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, and the Gender scorecard -- <https://undg.org/programme/gender-equality-and-empowerment-of-women/>

- Revised UNDAF Interim Guidelines 2016, and UNDAF Guidelines 2010, and other guidance material on strategic positioning, 2010-2016
- Progress report guidance (2010)
- UNDG Toolkit
- Key Messages on DaO (March 2014)
- Standard Operating Procedures for Countries Wishing to Adopt the “Delivering as one” Approach, UNDG (August 2013)
- UNDG Plan of Action for headquarters (February 2014), with 55 ideas for action.
- New DaO Guidance on One Programme, Operations, Communication, etc. (Integrated package of support, and concrete examples which could be useful)
- UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation, 2016
- UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System, 2008
- Frequently Asked Questions for UNDAF Evaluations, UNEG, 2010
- Quality Checklist for Evaluation TOR and Inception Reports, UNEG, 2010
- Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports, UNEG, 2010
- UNEG Guidance on Preparing TORs for UNDAF Evaluations, 2012
- Guidance Note on the Application of the Programming Principles to the UNDAF, 2010
- Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, UNEG Guide, 2014 -- <http://uneval.org/document/detail/1616>
- Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation – Towards UNEG Guidance, 2011
- 2015 Evaluation Handbook on How to Manage Gender Responsive Evaluation (www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/4/un-women-evaluation-handbook-how-to-manage-gender-responsive-evaluation).
- A Manager’s Guide to Gender Equality and Human Rights Responsive Evaluation, Identifying Stakeholders and Reference Groups, UN Women
- Resource Book for Mainstreaming Gender in UN Common Programming at the Country Level, UNDG, July 2018
- Resource Book for Mainstreaming Gender in UN Common Programming at the Country Level, UNDG, July 2014 (previous version)
- Gender marker guidance under UN Info and related guidance for UNCT, 2019
- Gender Equality Marker, Guidance Note, UNDG, September 2013 (previous version)
- UNEG Guidance on Preparing Management responses to UNDAF Evaluations, 2012
- Outcome-Level Evaluation, A companion Guide to the Handbook on Planning and Evaluating for Development Results, for Programme Units and Evaluators, UNDP, 2011 (especially Sections 5, 6 and 7)
- Handbook on Planning and Evaluating for Development Results, UNDP, 2009 (in particular Chapter 7)
- Contribution analysis: An approach to exploring cause and effect, ILAC Brief No 16, John Mayne, May 2008
- Planning Evaluability Assessments, A Synthesis of the Literature with Recommendations, Report of a study commissioned by the Department for International Development (DFID), Working Paper 40, Dr Rick Davies, October 2013.
- How to Design and Manage Equity-focused Evaluation, UNICEF (especially Sections 4, 5 and 7)
- Evaluation for Equitable Development Results, UNICEF (in particular Part 2)
- Non-Resident Agencies material on UNSDG Website
- Better Criteria for Better Evaluation, Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use, OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, December 2019.

UN Reform

- Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet, Report of the Secretary-General, 21 January 2017, A/72/684–E/2018/7, (pages 12-13 among others)
- 2016 JIU Study on the UNDAF and QCPR study on RBM
- 2012 QCPR studies on UNDAF, RBM, RC System, Business practices, Emerging issues
- QCPR Secretary-general’s Reports, and General Assembly Resolution
- Independent Evaluation of Delivering as One.

ANNEX 5

Evaluation Mission – Agenda of e-meetings

Agenda OF E- MEETINGS

UN Evaluation mission

27 April - 15 May 2020

Tirana, Albania

Note: Given the current Covid- 19 pandemic circumstances and restrictions for in-country travel, all the below listed meetings will be organized online.

