



Interim Report:
System-Wide Evaluation of the UNDS
Response to COVID-19
March 2022

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Preface

The global COVID-19 pandemic has been unrelenting in its social and economic damage. Therefore, the development crisis alarm raised by the Secretary-General in early 2020, at the onset of the pandemic, is still relevant, given the continued reversal of progress on Sustainable Development Goals.

This interim report provides evaluative evidence in real time. It combines an illustrative case study with other streams of evidence to show and analyse the response of the UN Development System to the socio-economic effects of the rapidly changing COVID-19 pandemic, enabled by the ongoing reform of the UN Development System. With its focus on a single country, the case study cannot be representative of the global situation, except where it provides evidence confirmed by other data sources. The final report, to be completed in September 2022, will draw on eight case studies, interviews, and documentary evidence to make an evaluative judgment on how the UN Development System has responded to COVID-19.

The interim report's main objective is to ensure that evaluative findings can be used in a timely manner for helping adjust and improve the ongoing pandemic response as well as the UN development reform process. Providing illustrative examples and analysis in real time may help the UN system undertake early course corrections. Importantly, it also shows Member States how their guidance and directions are translated into action and put into practice, thus providing a basis for potential refinements.

With its system-wide mandate, this evaluation provides the Member States and United Nations with an analytical perspective of the UN Development System's response to the pandemic. Such a perspective is crucial for realising an integrated and coherent UN offer at the country level that supports countries in their recovery towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

This system-wide evaluation was made possible due to collaboration and support from many colleagues. We offer special thanks to the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and UNCT in Jordan for the support to the illustrative case study. We appreciate the independent comments from the Evaluation Reference Group, comments from the UN entities evaluation offices and Donor Advisory Group, the continuous technical review by the Quality Assurance Panel, and the professionalism and hard work by the evaluation team.

An important message that stands out in this interim report is that collaboration between UN entities brings better results for countries. Therefore, the UN Development System should continue its efforts to advance the UN Development System reform process.

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Acronyms

AoI	Area of Investigation
BBB	Build Back Better
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CF	Cooperation Framework
CO	Country Office
COP 26	26th Conference of the Parties
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease-2019
COVID-19 MPTF	COVID-19 Response and Recover Multi-Partner Trust Fund
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GE	Gender Equality
GTT	Gender Task Team
HDPG	Humanitarian Development Partners Group
HOA	Heads of Agency
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Rights
IFI	International Financial Institutions
ILO	International Labour Organization
INFF	Integrated National Financial Framework
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning
LNOB	Leave no one behind
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
NCD	Non-communicable diseases
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRA	Non-Resident UN Agency
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
RC	Resident Coordinator
RC/HC	Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator Office
RG	Result Group
RO	Regional Office

SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEF	Socio-Economic Framework
SEIA	Socio-Economic Impact Assessment
SERP	Socio-Economic Response Plan
SP	Strategic Plan
SWE	System-Wide Evaluation
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UN DCO	United Nations Development Coordination Office
UN HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Program
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNCG	United Nations Communication Group
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNINFO	UN Information webpage
UNPSD	United Nations Partnership for Sustainable Development
UNSDF	United Nations Sustainable Development Framework
UNSDG	UN Sustainable Development Group
UNWRA	UN Work and Relief Agency for Palestine
UNCT-SWAP	UN Country Team System-wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization

Executive Summary

The System-Wide Evaluation

This evaluation, with its system-wide perspective, serves the essential purpose of providing an assessment of the effectiveness of the UNDS response to COVID-19, supported by an analysis of how UNDS reform may have influenced that response.¹ It will also provide an assessment of how the response has integrated core UN values of Human Rights, Gender Equality, Inclusion (including, among other vulnerable groups, persons with disabilities) and Leave No One Behind. The evaluation can help secure an effective UNDS response to COVID-19 aimed at re-gaining progress toward Agenda 2030.

The Interim Report

This interim report presents the emerging findings and recommendations arising from the completion of approximately one third of planned data collection and analysis. The emerging recommendations will be further refined and augmented during the remaining portion of the evaluation. The final report of the evaluation, in September 2022, will provide completed findings, conclusions and recommendations. The purpose of this report is to provide inputs to the Secretary General's 2022 Report on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review and, thereby, to serve as a support to Member States decision making in the Economic and Social Council Operational Activities Segment.

A Continuing Development Emergency

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a comprehensive and continuing development emergency. It has caused deep disruptions in health, education, and other basic services and has exacerbated deeply rooted inequalities with especially severe impacts for women, youth, informal workers, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. The pandemic has caused a reversal of progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. The development emergency identified by the Secretary General in early 2020 has not abated and the call for the UNDS to shift to an emergency mode has been validated.

The Country-level UNDS Response in Jordan

The Jordan UN Country Team, under the leadership of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, has achieved important results in pursuing a more coherent UNDS response to COVID-19 by strengthening a nexus approach to humanitarian and development programming and by carrying out an inclusive and unifying process to develop the Jordan Socio Economic Framework (SEF). The SEF content and process of development is, in turn, positively influencing the development of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Jordan. This process has supported the UN Country Team in its commitment to UN values of Human Rights, Gender Equality, Inclusion and Leave No One Behind. Through these mechanisms, the UNDS reform process contributed to a more cohesive offer of UNDS services.

¹ Terms of Reference Accessible at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/terms-reference-system-wide-evaluation-unds-response-covid-19>

Inception Report Accessible at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/inception-report-system-wide-evaluation-unds-response-covid-19>

Lessons from UNDS Entity Evaluations of the Response to COVID-19

The review of UNDS evaluations and lessons learning studies highlights the flexibility of UN entity working arrangements in the early days of the crisis, including reliance on accelerated use of digital methods. It also points out successes in re-purposing funding to address the crisis despite ongoing constraints. Evaluations also noted that the pandemic uncovered new opportunities, and a new imperative, to advocate for UN values while highlighting the need to overcome barriers to cross-sectoral collaboration and to reduce silos within UNDS entities. Evaluations also identify a need and an opportunity to increase inter-agency collaboration at country level.

Important Messaging in UNDS Entity Strategic Plans

UN entity Strategic Plans prepared during the pandemic endorse the characterization of COVID-19 as a "development emergency". They also reflect a strong commitment to re-gaining and/or accelerating action toward transformative results in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. While committing to an increased emphasis on joint programming, most plans lack an expressed commitment in their narratives to advance UNDS reforms as defined in Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review resolutions.

Emerging Evaluation Findings

The experience of the past two years has confirmed the depth and seriousness of the development crisis identified in early 2020 and the relevance of the five pillars of action of the UN Framework. The pandemic has also been an important test of UNDS reform. UNDS reform efforts aimed at strengthening the role of the empowered and independent Resident Coordinator have helped to support collaborative and coherent planning processes. They have enabled Socio-Economic Response Plans to contribute to more coherent Cooperation Frameworks which are better aligned with national needs and priorities. Despite this, there are continuing barriers to further progress, including issues of accountability with individual agency priorities remaining a determining factor in programme planning. There is also a need to strengthen messaging on UNDS reform from headquarters to the country office level and to better understand the roles played by different platforms in the architecture for UN Country Team coordination.

Pooled funding mechanisms such as the COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF and the Joint SDG Fund are valued by participating organizations as a mechanism for engaging in new areas of programming with the potential for catalytic effects. They have also facilitated new partnerships which may have lasting impacts on collaboration.

There is strong ownership among UN Country Teams of the guiding values of Human Rights, Gender Equality, Inclusion (including Disability Inclusion) and Leave No One Behind. There is evidence, in the Jordan case study, that a focus on vulnerable groups, including women, refugees, youth, older people, persons with disabilities and migrant workers is being integrated into key planning documents. The strength of this engagement relates to capacities across the UN Country Team: positive examples include the presence of a Human Rights Advisor in the Office of the Resident Coordinator and the establishment of an empowered interagency Gender Theme Group.

Ensuring that Socio Economic Response Plans and Cooperation Frameworks contribute to a more equitable and environmentally sustainable recovery – including action on climate change adaptation and mitigation – has been a challenge for UN Country Teams. Nonetheless, they are turning their attention to engagement on environmental sustainability and climate change with consistent encouragement by Resident Coordinators. Key questions raised include how best to integrate action on environmental sustainability within a more equitable social and economic recovery.

UN Country Teams have demonstrated an ability to learn from experience and adapt operational requirements in the immediate response to the pandemic. They have also built on progress made before and during the pandemic to improve coherence in policy development and planning processes.

Emerging Recommendations

- 1. That UNDS entities continue efforts to advance the UNDS reform process as it contributes to a more coherent response to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19, with particular emphasis on the Cooperation Framework as an instrument for collective planning, programming and accountability for the socio-economic response and an equitable and green recovery at country level.**

Rationale: There is an identified need for continued efforts to reduce competition for resources, align incentives and improve collective accountability for results at country level in order to continue advances in the coherence and effectiveness of the UNDS response.

Benefits: The primary benefit will be to avoid a loss of momentum in continuing effort to strengthen the coherence of UN Country Teams as they work to develop and implement a more cohesive response to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 and to contribute to a more equitable and sustainable recovery.

- 2. That UNDS entities prepare a supplement to their Strategic Plans to reinforce messaging on necessary action to advance progress in response to UN General Assembly resolutions on UNDS reform.**

Rationale: There remains a wide diversity and sometimes lack of uptake of resolutions on UNDS reform in reviewed Strategic Plans. By incorporating provisions on reform in a more substantive manner, UNDS entities can reinforce their importance as priorities at the highest level. This is consistent with the recommendation in by the Secretary General in his report on the functioning of the Residence Coordinator system that the chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group should prepare a UN development system reform checklist (UN 2021g, para. 153).

Expected Benefits: The primary benefit of these actions will be to reinforce messages from executive management level in UNDS entities to representatives and staff of regional and country offices regarding the need to continue to advance the UNDS reform agenda and, thereby, to improve the coherence of the UNDS response to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19. The supplements may also include including further action to strengthen the RC system and to increase commitment to pooled funding and joint policy and programme actions at country level across the full UNCT. The resulting statements would support a more effective collective response by UN Country Teams, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator as expressed through the Cooperation Framework.

- 3. Undertake a system wide review of the country level UN coordination architecture including, the Resident Coordinator's Office and results and thematic groups.**

Rationale: The evaluation has emphasized the important role of Resident Coordinators Offices and inter-agency results and thematic group structures in strengthening coordination and coherence in the UN Country Team. The effectiveness of these structures varies from country to country depending on, inter alia, the set of expertise available within the Resident Coordinators Office, the leadership provided by the Resident Coordinator and the history of UN Country Team collaboration.

Benefits: The review would identify and support good practices and further encourage a results-tested flexibility in the approaches to establishing or modifying these structures as required based on country context, in accordance with current guidance on Cooperation Frameworks.

4. Undertake a System Wide Evaluation of UNDS efforts to support an environmentally sustainable recovery and address climate change

Rationale: UN Country Teams are facing important challenges in developing a coherent approach to supporting a more equitable and greener recovery – including an effective response to climate change. The priority need for effective UNCT support to climate change adaptation and mitigation is highlighted in commitment number two (protect our planet) of *Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General* (UN 2021a). Regional and global interviews confirm that now is the time to address the most effective means of supporting an environmentally sustainable recovery that includes action on climate change.

Benefits: The proposed evaluation, would focus on identifying and validating emerging good practices at a system-wide level and sharing those practices across agencies and countries. The resulting report would be useful to the UNDS system as a whole, to Resident Coordinators and to UN Country Teams as they further develop programmes to support a more equitable and environmentally sustainable recovery, including action on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

1. Introduction

Note to the Reader: The Interim Report in Context

As an interim report on the progress to date and emerging results of the System-Wide Evaluation of the UNDS Response to COVID-19, this report should not be read as a substitute or stand-in for the final report of the evaluation to be presented in September 2022. The final report will draw on all sources of evaluation evidence gathered over the full course of the evaluation including eight country case studies, wide-ranging global and regional interviews, a full review of documentary evidence and a compilation of reported results at country level. The evidence in the final report will be collected and analysed in accordance with the approach and methodology presented in the Inception Report and briefly outlined in Annex D. The final report will include the ultimate evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

This report, in contrast, draws on **four main sources of information** and is structured around those sources:

- A **documentary review of the social and economic impacts of COVID-19** in 2020 and 2021 and their implications for the UNDS response;
- A **report on the UNDS response to COVID-19 in Jordan** as an illustrative case study which will be supplemented by seven other country case studies as the evaluation is completed;
- A **review of evaluation and lessons learned studies** assessing the UNDS entity responses to COVID-19;
- A **structured review of UNDS entity Strategic Plans** developed during the Pandemic and their implications for a coherent UNDS response at country level.

These four data sources have been supplemented by the result of global and regional interviews carried out to date as well as selected documentary evidence in order to triangulate and validate emerging findings. The report concludes with a set of emerging evaluation findings and recommendations. These will be refined, clarified and augmented as data collection and analysis efforts are continued to their conclusion in September 2022.

1.1. Background: The UNDS Response to COVID-19

On September 10, 2021, the United Nations Secretary General presented his report *Our Common Agenda* to the General Assembly detailing his vision of the way forward for the multilateral system and the world in light of COVID-19 and other major ongoing crises. He specifically emphasized the devastating effects of the pandemic (UN 2021a, p.12):

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has been a challenge like no other since the Second World War, revealing our shared vulnerability and interconnectedness. It has exposed human rights concerns and exacerbated deep fragilities and inequalities in our societies.... Moreover, with less than a decade to go, the Sustainable Development Goals have been thrown even further off track.

When the report was discussed at an informal plenary session of the General Assembly on October 25, 2021, one of the delegates pointed out "...continuing with business as usual is very attractive, but it will not resolve the issues facing our people..." (IISD 2021).

This call to move away from business as usual had already been made in the *Secretary General's Report on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review 2021*, which emphasized the need to build on progress in repositioning the United Nations Development System (UNDS) through ongoing reforms as an essential component of the response to COVID-19 (UN 2021b, p.4):

We need to move faster in effecting the transition of the mindset and skill sets in each entity of the United Nations development system, including by aligning agency specific policy making, planning and programming in support of an integrated response.

There is thus a dual recognition of the challenge faced by the UNDS as it responds, to the socio-economic effects of the rapidly changing COVID-19 pandemic and the essential role played by the UNDS reform process in enabling and, potentially, accelerating that response.

The key objective of the immediate UNDS response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been to support countries and societies in addressing the socio-economic fallout of the crisis, especially for the most vulnerable. To that end, and in line with ongoing reform, the UNDS aimed to leverage the full breadth of the system's capacities and draw on the strength of multilateral norms and values for an integrated package of support.

Formulated under the global UN Framework and tailored to national priorities in the form of country-specific Socio-Economic Response Plans (SERP) and their associated United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (CF), the UNDS response had a dual purpose. While focused on stemming the immediate impact of the pandemic, UNDS support also seeks to define entry points for a better recovery, oriented towards sustainable development as formulated in the 2030 Agenda. Key UN values such as Human Rights, Gender Equality, Inclusion [including persons with disabilities], and Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) were to form an integral part of the UNDS response.

The UNDS response has been taking place in a highly dynamic and complex setting, which the evaluation also needs to recognize and account for: the uncertainty of the pandemic's course, its unprecedented economic and social disruption, and the uneven and inequitable vaccine response have all required continuous adaptation. While it was clear early on that the pandemic would set back efforts to progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the extent of these setbacks is still emerging.

At the same time, UN structures at country and regional levels were in the midst of major changes when the pandemic began. Adjusting to reform demands to meet the requirements of the 2030 Agenda, the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system was being established, and UN country teams (UNCTs) were reorganising the way they worked together to support countries to achieve the SDGs, aiming for greater coherence and integrated approaches across sectors and organisations. This is an ambitious undertaking at a time when UNDS reform is working to bring coherence to a system that is sometimes fragmented by differing mandates, incentive structures and governance arrangements, and which furthermore depends on insecure funding. The pandemic itself presented a further test of the UNDS reforms, particularly across the socio-economic spectrum.

1.2. The System-Wide Evaluation of the UNDS Response: Purpose and Scope

With its system-wide perspective, the evaluation of the UNDS response to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 serves the essential function of providing an overall assessment of the UNDS

response, supported by an analysis of how the process of UNDS reform may have enabled and/or constrained that response.²

It will also provide an assessment of how well the UNDS response has integrated action on the core UN values of Human Rights, Gender Equality, Inclusion [including persons with disabilities] and LNOB. Finally, by addressing the socio-economic response in 2020 and 2021, the evaluation can help identify barriers and recommend changes which can better position the UNDS to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and realization of Agenda 2030. **As such it will be of direct interest to senior managers in the UN, including heads of agencies, to all member states and to the general public. In sum, a timely and informative evaluation holds out the potential to help secure a successful and coherent UNDS socio-economic response to the pandemic moving forward which, in turn, represents an important step in achieving Agenda 2030.**

While the scope of the evaluation is global, its primary focus is the coherence and strategic focus of the UNDS response at country level. The evaluation is ongoing with approximately one third of data collection and analysis methods completed to date. It will provide a final report available to member states by the end of September 2022. The final evaluation report will provide specific evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations organized according to the five over-arching evaluation questions listed below (UN 2022, p.23).

