

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



# MIDTERM REVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN 2018–2021

Where We Are, Where We're Going

“**W**hen we embarked on our ambitious Strategic Plan two years ago, we could not have foreseen the extraordinary challenges the COVID-19 pandemic would present. I believe our rapid action to help countries prepare, respond, and recover—embedded in the larger UN System response—is proving the value of the transformation that the Strategic Plan set in motion. That transformation is by no means complete, and this review recognizes that we still have much to do. But glimpses into today’s UNDP—which is delivering in crisis and fragile settings, reaching those furthest behind and thinking afresh on inequalities through our HDR 2019—show how we’re working differently to meet today’s development needs, through digital approaches, our new accelerator labs and more.



**Achim Steiner**  
UNDP Administrator

UNDP/Positive Mass Films

# Summary of Strategic Plan 2018–2021



## MAKING UNDP REFORM-READY...

The Strategic Plan prepared UNDP for what Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed called “the biggest transformation of the UN development system in history”. It readied our country offices for stronger engagement in coherent UN planning and collaboration towards shared results. It created new global and country-level platforms to enhance our support to the 2030 Agenda. And it made these assets available to the whole UN System, strengthening our joint capacity to deliver the integrated support countries want.



## ...AND FUTURE-FOCUSED

The Strategic Plan set UNDP on the path towards #NextGenUNDP, changing the way we think, invest, manage and deliver, paving the way for innovations like SDG Impact and the accelerator labs and for evolving policy on key issues like inequality, governance and digitalization. The plan looks to the future and seeks to equip UNDP to respond to a fast-changing development landscape.

## RATIONALE

The Strategic Plan is anchored in the 2030 Agenda and committed to the principles of universality, equality and leaving no-one behind.

## UNDP’S ROLE

- » Working in partnership with governments, civil society and the private sector
- » Catalysing and facilitating support from the UN System

## OBJECTIVES

**Achieve tangible progress by 2021 on:**

- » eradicating poverty and keeping people out of poverty
- » accelerating structural transformations for sustainable development, especially through innovative solutions with multiplier effects across the SDGs
- » building resilience to crises and shocks

**Adapt better to different country contexts, working across:**

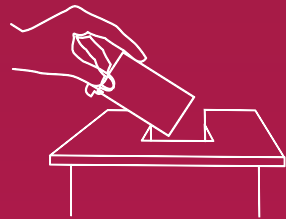
- » 3 development settings
- » 6 Signature Solutions
- » Country Support Platforms (CSPs)
- » Global Policy Network (GPN)
- » an improved business model

**Transform UNDP into:**

- » a more nimble, innovative thought leader
- » a more effective, efficient organization
- » a trusted partner in a complex, evolving development landscape

# Results 2018–2019

With UNDP support, millions of people improved their lives



**28 MILLION**

new voters were registered in  
**23 countries**, 48% of them women



**48 MILLION**

people had better access to  
basic services, **23.4 million**  
of them women



UNDP supported stronger  
human rights systems in over

**50 COUNTRIES**

and **7 million people** in  
**27 countries** gained  
access to justice



**54 COUNTRIES**

mainstreamed climate adaptation  
and disaster risk reduction in  
their development plans



**1.2 MILLION**

rural households and  
**1.4 million households headed**  
by women gained access to  
clean, affordable and  
sustainable energy



**74 COUNTRIES**

integrated gender into  
environmental and climate policies;  
**97 countries** strengthened women's  
leadership in natural resource  
management



**2.5 MILLION**

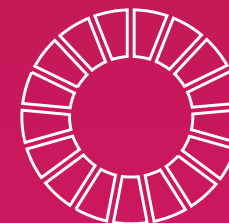
people gained access to early  
warning systems and climate or  
disaster information



Management of

**40 MILLION**

protected hectares in  
**55 countries** was improved;  
**5 MILLION** hectares of forest  
in **55 countries** were  
managed sustainably



**\$107 MILLION**

in public financing and  
**\$21 million in private**  
financing were  
leveraged for the SDGs  
in 11 countries

# Right on track

Hitting our development targets



## BUILDING BETTER GOVERNMENT THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

**Governance** was the single largest area of investment for UNDP, with **25% of expenditure** coming from programme countries themselves.