MEMBERS OF THE EVALUATION TEAM:

UN Evaluation team

Mr. Christian Privat, International Consultant

Ms. Sabina Ymeri, National Consultant

Monday, 27 April

9:00-9:55 Meeting with Mr. Brian Williams, UN Resident Coordinator

MEETING WITH UN OUTCOME CO-CHAIRS:

10:00-10:50 Ms. Limya Eltayeb, UNDP Representative
Mr. Michele Ribbotta, UN Women Representative

11:00-11:50 Mr. Roberto De Bernardi, UNICEF Representative
Ms. Emanuela Bello, UNFPA Head of Office

14:00-14:50 Mr. Arben Kipi, FAO Assistant Representative
Ms. Zhulieta Harasani, ILO National Coordinator
Mr. Ilir Halilaj, FAO Programme Officer,

15:00-15:50 Ms. Limya Eltayeb, UNDP Representative
Ms. Sonja Gerber, UNEP Regional Coordinator

Tuesday, 28 April

11:00-11:50 Meeting with UN RCO
Ms. Fioralba Shkodra, Head of UNRCO
Ms. Azeta Collaku, Programme Analyst

Wednesday, 29 April (Double Meetings to be divided between consultants)

MEETING WITH GOVERNMENT OUTCOME CO-CHAIRS & OTHER KEY PARTNERS

- 09:30-10:20 Meeting with Ms. Ornela Cuci, Deputy Minister MoTE
- 10:30-11:20 Meeting with Ms. Dajna Sorensen, Deputy Minister MoFE
- 11:30-13:00 Meeting Ms. Erinda Ballanca, Ombudsman with participation of Ms. Vilma Shurdha and Ms. Etleva Sheshi, People Advocate Office.
Meeting with Mr. Robert Gajda, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner with participation of Ms. Brunilda Menalla and Ms. Ardjana Hala from the Office of the Anti-discrimination commissioner
- 14:30-15:20 Meeting with Director INSTAT, Ms Elsa Dhuli and former Director, current General Director of Tax Office, Ms. Delina Ibrahimaj
- 16:00–16:50 Meeting with Ms. Rovena Voda, Deputy Minister Mol
Meeting with Ms. Romina Kuko, Deputy Minister Mol

Thursday, 30 April (Double Meetings to be divided between consultants)

- 09:30-10:20 Meeting with Mr. Enea Hoti, General Secretary and Ms. Lorena Pullumbi, Chief of Cabinet MoARD

MEETING WITH GOVERNMENT OUTCOME/OUTPUT TECHNICAL MEMBERS

- 11:00-12:00 Ms. Brunilda Minarolli, Director of HR and Reporting, MEFA
Mr. Bekim Murati, Director of Agency for Support to Local Government, Mol
Ms. Tetis Lubonja, Director of Delivery Unit and/or Elona Hoxha, Director of Policies, MoJ
Mr. Denar Biba, Deputy Chair of CEC
- 12:30-13:30 Ms. Mejvis Kola, Advisor, Ms. Merita Xhafaj, General Director, Ms. Brunilda Dervishaj, Head of Gender Unit, MOHSP
Ms. Zamira Gjini, Director, Ms. Tatjana Vucani, Specialist, Pre-University Education MoESY
Mr. Gerti Janaqi, Director of Institute for Development Education
Ms. Vilma Tomco, General Director of AKCESK
- Ms. Silvana Alimadhi, Head of Domestic Violence and Juveniles sector at the General Directorate of Albanian Police
- 14:30-15:30 Meeting with Mr. Majlinda Dhuka, Director Department for Development and Good Governance

Monday, 4 May (Double Meetings to be divided between consultants)

- 09:30-10:30 Meeting with Parliament of Albania
Deputy Speaker - Ms Vasilika Hysi
Chair of the parliamentary sub-committee on GE and prevention of VAW and members- Ms. Eglantina Gjermeni
Parliamentary Friends of Children Caucus – Ardiana Jaku
Klodeta Dibra
Ermonela Felaj
Ms. Elona Gjebrea

- 09:30-10:30 Continue Meetings with Government Outcome/Output Technical Members
Mr. Gentian Opre, Budget Director, MoFE
Mr. Fran Brahimi, Director of Local Finances, MoFE
Mr. Pjerin Shoshi, Director of Projects, MoTE
Mr. Alfred Bundo, Director of Projects, and Mr. Gjergj Simaku, Director of Policies, MoIE
- 11:00-12:00 Meeting with Ms. Klodiana Marika, Director of Biodiversity and Protected Areas, MoTE
- 11:00-12:00 Meeting with Mayors and/or Deputy Mayors of Albanian Municipalities – 5-6 mayors
Mr. Gledian Llatja, Mayor of Elbasan with participation of Ms. Marsida Sejдини, local DV coordinator
Ms. Voltana Ademi, Mayor of Shkodra with participation of Mr. Filip Vila, Head of Social Services
Mr. Sotiraq Filo, Mayor of Korca with participation of Mr. Ilir Zguri, Head of Social Services
Ms. Anisa Ruseti – Deputy Mayor, Tirana Municipality with participation of Ms. Aida Shehu and Ms. Nadire Myrta
- 14:00-15:30 Meeting with national Civil Society Organizations (Double Meetings to be divided between consultants)