EQ 1: To what extent have UNCTs been able, through the SERPs and CFs, to achieve a coherent and sustained UNDS focus on progress toward the achievement of SDGs during the pandemic?

EQ 2: To what extent has pooled financing been an effective instrument for mobilizing resources and planning and implementing programming coherent with the collective socio-economic response of UNCTs?

EQ 3: To what extent have UNCTs developed and implemented coherent strategies and programmes to advance core UN values of Human Rights, Gender Equality, Inclusions³ and LNOB?

EQ 4: To what extent have SERPs and CFs contributed to UNCT support to partners to achieve progress toward the recover better and greener agenda – including a more equitable and sustainable recovery?

EQ 5: To what extent have UNCTs and the UNDS learned lessons from the SERP and CF processes regarding mechanisms to overcome constraints and identify incentive structures to achieve collaborative results?

For information on the evaluation Areas of Investigation (AOI), methodology and analytical approach, as well as data collection methods, please refer to the Inception Report for the

²Terms of Reference accessible at <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/terms-reference-system-wide-evaluation-unds-response-covid-19>

³ Inclusion refers to all marginalized and vulnerable groups as identified in the UN Framework (UN 2020c, p.12) including, inter alia, women, older people, adolescents and youth, minorities, persons with disabilities and others. The most affected groups vary from country to country depending on national context.

evaluation.⁴ A brief summary of the methodology for the evaluation study as a whole (encompassing both the interim and final reports) is provided in Annex D.

1.3. The Interim Report

This Interim report presents the preliminary findings and observations of the System-Wide Evaluation of the UNDS Response to COVID-19 gathered together at the end of the first two full months of data collection. **As a result, all the findings and observations presented here should be read as preliminary.**

As noted in the Inception Report (UN 2022, p.10), the interim report is intended to provide inputs to the Secretary General’s Report on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) and thereby to serve as a support to Member State decision making in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Operational Activities Segment. In order to achieve this, the report includes a set of emerging findings and recommendations which will be further developed and augmented during the remaining data collection and analysis tasks.

1.4. Sources

As an interim evaluation product, this report draws on very different sources of evidence with perspectives ranging from the global and regional level (global and regional interviews and document reviews, a review of UNDS agency evaluations on COVID-19) to the country specific (the pilot country case study of Jordan). Drawing on these diverse sources allows the evaluation, even at this interim stage, to identify emerging findings and to triangulate those findings across diverse data sources.

More specifically the report draws on the following completed data collection activities:

- A detailed review of the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those affecting progress toward the achievement of Agenda 2030, from March 2020 to December 2021. This serves as important context for the evaluation by addressing the depth and persistence of the emergency described by the Secretary General in *Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19* at the earliest stage of the pandemic (UN 2020a).
- The report of the pilot country case study of the UNDS response in Jordan carried out from January 23 to February 21. The **results of the case study are presented to illustrate the UNDS response to COVID-19 in one country**: a country with a specific context including a very large humanitarian response. The results, while valid for Jordan, are illustrative and are not intended for generalization beyond this specific case – except to the extent they are congruent with results reported from other evaluation data sources.
- The findings of a review of evaluative reports summarizing the results of evaluations and lessons learning exercises of the COVID-19 response by seven UNDS entities (FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UN Habitat and UN Women) as provided to the evaluation by UNEG members in December 2021. This review highlights overall findings and lessons learned by UNDS entities through their own summaries of evaluations and lessons-learning studies with implications for the COVID-19 response. It was designed to complement a

⁴ <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/inception-report-system-wide-evaluation-unds-response-covid-19>

planned mapping of COVID-19 evaluations being carried out in parallel to this evaluation by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

- A review of the 13 UNDS entity strategic plans developed in 2021 covering the period from 2022 to 2025. These were reviewed with a view to assessing how the entities involved have used the narrative component of their Strategic Plans to communicate key messages from the executive management level to Country Offices and how those may, in turn, provide important insights to the evaluation areas of investigation, always in the context of UNDS reform as specified in the ToR.

In addition, the Report draws on the results of the ongoing global and regional interviews undertaken to this point in the evaluation as well as information from documentary sources such as the report of the *Evaluation of the Resident Coordinator system contribution to country-level programme coherence* carried out by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS 2021) and the *Early Lessons and Evaluability of the Covid-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF)* (UN 2021c).

1.5. A Note on the Jordan Case Study

As noted above, the results of the Jordan case study are included in this report to illustrate the UNDS response to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 in just one country. The results of the case study are not, themselves, used to derive the emerging findings and recommendations presented in Section 6. However, the results of the Jordan case study are used to support emerging findings wherever they are also strongly supported by other sources of evidence including the global and regional interviews and document reviews completed to date. This triangulation across different sources of evaluation evidence is detailed in Section 6.2.

1.6. Evaluation Progress and Remaining Tasks

Evaluation data collection efforts are ongoing and will be completed by the end of June 2022. The Final Report will draw on data collected to date, combined with the following:

- Completed planned country case studies⁵
- The remaining segment of global and regional interviews
- Results of continuing document reviews at global and regional level
- Results of the UNEG conducted synthesis of evaluation findings
- Quantitative profiling of results reported for the eight case study countries.

The final report is scheduled for completion in August 2022. Figure 1 presents a timeline for the overall evaluation.

⁵ Annex D lists the eight case study countries; the actual country missions will be dependent on COVID-19 travel restrictions applicable at the time of the case studies.

Figure 1: Timeline for the Evaluation



1.7. Structure of the Interim Report

The Interim Report is organized mainly around the data sources described in Section 1.4. This structure reflects the interim nature of the report and the emerging character of both findings and recommendations. As a result, the report includes the following Sections:

- Section 1 includes this introduction;
- Section 2 describes the evolving context of the pandemic and its effects;
- Section 3 presents the results of the Jordan Country Case Study;
- Section 4 describes the results of the review of UNDS entity evaluations and studies on their response to COVID-19;
- Section 5 details the results of the analysis of UNDS Strategic Plans; and,
- Section 6 presents the emerging findings and recommendations as of this point in the evaluation.

The Final Report, in contrast, will be structured in direct relation to the five evaluation areas of investigation

2. A Continuing Development Emergency

On the 23rd of April 2020, the Secretary General of the United Nations remarked to the ECOSOC Forum on Financing Sustainable Development in the Context of COVID-19 (UN 2020 b, p.1): “This is not only a health crisis but a human crisis; a jobs crisis; a humanitarian crisis and a development crisis.” It was the depth of this developmental crisis and its impacts on the SDGs and Agenda 2030 that lay behind the *UN Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19* with its commitment that the “**UNDS is switching to emergency mode**” (UN 2020 c, p.10) to help countries respond to the pandemic with actions across five pillars:

1. Health First: Protecting health services and systems;
2. Protecting People: Social protection and basic services;
3. Economic Response and Recovery: Protecting jobs, small and medium sized enterprises, and informal sector workers;
4. Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration; and,

5. Social Cohesion and Community Resilience.

In the intervening 22 months, the scope of the development crisis has only expanded as the virus has evolved into new variants and lockdowns have ensued with extensive social and political consequences for all countries and their populations.

2.1. The Continuing Socio-economic Effects of COVID-19: An Overview

In 2020, the global COVID-19 health emergency heightened development challenges. Health, employment, economic growth, hunger and food security, poverty, and education were particularly affected. Equality also suffered an important drawback as the global pandemic widened existing inequalities within and between countries. Prior to the pandemic global patterns of slow economic growth and slow poverty reduction were marked by persistent inequalities that left millions of vulnerable people behind. Slow and uneven levels of development progress also highlighted that governments needed guidance on *how* to implement the 2030 Agenda and accelerate the SDGs.

As of 15 January 2022, the total number of official reported deaths from COVID-19 had surpassed 5.5 million globally (WHO 2022); at the same time, estimates for excess deaths likely attributable to the effects of COVID-19 totaled 19.6 million (The Economist 2022). Nearly all countries (94%) had to reassign health staff with responsibility for Non-Communicable Diseases

In 2020, the pandemic brought massive disruptions in health services, including detecting and treating non-communicable diseases (NCDs)

(NCD) to COVID-19 efforts (WHO 2020, p.14) - a decision with significant impacts on NCD patient health. Coverage for the most important childhood vaccines was severely disrupted as well, affecting an estimated 6.9 million children in East Asia Pacific, 5 million children in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 15 million children in the Middle East and North Africa (UNICEF 2021a, p.13). Worldwide, the pandemic also had a significant impact on mental health. In 2021, almost 80% of adults in the United States reported experiencing anxiety, depression, a sense of isolation, or grief (UN 2021d).

According to UN Habitat (2020, p.6), 90 per cent of the world's COVID-19 cases were reported in urban areas, straining health systems in cities. Cities carried a heavy burden of the crisis, especially those with inadequate water and sanitation services and poor housing conditions. The pandemic quickly exposed deeply rooted inequalities and growing vulnerabilities, especially regarding the one billion people living in slums and informal settlements. Urbanization exacerbated transmission rates and made containment and response measures more difficult (UN Habitat 2020, p.19).

Informal sector workers, including 500 million agricultural workers, were amongst the hardest-hit by the pandemic, as they faced disrupted agri-food supply chains and markets.

Quarantine and self-isolation measures also severely reduced employment. Businesses initially resorted to reducing working hours or granting leaves of absence, but as the pandemic dragged on millions of businesses furloughed workers and began to fail. A study carried out in Central America revealed that by early 2021, one in four formal businesses had closed (IDB 2021, p.5).

Globally, women’s labour participation was significantly at risk during the pandemic; 70 per cent of women globally were employed in informal sectors, leaving them far more vulnerable to falling into poverty due to dismissals without proper compensation (UN 2021e, p.43). Nearly 40 per cent of all employed women worked in the hardest-hit sectors, including accommodation, food service, and wholesale, and retail trade (UN Women 2021a, p.11).

Overall, despite making up just 39 percent of global employment, women accounted for 54 percent of job losses during the pandemic (UN Women 2021a, p.11). Women’s weekly unpaid workloads also increased, going from an average of 26 hours per week before the pandemic to 31 hours — a consequence of lockdowns and increase in domestic work that can be observed in both less developed and developed countries. This unequal increase in the burden of unpaid domestic work also helps explain a portion of the hard drop in women’s labor participation rates during the pandemic (UN 2021e, p.36).

Women and girls suffered disproportionate harm in terms of job losses and labour force participation as a result of COVID-19 and related public health measures.

Progress in education was set back by the pandemic. With a worldwide average of 224 days of school closures, nearly 100 million more students fell out of the reading proficiency threshold necessary for lower-secondary school children in 2020 compared to 2019 (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank 2021, p.14). Worldwide, COVID-19 is projected to result in a loss of 0.3-0.9 years of effective schooling. The resulting loss in predicted lifetime earnings due to learning losses could be as high as US\$17 trillion (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank 2021, p.14). In 2021, many students still lacked access to formal education, including 114 million children in East Asia and the Pacific Region, 50 million in Eastern and Southern Africa, 110 million in the Middle East and North Africa, and 128 million in West and Central Africa (UNICEF 2021a, p.14). Regions in Asia and Africa also noted concerns around girls increased school dropout and early marriage rates (UNICEF 2021a, p.34).

For many countries, rates of economic growth collapsed in the second quarter of 2020 but rebounded in the third quarter and have been recovering ever since. Unfortunately, the recovery rate varies dramatically across countries and regions. Other inequalities between developing and advanced economies have increased as most developed countries responded to the economic crisis by enacting fiscal and monetary stimulus packages (UN Women 2021, p.11). Low-income countries could not sustain such costly stimulus packages and are now facing debt distress due to declining exports and capital flight (UNDP 2021a, p.59).

In developed economies, where vaccination rates are high, growth rates are rising rapidly. For developing economies, however, where vaccination rates are low, the slow pace of growth remains.

The global total investment in fiscal and monetary stimulus packages was estimated at US\$19.5 trillion as of 30 September 2020 (UN Women 2021, p.11). Rising inflation is quickly becoming a growing concern as disruptions to the labor market have created supply shortages. This is made worse by ongoing production and supply chain bottlenecks caused by the pandemic.

Food prices have mostly risen, even for basic staples that are the nutritional bases of many developing countries. Amidst these supply concerns, 72 countries have self-reported a significant number of people running out of food or reducing their consumption (World Bank 2021). Early 2021 data shows an additional 70-161 million people experiencing hunger since the beginning of 2020, with the prevalence of child malnourishment increasing from 8.4% in 2019 to 9.9% in 2020 (UN 2021e, p.28).

With rising unemployment, a global contracting economy, and millions of people experiencing hunger during the pandemic, it came as no surprise to see the world experience its first rise in extreme poverty since the late 1990s (UN 2021c, p.26).

Estimates point to an increase from 8.4% of the world's population living in extreme poverty (US\$1.90 a day) in 2019 to 9.5% in 2020 (UN 2021e, p.28). This rise has erased all progress made towards eliminating extreme poverty since 2016.

Some of the most important socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 in relation to the five pillars of the UN Framework can be summarized as follows:

- **Pillar 1- Health First:** *The pandemic brought massive disruptions in health services, including detecting, and treating non-communicable diseases (WHO 2020, p.14).* Additionally, vulnerable groups such as older persons, people living in poverty, migrants, and refugees required specific strategies for accessing healthcare. According to UNICEF (2021a, p.13), routine vaccination, outpatient care, antenatal and postnatal services, births attended by a skilled attendant and health campaigns were amongst the health services reported to be most affected by the pandemic.
- **Pillar 2- Protecting People:** *Social protection systems were the first line of defense to mitigate the massive income loss caused by rising unemployment.* In 2020, virtually all countries adapted, expanded, and scaled up programs; just over 1,600 social protection measures were announced in 2020 (ILO 2021a, p.68). The UN Women/UNDP Global Gender Response Tracker showed that only 10% of social protection, employment, economic and fiscal measures analyzed were directed towards women's economic security, and only eight percent of measures on social protection and employment were directed towards care (UN Women 2021a, p.11). *Social protection programs proved financially unsustainable for most governments, which now face large primary fiscal deficits, limited fiscal space, and heavy public debt.*
- **Pillar 3- Economic Response and Recovery:** In 2020, the global unemployment rate reached 6.5%. Compared with the fourth quarter of 2019, 8.8% of global working hours were lost in 2020 (UN 2021e, p.42)—a loss equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs. *Informal sector workers (especially women) were hit worse by the pandemic; an estimated 1.6 billion informal workers were significantly impacted by lockdown measures in 2020.*
- **Pillar 4- Macroeconomic Response:** Estimates indicate global economic growth for 2020 was reduced to -3.4% (World Bank, 2022); the economic downturn for 2020 was not as negative as initially estimated, mainly because of the fiscal and monetary stimulus packages put in place by various governments during 2020. However, two years into the pandemic, more than half of low-income countries are facing debt distress, or at high risk of debt distress, due to declining exports and revenues and capital flight (UNDP 2021a, p.59). Low-income countries continue to face

constraints in their ability to respond to the crisis because of growing debt and lack of fiscal space. According to UNDP, these rising debt obligations will result in untenable choices for governments: forcing them to choose between budget cuts for health, education and safety nets or defaulting on debt obligations (UNDP 2021a, p.59). *Rising inflation has now become an alarming concern, which is highly correlated with rising food insecurity and hunger.*

- **Pillar 5- Social Cohesion and Community Resilience:** The pandemic has widened gender inequality. In 2020, adult women, compared with men, faced higher unemployment rates, job insecurity, increased housework, and deteriorated health due to overwhelmed health systems. Physical and sexual violence towards women spiked in spring 2020, with early reports from many countries seeing up to a 25% increase in household violence (UN Women 2020, p.19). *Since the outbreak of COVID-19, data and reports from those on the front lines have shown that all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, have intensified (UN Women 2021a, p6).* The pandemic has also had disproportionately negative consequences for older persons, youth (especially youth unemployment) workers in the informal sector, migrants and refugees and many other vulnerable people.

2.2. Summary: A Deepening Development Crisis

The COVID-19 Pandemic has resulted in a comprehensive and continuing development emergency with impacts felt most severely in developing countries. It has caused deep disruptions in health, education, and other basic services, has exacerbated deeply rooted inequalities and is causing continuing economic damage. The pandemic continues to cause a major reversal of progress toward the SDGs and determined actions are required to re-establish and accelerate progress.