## ACHIEVING OUR STRATEGIC PLAN TARGETS

**74% of development outputs** reached or exceeded over **90% of the targeted milestones**

**86% of organizational outputs** reached or exceeded over **90% of the targeted milestones**

UNDP met or exceeded **88% of performance indicators** in the UN System-Wide **Action Plan 2.0 on Gender**



## TRACKING AGAINST PLANNED RESOURCES AND EXPENDITURE

**\$14.9 billion in resources**  
= 97% of midterm planned level

**\$9 billion is programme expenditure only**  
= 43% of projected four-year resource plan



## BUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE AROUND THE WORLD

UNDP is the top recipient of financing from the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Some **\$104 million of PBF** expenditure (40% of the total) went through UNDP in 2018–2019.



## LEVERAGING DEVELOPMENT FUNDS TO TACKLE THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

UNDP enabled countries to access over **\$1 billion** from vertical funds in 2018–2019, leveraging an additional **\$1.2 billion** of private and public finance for **91 countries**.

Some **\$100 million** for over 50 countries was mobilized from the Global Environment Facility and other climate funds as the entry point for broader development impact.

# How it works

## Operating across different areas

- » UNDP is a trusted partner in a **complex and evolving development** landscape.
- » Governments want to work with UNDP when and where **integrated solutions are the only answer**.
- » UNDP works across and between **areas, platforms, sectors, networks, Signature Solutions** and **SDGs**.

### MULTIDIMENSIONAL DELIVERY: SOME EXAMPLES

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP	POLICY AND PLANNING	IMPLEMENTATION	SCALE AND ACCELERATION
UN coherence: working with UNCT partners on new Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks			
Human Development Report 2019 reveals disparities hidden behind averages to help reach those furthest behind	Country Support Platforms: designed to catalyse rapid change at population scale, sustainably		Accelerator Labs: established across 78 countries in 12 months, testing new ways of working to address complex challenges
Scaling Fences: better understanding of the relationship between migration and development	SDG integration team trialing innovative working methods to build whole-of-society responses to large-scale challenges		
Journey to Extremism: examining how to prevent and respond to violent extremism in Africa	New Crisis Bureau and a new prevention offer enhances delivery in crisis settings and strengthens humanitarian–development–peacebuilding nexus		
Global Knowledge Index: fostering knowledge-based economic transformation in the Arab region	Global Policy Network: 8,800 colleagues connected in communities of practice, plus 5,000 external experts in 110 areas of expertise	Country Investment Facility: grants to 52 country offices to kickstart innovation and platforms	
Strengthening Social Cohesion, Engaging with Insider Mediators, and Invisible Women: think pieces on conflict prevention and peacebuilding		UN coherence: country programmes focus more strongly on collective results	Digitalization: a digital strategy, testing new programme ventures, investing in organizational digital literacy and capacity
		SDG Impact: accelerating private-sector investment towards the SDGs	
			Project Catalyst: sparked establishment of Secretary-General’s Digital Financing Task Force, co-chaired by UNDP, convening private- and public-sector leaders to explore how digital financing can advance the SDGs

# Signature Solutions and the SDGs

## Achieving greater development impact through integration

The Signature Solutions address complexity in a systemic way by managing risks and exploiting synergies across sectors to deliver transformative change across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UNDP supports the collective efforts of UNCTs through its integration offer: a programmatic function offered to the country to cocreate and operationalize development solutions across sectors in pursuit of common goals. The value of integration is demonstrated by performance analysis showing that applying multiple Signature Solutions to 30% to 60% of country programme outputs contributes to higher results across the whole programme.



