



UNITED NATIONS
SRI LANKA



EVALUATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK 2018-2022 IN SRI LANKA

APRIL 2022



SUMMARY

The evaluation team was comprised of Dariusz Dziewanski (International Consultant, dariusz.dziewanski@gmail.com) and Selyna Peiris (National Consultant, selyna.peiris@positiveimpac.lk).

The team would like to sincerely thank all of those that contributed to the evaluation by giving their time: to help coordinate the evaluation activities, to provide input and ideas as key informants and discussants, and to offer feedback during the different stages of the evaluation. Without your help this evaluation would not have been possible.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The United Nations (UN) and the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) signed the 2018-2022 United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) on 3 August 2017. The UNSDF serves as a common strategy in four strategic areas, referred to as drivers, mainstreaming all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the national development agenda: 1) towards improved data, knowledge management and evidence-based policy; 2) strengthened, innovative public institutions and engagement towards a lasting peace; 3) human security and socioeconomic resilience; and 4) enhancing resilience to climate change and disasters and strengthening environmental management.

Several **external and internal developments** – terrorist attacks, major political changes, and a global pandemic – made much of the 2018-2022 period highly unpredictable, strongly impacting the implementation of the UNSDF compared to its original plans. The attention devoted to these developments, as well as a longer than usual period of transition between national governments following elections during a pandemic-burdened 2020, delayed the setting up and convening of the Steering Committee which was meant to provide overall direction and accountability. In addition, the new government's rejection of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolution on Sri Lanka, complicated the perception of the UN in Sri Lanka for an initial period until a clearer understanding of the process could emerge.

When **COVID-19** first emerged, Sri Lanka took a strict approach to containing the pandemic and was hailed as a global success story for staying nearly free of COVID-19. The status quo rapidly changed with an eventual relaxation of control measures and the emergence of second, third, and fourth waves **peaking at over 2000 cases a day** in mid-2021. In response, the **UN in Sri Lanka pivoted rapidly** to adapt its work to the pandemic and focus heavily on supporting the national health and socio-economic response, mobilising or reallocating programming and budgets where

possible. While presenting a **significant disruption** at almost every level, from staffing to the political level, the pandemic also motivated **important adaptations** to the structures supporting the UNSDF 2018-2022.

Another key development was the **2019 United Nations Development System (UNDS) reform** mandated by General Assembly resolution 72/279, which created several significant change processes. The adoption of the resolution elevated the priority of the cooperation framework, which required the entire footprint of the UN to be included, joint ownership with government, and greater alignment of country programme documents. This meant that the existing UNSDF developed in 2016/2017, was no longer fully aligned with the new global guidance as a planning and implementation instrument. The reforms also involved the **de-linking of the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, resulting in an initial period marked by significant administrative changes and reduced capacities. These challenges were gradually addressed and a fully staffed RCO was in place by late 2020, to help support the UNCT and help implement the reformed and strengthened mandate of the Resident Coordinator (RC) System. Given that the UNSDF was the only overarching agreement of the UN's programme and operations in country, the **UNCT undertook several initiatives to repurpose the document** to align it with and complement the new agenda of the government.

Purpose and Methodology

The UNSDF provides the overarching structure and agenda for the work of the UN in Sri Lanka, in line with national priorities and within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs. As the UNSDF cycle nears its end, a **mandatory system-wide country-level independent evaluation** is required as part of an effective transition towards the next cooperation framework, the 2023-2027 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). In line with these requirements, this



evaluation will assess both the processes underlying the UNDS, in particular its effectiveness and efficacy as a coordinating mechanism for the UN's activities in country, and the extent to which the UNSDF contributes to the UN's impact on sustainable development in Sri Lanka. It includes a critical appraisal of design and development of the UNSDF, as well as its implementation and monitoring, through an evaluation of the UNSDF that learns from past and current work and informs the future cooperation framework design and implementation.

The evaluation relied on a **mixed methods approach**, tracking quantitative progress towards indicator targets, and examining the qualitative elements of processes, successes, challenges, etc. Using different methods allowed for triangulation of data from a variety of sources. Triangulation was of particular importance considering that quantitative data came from secondary sources, which were of variable quality, reliability, and frequency. Data collection relied primarily on desk research and key informant interviews (KIIs). Key informants were sourced through stakeholder mapping/consultations and workshops undertaken to understand the design processes leading up to UNSDF and emphasis was placed on including a diverse representation of key stakeholder groups.

Key Findings

Presented below are key findings based on the key evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, orientation towards impact, efficiency, coordination, and sustainability.

Relevance

In terms of relevance, the four Drivers outlined in the UNSDF were observed to be **in line with the national priorities of the government** at the time of designing the framework. This included the 2015 election manifesto as well as other policy papers released by the government, such as the Sustainable Sri Lanka 2030: Vision and Strategic Plan, and initiatives outlined in the governments' Annual Budgets, such as 'Enterprise Sri Lanka' and 'Grama Shakthi' schemes.