In short, the development crisis alarm raised by the Secretary General in early 2020 has not abated in the months that followed – rather, the call for a shift by the UNDS to an emergency mode of operation (UN 2021c, p.8) has been fully validated.

The depth of the development crisis within the five pillars of action of the UN Framework reinforces the relevance of the Framework as conceived in early 2020. The actions called for in the Framework as realized through the Socio-Economic Response Plans (SERP) held out the promise of a more cohesive and effective UNDS response to the social and economic impacts of the pandemic, with potential to reduce the worst of these impacts. The evolution of the pandemic also reinforces the relevance of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF) as one mechanism for funding the initiatives identified in the SERPs in combination with new funding from development partners, repurposed funding commitments of UNDS entities and, funding from pre-existing MPTFs.

The rationale for urgent action to propel a more equitable and sustainable recovery as emphasized in the Secretary General's *Our Common Agenda* report to the General Assembly is at least as strong now as in the beginning of the crisis. As the Secretary General reported (UN 2021a, p.12): "the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has been a challenge like no other...revealing our shared vulnerability and interconnectedness. It has exposed human rights concerns and exacerbated deep fragilities and inequalities in our societies."

3. Country-level UNDS Response to the Emergency in Jordan

This section provides a narrative overview of the results of the pilot country case study of the UNDS response in Jordan. It is provided here as an illustration, in one country, of how the UN Country Team (UNCT) responded within the overall architecture of the UN Framework and supported by ongoing progress in UNDS reform. The case study is structured around the five evaluation Areas of Investigation, but at its core is an examination of how the UNCT, under the leadership of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), was able to use the Socio-Economic Framework (SEF)⁶ and the process of developing a UN Cooperation Framework (CF) to develop a more coherent response to COVID-19 across the humanitarian/development nexus.

The Jordan Case Study was conducted in the second half of January 2022 as a 10-day field mission to Amman to pilot the methodology. The mission included the SWE Manager, Team Leader and Gender/Human Rights Expert. The Social Protection expert engaged with the team remotely. The team conducted a series of semi-structured interviews and focus groups (either in person or via video link in line with continued COVID-19 restrictions) with a total of 56 stakeholders from UN entities, bi-laterals, INGOs, NGOs and government officials.⁷ The team also relied on secondary reports and data to elaborate and support findings.⁸

The RCO arranged all interviews in consultation with the team, and kept an online itinerary updated regularly to inform team members of locations and links for meetings. The RC/HC was briefed at the start and end of the mission, and an overview of findings were shared with the UNCT during a 30-min session at the end of the mission as an agenda item within the regular UNCT Heads of Agency meeting. Observations offered useful insights into the five areas of investigation as they related to the Jordan context and experience.

3.1. Country Context

Jordan is a middle-income country with high levels of human development and a strong track record in health, education, basic services and social protection. With limited natural resources, the country is highly dependent on imports for food and energy, and further faces severe water scarcity and a looming environmental crisis. Jordan's geopolitical position as a stable country in a region marked by continued crisis has shaped the course of the country's progress. It faces a complex set of development challenges that have been deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Jordanian economy has weathered multiple challenges over the past decade that have hampered economic growth. Unemployment rates have risen significantly over the past years, with large portions of the population clustered in small and informal enterprises, and youth and women comprising the bulk of the unemployed.⁹ Large numbers of migrant workers are also clustered in low-paid, vulnerable employment. As the country's economic challenges have been deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has placed economic growth at the core of its agenda.

⁶ Jordan's Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP) is titled Socio-Economic Framework (SEF) for COVID-19 Response, herein referred to as SEF.

⁷ See Annex A Persons Consulted – Case Study Jordan.

⁸ See Annex B References and Sources.

⁹ Female labor force participation rate in Jordan is one of the lowest in the world at around 14 percent (UNDP GDI 2019).

Jordan has been a longstanding haven for refugees from throughout the region, hosting refugee populations from Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Yemen, Sudan and other countries. Jordan is positioned as a key strategic partner in the region, and international stakeholders provide significant aid to help support the country's refugees and host communities. Vulnerability among some refugee groups remain high, with many depending on cash and food assistance. UN analysis highlights that those groups at particular risk of marginalization include women and girls, refugees, migrant workers, informal sector workers, unemployed youth, and LGBTQ+. The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated many of these vulnerabilities, putting some at increased risk of being left behind, and halting or endangering progress towards the realization of the SDGs and Agenda 2030.

3.2. UNCT Context (pre-COVID-19)

The United Nations Jordan is comprised of 26 entities (22 physical presence; 4 non-physical presence) operating within a complex environment, whereby humanitarian operations dominate UN programming and are the primary expectation of the government for UN delivery. The development side of operations is dwarfed by comparison, both in terms of budget and personnel. As an illustration, the Socio-Economic Framework developed by the UNCT to respond to the impacts of COVID-19 (UN Jordan 2020, p. 35-41) identified the need for an envelope of US\$ 437.4 million to fully fund the response, while the projected budget for Jordan's response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis for the period 2020 to 2022 totals US\$ 6.6 billion (Government of Jordan, Ministry of Planning 2020).

In the years before the pandemic, the UN Jordan was engaged in a process of defining and operationalizing a 'nexus' approach based on a recognition of the complementarity and inter-connectiveness of the humanitarian and development spheres of activity.¹⁰ Under this model, the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and Resident Coordinator (RC) merged into a single position (RC/HC) and the Humanitarian Development Partners Group (HDPG), led by the RC/HC together with the World Bank (and subsequently USAID) brought together a wide range of stakeholders for common goals and processes.

Jordan's 2018-2022 United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF), although developed prior to the 2016 guidance on Cooperation Frameworks, represented a significant step forward in line with reform of the UN system in Jordan, bringing together for the first time the UN's humanitarian and development programming within a common strategic framework. While interviews indicate that the UNSDF had significant shortcomings, not the least of which was a lack of alignment with the Government's evolving priorities and a lack of funding for long-term development objectives, the framework did provide a basis for fostering stronger coordination across the UN system (UN Jordan 2021). The early years of the UNSDF elaboration supported, to some degree, increased dialogue between humanitarian and development actors and improvements in interagency working relationships in general.

In line with the findings of the UNSDF evaluation, stakeholders interviewed for this case study felt the UNSDF to be of limited use as a unifying framework to guide UNCT operations. Standard

¹⁰ Strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus was identified as a top priority at the World Humanitarian Summit (2016), calling on humanitarian and development actors to work collaboratively together, based on their comparative advantages, towards 'collective outcomes' that reduce need, risk and vulnerability of target populations.

coordinating architecture during UNSDF elaboration was weak and/or dysfunctional. A planned Joint Steering Committee to guide UNSDF implementation was never convened. Results Groups functioned intermittently and minimally; standard interagency coordination groups such as the Program Management Team, Gender Theme Group and M&E Group were not officially in operation in the pre-pandemic era.¹¹ The United Nations Communication Group (UNCG) provided a notable exception as a full-fledged, well-functioning inter-agency group.

Prior to the pandemic, the UNCT Jordan was in the process of continued work toward team-building and exploring new ways of working together under the leadership of the RC/HC, drawing on the growing strength and expertise of a fully-staffed and expanding RCO. Concrete steps such as a 'Strategic Leadership Journey' retreat for HOAs combined with the RC/HC's highly inclusive leadership style to ensure that all voices had a place at the UNCT table. These on-going processes across the humanitarian-development nexus helped to lay a foundation for a more coherent and coordinated response from the UN in Jordan when the crisis hit.

3.3. The UN Jordan Response

EQ 1: To what extent have UNCTs been able, through the SERPs and CFs, to achieve a coherent and sustained UNDS focus on progress toward the achievement of SDGs during the pandemic?

UN Jordan Immediate Response to COVID-19

Faced with an unprecedented crisis, the initial response of the UN in Jordan focused on getting its own house in order in support of key operational decisions. The UN drew across its areas of expertise, including on WHO for health information and UNDS for safety and security, to provide timely information to the UNCT and the wider development community around individual and collective risks. The decision was made for the UN as a system to 'stand and deliver' amidst a time of uncertainty. Information was shared regularly via rapidly developing online modalities to focus on staff well-being and security, enabling business continuity and securing on-going essential operations.

COVID-19 Response Coordination Phase

The UN Jordan moved into a more coordinated response phase of the pandemic following the immediate response phase. A coordinated response was supported by the presence of a RC/HC who worked in a highly inclusive style, bringing together all UN entities (including smaller and Non-Resident entities (NRAs) while also remaining highly accessible to external stakeholders. Though there are dissenting opinions, the consensus from both within and outside of the UN is that the RC/HC's soft skills and an accessible leadership style played a key role in facilitating a consultative and inclusive process that supported consensus, and furthermore allowed a wide range of voices to be heard in a turbulent time.

¹¹ An interagency Gender Task Team was in start-up phase in late-2019; an informal M&E Group had begun to coalesce in 2019 to address needs around joint monitoring and evaluation.

Coordination and cohesion for the UN Jordan's COVID-19 response was further enabled by a large RCO presence to support joint operations.¹² Interagency groups including new configurations (Crisis Management Team), nascent groups (M&E Group and Gender Task Team) and established groups (UN Communications Group) played important roles in unifying approaches and messaging in the crisis response.

Previous efforts that the UN Jordan had undertaken to foster coordination and coherence in line with the nexus approach and operational structures (especially the HDPG) offered a platform for the RC/HC to convene essential development and humanitarian stakeholders on a range of issues including key cross-sectoral issues such as the environment and vulnerability. Bi-lateral stakeholders (e.g. donors) in particular appreciated the importance of this unique role that the RC/HC was able to play over this period of time.

Socio-Economic Framework (SEF)/Cooperation Framework (CF) Focus

The UN Jordan was guided by universal global frameworks and high-level UN messaging to inform its work at the highest strategic level in the country. The SDGs serve as a key organizing principal that give focus and shape to all joint planning frameworks. Timely messaging from the SG to elaborate a framework to shape the UN health, humanitarian and development responses globally offered important guidance and structure during a critical period of time. The five pillars of the Framework for the socio-economic response were deemed by UN stakeholders to offer a useful structure to steer conversations and planning for the UNCT.

Jordan's SEF was informed by a number of agency-led impact studies in lieu of a single socio-economic impact assessment. Although planning was deemed to be well coordinated in general for the impact studies, several instances of overlap between studies highlighted the need for stronger coordination and inter-agency engagement to avoid duplication, enhance efficiency and further integrate the analysis process.

UN Jordan undertook a highly inclusive planning process to design the SEF, which brought together the full spectrum of actors across the UNCT. This process notably strengthening engagement in the development response for some UN entities that were primarily focused on the humanitarian response at a critical point in time. New communication modalities further offered NRAs enhanced visibility and expanded opportunities to engage. Drafting responsibility was shared by the RCO, UNDP and OCHA with inputs from entities and UN interagency groups as well as external stakeholders (to a lesser degree), leading to a sense of strengthened engagement and ownership for some actors within the UN system.

Drawbacks to this highly participatory approach included high time investments to coordinate around the SEF design, especially challenging during a period of time where most entities also required further reporting and restructuring around entity-specific protocols. Several stakeholders

¹² At the time of the Case Study (January 2022), the RCO was comprised of 13 staff (excluding the RC/HC) that included the five core RCO functions (Head of Office, Communications Specialist, Senior Economist, M&E Results Reporting Specialist, Partnership and Development Finance Specialist) as well as a further eight staffed positions (four of which were temporary UNV designations): Nexus Advisor, Senior Human Rights Advisor, Peace and Development Advisor, Senior Executive Associate, Data Analyst, Digital Communication Associate, Senior Fellow and Administrative Assistant

noted that there remains a tension in the system for UN agencies on the ground to respond to HQ directives alongside UNCT common structures, making prioritization challenging within contexts with limited human and financial resources.

The SEF was seen generally as a good integrator for the UNCT Jordan at a time of crisis whereby agency interest came secondary to demonstrating how the UN comes together as a collective, drawing on the comparative advantage of each entity across the system. The SEF was seen by UN stakeholders as a vehicle by which the UN became more unified and more aligned to Government priorities than in the pre-pandemic era under the UNSDF framework. This was true despite the fact that there was limited Government engagement and buy-in for both the UNSDF and the SEF. A number of factors appear to have impacted on the Government's limited engagement in the SEF design, including the UN perceiving the SEF design as an internal exercise to some extent, competing demands within the Government to focus on other issues, and challenges with establishing online communications with many key Government contacts over that period of time.

The SEF was furthermore seen by key UN stakeholders as having positively influenced UN consensus around the need for well-functioning interagency structures to support joint planning and programming. In particular, some unofficial and/or nascent interagency groups (e.g. GTT, M&E group) were deemed to play important roles in facilitating cohesive and coordinated operations. The recognition of the value of such interagency groups and the need for revitalized Results Groups (RGs) and other operational structures are likely to lead to greater collective acceptance across the UNCT moving into the new CF cycle from 2023 forward.

Initial work was underway on the design of the new CF (2023+) at the time of the field mission. The CCA and new CF design (still in early prioritization stage) were informed to some extent by the SEF priorities and collaborative model. A strong feeling prevailed across the UN Jordan that the new CF will take another significant step forward in demonstrating and facilitating a coordinated UN response that is strategically and appropriately responsive to the changing local context and Government priorities.

While Jordan's SEF played a positive role in facilitating a collaborative and coherent UN response to the pandemic, the impact on actual programming remains unclear in the short-term. For example, the five identified SEF accelerators are largely hailed as a good practice model, but evidence of direct impacts on operations were lacking. Nevertheless, the accelerators identified during the SEF design fed into the design of the new CF priorities and will likely further influence the outcomes and joint work planning down the road.

Pillar 4 of the SEF around macro-economic responses also posed a challenge to UN Jordan to fully operationalize, although the existence of the pillar was felt to have facilitated some important discussions with IFIs and other key stakeholders to help carve out the appropriate role for the UN around macroeconomic engagement. The UN Jordan has increased technical expertise within the RCO as part of the reform and across the system, but more capacity is needed to more meaningfully engage. The RCO staff includes a Senior Economist who has taken part in efforts to establish a small working group of UN economists to engage on policy issues related to the fiscal framework, Jordan's debt burden and expected declines in financial support to SDG investments. This group included (as of January 2022) economists working with the RCO, UNICEF, UNDP and ILO. Interviews with bilateral development agencies and IFIs indicate that they welcome this effort by the UNCT to organize its

technical expertise to engage on these issues and that they value the UNCT knowledge of the investment requirements to support Agenda 2030.

The contribution that the UN is able to make to discussions on Jordan's macroeconomic position which is most valued by other stakeholders focuses on broad collective expertise around vulnerabilities. Trials of new methods were undertaken under pooled funding modalities (SDG accelerator project and Integrated National Financial Framework pilot project), but impacts/outcomes remain uncertain.

EQ 2: To what extent has pooled financing been an effective instrument for mobilizing resources and planning and implementing programming coherent with the collective socio-economic response of UNCTs?

UN Jordan implemented three pooled fund programs between 2020-2022 under the Joint SDG Fund and the COVID-19 MPTF worth a total value of USD 2,150,000 involving a total of seven agencies as follows:

- "Accelerating Jordan's Progress towards SDGs by Establishing Building Blocks of an Integrated Financing Framework" Joint SDG Fund USD 1,000,000 (UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women).
- "Accelerating Private Capital towards SDG Investing in Jordan" Joint SDG Fund USD 300,000 (UNDP, UNIDO, UN Women).
- "Socio-Economic Empowerment of Vulnerable Women in Ghor Al Safi through Improving Access to Safe and Green Public Spaces" COVID-19 MPTF USD 850,000 (UNHabitat, UNOPS, ILO).

Entities involved in the above projects highlighted the value of pooled funds to allow them to engage in new areas of programming that have the potential for catalytic effects in the future. Some stakeholders noted that the programs facilitated new partnerships and working relationships with other UN entities, which may have lasting impacts on future collaboration that builds on a deeper understanding of each other's areas of expertise and comparative advantages.

Stakeholders uniformly noted that the monies on offer for the SDG and COVID-19 MPTF funds were quite minimal in the Jordanian context, which did not aid in gaining project visibility with the Government in some instances. The burden of documentation and reporting was also felt to be disproportionate to the monies allocated.

Pooling of resources is a way of commitment to coordination and acknowledging our comparative advantages. Working jointly has the effect of giving the impression to partners that we are not separate. We come in for the benefit of the sector, the people. (UN Jordan Staff Member)

The role of the RCO in facilitating coordination around design and reporting on pooled funds was deemed an important facilitative factor by a number of stakeholders. Despite limitations, there remains an openness among most UN interviewees to working more in this manner in the future.