Outcome 1

Ms. Raimonda Bozo, Tirana Legal Aid Society
Ms. Aurela Anastasi, Centre for Legal Civic Initiative
Ms. Bajana Cevoli, Executive Director of Women, Peace and Security
Mr. Agron Haxhimali Albanian Association of Municipalities, Executive Director
Mr. Auron Pasha, IDRA Research and Consulting
Mr. Satiraq Hroni Executive Director, IDM
Ms. Blerina Xhani independent GRB and PFM expert

For surveys

Ms. Adelina Farrici Association for Local Autonomy, Executive Director
Ms. Ani Plaku, independent statistics expert
Ms. Eralda Methasani - Expert for the NAP on UNSCR1325
Mr. Remzi Lani, Media Institute
Ms. Dorian Matlija, Executive Director, Res Publika

Outcome 2

Ms. Elma Tershana, Executive Director, Child Rights Observatory
Ms., Country Representative, Terre des Hommes
Ms. Mirela Arqimandriti, Gender Alliance for Development Centre (GADC)
Ms. Mirela Bogdani, Head of National Network of Alliance of Women Councilors
Ms. Fabiola Egro, Albanian Community Centre - Qendra Komunitare
Mr. Mirgit Vataj, Albanian National Child Helpline (ALO 116)
Ms. Anila Meço, Country Director, Save the Children
Ms. Manjola Veizi, Roma Women's Rights Center
Ms. Blerta Cani, ADRF

For surveys

Ms. Vera Remskar, Director Nuk je vetem –
Mr. Blendi Dibra, Deputy Chair, National Council for Civil Society
Ms. Delina Nano, Executive Director of IPSED (under civil society)
Ms. Blerina Metaj, Albanian Coalition for Promotion of Women and Youth in Politics
Ms. Liliana Dango, Center for Community Services
Mr. Edmond Dragoti, Institute of Public Opinion Studies
Ms. Liliana Dango, Executive Director, National Center for Community Services (NCCS)
Ms. Suela Kusi, Albanian Institute for Social Innovation
Ms. Eglantina Bardhi, Executive Director, Together for Life
Ms. Eleni Jacari, Executive Director, Me, the Woman
Mr. Besim Nuri, Manager of Health for All Project
Ms. Xheni Karaj, Aleanca LGBT
Ms. Edlira Haxhiymeri, Shelter for Women and Girls
Ms. Ines Leskaj, Albanian Women's Empowerment Network
Ms. Gertjana Hasallaj Woman's Forum Elbasan
Ms. Aferdita Prroni, Human Rights iun Democracy Center
Ms. Ana Majko, Director of Nisma per ndryshim Shoqeror

16:00-17:00 Meeting with national Civil Society Organizations (Double Meetings to be divided between consultants)

Outcome 3

Ms. Mirela Koci, AULEDA
Ms. Arta Dollani, Director of the Instituti i Monumenteve të Kulturës "Gani Strazimiri" IMK
Ms. Evelina Azizaj, Albanian Network for Rural Development
Ms. Eldisa Lloshi, Institute for Change and Leadership in Albania
Mr. Edvin Zhllima, DSA
Mr. Petrit Dobi, RASP (Rural Associations Support Program)

Outcome 4

Mr. Mihallaq Qirjo, Regional Environment Center
Ms. Marieta Mima, Environmental Center for Administration and Technology
Mr. Alban Ibraliu, NGO "For sustainable development"

Tuesday, 5 May

Meeting with Development Partners
Partners to invite other staff from their offices to the call as they see fit.