In terms of the **perception of the UNSDF within the UN system** in Sri Lanka, key informants suggest that it was largely considered in programme development and activity-based discussions only after agency-specific priorities were determined and met. A key challenge in this regard was the use of high-level national indicators which are affected by many externalities, making it difficult to determine how the UN in Sri Lanka contributes to these, especially in terms of the programmes of smaller UN agencies whose activities are hard to quantify under broad national level indicators. From **other stakeholders**, generally only large-scale national level civil society organisations (CSOs) with long-standing relationships to the UNCT were closely engaged in the UNSDF design process. While some CSOs noted their awareness of the UNSDF, others mentioned that the framework was not used in their work. Other CSOs noted only a cursory awareness of the UNSDF while some mentioned that they were not aware of the framework at all. In addition, private sector stakeholders commented that there was only minimum involvement at design phase and that too in an ad hoc manner and not followed up.

Coherence

In relation to coherence, the **capacity of UN agencies to provide technical assistance, capacity building, and systems strengthening** were agreed to be critical strengths of the UN by government key informants and CSOs. According to key informants within the donors and international financial institutions (IFIs), the UN was seen as a "trusted partner" and the UN's close relationship with the GoSL across diverse ministries and its technical knowledge of national priorities in different sectors was important to informing how funding was disbursed. However, key informants from UN agencies and government counterparts suggest that the UNSDF, as a framework, was not particularly effective in promoting **partnerships and accountability between the UN in Sri Lanka and the government**. This may in part have been due to a revision of national priorities that occurred after the November 2019 presidential elections. Key informants – both from inside and outside the UN – suggested that negative perceptions on



particularly sensitive issues such as the Human Rights Council or peacebuilding contributions, as well as an insufficient awareness of the cooperation-framework level UN agenda among some government entities, presented a key challenge to enabling full government buy-in to the UNSDF. A negative political narrative around the HRC¹ in particular created some lingering hesitation on engaging with the UN among some partners. Notwithstanding these challenges, the UN System has played an integral role in assisting the national response to the COVID-19 crisis and adapting UN support to meet the resultant health emergency and humanitarian and socio-economic crisis. Even though the coherence and effectiveness of the pandemic response is not attributable directly to the UNSDF, it – along with strong government relationships between government ministries and agency country programmes – laid a solid foundation on which to build understanding about UNSDCF 2023-27 and the **One UN Agenda**.

Effectiveness

In relation to the effectiveness of **Driver 1**, most key informants held the opinion that there is still a general lack of awareness and technical capacity around data being systematically compiled, analysed, and used in decision-making in the government sector. In particular, the Department of Census and Statistics (DSC) still relies considerably on outside actors to measure and monitor SDG indicators. Creating the SDG dashboard was an important achievement, but it is still largely out-of-date and of limited analytical utility.

Progress under **Driver 2** was made difficult because Indicators 2.1 and 2.2 do not have baselines or targets. In terms of innovative governance, available indicators suggest a regression in the extent to which innovative governance platforms are used at national and sub-national levels to engagement with people. The country also regressed in the Gender Inequality Index (GII), from 76th place in 2017 to 91st in 2019.

Coverage of social protection schemes, a main focus of **Driver 3**, improved in general over the UNSDF period. Still, only a small percentage – 16 per cent – of vulnerable persons are covered by social assistance. Available data for key development measures shows decreases in under-five mortality rate for children under the age of five years and high scores for children immunisation, but still finds too many children outside of formalised education. Youth unemployment has been increasing recently while female unemployment is twice as high as male unemployment. This highlights continuing structural issues in labour markets, and both are expected to grow due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 the pandemic.

Data to evaluate the effectiveness of several indicators under **Driver 4** were unavailable. Available data suggests localised Disaster Risk Reduction plans and the Nationally Determined Contributions are yet to be implemented. However, Sri Lanka's implementation of integrated water management improved beyond the target set out in the UNSDF 2018-2022.

Orientation towards Impact

In terms of orienting the UNSDF towards impact, **new modalities created around Results Groups**, for the implementation of the UNSDF by the end of 2020, which favoured increased autonomy and control for participating agencies was an improvement over the previous Driver Groups and Outcome Groups and increased results-based management. Having said that, the evaluation found that a disconnect between UNSDF priority areas and indicators, on one hand, and agency activities, on the other, limited the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the framework, presenting a challenge to robust results-based management. While the need to drive forward the data and evidence-based programming had been identified as a key step toward a UN that is fit for purpose, most UN key informants in Sri Lanka agreed that

¹ Politically delicate processes related to the HRC resolution on Sri Lanka, polarised coverage of which have often

dominated popular media reporting and at times advanced an unfavourable depiction of the UN.



the purpose and objectives under **digital transformation and innovation** were unclear.

The relationship between the **Peacebuilding Fund's Peacebuilding Priority Plan (PPP)** and UNSDF was unclear to many key informants, and some observed a degree of replication or overlap. The PPP pre-dates the UNSDF and was formulated as it is a requirement for financing the implementation of the ambitious political commitments of HRC 30/1 which was strongly focused on the transitional justice agenda and to a lesser degree, resettlement. While it laid out governance and reconciliation priorities, its operation and funding, which was closely co-owned by key government partners at the time, was heavily focused on delicate transitional justice priorities such as setting up the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) and the Office on Reparations. These priorities are narrower, though complementary to the wider outlook of Driver 2. Against this background, gaps have been observed in relation to Driver 2 concerning the social cohesion and reconciliation interventions.