EQ 3: To what extent have UNCTs developed and implemented coherent strategies and programmes to advance core UN values of Human Rights, Gender Equality, Inclusions and LNOB?

There is strong ownership across the UNCT Jordan on the guiding principles of Human Rights, Gender Equality and Leaving No One Behind (HR/GE/LNOB). A focus on vulnerable groups and leaving no one behind is seen as integral to the humanitarian response, which is understood as intertwined with the development response in Jordan in line with the nexus modality.

Jordan is deemed by most stakeholders interviewed to be a complicated context for advocacy on HR/GE/LNOB whereby some rights and some vulnerable groups are easier to address with the Government than others. Some key stakeholders (both internal and external) noted that there was further room for the UN to work strategically to advance the HR agenda by using the collective UN voice to raise 'sensitive' human rights issues with the Government in a manner that would be difficult for an individual entity or for others outside of the UN. Noting the challenges, the UNCT is generally seen by both internal and external stakeholders as having established a reasonable (though not universally accepted) balance,¹³ seeking strategic opportunities to progress the agenda wherever deemed possible. In the words of one UN stakeholder, *"This is a difficult balancing act for all concerned but the RC and UNCT family seem to have got it just about right."*

There are good capacities across the system with technical experts well placed to provide guidance in the form of the Human Rights Advisor in the RCO and the Gender Task Team (led by UN Women) that brings together gender expertise from across the UN Jordan. Importantly, those with expertise are used strategically by the HC/RC and RCO to ensure key joint planning and processes integrate these important elements as evidenced by the strong focus on human rights, gender equality and the principles of LNOB in key documents under review for this assessment (see paragraph below for elaboration).

Global accountability frameworks that set minimum standards for joint UNCT work around cross-cutting areas have played a positive role in elevating joint focus around key vulnerable groups and facilitating cohesiveness. The UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard, first undertaken in 2019, has helped guide the UN Jordan toward stronger compliance with minimum standards for joint gender processes. Supported by the Gender Theme Group (Gender Task Team), the UNCT has progressed to meet/exceed minimum standards for 14 out of 15 performance indicators set by the UNSDG based on reporting at the end of 2021. Reporting against the UNCT Disability Inclusion Scorecard, first undertaken in 2020, met minimum standards for only two out of 14 performance indicators in 2021. Despite evidence of inclusion of persons with disabilities as part of LNOB analysis and integration across planning frameworks, it remains difficult to see clearly how disability inclusion has been operationalized, obscured in part by a lack of data disaggregated by disability.

¹³ Dissenting voices represented a small minority of those interviewed. Some stakeholders from within the UN system stressed a desire for the UN to take a stronger position with regard to human rights issues that were more challenging to address with the Government (including civil and political rights). Non-Governmental Organizations also felt a need for the UN to take a stronger leadership role to hold the Government accountable for human rights violations, stressing the importance of a collective UN voice, rather than a fragmented, agency-specific approach.

Building on collective ownership and key technical expertise, the UN Jordan has ensured that the planning documents under review for this case study have elaborated a focus on vulnerable groups, including women, refugees, host communities, youth, older people, people with disabilities and migrant workers. The Common Country Analysis (2021) was informed by a cross-cutting LNOB analysis to identify key policy and institutional drivers of marginalization and exclusion and identify specific groups of people left behind or at risk of being left behind. The SEF identified key groups at risk of being left behind in the crisis, and put forth a gender responsive recovery and application of an equity and inclusiveness lens as two of the five accelerators needed to fast-track recovery. Furthermore, vulnerable groups have been identified as one of the four collective priorities in UN Jordan's 2023-2027 Cooperation Framework (draft): "We want all vulnerable people living in Jordan to be supported based on their needs and rights and to empower them to become self-reliant".

The UN's strong focus on vulnerability and inclusion made it uniquely well placed to support Jordan's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which in many ways demonstrated the UN system at its strongest. The agencies moved quickly to analyse the emerging needs and vulnerabilities, preparing a Socio-Economic Framework that largely replaced the UNSDF as the UN's guiding strategy. (UN Jordan 2021, p.4)

The COVID-19 pandemic is seen by some stakeholders across the UN system in Jordan as a pivotal point in time to deepen UN efforts to address some of the more sensitive issues around inclusion and vulnerability by framing the vulnerabilities as exposed and/or exacerbated by the crisis. Such framing may have more traction with the Government as a less critical or confrontational approach. As one stakeholder quipped, "The SEF brought new momentum for working together and laid the groundwork for further working together. We saw in the UNCT a change in the discourse, which was much more norms and standards based. The opportunity is there to seize the COVID moment!"

EQ 4: To what extent have SERPs and CFs contributed to UNCT support to partners to achieve progress toward the recover better and greener agenda – including a more equitable and sustainable recovery?

The Jordanian context readily allows for collective engagement on climate-related issues due to the severe water challenges faced by the country, and the risks to fractured social cohesion. The context furthermore demands a focus on economic recovery, whereby the government has placed economic growth at the center of its policy agenda rocked by a series of economic shocks and rising unemployment rates.¹⁴ Nevertheless, issues around equitable economic recovery are seen as much less straightforward, forming an arena within which the UN and the Government have more difficulty in agreeing on priorities. As the country grapples with questions around an equitable economic recovery, there is increasing focus on 'women's economic empowerment' as an area where the UN can bring its strengths across the system to support transformative change.

¹⁴ As reported in Jordan's CCA (2021), unemployment has risen sharply, from 13% in 2015 to 19% in 2019 and 23% in the second quarter of 2020.

While the RC was seen by external stakeholders as being consistent and visible on the need for a better and greener recovery, stakeholders across the UN Jordan were quick to note that they were still in a process of developing an understanding of the practicalities and priorities to build back better and greener. The SEF and its associated consultative processes were identified by some stakeholders as having advanced collective thinking on BBB, with the new CF offering an important opportunity to further that analysis and commitment. Environmental sustainability was identified as a key accelerator to recovery in the SEF, and the environment has been put forth as one of the four priority areas for the 2023-2027 CF (draft): “We want Jordan to have safe, sustainable and reliable access to water, food and energy and that everyone has equitable, affordable and sufficient access to such resources”.

*“We are at the beginning of understanding what BBB means – we have not yet well made the case of what help the UN can offer for designing the recovery.”
(UN Jordan staff member)*

EQ 5: To what extent have UNCTs and the UNDS system learned lessons from the SERP and CF processes regarding mechanisms to overcome constraints and identify incentive structures to achieve collaborative results?

The UN Jordan demonstrated an ability to learn and adapt over the course of the pandemic as elaborated through SEF and CF processes. Progress made before and during the crisis with defining and operationalizing the nexus approach were well appreciated from both the humanitarian and development sides of operations to have impacted positively on coherence. Some key stakeholders saw important opportunities to advance the development role within the system going forward.

The UN Jordan applied lessons learned from the highly participatory SEF design to the new CF design whereby an inclusive consultative process was being undertaken at the time of the case study that seemed very likely to lead to a final product with greater collective ownership across the UN and the Government than the 2018-2022 UNPSD. Optimism for greater cohesion is tempered to some extent by system structures and accountability systems whereby HOAs still report to and respond to their HQs first and foremost; there remains a need for greater accountability from within agencies to work together in unity. Inclusive communication modalities and recognition of the value of smaller players across the UN system were also deemed likely to have a positive impact going forward, but this is by no means assured and the risk of fallback was felt particularly by entities lacking a physical presence.

“When COVID hit, the work of the M&E group became more coordinated, especially when we received the SEF. The SEF reporting played a role in elevating the need for greater M&E coordination.” (UN Jordan staff member)

The SEF design and elaboration in Jordan helped to make more visible the importance of joint coordination structures to guide collective processes. Key interagency groups became strengthened through the processes, with growing recognition of the criticality of their roles. The UN Communications Group set forth a comprehensive framework for SEF messaging and advocacy. The Gender Task Team, in its infancy at the start of the pandemic, became strengthened in unifying and elevating a gender focus in the response. The M&E Group took a key role to coordinate SEF reporting, which further strengthened the informal group. Decisions around coordination structures for the 2023-2027 CF had not yet been decided at the time of the case study, but there appears to be a much stronger understanding within the UN Jordan of the importance of joint architecture to deliver together.

The UN Jordan was compliant with reporting requirements around 18 globally standardized SEF indicators, seeking to disaggregate data where possible. However, reporting was deemed to be largely extractive to serve global tracking and did not help to guide the UN in monitoring progress in a meaningful way. The RCO designed in-house initiatives with internal tracking reports to make the data more accessible and useful at the country level, but more work is needed at the higher levels to design reporting systems that help facilitate learning at the country level.

3.4. Summary: Jordan Country Case Study

The functioning and cohesiveness of the UN Jordan has appreciably changed as viewed through the lens of the SEF and Cooperation Frameworks. The Jordan UNCT, under the leadership of the RC/HC has achieved important results in pursuing a more coherent UNDS response to COVID-19 through:

- Measures to strengthen a nexus approach to humanitarian and development programming;
- Improving processes for assessing the pandemic's impacts and developing plans to address them;
- Initiating and carrying out an inclusive and unifying process to develop the SEF;
- Ensuring that the SEF framework and process contributes to the development of the new CF;
- Supporting UNCT commitment to UN values of Human Rights, Gender Equality, LNOB and Inclusion through work that balances commitment to these principles with recognition of the complex national context; and,
- A general improvement in the quality of processes for analysis and planning at the overall UNCT level.

These achievements face ongoing challenges, but there is overall optimism that the team will not go back to fragmented ways of working. This is not universal and is tempered by concern that the UNCT may revert to less cohesive ways of working together as funding declines and competition ensues, noting that primary accountability remains within entity mandates and programs. There is a risk that some of the well-funded organizations in particular may feel less incentive to fully engage, though many from large and small entities alike recognize that each play critical roles that offer value to the whole system and to the strength of results.

Though by no means guaranteed, the strength of the SDG focus on transformative results combined with an overarching vulnerability lens offers unifying potential for the UN in the next phase to more strategically align with Government priorities while elevating the development role of UN. Overall, efforts at UNDS reform as experienced in Jordan under the leadership of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator have contributed to a more cohesive and coordinated offer of UNDS services in response to the social and economic impacts of the pandemic.

4. Review of UN Entity COVID-19 Lessons Learned

4.1. Introduction

UN entities began publishing evaluative evidence on their socio-economic responses to COVID-19 in 2021. As the first step in summarizing lessons from these studies this evaluation mapped all available evaluative reports published by UN entities prior to January 2022, before submitting this list to UNEG member Evaluation Offices for their review and for supplemental additions. The review

selection process was narrowed down to two main types of evaluation and lessons learning reports¹⁵:

1. Thematic or joint evaluations and synthesis of evaluations covering overall UN entity actions in response to COVID-19; and
2. Real time assessments (RTAs) or synthesis of RTAs of UN entity response including global evaluation summaries drawing on regional reports.

When the two types of reports were combined, the universe included eight reports which summarized all or part of a UNDS entity's experience in evaluating or reviewing programmes under COVID-19 for an in-depth analysis. Evaluations at country or regional level, including UNDAF and CF evaluations and Country Program Evaluations by selected UNCT members were excluded from the summary.

This review has identified the overall conclusions and thematic lessons learned from the selected studies – to the extent that they are directly applicable to the UNDS response to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and thus fall within the scope of this evaluation.

Table 1: Reports reviewed for the summary

UN Entity	Published	Title
FAO	November 2021	Real time Evaluation of FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme- Phase 1
ILO	December 2021	Evaluative lessons on how to build a better future of work after the pandemic: A synthesis review
UNDP	July 2021	Lessons from Evaluations, UNDP's COVID-19 Adaptation and Response: What worked and how?
UNDP	December 2020	Evaluation of UNDP Support for Climate Change Adaptation
UNESCO	May 2020	Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on UNESCO's Programme and Activities
UN Habitat	September 2020	COVID-19 Response Report of Activities
UNICEF	June 2021	Real-Time Assessment of the UNICEF Response to COVID-19: Global Synthesis Report
UN Women	February 2021	Report on the UN Women Global Response to COVID-19

This section details the findings and lessons learned of the reviewed studies, specifically the strategic and operational lessons learned as reported by UN entities (particularly those related to joint work, cohesion and collaboration).

The evaluation has also noted socio-economic impacts of the pandemic as identified in the reviewed reports and has incorporated these reported impacts into section 2 (The Development Emergency) of this interim report.

¹⁵ In order to achieve coverage of a reasonable number of UNDS entities, the review does include some overall studies of a UN entity global response to COVID-19 which are not evaluations, including study reports published by UNESCO and UN Women. The UNESCO report, for example, was produced by the UNESCO Bureau of Strategic Planning as an element of reporting to the governing body. The independent evaluation of the UNESCO response to COVID-19 is currently under way.

4.2. Lessons Learned as Reported by UN Entities

Lessons on Flexible Programming, Funding, and Digital Preparedness

- 1) At the beginning of the pandemic, urgent action on behalf of UN entities was required. Specifically, programming had to pivot to respond to the evolution of existing priorities and the emergence of new ones.**

For UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, and other UN entities, COVID-19 required many of their projects to pivot to address the new and prominent socio-economic consequences of the pandemic, especially on the most vulnerable. Projects had to become more flexible and innovative in addressing new challenges, assigning funds to COVID-19 related support or broadening target groups to include those impacted or to include new needs. In addition, FAO (FAO 2021a, p.10) noted the requirement to maintain critical operations to sustain farm families and ensure crops were planted during the immediate crisis of the Pandemic.

ILO (2021b, p.44) recognized the ongoing need to maintain its ability to adapt to new priorities, as countries try to rebuild their labour markets, and (in the immediate response phase) focus less on work quality issues. For UNICEF (2021a, p.17), country-level programming shifted significantly, as the need to procure (mainly) health-related supplies at scale was new for most Country Offices (CO); while providing an opportunity for UNICEF, this was also extremely challenging. UNICEF (2021a, p.17) also supported adaptations to service delivery systems to support continuity, facilitate reopening, and enable equitable access to education. For UNICEF (2021a, p.17), all regions reported an overall increase in the scale of delivery and coverage. UN-Habitat (2020, p.10) also adapted its programming by launching an urgent COVID-19 Response Plan for 64 countries focusing on immediate action in poor and densely populated areas.

- 2) The pandemic presented a significant opportunity to advocate UN normative values.**

The pandemic opened a window of opportunity to advocate for specific (and often controversial or politically sensitive) interventions based on UN values of HR/GE/LNOB and Inclusion. For example, for UNICEF, it presented the opportunity to advocate for releasing detained children; in many cases, COs had been advocating for such release prior to COVID-19, but the pandemic gave governments additional motivation to respond to these advocacy efforts (UNICEF 2021a, p.34). In certain countries, UNICEF also encountered a new opportunity to advocate for street children by supporting their integration into social centers during the period of confinement and curfews, and also took new action to support people living with HIV/AIDS (UNICEF 2021a, p.34). For UNESCO (2020, p.13), the increased risk of poaching at natural sites and looting at archaeological sites left without surveillance gave the entity the opportunity to mobilize site managers, intensify its vigilance of online platforms for cultural property sales and hold consultations with institutional partners to pool efforts and agree on common approaches to address the consequences of the pandemic. These findings are consistent with the Jordan case study where the vulnerabilities exposed by the pandemic reportedly provided the opportunity to raise sensitive issues such as women's participation in the labour market and the plight of migrant workers.

- 3) The pandemic quickly revealed the need to repurpose funds and mobilize new funds for the response, yet success in funding COVID-19 programming varied greatly across entities and regions.**

UN entities had to quickly mobilize funds to support programmes as they pivoted to address the emergency of the pandemic. UNICEF (2021a, p.28) COs greatly appreciated the flexibility of donors

in allowing them to reprogram funds to respond to the pandemic. Still, their evidence does not yet indicate why some sectors have had more flexibility than others. For them, funds were repurposed mainly to purchase PPE, essential drugs, testing devices, the printing of learning modules, communication for development, and child and social protection responses. UN Women reallocated its resources to enable programme continuity while addressing the effects of COVID-19, which allowed for flexibility to allocate funds when and where they were most needed, enabling a faster and more comprehensive response (UN Women 2021a, p.6).

Reallocating resources for the COVID-19 response also generated funding gaps in existing programmes. For example, as government partners faced financial constraints with resources being redirected to the pandemic response, some of UNDPs ongoing projects lost a priority focus, with financial contributions from the government no longer being provided. UNDP also had to reallocate some project funds to meet pandemic needs, further constraining its existing projects (UNDP 2021a, p.6). Evaluations reviewed provided examples of re-purposing funds from core resources and from funds earmarked to a greater or lesser degree by development partners.

4) Entities recognized an absence of quality monitoring data during the pandemic.