# Country Support Platforms

Engines of integration

## COUNTRY SUPPORT PLATFORMS BRING EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE TOGETHER



### ACTORS

(government, private sector, civil society organizations, academia, etc.)



### METHODOLOGIES



### INTERCONNECTED ACTIONS

(a portfolio of products, processes, technologies and services)



### SOLVE COMPLEX SOCIETAL PROBLEMS

(a more experimental and systemic approach to addressing the SDGs)

Country Support Platforms (CSPs) expand the number and nature of actors with which UNDP usually connects. These are then invited to take part in cocreating new responses to complex challenges.



For example, the urban platforms in **Pakistan**—which began in Islamabad and have now been replicated in all the country’s major cities—have generated space for **cocreating new solutions** to SDG challenges like waste management and water conservation. Municipalities, regional governments, companies, social entities and universities are all participating.



CSPs benefit greatly from a systemic approach to **prototyping and experimentation**, a hallmark of real innovation. For example, the **North Macedonia** country office commented that “before moving on to the full implementation or replication of one of the proposed solutions, we test several solutions to check their effectiveness. Prototypes might fail but it’s better to have spent a small amount of money and time on designing a bad solution than to rush into a full pledge and end up with a disaster.”



In **Somalia**, the country office has added several **participatory opportunities** to the platform, through which ideas are prioritized and possible solutions to different problems are sought collaboratively. This is particularly important in view of Somalia’s current statebuilding objectives, which include building bridges between civic engagement projects and local government, such as in Mogadishu.



**Paraguay’s** CSP, which is working on sustainable beef and soya production, has structured a **listening process** with all the actors involved in its value chain. WhatsApp groups created for each of the platforms have improved internal communication, while social media, radio and TV have generated broader public interest in the platforms. A beef producer in Paraguay commented that “the dynamics of power disappear in these spaces of dialogue, not completely, but significantly. The biggest challenge is always to sit down first, then talk. That’s there where the major challenge usually comes: building a joint vision that is truly accepted by both sides, by those who are involved in the platform.”

# Global Policy Network

## Activating UNDP's integrated expertise and solutions platform

We are harnessing the collective wealth of UNDP's vast on-the-ground experience and global thought leadership through our new communities of practice, networked learning and knowledge platforms and rapid skills-matching and deployment.

Below are examples of the Global Policy Network (GPN) in action: mobilizing rapid, tailored, comprehensive support and solutions and connecting UNDP's global and local expertise to accelerate countries' progress towards the SDGs.



### RISING UP FOR SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS)

- An upgraded offer of support to SIDS to realize the goals of the SAMOA Pathway and 2030 Agenda, building on multipliers to accelerate progress towards the SDGs
- Integrated support across three service lines: climate action, blue economies and digital transformation
- Improved access to finance as a key enabler, including through innovative blended finance approaches, risk-mitigating solutions like disaster insurance, and blue bonds
- Promoting nature-based solutions to sustainable development
- Grounded in partnerships with IFIs, UN System, bilateral and private-sector partners
- Leveraging extensive GPN capacities: 1,200 UNDP staff in SIDS plus expertise from the Global Centre for Technology, Innovation and Sustainable Development in Singapore and others



### SDG HOTSPOTS IN MALAWI

- Geospatial mapping shows where different vulnerabilities overlap: food security, resilience to flooding, child malnutrition and infant mortality
- Mapping of gaps in SDG enablers: weak data, weak implementation capabilities and insufficient financing
- Composite picture shows hotspots where multiple SDG gaps, exclusion and deprivation intersect
- Integrated approach targets the hotspots
- Connections with experts in geospatial mapping and multidimensional poverty eradication through the GPN



### NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS IN PERU

- Accelerating sustainable development for indigenous peoples in the Amazon, who represent 25% of Peru's population
- Partnering with the National Park Service of Peru
- Integrated solutions through community-level governance, climate change-resilient livelihood strategies and alliances for conservation and development
- Over three years, family incomes increased by 160% and 60% in Tuntanain and Amaraeri reserves; increased protein consumption reduced risk of child malnutrition
- UNDP advised government on scaling up to cover a greater area: government action plan and \$1.4 billion budget to address development gaps in oil-producing areas through nature-based strategies underpinning investments in infrastructure, health, education and livelihoods
- GPN facilitated linkages with sustainable environmental management in other regions to share lessons learned