9:00-09:50 Meeting with Sweden - Ms. Petra Burcher, Deputy Head of Mission/Head of Development Cooperation

10:00-10:50 Meeting with Mr. Nino Merola, Head of Italian Cooperation

11:00-11:50 Meeting with Switzerland - Mr. Patrik Meier, DHOM

12:00-13:00 Meeting with Private Sector representatives- ICC, Telekom
Ms. Arla Tushe, Intesa San Paolo Bank
Ms. Gentiana Susaj, Aikido Albania
Ms. Lindita Shomo, CEO, EasyPay shpk
Ms. Tahsin Yilmaz, CEO ALBTelecom

- 15:00-16:00 Meeting with EU – Mr. Mario Mariani, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation
- Meeting with CoE - Mr. Jutta Gutzkow, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Tirana
- USA – Ms. Michaela Meredith, USAID Representative
- World Bank – Ms. Mariam Salim, World Bank Country Director
- OSCE – Mr. Robert Wilton, Deputy Ambassador, OSCE
- UK – Mr. Jason Ivory, Deputy Head of Embassy of UK
- Croatia – Mr. Zlatko Kramaric, Ambassador
- Austria – Ms. Simone Ungersboeck, Head of ADA
- GIZ – Ms. Sonja Kurz, Director, GIZ Office Albania
- Ms. Christina Vasak, Ambassador
- Czech – Mr. Jaroslav Ludva, Ambassador
- Netherlands - Guusje Korthals Altes, Ambassador

May 6

- 09:30-11:00 Meeting with right-holders/immediate beneficiaries (UNICEF, UN WOMEN, UNDP, UNFPA)
- Ms. Alma Katragjini, DV Specialist, Tirana Police Directorate, Albania State Police
- Ms. Edlira Teferici, former Diversity Specialist, General Directorate of Albanian State Police
- Ms. Laura Talo, GRB beneficiary as a result of engendering vocational education budgets
- Ms. Lyto Alliu – beneficiary from Woman’s Forum of Elbasan on grassroots activism (EVAW work)
- Ms. Luljeta Dollani – administrative unit of Labinot Fushe, beneficiary of capacity building from UN Women and its partner (EVAW work)
- Ms. Dritmira Gremi – beneficiary from Woman’s Forum of Elbasan on grassroots activism (EVAW work)
- Ms. Miranda Cenameti – beneficiary of services by UN Women partner HRDC (EVAW work)
- 11:30-12:30 Meeting with Ms. Bardhylka Kospiri, Deputy Minister together with Ms. Merita Xhafaj, General Director, MoHSP
- 15.00-16:00 Meeting with GTRG

Tuesday, May 12

Meeting on Programmatic Areas with UN Outcome Groups Members

- 10:00-11:30 Outcome 1 Governance and Rule of Law
- 12:00-13:30 Outcome 2 Social Cohesion
- 14:00-15:30 Outcome 3 Economic Growth, Labour and Agriculture
- 16:00-17:30 Outcome 4 Environment and Climate Change

Wednesday, May 13

11:00-12:00 Meeting with previous JEC Government Co-Chair Ms. Senida Mesi

14:00-15:00 Meeting with DPM's Cabinet, Ms. Oriana Arapi, Director Policies, DDGG

Follow – up meetings with interagency bodies, if needed

Friday, May 15

11:00-12:00 Debriefing Meeting with UN Resident Coordinator and UN RCO

Thursday, June 11

10:00-11:00 Wrap-up and debriefing meeting with UNCT

ANNEX 6

Biography of consultants

Mr. Christian Privat, International Consultant
cprivat8@gmail.com

Christian Privat is an international consultant who specializes in sustainable human development. He has significant experience in conducting evaluations of development programmes for the United Nations. He focuses on the evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), Country programmes, Joint Programmes, Programmes and Projects, Delivering as One, and cross cutting issues, especially the Human Rights-based Approach (HRBA) and Gender Equality.

He has 24 years of experience with the UN System, in the development area (14 years in Evaluation, 10 years in other areas). He has significant experience with the UN Development System at field level, and with many UN agencies and Departments (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, ILO, UNDEF, UNDESA, UNOHCHR, and UNOSSC), in addition to his frequent work with UN Country Teams.