When adjusting or redesigning programmes to respond to the pandemic, COs often found a lack of quality monitoring data to draw on. FAO recognized that the absence of monitoring data limited FAO personnel’s ability at headquarters and in decentralized offices to inform future follow-up actions, including targeted advocacy, increased dissemination and provision of technical assistance (FAO 2021a, p.12). UNICEF (2021a, p.28) recognized how several regions highlighted both the access challenges to monitoring and, in many cases, the previous limited experience in remote monitoring as a challenge. Most UNICEF COs felt that a lack of reliable data during the COVID-19 response was a barrier to decision-making (UNICEF 2021a, p.44).

For UNICEF (2021a, p.48), the existence of innovative and remote management and monitoring mechanisms has been articulated but the effectiveness of these mechanisms has not yet been established. UNICEF regions indicate that a hybrid (remote and traditional) monitoring mechanism would be desirable in the future.

5) Digitalization proved to be key to the continuous implementation of projects.

UN entities quickly shifted staff to new working modalities, including teleworking arrangements in order to provide continuity and ensure implementation of programmes. Entities developed digital tools to continue with their programming: virtual trainings and technical assistance, interactive e-learning tools, disseminating guidance reports online, online webinars, and developing remote learning systems, amongst other similar tools. Overall, entities used new technologies and remote assistance to support affected countries.

Lessons on Multi-stakeholder Partnerships

1) For many entities, the pandemic proved they could be agile and overcome barriers of internal collaboration to unlock latent synergies and capacity to innovate.

The need for interventions to pivot and significantly change in response to the pandemic, tested entities’ ability to develop highly relevant activities and use resources to meet stakeholder needs. This required overcoming barriers to internal collaboration. For UN entities, progress in reducing internal “siloing” needs to be maintained in the post-COVID-19 world, as evaluation reports recognize the risk of reverting to old, more fragmented habits

FAO (2021a, p.2) found that adopting measures that fostered collaboration resulted in improved coordination, planning and alignment of efforts within the Organization. ILO reviewed the focus of the work of different ILO departments away from product-centered approaches and towards more localized solutions. ILO showed that, when faced with a crisis, it could overcome its tendency to 'work in silos', the pandemic provided a new imperative for ILO to work as one and overcome a tendency to work in a fragmented, even internally competitive way (ILO 2021b, p.7).

2) Collaborations amongst UN entities in developing COVID-19 related knowledge products contributed to building a shared understanding of the impact of COVID-19.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships enabled the pooling and leveraging of expertise, resources, and networks to develop inter-sectoral assessments. These assessments contributed to building a shared understanding of the impact of COVID-19 and guided UN entities' response. For FAO (2021a, p.10), collaborating with external actors for the development of COVID-19 related knowledge products and data services contributed to building a shared understanding about the impact of the crisis and was reported very effective to disseminate key messages and to support their uptake. UN Habitat (2020, p.8) enhanced multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support preparedness, response and recovery in urban areas.

3) In response to COVID-19, numerous partnerships and collaborations emerged amongst UN entities at country level. While there are many good examples of cooperation, countervailing pressures that work against effective collaboration were noted.

UN entities recognize the importance of collaborative work during the pandemic; especially in order to regain momentum to achieving the SDGs (ILO 2021b, p.8). Entities have recognized opportunities for more collaboration with other UN agencies in the recovery phase.

UNICEF (2021a, p.39) warns of examples where inter-agency cooperation was limited, particularly in those countries where weak relationships predate the pandemic. Additionally, it was noted that coordination or cooperation agreements among United Nations agencies made at HQ level were not always well communicated to the COs (UNICEF 2021a, p.39).

UNDP (2020, p.35) also identified some countervailing pressures that worked against more effective collaboration:

Joint programming is resource intensive, and it is not always clear that the benefits outweigh the costs. A competitive dynamic still exists with other UN agencies including specialized agencies (i.e. IFAD, FAO) and other funds and programmes with a more focused mandate (i.e. UNEP, WFP). This dynamic is most pronounced in contexts where resources are scarce, forcing agencies to compete for similar funding opportunities. This dynamic is reflected in relatively low levels of satisfaction from UN partners of UNDP's contributions to the UN development system in areas such as coordinated resource mobilization and integrated development solutions.

This was consistent with findings in the Jordan Case Study at the country level whereby the risk of reverting to less cohesive working styles within the UNCT were well recognized.

Lessons on UNCT Coherence and Collaboration

- 1. UN entities aligned their COVID-19 response programming with the broader UN framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19. They also worked within the UNCT to identify gaps in the response and formulate their country-level response strategy.**

As reflected in these evaluation reports, UN entities recognized the need to align their actions within the broader UN framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19. They also recognized value in working within the UNCT. For example, UNESCO (2020, p.3) recognized it has worked with the UNCTs to formulate a coherent communication and response strategy, including response planning, data collection, needs assessments, development of materials and resources, and advocacy. Through its engagement with UNCTs, UN-Habitat (2020, p.6) repurposed its development portfolio in 64 countries identifying gaps, maximizing its added value to local government and community-led responses in urban areas.

2. At a country level, UN entities put effort into developing SEIAs and SERPs to formulate a coordinated response strategy.

A strong element of the COVID-19 socioeconomic impact response has been the UN's country-level strategic instruments, such as SEIAs and SERPs. UNDP recognized the role SEIAs played in articulating the impact of COVID-19 across society and in helping governments strengthen their own response plans. The role of UNCT-developed SERPs is also highlighted by UNDP, as they recognize these outlined the areas of work that the UN agencies in the country support the government in addressing in response to the pandemic (UNDP 2021, p.6).

Efforts placed in developing SEIAs and SERPs were also mentioned by UN Habitat (2020, p.38), who explicitly recall putting extra effort in the engagement through UNCTs, supporting the review of SEIAs and related SERPs. UN Habitat (2020, p.38) also recognizes actively supporting the elaboration of Common Country Analysis (CCAs) and Cooperation Frameworks (CFs).

4.3. Summary: Lessons from an Overview of UNDS Evaluations

The review of available UNDS member summaries of the findings of evaluations and lessons learning studies relevant to COVID-19 illustrates that these entities are identifying some key messages relevant to this evaluation. These include:

- The requirement, in the immediate phase of the pandemic, to adopt new ways of working by relying on hybrid (remote and in-person) methods, advance digitization and strain to re-design and re-purpose programming and funding – sometimes with remarkable success but also in the face of significant constraints, especially on funding;
- The uncovering by the pandemic of new opportunities and a heightened impetus to advocate for controversial elements of HR/Gender/LNOB and inclusion values to support those most heavily impacted by the pandemic;
- The need to reduce internal UNDS entity barriers to better foster cross-sectoral collaboration; and,
- The need and opportunity provided by the pandemic to increase inter-agency collaboration with and beyond UNCTs.

These lessons are largely consistent with the evaluation evidence gathered to date for this evaluation and with the preliminary findings reported in Section 6.

5. UN Entity Strategic Plan Analysis

5.1. Introduction

In addressing the UNDS response to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, the evaluation has taken note in both the Terms of Reference (UN 2021f) and the Inception Report (UN 2022a) of the important contextual role of UNDS reform in supporting and strengthening the coherence of the

response at country level. This was also a key lesson learned by the Early Lessons and Evaluability of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF (UN 2021c, p.35-36)¹⁶ which found that progress in UNDS reform had contributed to a more coherent response to the pandemic. In light of UNDS reform as a contributing factor for a more coherent UNDS response, the evaluation has examined UNDS entity Strategic Plans (SP) developed in 2021 and commencing in 2022 as an example of an important supporting message from executive management at headquarters level to their respective Country Offices that make up the UNCT.

The four-year SPs regularly produced by UN entities serve to guide them towards reaching their goals and implementing their mission, all in context of their individual mandates. Under a relatively standard structure, SPs reflect on the strategic context and the entity's role within the UN System; they then set SDG-related targets and further describe how the entity will deliver on them. A programme budget and a strategic indicator framework generally accompany each SP.

When developing an SP, UNDS entities also consider the general guidance laid out in the resolutions of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), in particular the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) resolution. Progress toward the mandates contained in the QCPR (as well as resolutions on the repositioning of the UNDS) are annually reviewed by ECOSOC. There are differing degrees of obligation and accountability to the QCPR resolutions depending on the type of UNDS entity involved. While Funds and Programs are obligated to implement the resolutions, Specialized Agencies are invited to do so. Nonetheless, it is clear from this review that most UNDS entities give some consideration to these resolutions in the preparation of their respective SPs.

The latest QCPR resolution (2020) guides the UNDS over the years 2021-2024. General Assembly Resolution 75/233 of December 2020 emphasizes key components of UNDS reform by:

- Welcoming a revitalized and action oriented **United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (CF) as the most important instrument** for planning and implementation of the UN development activities in each country (para. 71).
- Recognizing the progress made by the reinvigorated **Resident Coordinator system** and the **reconfigured United Nations country teams**, underscoring the importance for all United Nations development system entities to prepare and finalize their entity-specific country development programme documents in accordance with the agreed priorities of the CF (para 74).
- Stressing the importance of accountability for implementing reforms at the country level, and in this regard requests the Secretary-General and members of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to ensure full implementation of the **Management and Accountability Framework in all United Nations country teams** (para 77).
- Reiterating the request to United Nations country teams **under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator to strengthen joint programming processes** and the use of joint programmes at the country level, where appropriate (para 96).
- Urging Member States and other contributors to give priority to **pooled, thematic and joint funding mechanisms** applied at all levels, where appropriate, and limit earmarking to activities in accordance with the national priorities of programme countries (para 53).

¹⁶ Accessible at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/early-lessons-and-evaluability-un-covid-19-response-and-recovery-mptf>

UN entities incorporate QCPR components into their SPs, in part, to signal their importance to Regional (RO) and Country Offices (CO), as the SPs serve as a messaging and strategic guidance mechanism. For these decentralized offices, the Strategic Plan (or Framework) of their UN entity is considered an important input document for preparation of Country Programme Documents.

This section provides the findings of an analysis the messages provided through the SP regarding advancing UNDS reform and addressing the socio-economic response to COVID-19. From 2022 onward, SPs outline inter alia how each entity envisions UN system collaboration (and other QCPR components) in support of the socio-economic response to COVID-19. In this regard, analysing the message sent through the SP to COs is important to better understanding the aggregate UNDS response to COVID-19.

5.2. Methodology

Thirteen UN entities¹⁷ developed a Strategic Plan amidst the COVID-19 pandemic; Table 2 summarizes the SPs dated 2022 onward. Based on the time they were developed and approved, these SPs should reflect the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on programming, the ongoing efforts to advance UNDS reforms and incorporate elements of GA Resolution 75/33 as well as articulating the entity’s role in the overall UNDS COVID-19 response. The remaining entities in the UNDS either developed their current SP before 2021 or do not prepare an overall strategy document analogous to a formal SP.

Table 2: Strategic Plans

Entity	Document Title	Period
WIPO	Medium-Term Strategic Plan	2022-2026
WFP	Strategic Plan	2022-2025
UNWOMEN	Strategic Plan	2022-2025
UNOPS	Strategic Plan	2022-2025
UNIDO	Medium-Term Programme Framework	2022-2025
UNICEF	Strategic Plan	2022-2025
UNFPA	Strategic Plan	2022-2025
UNESCO	Medium-Term Strategy (Draft)	2022-2029
UNEP	Medium-Term Strategy	2022-2025
UNDRR	Strategic Framework	2022-2025
UNDP	Strategic Plan	2022-2025

¹⁷ UNAIDS Global AIDS Strategy for 2021-2026 was not included in this analysis, as it is not a Strategic Plan for the entity, but rather a strategy to get the world on-track to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

ILO	Strategic Plan	2022-2025
FAO	Strategic Framework	2022-2031

When analyzing these SPs, the evaluation followed a two-step process. First, each Strategic Plan¹⁸ was searched for coverage of specific themes related to the evaluation areas of investigation. The relationship between each area of investigation and defined themes is summarized in Table 3. Next, coded excerpts from each SP were examined to identify how specific themes were framed and communicated. At all times, the evaluation focused on the SP narratives around specific themes derived from the evaluation areas of investigation. The results frameworks that accompany each SP were not included in the review.

Table 3: Areas of investigation and specific themes

Area of Investigation	Specific Themes
1. The extent that UNCTs have been able, through the SERPs and CFs, to achieve or maintain a coherent and sustained UNDS focus on progress toward the achievement of SDGs during the pandemic	<p>1.1 COVID-19: Direct reference to COVID-19 and its effect on the SP</p> <p>1.2 SERP/ UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19: Any explicit reference to the SERPs or the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 as relevant to, guiding, or contributing lessons learned to the SP and its content</p> <p><u>QCPR/UNDS Reform Components (1.3-1.6)</u></p> <p>1.3 RC/DCO: Reference to a commitment to work at the country level through the RC system (including DCO) and/or to support the same</p> <p>1.4 CF: Reference to a commitment to work at the country level through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework</p> <p>1.5 Joint UNDS: Overall reference on the importance of joint collaborations and partnerships amongst UN entities</p> <p>1.6 Joint Work: Specific reference to joint work/programming within entities</p>
2. The extent that MPTFs pooled financing have been effective instruments for mobilizing resources and planning and implementing programming that is coherent with the collective socio-	<p>2.1 Pooled Funds: Evidence of a commitment to increased use of pooled funding (Multi-Partner Trust Funds) to support joint work with other UN entities</p>

¹⁸ Excluding budget programmes and indicator reporting frameworks.

economic response of UNCTs within the framework of the SERP and the CF	
3. The extent that UNCTs, within the framework of the SERPs and CFs, have developed and implemented coherent strategies and programmes to advance UN core values of human rights, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability	3.1 Joint HR/GE/Disability Inclusion/LNOB: Evidence that the entity is committed to a cross-agency approach to addressing HR/Gender/Inclusion/LNOB. This may include reference to joint work with UN Women, the office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR), and other UNCT members.
4. The extent that the SERPs and CFs have contributed to UNCT action to work with national governments and partners to support progress toward the recover better and greener agenda of the UN Framework	4.1 Joint Equitable/Greener Recovery: Explicit references to supporting the transition to a more equitable and sustainable (greener) recovery through joint work with relevant UNDS partners (UNEP) or with other UNCT members
5. The extent of learning by UNCTs (and the UNDS system as a whole) regarding cross-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration as a mechanism to overcome constraints and identify incentive structures which facilitate achieving collaborative results from SERP/CF implementation	5.1 Joint Accountability: Any reference to the MAF at the country level and/or any reference to joint accountability of the UNCT as a whole.

5.3. Strategic Plan Analysis by Evaluation Area of Investigation

After an initial review of Strategic Plans, all specific themes were found to be present in at least one of the documents. Table 4 summarizes the presence of each specific theme per Strategic Plan. What follows is an analysis of each specific theme and its presence within the SPs.

Table 4: Specific theme presence in Strategic Plans

<i>Specific Theme/ Entity</i>	WIPO	WFP	UNWOMEN	UNOPS	UNIDO	UNICEF	UNFPA	UNESCO	UNEP	UNDRR	UNDP	ILO	FAO	TOTAL
1.1 COVID-19	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13/13
1.2 SERP/UN Framework for COVID-19	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3/13
1.3 RC/DCO	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	8/13
1.4 CF	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	11/13
1.5 Joint UNDS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13/13
1.6 Joint Work	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	10/13

2.1 Pooled Funds	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	4/13
3.1 Joint HR / Gender / Disability / LNOB	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	5/13
4.1 Joint Equitable/Greener Recovery	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	5/13
5.1 Joint Accountability	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	9/13

Area of Investigation 1: SERPs, CFs, and a coherent response to COVID-19

A common denominator across all Strategic Plans is the recognition of the effects of COVID-19 on their mandated SDG-related goals. All entities recognize the setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and have consequently made notable adjustments in their programming to regain progress towards the SDGs. Additionally, all SPs recognize the relevance of collective UNDS action in accelerating transformative results. Overall recognition of the importance of collaborative work was found in all Strategic Plans, including UNEP (2021, p.1) recognizing that it will leverage the UNDS reform to engage the wider UN system in stronger, more coordinated and mutually supportive environmental action, and WIPO (2021, p.11) intending to work closely with Member States and other UN agencies, IGOs and NGOs, to pool our expertise to find and deliver workable solutions to complex global challenges. At the same time, nine (out of thirteen) SPs refer explicitly to the QCPR as a guiding document.