### FUNDING FACILITY FOR STABILIZATION IN IRAQ

- Integrated approach across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus
- Supports immediate recovery while building longer-term resilience
- Integrates livelihood interventions (cash-for-work, business grants) with investment in infrastructure (electricity, water, roads and bridges, hospitals, schools and housing)
- 8.5 million Iraqis (49% women) have benefited from access to basic services since 2015
- 4.6 million internally displaced peoples have returned

# Improved business model

Becoming more effective and efficient

UNDP has become stronger and more agile, ready to take on new, unpredictable challenges

## INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE



- Balanced budget in 2019 for 3rd consecutive year
- No need to draw on \$49 million approved by Executive Board for management activities
- Savings included \$11.7 million on HQ office costs and \$7.5 million on travel
- Increased productivity: 91 cents on the dollar spent on development (up from 88 in 2017)
- Additional \$19.5 million shifted from institutional budget to development
- 14th consecutive clean audit from UN Board of Auditors in 2018

## STREAMLINED BUSINESS PROCESSES



- 151 business processes have been shortened or improved, and some business units have been repositioned to be closer to their clients
- Global shared services (“clustering”) is consolidating 57 country office management processes, with estimated savings of up to \$15 million by 2021
- Digital innovations: a new travel request system halved processing times and saved 109,000 hours in 2019; the Atlas Mobile app enables managers to approve transactions direct from their phones

## #NEXTGENUNDP WORKFORCE



- People for 2030: excellence, diversity, safety at work and flexible careers
- Action to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment
- Gender parity achieved among staff and among resident representatives
- Imaginative recruitment: 72% of Accelerator Labs staff new to UN, 24% returnees
- Modernizing skills: training in digital literacy (20% of staff), Islamic finance, risk management

## DIGITALIZATION



- New digital strategy and Chief Digital Officer
- 7 “lighthouse initiatives”, including using blockchain for supply-chain transparency
- Artificial intelligence used to generate insights to support evidence-based policy and programme design

## GREENING



- UNDP is carbon-neutral: carbon footprint efforts save \$600,000 in energy costs every year
- Greening UNDP Moonshot to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2025 and 50% by 2030
- 3,600 solar panels generating 1,500 MWh/year provided to country offices and UN agencies

# Stronger together

Two years on, the changes envisioned in the Strategic Plan are making an impact by strengthening UNDP’s core development capacities and making us a more effective partner in the collective UN effort.

## TEAMWORK

- Coordination function successfully transferred to UN Secretariat by deadline of 1 January 2019 with 63 staff seconded as Resident Coordinators (RCs) at the time
- New cadre of 127 resident representatives (RRs) and 144 deputies selected and appointed in record time
- Concrete steps to implement new Management and Accountability Framework: revision of RR job description and changes to performance management systems to recognize system-wide responsibilities of RRs and the new role of RCs
- 73% of partners see UNDP as supporting RCs to strategically position UN at country level and advocating for a common UN position on important development issues

## SYSTEM-WIDE PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

- Multidisciplinary teams heavily engaged in drafting Common Country Analyses and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs): 79% of governments and 70% of UN entities are happy with UNDP’s contribution to analysis and evidence underpinning UN’s work in the country; 82% of governments see UNDP as providing integrated solutions in collaboration with others
- Repositioned programme appraisal process and revised Country Programme Document template
- Industry-standard certification to strengthen staff capacities for effective programme management in a reform environment

## FUNDING

- Largest single UN entity contributor to RC System (\$10.3 million annually)
- \$2.5 million in income from the 1% levy in 2019 transferred to the Special Purpose Trust Fund

## SERVING OUR CLIENTS

- Principal service provider for the RC System, administering \$145.9 million in 2019; new platform to track and continuously strengthen quality of services provided to RCs rated 4.23 out of 5 (May 2020)
- UN operational backbone provides business services to UN System partners across ICT, finance, HR, procurement, admin and logistics in 90% of country offices: disbursed \$3 billion in payroll, \$95 million in travel services and \$618 million in procurement; managed 200+ shared services in 2018–2019
- Developed an online platform to avoid costs, improve the quality of UNCT business operation strategies and reduce the development time of these from six months to eight weeks.