He conducted 15 Evaluations and Mid-Term Reviews of the UNDAF, in a variety of countries and regions: Ghana, Peru (2 assignments), Egypt, Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Benin, Mexico, Nigeria, Tajikistan, Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean States, Montenegro, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan (2).

He also conducted 6 Mid-Term and Final Evaluations of Joint Programmes of the MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F): four on Youth, Employment and Migration (Peru, Paraguay and Costa Rica twice), one on Culture and Development (Honduras), and one on Conflict Prevention and Peace Building (Haiti). Moreover, he has conducted the MDG-F Country Evaluation in Mauritania, which was one of the nine Focus Countries of the Fund.

He also conducted, for UNICEF, a Country Programme Evaluation in Egypt, two “Strategic Moment of Reflection” (SMR) in Ghana, Malawi and Turkey, in addition to a Mid-Term Review in Cuba. He also conducted two other Country Programme Evaluations for UNDP (Montenegro) and OHCHR (Mexico).

He also prepared a (UNDAF-related) Human Rights-based Country Analysis in Ukraine and Tajikistan, as well as a Country Analysis in Kuwait.

He also undertook a study on “Strengthening the presence, coherence and strategic positioning of the UN in Kuwait, and Delivering as One lessons learned”.

He worked with UNDESA for the QCPR (Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities in the area of development) of the UN General Assembly, especially on the UNDAF and Results-Based Management studies.

He paid particular attention to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment and Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), especially in all his UNDAF and Joint Programme evaluations.

He conducted these assignments in a multitude of countries and regions in the world, especially Latin and Central America, Africa, the Middle East, the CEE/CIS region and Central Asia.

Moreover, he worked as Programme Officer for UNICEF Cuba, and as a Consultant and Programme Officer for UNICEF NYHQ, in the Evaluation Office, the Programme Division, the Division of Policy and Planning, the Programme Funding Office, and the Office of the Executive Director.

Christian Privat has a Master's degree in International Administration and International Law from the University of Paris II, a Bachelor's degree (*Laurea*) in Political Science and International Relations from the University of Florence (Italy), and a Bachelor's degree in Administration, Economic and Social Sciences from the University of Saint-Etienne (France). He also took 10 courses on Human Rights at Columbia University, at the Law School, School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), and Center for the Study of Human Rights. Christian has additionally received training on leading participatory workshops, which he routinely incorporates into his evaluation and strategic planning work. He is a French native speaker and is fluent in English, Spanish and Italian.

Sabina Ymeri, National Consultant
Sabina.ymeri@gmail.com

Sabina Ymeri has 15 years of professional experience in development and monitoring of public policies, governance and institution building. She has worked with technical assistance programmes for the European Commission, World Bank, UNDP, Swiss Development Cooperation, Swedish government, and other partners and has proven successful expertise in strategic planning and public finance, strengthening governance and institutional capacity, economic development, employment and social policy, sector performance evaluations and European Integration processes. Sabina has solid experience in programme identification and formulation, project and programme assessment and evaluation, monitoring and evaluation; qualitative and quantitative analysis as well as sector budget support experience and excellent knowledge of EU pre-accession assistance mechanisms.

Sabina is familiar with the UN system. She has been a team member for the Evaluation of the Albania Programme of Cooperation (UNDAF) 2012 – 2016; Independent Country Programme Review 2007 – 2015 for UNDP, assessing achievements and contribution of the UNDP programme between 2007 – 2015 to the national development objectives and in capacity development within government and non-governmental stakeholders. Previously she was part of the first Country Led Evaluation of the Delivery as One Un in 2010. She has also evaluated UN Joint Programmes and UN agency implemented projects.

She has conducted a number of other strategic and programmatic reviews for other development partners. Recently Sabina led a mid-term review of USAID programme in support of local government and decentralization in Ukraine, has been a key expert for the Interim and Meta Evaluation of IPA Assistance to Western Balkan in 2012 – 2013 and the first Interim Evaluation of IPA Assistance to Albania and Kosovo (2010). Sabina has also evaluated project and programmes for in Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Ukraine and regional Western Balkans programmes. Sabina has a Master's Degree in Economics and is fluent in English and Italian.