When it comes to specific cooperation amongst UN entities, most SPs (10/13) provide evidence on inter-agency partnerships. In most cases, this evidence describes coordination as decentralized and project-based around specific program areas, with collaborations amongst UN entities being seen as partnership. For example, UNDP (2021b, p.8) mentions scaling up work with UNICEF, WHO, and others on policy proposals and programmatic solutions to strengthen systems for health, including to regain lost ground in the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria and to address emerging issues such as non-communicable diseases, mental health, and pandemic preparedness. Similarly, UNFPA (2021, p.10) mentions specifically working in collaboration with UNICEF, UN Women, the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, WHO, ILO, UNDP and OHCHR to reach their outcome goal of strengthened skills and opportunities for adolescents and youth to ensure bodily autonomy, leadership and participation, and to build human capital to be achieved by 2025. It is not possible, based on this one-time review of SPs to indicate whether this most recent generation reflects an increased emphasis on joint programming when compared with earlier iterations.

Joint programming amongst entities is best exemplified across Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) - FAO, IFAD, and WFP. These entities recognize the catalytic role the ongoing UNDS repositioning has played in reinforcing and diversifying their collaboration. The close relationship amongst them has been exemplified in their Programme Priority Areas (PPA); for example, the PPA on Agriculture and Food Emergencies providing the direct link to FAO’s collaboration with WFP, the PPA on Scaling up Investment highlighting FAO’s collaboration with IFAD, and the PPA on One Health encompassing the joint work with WHO and OIE (FAO 2021b, p.25). UN Women (2021b, p.22) also plans to focus on larger, more impactful, and joint programmes aimed at achieving systematic and transformative change and move away from small standalone projects. By working within the UNDS, UN Women (2021b, p.20) aims to become a development organization that is equipped to deliver results as part of a repositioned UN development system where they are most needed – in the field.

Though the narrative in SPs referring to joint work generally emphasizes collaborative partnerships in specific programme areas amongst UN entities, rarely is the commitment set out in the QCPR regarding the RCs role in coordinating joint work present in Strategic Plans. The RC (or DCO) is referenced in eight out of thirteen SPs. Table 5 presents each of these mentions.

Table 5: RC/DCO mentions in Strategic Plans

Entity	Strategic Plan Excerpt
UNEP	UNEP regional offices will be the anchor for delivering the organization’s strategic aspirations and securing stronger engagement at the regional and country levels. They will serve as conduits of UNEP alignment with the United Nations reform guidelines and processes, securing a better understanding of and responsiveness to national and regional contexts and needs, as well as enhanced engagement with United Nations resident coordinators and peace operations and stronger collaboration with United Nations country teams, the regional Development Coordination Office and the Regional Economic Commissions. In contributing to the design and implementation processes for common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, UNEP will ensure that science informs policy. Decisions from these joint processes will inform the organization’s own programme planning and implementation at the country level and its modalities for engagement in the work of the United Nations country teams
UNDP	UNDP works with UNCTs in establishing United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (CF), based on which UNDP and Governments develop their country programmes in areas of UNDP strengths. UNDP will sharpen its offer of integrated support, providing demand-driven services to the system, under the overall coordination of resident coordinators , that meet Governments’ policy and programming priorities
UNDP	Having supported the transition to a repositioned United Nations development system with significant funding and expertise, UNDP continues to work closely with United Nations country teams (UNCTs) and resident coordinators towards these goals.
UNDRR	Within the UN system, UNDRR will further expand engagement with UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams to ensure that disaster risk reduction is a central component of the UN system’s integrated offer to Member States in support of the SDGs
UNIDO	The field network is also fundamental to ensure collaboration with other United Nations entities, stakeholders and development partners, and to help scale up and replicate successful country-level initiatives. At the same time, the field network is instrumental in strengthening UNIDO’s contributions within the United Nations development system reform, ensuring more systematic cooperation with the UNRC offices and UNCTs. This has proven crucial in the coordinated support to national COVID-19 response and recovery plans, which is likely to remain a priority for many Member States moving forward.

Entity	Strategic Plan Excerpt
UNWOMEN	At the country level, it will support UNCTs, under the leadership of the RCs , to promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by enhancing and accelerating gender mainstreaming, including through the roll-out of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard. The Entity will also continue to exercise leadership in convening issue-based coalitions on gender equality that are demand-driven and aligned with the priorities of UN Country Teams
UNWOMEN	In alignment with the QCPR and the Management and Accountability Framework UN-Women will fully support the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator (RC) system and work under the leadership of RCs at country level to support Member States, in line with the Cooperation Frameworks (CF) and national development plans. In this regard, the Entity will maximize its role within UNCTs, both where it is present and where it supports as a Non-Resident Agency, to ensure that CFs and other common country documents enhance financing and strengthen accountability and results for gender equality and women’s empowerment.
UNFPA	Sourcing data from existing national systems as much as possible, and set up the UNFPA monitoring systems to interface and support the exchange of monitoring data and information with United Nations systems, such as UN INFO (the planning, monitoring and reporting system of the United Nations Development Coordination Office that tracks how the United Nations system at the country level supports Governments to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals);
UNFPA	Strengthening the capacity of UNFPA staff and supporting joint monitoring and evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, in line with the United Nations reforms; and relying on the systems and frameworks of the United Nations Development Coordination Office to track several organizational effectiveness and efficiency-related indicators, including those for the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review
UNICEF	The organization will continue to support the enhanced resident coordinator system and coordination structures at the headquarters, regional and country levels, and to implement the Management Accountability Framework.
WFP	Momentum generated by the summit to work closely with resident coordinators , United Nations country teams and its partners to support government priorities and summit commitments and to scale up integrated programming to achieve SDG 2.
WFP	At the global level, WFP participates in inter-agency task teams and liaises with the United Nations Development Coordination Office through its New York Office. At the regional level, WFP contributes to framing the new regional inter-agency architecture through the regional collaborative platforms and related mechanisms. At the country level, WFP country directors are active members of United Nations country teams (UNCTs), ensuring complementary action by United Nations actors.

UN entities that do include references to the RC or DCO include UNEP, UNDP, UNDRR, UNIDO, UNWOMEN, UNFPA, UNICEF, and WFP. In most of these mentions, entities highlight their intent to engage with resident coordinators. UNDP and UNWOMEN both refer to working *under* the leadership of the RC for integrated work. For UNEP, UNDRR, and UNICEF, the SPs reflect their intent to *support* the enhanced RC system. Lastly, for UNIDO and UNFPA, engaging with the RC refers to strengthening *systematic cooperation*, via UNINFO or participating in supporting country-level frameworks.

General Assembly resolution 72/279 elevated the CF as the most important instrument for planning and implementation of the UN development activities at country level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). SPs should reflect the importance of the CF in determining country programming and coordinated joint work at the country level. Eleven out of the thirteen reviewed Strategic Plans explicitly mention the CF.

FAO's SP (2021b, p.28) echoes the QCPR by stating the Cooperation Framework is intended to be the polestar of all UN country-level activities. Similarly, UNDP (2021b, p.5) works with UNCTs in establishing the CFs, based on which UNDP and Governments develop their country programmes in areas of UNDP strengths. UNICEF's (2021b, p.7) SP explains that while UNICEF develops its country programmes under the framework of this SP, those programmes are designed and informed by local contexts, national development priorities and the CF. Entities recognized their valuable role in developing the CF; UNESCO (2021, p.18), an entity which often has a restricted country presence, mentions its commitment to ensure that UNESCO can fully contribute to the results of the common operational activities of the UN system, including the new CF and other UN system-wide mechanisms.

No reference to the UN Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 was found in any of the reviewed Strategic Plans. Only three SPs (UNIDO, UN Women, UNDP) included a reference to country-level Socio-economic COVID-19 Response Plans (SERPs). Given that SERPs were a short to medium-term measure intended to operate from early to mid-2020 until late 2021, it is not surprising that most SPs commencing in 2022 lack an explicit reference. However, some SPs do indicate their intention to move forward on UNDS reforms. For example, UNIDO (2021, p.25) recognizes the importance of strengthening their contributions within the UNDS reform, ensuring a more systematic cooperation with the RC offices and UNCTs. This has proven crucial in the coordinated support to national COVID-19 response and recovery plans, which is likely to remain a priority for many Member States moving forward.

Area of Investigation 2: Pooled Funds

Pooled funds have been referred to as a priority in the 2020 QCPR; they are meant to serve as the financial incentives that drive UNDS reform. In accordance, UNDS entities have committed to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of development-related inter-agency pooled funds. Yet, references to pooled funds were only found in four of the reviewed Strategic Plans. When mentioned, the entities referred to collaborating on specific pooled funds such as the SDG Fund or the Spotlight Initiative. No specific mention of the COVID-19 Response and Recover Multi-partner Trust Fund was found.

Although rarely mentioned (5/13), other forms of joint financing amongst UN entities appeared in Strategic Plans; a notable example being UNICEF's (2021b, p.23) mention of work on financing for development with UNDP, including within the Secretary-General's initiative on Financing for Development in the era of COVID-19 and beyond, and through a flagship initiative that encompasses regional development financing ideas in areas that leverage existing country-level partnerships. This

collaboration builds on the strengths of UNDP on the macroeconomic level and in innovative financing.

Area of Investigation 3: Human Rights/Gender/Inclusion/LNOB

Most entities have mainstreamed gender equality into their Strategic Plans. When doing so they tend to cite their overarching commitment to the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Yet, only a few entities (UNDP, WFP) explicitly refer to a joint collaboration with UN Women to promote gender equality and accelerate women's empowerment. On the other hand, UN Women (2021b, p.18) explicitly recognizes it will:

Significantly step up its UN coordination work. This work will include: leveraging UN-Women's leadership role in promoting accountability of the UN system for work on gender equality, through inter-agency coordination bodies and mechanisms at global, regional and national levels; supporting gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes in the UN system, through guidance and services to strengthen the relevant capacities of the UN system; and developing accountability frameworks of harmonized and commonly agreed standards in this regard. Examples include support for the uniform application of gender equality markers and the establishment of related financial targets, including to monitor and track gender equality-related allocations and expenditures.

Evidence that an entity is committed to a **cross-agency approach** to addressing HR/GE/Inclusion/LNOB was also scarce amongst SPs. References to joint work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was only found in UNICEF's Strategic Plan. In a similar manner, three Strategic Plans (WFP, UNEP, UNICEF) cite working with UNHCR in support of refugees and returnee populations as a strong commitment.

Most (10/13) the SPs reviewed make a general reference to persons with disabilities, with seven of these making clear linkages between disability inclusion and programmatic action. Just under one-third of the SPs (4/13) refer to the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UN DIS). However, only one SP refers to joint work to address the needs of persons with disabilities.

Area of Investigation 4: Equitable and Greener Recovery

Through their SPs, UN entities have consistently addressed how environmental changes impact their mandates and goal areas. Most have elaborated on how their entity will support environmental change, yet only very few of them explicitly detail joint work across UN entities for a greener recovery. UNDP (2021b, p.10) is amongst the very few by emphasizing working with FAO, UNEP and other specialist partners, to catalyze a shift away from business-as-usual land-use and agricultural systems towards practices that restore long-term productivity, bolster livelihoods, safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem services and provide climate solutions.

In a similar fashion, all entities stress the importance of strategic programming to address diverse vulnerable groups' development setbacks. They consistently recognize the growing inequalities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, only UNICEF (2021b, p.2), refers specifically to the term *equitable* in a joint-work amongst UN entities and COVID-19 response context:

UNICEF will lead the momentum for equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, drive equity-based agendas around the world and leverage financing to accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including from countries' domestic resources and those of the United Nations development system, international financial institutions and the private sector.

Area of Investigation 5: Joint Accountability

The majority of Strategic Plans have incorporated joint accountability components (9/13); these include collective monitoring and reporting frameworks, joint evaluations, and evidence/data sharing to strengthen the work of the entire UN system.

When referring to monitoring and reporting frameworks, entities tend to emphasize the importance of harmonizing tools and methodologies with other UN entities to report on progress towards achieving SDGs. As an example, UNEP (2021, p.28) emphasizes how they will contribute to easing the burden of country reporting on progress by building as much as possible on existing credible data and reliable baselines and by aligning its reporting requirements with the SDG indicators. Other entities, like FAO (2021b, p.28), have derived their Country Programme Frameworks from the CF, incorporating country-level results which are defined in the context of the CFs and are linked to the achievement of SDG targets and indicators. This allows for FAO offices to use a common language that facilitates measurement of FAO's interventions at all levels, by aggregating and rolling-up results from country, regional, and global levels. Entities also acknowledge their important role in joint monitoring and evaluation of the CF, and in doing so explicitly refer to their intent to strengthen staff capacity.

Joint assessments and evaluations have also emerged in Strategic Plans. For example, WFP and FAO will conduct joint crop and food security assessment missions to understand the extent and severity of crisis-induced food insecurity (WFP 2021, p.30). More broadly, UNFPA (2021, p.23) mentions its support to joint monitoring and evaluation approaches and efforts with United Nations organizations with whom it shares collective outcome-level and impact-level indicators. A specific mention was found to system-wide evaluations within UNICEFs (2021b, p.21) SP:

Collaboration with United Nations entities is a cornerstone of UNICEF work. UNICEF continues to be fully committed to enhancing the effectiveness and coherence of the United Nations development system, including during the upcoming phase of transition from implementing the remaining mandates of General Assembly resolution 72/279 – a new regional architecture, a strengthened system offer in multi-country offices and bolstered *system-wide evaluations*— towards monitoring what works and addressing gaps and challenges.

Entities have also recognized the relevance of supporting the exchange of monitoring data and information with UN Systems, including UNINFO. UNFPA (2021, p.24) elaborates on the importance of UNINFO as the planning, monitoring, and reporting system of the UN DCO that tracks how the UN system at a country level supports Governments to achieve the SDGs. UNDP (2021b, p.15) echoes UNFPA by stating that through its new data strategy, aligned with the Secretary General's Data Strategy, UNDP will collect, manage, analyse and deploy data knowledge more purposefully to strengthen thought leadership and country programming, contributing as well to UN INFO, the common UN platform that tracks contributions to the SDGs. UNICEF (2021b, p.22) also plans for results to be monitored at the local level and reported and aggregated globally through the UNINFO planning, monitoring, and reporting, systems. Additionally, other entities consider their data and reporting being used to inform the analysis in key national and UN planning documents, such as the UN Country Team Common Country Assessments.

5.4. Summary: Review of Strategic Plans

The UN entities that have prepared new SPs during the pandemic have uniformly endorsed the characterization of COVID-19 as a "development emergency" and a setback to achieving the SDGs and Agenda 2030 as stated in the UN Framework for COVID-19 (2020). While rarely making direct reference to the UN Framework or the SERPs, the SPs developed during the period under evaluation

reflect diverse commitments to respond to the impacts of COVID-19 by re-gaining and/or accelerating action toward transformative results across the UNDS in line with the SDGs and Agenda 2030.

The thirteen SPs assessed for this review have positioned their plans within the framework of the UNDS, with most making explicit references to joint work around the CF, although usually in terms of joint programming among a subset of UNDS entities. This is different than an expressed commitment to achieving the UNDS reform goal of a more coherent UNDS offering to the host government. The majority (9/13) referenced the QCPR as a guiding document. However, UN entities are less consistent in presenting an explicit commitment to support a strengthened RC system and a new-generation UNCT or to otherwise advance UNDS reforms as defined in QCPR resolution 75/233. Furthermore, only four entities committed to increasing development responses through inter-agency pooled funds in their SPs.

Reviewed SPs expressed an overarching commitment to core values of Human Rights, Gender Equality, Inclusion and LNOB in their SPs. However, very few demonstrated specific commitments to working collectively and/or collaboratively achieve global goals around HR/GE/Inclusion/LNOB, and even fewer committed to working collaboratively with those entities within the system that have coordination mandates (UN Women, UNHCHR). While most SPs include a general reference to meeting the needs of persons with disabilities, references to collaborative work to ensure inclusion of persons living with disabilities were largely absent.

UN entities have also demonstrated through their SPs an understanding of how environmental changes have impacted on their mandate's goals, although very few explicitly detail joint work across UN entities for a greener recovery as part of BBB strategies. Similarly, all entities stressed the importance of strategic programming to address the setbacks of various vulnerable groups, largely exacerbated by the pandemic, yet framing of joint work toward equitable BBB responses was generally missing.

The majority of entities reviewed have also emphasized the need to incorporate joint accountability components into their SPs, including collective monitoring and reporting frameworks, joint evaluations, and evidence/data sharing to strengthen the work of the UN system.

6. Emerging Evaluation Findings

6.1. Introduction

This section presents a reflection on the emerging evaluation findings that can be reported at this time given the current stage of data collection and analysis. The findings reported here are not definitive and will be supplemented and refined as the data collection and analysis phases of the evaluation are completed in the coming months. Nonetheless, they are supported by the evaluation evidence that has been collected to this point in time, including the evidence cited in the preceding sections. These findings are also supported by the results of ongoing global and regional stakeholder interviews and evidence gathered in other evaluative initiatives such as the report of the *Early Lessons and Evaluability of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF* and the report of the *Evaluation of the Resident Coordinator system contribution to country-level programme coherence*. They also form the basis for the emerging recommendations listed in Section 7.