# Further to go

## Key areas for acceleration

The Strategic Plan set a high bar for success. As the preceding pages show, we've made significant progress towards its objectives. But in some areas, our results don't measure up to our goals—yet. Recognizing this is the first step towards getting where we want to be.



### A LEARNING ORGANIZATION

The 2018 evaluation of UNDP support for poverty reduction in the least developed countries (LDCs) revealed weaknesses in our approach, including a need to rethink our tools and programme design. Determined to learn from this and from the 2019 Human Development Report's focus on inequalities, we are working hard to strengthen our impact on multidimensional poverty and reorient our approach to social protection.



### LEVERAGING EXPERTISE

The tremendous expertise and experience found throughout UNDP is not always well connected. The Global Policy Network is not yet fully up and running nor is it sufficiently well networked with the Accelerator Labs, country offices, Country Support Platforms and all the parts of UNDP that need to be properly joined up to share experiences, scale up successful experiments and achieve large-scale impact.



### IMPACT AT SCALE

In response to requests from governments for more integrated support, UNDP is moving from a project- to portfolio-based approach aimed at whole-of-society solutions. This is not easy in an organization which is largely project-funded. This funding model limits our capacity to manage portfolio interventions and demonstrate larger-scale impact. It also constrains our ability to deploy staff flexibly across the organization since most staff resources are project-linked.



### INTEGRATED SUPPORT

While our Signature Solutions are designed to address complex development challenges, we have further to go in ensuring they are truly integrated to deliver results across multiple sectors. Insights from performance analysis and machine learning can help identify the most effective combinations of Signature Solutions. While 60 Country Support Platforms have been established, some are more akin to rebranding and are not yet true "integration engines".



### DIGITALIZATION

Embedding fast-changing digitalization throughout UNDP and in our programme offers is vital if we are to replicate and scale-up successful initiatives. The COVID-19 pandemic has catapulted our efforts in this direction and is providing rapid evidence of how we can best use digital approaches for impact at scale.



### GENDER EQUALITY

While the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality rates UNDP as one of the best performing agencies in 2019, we still have further to go in translating strategy into an operational framework that delivers meaningful results. Tackling the causes of gender inequality—like entrenched discriminatory norms—and ending gender-based violence, are serious challenges we must meet. Inside UNDP, we have done much to improve our working culture, including through concrete actions to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. Gender parity among staff has been maintained, but gender parity in middle management and the representation of staff from programme countries at D1 level and above still need improvement.



### A NEW BUSINESS MODEL

Streamlining business processes takes time. The "clustering" project is taking longer than hoped, partly due to the requirements of personnel regulations. Our efforts to work more with the private sector are constrained by longstanding, sometimes anachronistic, rules that sometimes slow us down.



### ROBUST FUNDING

The trend towards more flexible, pooled funding is welcome, but we have not yet reached our targets for regular (core) resources. While contributions increased from \$612 million in 2017 to \$624 million in 2018 and \$629 million in 2019, we are aiming for the \$700 million mark. Evidence shows that offices with a higher proportion of core funding achieved better development performances.

# UNDP through our partners' eyes

Ranked highly by governments, civil society and the private sector

Across different spheres of development, our partners and others value and appreciate UNDP's work:



**UN Women rates UNDP one of the top UN agency performers** on gender equality and women's empowerment



**The Accelerator Labs network won the Apolitical 2019 Global Public Service Teams of the Year** award for evidence-based policy



**UNDP won a FutureEdge 50 Award** for developing a global incident response and threat-hunting cybersecurity platform



**"Highest scorer" rank in the Global Health 50/50 Gender and Health Index**



**Rated the most transparent UN agency** by Publish What You Fund with information on over 4,500 projects worth over \$4.5 billion



**Best Practice on Leadership— Legal and Ethical Behavior given by Business Performance Improvement Resource, New Zealand**

# Investing in the future

## Consolidating progress and increasing ambition

It is difficult to look ahead with any certainty amid the extraordinary challenges of COVID-19. But this midterm review has shown how our Strategic Plan investments have made UNDP stronger and better equipped to respond to the unexpected and outlined where we intend to focus our efforts going forward.

To achieve this, we rely on our partners. Their combined support and the breadth of our partnership base are what enable UNDP to deliver greater results that add up to more than the sum of their parts. This is evidence of the value of multilateralism. The considerable support we receive from programme governments, which invest in their own development priorities through UNDP, shows their confidence in what we can deliver.

Investing in UNDP has a powerful multiplier effect. Measured simply in dollars, UNDP may be relatively small, but our work with governments and countries is the gateway to much greater sources of financing and investment. The contributions of our partners, large and small, enable us to support countries through expertise like Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) and integrated national financing frameworks. Such initiatives then become a magnet that attracts much more significant investment from sources ranging from the IFIs to regional development banks and the private sector.

As this review has shown, UNDP is moving from a project- to a portfolio-based approach, to deliver the whole-of-society solutions that governments increasingly want. Climate change, the COVID-19 response and challenges in the Sahel are all examples of where an integrated, portfolio approach is essential (and is indeed being tested).

Yet our funding model limits our capacity and flexibility to manage such portfolio interventions: only 13% of our funding comes from regular (or core) resources, and our non-core resources are largely earmarked. To provide the kind of integrated support that is needed, and to achieve impact at scale, flexible, predictable funding is vital, as the Secretary-General's Funding Compact intends. That is why our future vision includes increasing the proportion of core to non-core funding, attracting more government financing and thematic and pooled funding and continuing to diversify our partnership base.

The next two years will see us redoubling our efforts to reach the goals of the Strategic Plan and create the *#NextGenUNDP*, even better equipped to adapt and respond to the challenges of today and tomorrow. We hope you will join us.

## SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

3,100+ partners working with UNDP in 140 countries responded to the 2020 partnerships survey



### UNDP RELEVANCE & IMPACT

76% PERCEIVE UNDP FAVOURABLY  
63% CONSIDER IT CONTRIBUTES A "GREAT DEAL" OR "ABOVE-AVERAGE" ON GENDER  
61% CONSIDER SAME ON GOVERNANCE



### ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

PARTNERS VALUE UNDP'S PERFORMANCE WHEN IT:  
TAILORS ITS ACTIVITIES AND CAPACITIES TO NATIONAL CONTEXT AND NEEDS  
COLLABORATES WITH DEVELOPMENT ACTORS TO SOLVE COMPLEX ISSUES  
CONSULTS AND INVOLVES PARTNERS IN KEY INITIATIVES AND EVENTS  
PROVIDES QUALITY REPORTING



### AGENDA 2030

62% SEE SDG FINANCING AS THE MOST RELEVANT *#NEXTGENUNDP* INITIATIVE  
61% SEE SAME ON OUR SDG INTEGRATION OFFER.



### UN COHERENCE

75% CONSIDER UNDP ADVOCATES A COMMON UN POSITION ON IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT ISSUES  
71% SEE UNDP AS PROVIDING INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS



### UNDP CAN IMPROVE ON

ENSURING MAXIMUM VALUE OF INVESTMENTS, PROVIDING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AND ENSURING VISIBILITY OF PARTNERSHIPS



### VALUED PARTNER

80% CONSIDER UNDP A VALUED PARTNER



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