6.2. Emerging Findings

Table 6 provides a list of the most important emerging evaluation findings available at this point in the data collection and analysis process. It also identifies the most significant evaluation evidence

used to triangulate each finding. Table 6 does not include findings relating to the end results of UNDS support to country efforts to address the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 as realized through the SERPs and CFs. In the final report, as per the terms of reference (UN 2021f, p.4), the evaluation will examine the results reported for each of the case study countries through the UNINFO portal. This will be used in combination with information gathered during all eight country case studies to provide insights into the level of results achieved to date. A more complete evaluation of the results of UNDS support will require allowing more time for results to emerge along with completion of CF evaluations undertaken in accordance with DCO guidelines.

Table 6: Emerging evaluation findings

Emerging Findings	Supporting Evidence Sources
<p>1. The experience of the past two years has confirmed the depth and seriousness of the development crisis identified by the Secretary General in early 2020. It has also confirmed the deepening challenge to achievement of the SDGs under Agenda 2030 and the need for re-gaining and accelerating momentum during the Decade of Action.</p>	<p>Consistent with data reviewed for this evaluation and with results of UN entity evaluations and with UNDS Strategic Plans.</p>
<p>2. The pandemic has contributed to deepening inequalities both within and among countries. At country level the pandemic, and the lockdowns and public health measures taken in response, have had a significantly worse impact on women and girls, self-employed and informal workers, migrant workers, refugees and virtually all of the at-risk populations identified in the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 (UN 2020c, p.7). At a global level, developed economies with high vaccination rates have rebounded economic growth rates while rates remain depressed in developing economies with low vaccination rates.</p>	<p>Strongly supported by this evaluation and by UNDS entity evaluation and lessons learned reports, global and regional interviews and the Jordan case study.</p>
<p>3. The evolution of the pandemic and its social and economic effects has also confirmed the relevance of the five pillars of action of the UN Framework, with particular emphasis on the immediate need (in 2020 and ongoing) for strengthened systems of social protection and economic response and recovery (without neglecting other pillars of the response).</p>	<p>Confirmed in global and regional interviews, independent data reviews, UN entity evaluations and in the Jordan case study.</p>
<p>4. UNDS reform efforts aimed at strengthening the role of the empowered and independent Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator have helped to support collaborative and coherent planning processes by the UNCT. These have combined, in some countries, with an inclusive process for developing SERPs (including moves toward integration of non-resident agencies) to contribute to more coherent CFs, which are better aligned with national needs and priorities. There is less evidence that this more inclusive and coherent planning process is strongly influencing UN entity programming on the ground.</p>	<p>Supported by the results of the <i>Early Lessons and Evaluability of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF</i> (UN 2021c, p.43) and the report of the <i>Evaluation of the Resident Coordinator system contribution to country-level programme coherence</i> (OIOS 2021, pp.13-14). Also supported by the results of the Jordan case study.</p>

Emerging Findings	Supporting Evidence Sources
<p>5. Notwithstanding the progress made toward more coherence and collaboration in policy engagement and programme planning there are continuing impediments and barriers limiting this progress including issues of accountability (with primary accountability to individual UNCT entity headquarters rather than collectively). Agency priorities remain a determining factor in programme planning. Messaging from UNDS entity headquarters to the country office level as illustrated in part through the newest generation of Strategic Plans often lacks specific reference to advancing UNDS reforms.</p>	<p>Supported by the <i>Secretary General’s Review of the functioning of the Resident Coordinator system</i> (UN 2021g, paras.152-156) and the <i>Evaluation of the Resident Coordinator system</i> (OIOS 2021, p.20) and the <i>Early Lessons and Evaluability of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF</i> (UN 2021c, p.33) as well as the review of Strategic Plans and Jordan case study.</p>
<p>6. UNDS reform and RC leadership have contributed to strengthening inter-agency collaboration (partly by reviving or strengthening key elements of the development coordination architecture at country level, including thematic and results groups) and a more coherent approach to HR/GE/Inclusion/LNOB by the UNCT. There is, however, a need to better understand the roles (realized and potential) played by different platforms of this architecture at country level. The Jordan case study, the <i>OIOS Evaluation of the Resident Coordinator System</i> and the <i>Early Lessons and Evaluability of the COVID-19 MPTF</i> all noted that the RC and the RCO play an important role in the operation of multi-agency mechanisms for UNCT coordination at country level. They also illustrate the need and opportunity to document good practice and better articulate how these mechanisms can operate more effectively.</p>	<p>Strongly supported by the <i>Evaluation of the Resident Coordinator System</i> (OIOS 2021, p.24) and the Jordan case study.</p>
<p>7. Pooled financing mechanisms such as the COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF and the Joint SDG Fund have been valued by participating organizations as a mechanism for engaging in new areas of programming with the potential for catalytic effects. They have also facilitated new partnerships among UNCT entities which may have lasting impacts on collaboration. At the same time, participating entities note the limited resources available through pooled funds and the resulting limited visibility among national governments and development partners.</p>	<p>Supported by the <i>Evaluation of the Resident Coordinator System</i> (OIOS 2021, p.22) and the <i>Early Lessons and Evaluability</i> (UN 2021c, p.vii) and the Jordan case study. To be further explored in remaining country case studies.</p>

Emerging Findings	Supporting Evidence Sources
<p>8. At country level, there is strong ownership among UNCT entities of the guiding principles of Human Rights, Gender Equality, Inclusion and Leaving No-One Behind. There is evidence of integration of a focus on vulnerable groups, including women, refugees, youth, older people, people with disabilities and migrant workers into key planning documents, but less evidence of joint programmatic impacts. The strength of the response at country level is related to capacities across the UNCT: examples include the presence of a Human Rights Advisor in some RCOs and the establishment of empowered interagency groups (e.g. Gender Theme Groups). In addition, where there is a significant humanitarian response under way and a nexus modality is applied by the UNCT, a focus on vulnerable groups and LNOB is seen as integral to the humanitarian response.</p>	<p>Supported by the <i>Evaluation of the Resident Coordinator System</i> (OIOS 2021, p.23) and the <i>Early Lessons and Evaluability</i> study (UN 2021c, p.30) as well as the Jordan case study.</p>
<p>9. Ensuring that SERPs have contributed to CFs with a strong focus on a more equitable and environmentally sustainable recovery – including action on climate change adaptation and mitigation has been a challenge for UNCTs, partly due to the ongoing evolution of the pandemic itself which means that host government priorities were overwhelmingly focused on the immediate response phase. Nonetheless, UNCTs are turning their attention to engagement on environmental sustainability and climate change with consistent engagement and encouragement by some RCs supported by high level messaging. There is some evidence that UNCTs have taken advantage of the SERP and CF development process to refine and develop their approach to supporting an equitable and environmentally sustainable recovery. A key question is how best to integrate action on environmental sustainability and climate within a more equitable social and economic recovery.</p>	<p>Supported by global and regional interviews and by the <i>Early Lessons and Evaluability</i> study (UN 2021c, p.39) with further development by the Jordan case study. This issue requires a more detailed and focused evaluation effort to be fully explored and developed further</p>
<p>10. Some UNCTs have demonstrated an ability to learn from experience and adopt to operational requirements to maintain business continuity in the immediate response to the pandemic. They have also built on progress made before and during the pandemic to improve coherence in policy development and in planning processes for the SERP and</p>	<p>While supported by individual country case studies undertaken for the <i>Early Lessons and Evaluability</i> study (UN 2021c) this finding is</p>

Emerging Findings	Supporting Evidence Sources
<p>the CF. In addition, the experience of the pandemic has highlighted the importance of joint coordination structures including inter-agency thematic and results groups as an important lesson learned. While UNCTs have largely complied with the requirements of the global system for reporting on SERPs progress indicators through the UNINFO portal, they report that this system has not provided assistance in guiding progress toward achieving the goals of the SERP at national level.</p>	<p>partly based on the pilot country case study of Jordan undertaken for this evaluation.</p>

6.3. Emerging Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this interim report is to provide real time analytical information and to illustrate how the UNDS has responded to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19. At this point in time, the evaluation is able to put forward, for consideration by decision makers, a number of emerging recommendations based on the data collection and analysis completed to date in line with the emerging findings presented in Table 6. The basic direction and intent of each of these recommendations is not likely to change, but they can and will be further developed and refined with more precision added as the remaining data collection and analysis tasks are completed.

As a result, the emerging recommendations are presented at this point in time for consideration and discussion. If decision makers decide to act on the emerging recommendations, their decisions will allow the process of planning and implementing the recommended actions to begin in a timely fashion. The final evaluation report will put forward additional recommendations aimed at helping the UNDS to adjust policies, processes and programmes to re-gain or re-animate progress toward Agenda 2030 and the achievement of the SDGs and to realize the commitments in *Our Common Agenda*.

Emerging Recommendations

- 1. UNDS entities continue efforts to advance the UNDS reform process as it contributes to a more coherent response to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19, with particular emphasis on the Cooperation Framework as an instrument for collective planning, programming and accountability for the socio-economic response and an equitable and green recovery at country level.**

The evaluation evidence gathered to date, consistent with the findings of the *Early Lessons and Evaluability of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF*, indicates that the lessons of the SERP planning and implementation process can make a strong contribution to a more coherent CF which is aligned with national needs and priorities and focused on the SDGs. Further, the extent that these lessons can improve CFs and UNDS engagement is partly based on continued progress in implementing UNDS reforms.

Rationale

As noted in emerging findings four, five and six, evidence continues to accumulate illustrating the important role of the newly empowered RC system, the strengthened RCO and the more responsive and inclusive UNCT in developing and advancing a coherent offer of UNDS services at country level in response to the pandemic through improvements in CFs and the programmatic actions they drive. At the same time, this evaluation and the recent *Evaluation of the Resident Coordinator System* (OIOS 2021) also identify the need for continued effort to reduce competition for resources, align incentives and improve collective accountability for UNDS results at country level in order to continue advances in the coherence and effectiveness of the UNDS response.

Benefits

The primary benefit will be to avoid a loss of momentum in the continuing effort to strengthen the coherence of UNCTs as they work to develop and implement a more coherent and cohesive response to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 and to contribute to a more equitable and sustainable recovery. This should improve coherence across all modes of engagement, including policy development and planning, technical assistance, advocacy and programme support.

2. UNDS entities prepare a supplement to their Strategic Plans to reinforce messaging on necessary action to advance progress in response to UN General Assembly resolutions on UNDS reform

Notwithstanding the different levels of obligation placed on Funds and Programmes and Specialized Agencies by resolutions in response to the QCPR, UNDS entities should consider supplementing current Strategic Plans/Frameworks with a clear statement detailing their commitment to taking further action in response to UNGA resolutions on UN development system reform including the reform related elements of General Assembly Resolution 75/233. In particular, this may include a strong emphasis on coherent and collaborative action on Human Rights/Gender Equality/Inclusion/LNOB as well as coordinated action on environmental sustainability and climate action as central elements in an equitable recovery.

It may also include including further action to strengthen the RC system and commitment to pooled funding and joint policy and programme actions at country level across the full UNCT. UN entities may also consider reviewing results frameworks for their Strategic Plans to ensure they incorporate performance indicators relating to realization of the elements of UNDS reform highlighted in Resolution 75/233. By doing so, UNDS entities will be able to strengthen and communicate a consistent message from the executive management level to regional and country office staff, to development partners and to member states regarding their commitment to advance the UNDS reform agenda.

Rationale

While recognizing different levels of obligation within the UNDS entities, there remains a wide diversity and sometimes lack of uptake of the QCPR resolutions on UNDS reform in the Strategic Plan/Frameworks reviewed for this evaluation, as noted in emerging findings four and five. By incorporating QCPR provisions on system collaboration and reform in a more substantive/comprehensive manner, UN entities can visibly reinforce their commitment to the reform and thus help enable effective collaboration within UN country teams in the response to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. This is consistent with the recommendation in by the Secretary General in his report on the functioning of the Residence Coordinator system that the chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group should prepare a UN development system reform checklist (UN 2021g, para. 153).

In developing a supplemental statement to support this aspect of their SPs, UNDS entities may wish to undertake consultations with the Chair of the UNSDG to ensure responsiveness to the critical elements of UNDS reform. In this discussion they may be guided by the proposals contained in the Secretary General's Review of the functioning of the Resident Coordinator system: rising to the challenge and keeping the promise of the 2030 Agenda, particularly those referring to adherence to the letter and spirit of the dual reporting function (UN 2021g paras. 152-156 and General Assembly Resolution A/Res/76/4, para 13). They may also wish to inform their respective governance bodies of the changes. These steps will support a better collective response by UNCTS, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, as expressed through the Cooperation Framework.

Expected Benefits

The primary benefit of these actions will be to reinforce messages from executive management level in UNDS entities to representatives and staff of regional and country offices regarding the need to continue to advance the UNDS reform agenda and, thereby, to improve the coherence of the UNDS response to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 as addressed through the SERPs (in 2020 and 2021) and in Cooperation Frameworks moving forward. They will also help to reassure member states that UNDS entities are intensifying efforts to advance the reform agenda and to respond effectively to member state decisions and resolutions to that effect.

3. Undertake a system wide review of country level UNCT coordination architecture including, the RCO and results and thematic groups.

There is a need for a UNCT-level review focused on identifying the outstanding good practices in establishing or improving the architecture for coordinating UN actions in support of CFs including in countries where the humanitarian-development nexus is predominant. This should include examining the roles and relationships of inter-agency results and thematic working groups as well as the functional operations of the RCO. The goal would be to identify good practices in tailoring the coordination architecture to the national context and to the comparative strengths of UNCT entities. The review will help to strengthen the UNDS reforms with a fit for purpose UNCT coordination architecture. It would also build on the findings of the recently completed OIOS Evaluation of the Resident Coordinator system but would not be focused on the performance of the RC system or the RC but rather the functioning of the constituent elements of the UN coordination architecture at country level.

Rationale

The Jordan pilot country case study; the *Lessons Learning and Evaluability* study of the COVID-19 MPTF (UN 2021c, p.45); and the *Evaluation of the Resident Coordinator System* (OIOS 2021, p.13) all emphasized the important role of RCOs and inter-agency results and thematic group structures in strengthening coordination and coherence in the UNCT as highlighted in emerging finding six. They also point out the effectiveness of these structures varies from country to country depending on, inter alia, the set of expertise available within the RCO, the leadership provided by the RC and the history of UNCT collaboration through results and thematic groups.

Benefits

The review would identify and support good practices and further encourage a results-tested flexibility in the approaches to establishing or modifying these structures as required based on country context, in accordance with current guidance on Cooperation Frameworks. One possible lesson from the Jordan case study for example is the value in having a dedicated Human Rights Coordinator in the RCO in countries where the UN High Commission for Human Rights does not have a physical presence.

4. Undertake a SWE of UNDS efforts to support an environmentally sustainable recovery and address climate change

As the policies, systems and processes for SWE continue to evolve and progress, there is a compelling need for a formative SWE of UNCT efforts to support countries as they engage in addressing the reality of pursuing an equitable and environmentally sustainable recovery – including action on adapting and mitigating climate change. This is needed to ensure that the renewed focus on SDGs during the decade of action is reinforced by evaluative evidence on environmentally

sustainable recovery and action on climate change. The evaluation would focus on how a more socially and economically equitable recovery can and should be grounded in integrated action to address environmental sustainability and action on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Rationale

The the *Early Lessons and Evaluability of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF* (UN 2021c, p. 39) reported that UNCTs were facing important challenges in developing a coherent approach to supporting a more equitable and greener recovery – including an effective response to climate change as highlighted in emerging finding nine of this report. The importance of addressing these challenges is further emphasized by the decision by member states at the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP 26) to join the Glasgow Climate Pact and thereby keep the goal of no more than 1.5 degrees centigrade of climate warming alive and to finalize outstanding elements of the Paris Agreement (accessible at: <https://ukcop26.org/cop26-keeps-1-5c-alive-and-finalises-paris-agreement/>).

The priority need for effective UNCT support to climate change adaptation and mitigation is also strengthened by commitment number two (protect our planet) of *Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General* (UN 2021a, p.6). Finally, regional and global interviews noted that the UNDS response from early 2020 to the present has been necessarily engaged in the most direct and immediate response to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19. However, they also note that now is the time to address the most effective means of supporting an environmentally sustainable recovery that includes action on climate change.

Benefits

As a formative evaluation, the proposed SWE would focus on identifying and validating emerging good practices at a system-wide level and sharing those practices across agencies and countries. It would augment the results of completed and ongoing evaluations carried out by UNDS members (including, for example, the Evaluation of UNDP Support to Climate Change Adaptation completed in 2020) but with a system-wide lens. The resulting report would be useful to the UNDS system as a whole, to RCs and RCOs and to UNCTs as they further develop programmes on climate change adaptation and mitigation to give programmatic expression to this priority area of many emerging CFs.

Annex A: Persons Interviewed

Global and Regional Interviews (Ongoing)

Name	Organization	Position
Aleshina, Olga	COVID-19 MPTF Secretariat	Head of the Secretariat
Alvarez, Priya	UN Women	UN System Coordination
Angela Neil, Natalie	OIOS	Evaluation Officer
Arapakos, Demetra	OIOS	Evaluation Officer
Baki, Yasser	OCHA	Head, COVID-19 Team: Jan 2021 to present
Bhatia, Anita	UN Women	Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management
Cronin, Eileen	Joint Inspection Unit	Inspector
Grogan, Brian	OCHA	COVID-19 Response and Recovery Focal Point
Guarnieri, Valerie	WFP	Assistant Executive Director
Gyles-McDonnough, Michelle	Office of the Deputy Secretary General	Director for SDGs
Igarashi, Masahiro	FAO and UNEG	Chair, UNEG
Kalapurakal, Rosemary	Development Coordination Office	Acting Deputy
Kehris, Ilze Brands	OHCHR	Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights
Kenney, Erin	Spotlight Initiative	Technical Unit Head
Kowbel, Nicholas	OIOS	Evaluation Officer/Team Leader
Kim, Heewoong	Joint SDG Fund Secretariat	Reporting and Evaluation Specialist
Kurbeil, Lisa	Joint SDG Fund Secretariat	Head
Landry, Magda	UNESCO	Senior Coordinator Field Security
Lust-Bianchi, Philippe	Spotlight Initiative	Technical & M&E Specialist
Mitra, Gopal	Executive Office of Secretary General	Senior Social Affairs Officer
O'Malley, Stephen	OCHA	Head, COVID-19 Team; March 2020 to December 2020
Piper, Robert	Development Coordination Office	Assistant Secretary General for Development Coordination
Rye-Pedersen, Anders	UN Jordan	Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator
Rubian, Renata	UNDP	Policy Advisor, Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific

Than, Nguyen	ESCAP	Sustainable Development Officer, Office of Executive Secretary.
Valji, Nahla	Spotlight Initiative	Head
Woo Guo, Yee	OIOS	Director, Inspection and Evaluation Division
Xu, Haoliang	UNDP	Secretary-General's Designate a.i. for COVID-19 RR MPTF and Chair of the Operational Steering Committee of the Joint SDG Fund
Zahedi, Kaveh	ESCAP	Assistant Secretary General

Interviews are continuing for the 60 identified key stakeholders at the global level

Jordan Case Study

Name	Organization	Position
Ababneh, Huda	Ministry of Health	Director of International Cooperation
Aboul-Hosn, Randa	UNDP	Resident Representative
Abu-Shan, Yousef	Ministry of Education	Director of Planning
Abuthiab, Deema	UN Habitat	National Programme Coordinator
Allen, Fiona	UNHCR	Senior Development Officer
Alassaf, Majida	UNDP	Deputy Resident Representative
Al Farah	IMF	Economist
Al-Hadidi, Farouk	Ministry of Labor	Secretary General
Al-Kayyali, Husam	RCO	Partnership and Development Finance Specialist
Almunizel, Sana	IMF	Office Manager
Al Sawalha, Dr. Lora	WHO	National Professional Officer
Bartsch, Dominik	UNHCR	Country Representative
Belbeisi, Dr. Adel	Ministry of Health	Secretary General
Bellizzi, Dr. Saverio	WHO	Health Emergencies Lead
Botto, Catarina	UN Women	Coordination Analyst
Bryer, Marlene	Embassy of Germany	Humanitarian Coordinator
Campbell, Jonathan	WFP	Deputy Country Director
Chhetri, Vickram	UNWRA	Field Program Support Officer
Cihan, Cengiz	RCO	Senior Economist
Chaupisat, Tanya	UNICEF	Representative
di Camillo, Pamela	UNFPA	GBV Specialist
Dmour, Dr. Barq	Ministry of Social Dev	Secretary General
Duncan, Sally	UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office	Social Development Officer
Elian, Mai	Ministry of Labor	Director of Policies Department
Hagood, Anne	RCO	Peace and Development Advisor
Hanquart, Baptiste	Jordan INFO Forum	Coordinator
Hasan, Rabia	UNDP	Business Development Specialist
Hawatmeh, Hala	RCO	Communications Associate

Geha, Carlos	UNHCR	Head of Office
Gjerding, Sarah	UNOPS	Gender Specialist
Isaczai, Ghulam	UNCT Jordan	Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator a.i.
Ishtay, Yasmine	Tamkeen	Programme Manager
Jobara, Safia	UNICEF	Gender and Youth Specialist
Johnston, Christopher	Embassy of Canada	Head of Cooperation
Kalash, Linda	Tamkeen	Director
Kalm, Nicolas	Embassy of Germany	Deputy Head of Cooperation
Kanaan, Nihal	RCO	M&E, Results Reporting Specialist
Khan, Frida	ILO	Country Coordinator
Kurt, Tajma	IOM	Chief of Mission
Malkawi, Khetam	RCO	Communications and Advocacy Specialist
Malhas, Danakhan	UNDP	Innovation Specialist, Gender and Youth Focal Point
Meinecke, Christina	RCO	Senior Human Rights Specialist
Mendes, Alberto	WFP	Representative and Country Director
Moon, Richard	Embassy of the UK	Deputy Head of Mission
Mdanat Issa Ayed, Sulafa	UNIDO	Representative
Monda, Nivedita	Oxfam	Country Director
Naatour, Lama	Ministry of Education	Director of Development and Coordination
Nikonoro, Anna	OCHA	Humanitarian Affairs Officer
Patrier, Marina	UNESCO	Education Programme Specialist
Pettersson, Marie	UN Women	Gender and Humanitarian Specialist
Prokop, Michaela	UNDP	Senior Economic Advisor
Rai, Pallavi	RCO	Nexus Advisor
Ramadneh, Wafaa	FAO	Programme Officer
Sakr, Sabine	UNEP	Regional Development Coordinator
Shaar, Yousef Abu	Ministry of Education	Director of Research and Planning
Sheikh, Ziad	UN Women	Representative
Spiazzi, Agnese	RCO	Head of Office
Tomeh, Laila	IOM	Programme Coordinator

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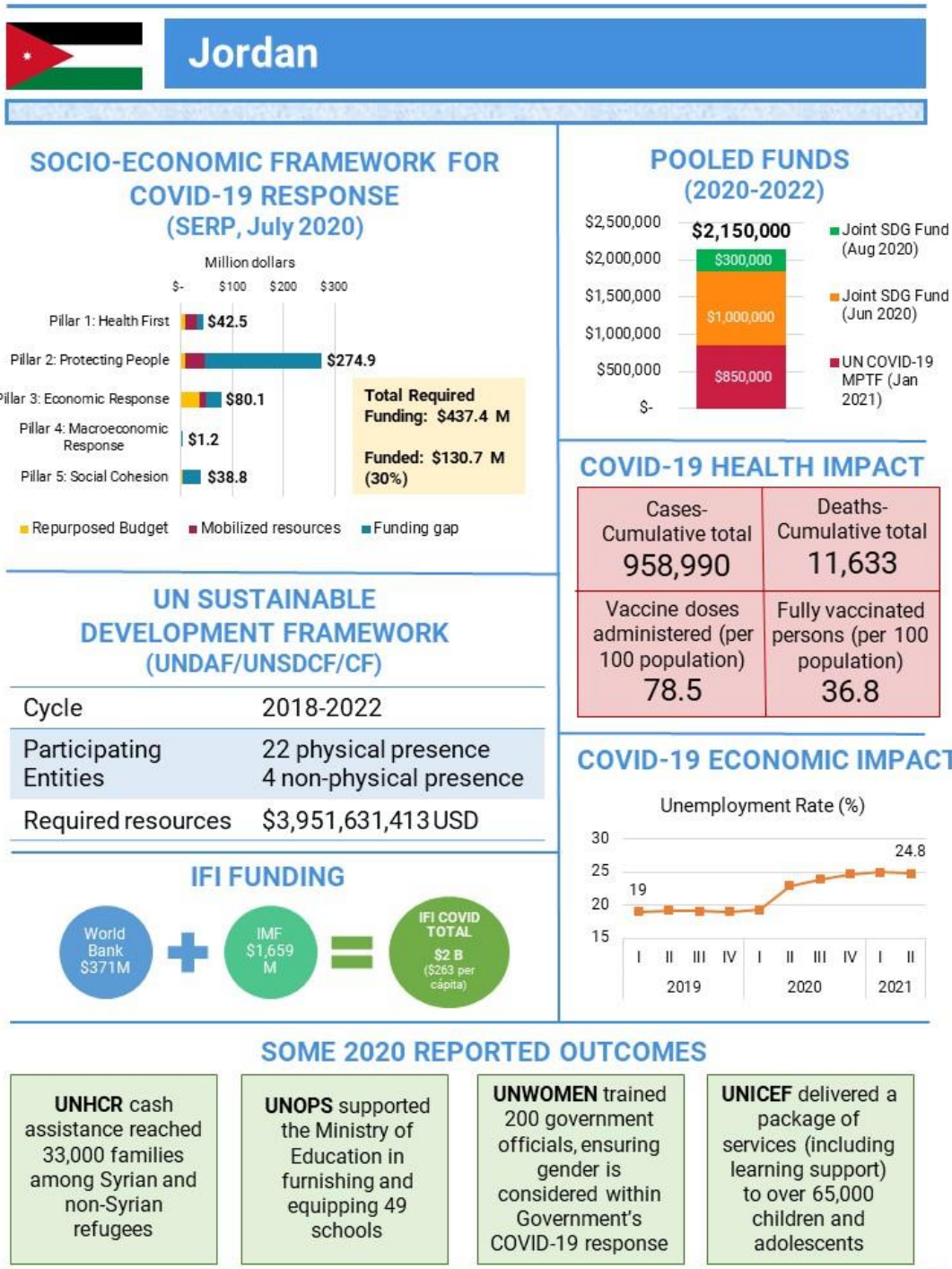
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Annex C: Jordan Quantitative Profile



Sources: Jordan SERP, Jordan UNSDCF, Jordan 2020 Results Report, Jordan Department of Statistics, WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard (as of December 6, 2021), UN-INFO COVID-19 Data Portal, and MPTF Gateway Portal.

Annex D: Methodology Brief

Evaluation Focus and Data Collection Methods

The evaluation will maintain a core focus on the country and the UNCT as the central unit of analysis. At country level, the evaluation will be guided by the DCO/UNEG Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNDCO/UNEG 2021). The main data collection methods used are:

- A review of key documents at global and country level. Global documents will include those providing guidance to UNCTs, including but not limited to, select UNDS entity strategic plans;
- Key informant interviews at global, regional and country level;
- A synthesis of lessons learned from completed evaluations undertaken by UNEG members and applicable to the UNDS COVID-19 socio-economic response;
- Country case studies of the UNDS response as realized through the SERP and the UNDAF/CF in selected countries;
- A review of data provided through the results reporting portals of the UNDS (UNINFO) and selected MPTFs (the COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF, the Joint SDG Fund and the Spotlight Initiative Fund).

Respecting the Subsidiarity Principle

The evaluation is designed to respect the principle of subsidiarity by ensuring that the role of evaluating programming by each UNCT entity remains the purview and mandate of the entities themselves, in keeping with the policy on SWE as enumerated in the 2020 QCPR. Country case studies carried out for the evaluation will conform to the joint UNDCO/UNEG guidelines on evaluation of the CF. The guidelines define CF evaluation (UNDCO/UNEG 2021, p.5).

Lessons Learned from UN Evaluations and Lessons Learning Studies on COVID-19

The evaluation incorporates evaluation findings and lessons learned in two stages:

- In the first stage, a focused review of evaluation reports and lessons learning studies directly relevant to the UNDS response to COVID-19, selected from reports available as of December 2021 was undertaken by the evaluation team as evidence to inform the Interim Report. This analysis will be supplemented by a review of selected evaluation reports published by UNDS Evaluation Offices from January to May 2022.
- In the second stage, analysis and data consolidation for the final report in September 2022 will make use of the results of the ongoing UNEG review process which are most relevant to the UNDS response to COVID-19.

Document Reviews

The evaluation team is engaged in compiling and reviewing a comprehensive set of documents for analysis at both global and country level. All documents have been collected and uploaded to a common drive for access by all team members. The google-drive repository will ultimately host all relevant documentation for the exercise. The Document Review includes a structured analysis of

the Strategic Plans developed during the pandemic by 13 UNDS entities. The detailed methodology and the results for this analysis are incorporated into the Interim Report (Section 5).

Key Informant Interviews

Given available resources and time, the evaluation team will undertake up to 60 interviews at global and regional level. In addition, in each of the countries chosen to provide a country-level perspective through a case study approach, the evaluation team will seek to interview:

- The Resident Coordinator;
- Staff of the RCO;
- UNCT Heads of Agencies;
- UNCT technical staff assigned to thematic working groups and results groups;
- Senior National Government representatives;
- Staff of Civil Society Organizations representing vulnerable groups;
- Staff of selected bilateral donor agencies active in the socio-economic response to COVID-19;
- Others as identified in each case study country.

After country level data and documentary evidenced has been collected and analyzed and country-level interviews conducted, the principal author of each case study will conduct a stakeholder feedback and verification session prior to finalizing the case study. The final case study product consists of a slide deck from the power point presentation and a brief summary note on key lessons learned as per the ToR.

Country Case Studies

The evaluation has identified a sample of eight countries to serve as case studies by applying a screen of six specific criteria:

1. The need for **geographic balance**, including at least one Small Island Developing State (SID);
2. The need to ensure adequate representation across **different national income levels**;
3. The need to ensure the sample included countries that were making use of one or more of the three **pooled funds of special interest** (Joint SDG Fund, COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund and Spotlight Initiative Fund);
4. The need to include countries at different stages of the **UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Cycle** to examine the link between SERPs and CFs;
5. The need for representation by countries at **different levels of gender inequality** as measured through the GDI; and,
6. The need for a mix of **smaller, mid-size and larger countries by population size**.

Selected sample countries

The eight countries selected for case studies that meet all of the criteria are:

- Argentina
- Barbados
- Indonesia

- Jordan
- Rwanda
- Sri Lanka
- Sierra Leone
- Uzbekistan

In the event that COVID-19 travel restrictions and quarantine requirements make travel to a case study country untenable, the evaluation will select a replacement country using the criteria listed above. If that proves impractical in the time frame available, the country case study may be carried out using remote methods of data collection. The evaluation undertook a **pilot country case study in Jordan** in January 2022 to further refine data collection and analysis methods and to provide supporting evaluative evidence for the Interim Report. The seven subsequent case study missions are planned for April to June 2022.

Quantitative Country Data

The team is assembling a quantitative database for each country in the selected sample. The exercise quantitatively profiles the countries by extracting data from the COVID-19 UN-Info Data Portal, Socio-Economic Response Plans, UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, national statistics portals, and WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, amongst other sources. Annex C presents the quantitative data profile for Jordan.

Assessing Human Rights, Gender Equality, Inclusion and LNOB

The United Nations leave no one behind (LNOB) commitment seeks to combat inequalities and discrimination grounded in the foundational principles of the UN Charter and inter/national human rights law. LNOB exclusions may be on the basis of ethnicity, race, gender, age, disability or other dimensions as well as on a combination of multiple vulnerabilities depending on individual contexts. This evaluation integrates a cross-cutting focus on Human Rights (HR) and Gender Equality (GE) in line with the principles of LNOB and the imperative to protect the rights of the most vulnerable members of society. It is important to highlight that the focus on inclusion and LNOB includes an explicit commitment to ensuring that supported programming recognizes and addresses the needs of persons with disabilities.

In line with *UNEG Guidance on Integrating Gender Equality and Human Rights in Evaluation* (2011), the assessment treats gender and inclusion as critical lines of inquiry that will cut across all relevant areas of investigation. The review draws on the knowledge of key informants with specialized expertise on systemwide accountability frameworks for human rights, gender, disability and youth. The evaluation also draws on available secondary data and analysis, including LNOB and gender reviews, application of gender equality markers in pooled funds and results from country-led Scorecards that assess common processes for gender, disability and youth inclusion.

Case studies complement broader findings with in-depth exploration to better understand the extent to which the UN socio-economic response, as conducted through the SERPs and CFs, has adequately operationalized a human rights-based approach and addressed the needs of the most vulnerable/excluded segments of society at the country level. Case studies are supported by short (1-2 page) working briefs to highlight key HR/GE/Inclusion/LNOB issues for each case study country.