Advocacy on **human rights** was suggested by many key informants – both UN and non-UN – as a comparative advantage of the UN, citing its capacity to leverage its reputation for neutrality and its strong institutional relationships with authorities to promote the principles of human rights and dignity as nationally owned priorities. The evaluation finds that the framework design process represents an avenue – and opportunity – for a shared commitment to and understanding of how a human rights-based approach fits into sustainable development in Sri Lanka. With greater integration of government actors through the Joint Steering Committee, the coming cooperation framework will be a stronger tool through which to create government buy-in into human rights issues.

In terms of **gender**, the evaluation found that it was a cross-cutting issue in the UNSDF, but currently there is only one gender-specific indicator in the framework – Indicator 2.3, related to the size of the budget allocated for gender empowerment and elimination of discrimination against women. Beyond the framework itself, agency key

informants agreed that the Gender Thematic Group (GTG) was an effective mechanism for mainstreaming gender into the UNSDF process and that there was an opportunity to further leverage the GTG within the 2023-2027 UNSDCF.

Key informants from UN agencies suggested that **social protection** was thought of “too broadly” in the context of Driver 3 of the UNSDF. There were many thematic areas incorporated under the human security and socioeconomic resilience pillar, for instance: nutrition, social security, health, cohesion, etc., which key informants suggest did not always fit together well, creating what one informant called a “social protection mixed bag” that intermingled different definitions of and approaches to social protection.

Further, the UNSDF sought to promote **environmental sustainability** and address climate change, environmental governance, resource management, and sustainability concerns through Driver 4. This included several large-scale programmes to carry out climate adaptation, livelihood, and resilience activities, including some which were undertaken by a collaboration of UN agencies together with a wide range of partners from other sectors.

Efficiency

In terms of efficiency, although the UNSDF was implemented in a timely manner in terms of **design and development**, its drafting was seen as too much of a “desk exercise”, with too little regard given afterwards about how to operationalise it. **Results Groups** were mostly useful for the purposes of knowledge-sharing and initial discussions around coordination. Later in the cycle, tangible steps were taken towards more effective coordination by generating annual joint work plans through the UNSDF Results Groups.

As mentioned, the UN System was key in assisting the national response to the pandemic and adapting UN support to meet the growing health emergency. Lessons from the response were also integrated into the UNSDF, most notably the replacement of broadly defined Driver Groups with thematically oriented Results Groups was



accompanied by important changes in the organisation of and approach to the groups, which created more efficient working relationships between UN agencies under the UNSDF. This progress should give momentum to the coming cooperation framework. Coordination led by the RCO, including the operationalisation of the UN Humanitarian Country Team (UNHCT), was seen as critical to the efficient and effective coordination of COVID-19 response efforts. Key informants from the UN, government and CSO sector all agreed that the collective response demonstrated was efficient and to a great degree effective during the initial stages of the pandemic.

In addition, key informants highlighted instances of successful **joint programming efforts** between agencies – drawing on another agency’s domain expertise – to reconceptualise previously unfunded programmes and securing new funding. Some of these collaborations have taken place within the UNSDF and the role played by the RCO to facilitate and provide a forum for collaboration between agencies was welcomed by these UN key informants. That being said, key donor informants for this evaluation suggested that the UNSDF is not well understood as an instrument to mobilise **joint funding initiatives** – most were not familiar with its contents. Further, only a minority of donors appeared to prioritise joint programming initiatives due to the belief that joint programming is associated with high project management costs and programmatic redundancies.

Coordination

In terms of **UN-internal coordination**, the UNSDF 2018-2022 increasingly created room for discussion, joint planning, and coordination of collective action among agencies throughout its lifespan. To this end, agency key informants highlighted the final format of Results Groups as of 2020 as the main benefit of the UNSDF. Informants suggested that these groups served as an environment for collaborative dialogue and knowledge-sharing. Informants suggest that building capacity among Results Group leadership and encouraging wider and deeper engagement among participants can generate greater buy-in, build stronger working

relationships across UN agencies, and promote joint programming and synergistic co-design of activities. Heads of Agencies can promote leadership and accountability within Results Groups by assigning staff with adequate seniority and expertise to them and creating incentives for action within the groups via mechanisms at agency level that monitor – through performance indicators, for example – each participant’s contributions to Results Groups.

Some external stakeholders suggest a mixed picture in terms of coordination and joint programming. While some development partners appeared to show a preference for engaging UN Agencies individually, citing perceptions of excessive overhead costs and perceived duplication of activities under joint programming, others expressed a need for RC leadership in terms of helping guide and coordinate agencies according to where they are best placed to contribute to joint programming, based on the comparative advantage of each.

The **RC in Sri Lanka** was seen as having played important roles communicating and negotiating with government partners, brokering funding streams with donors, and providing representational support for the non-resident entities. Further, the RCO was acknowledged for having facilitated platforms such as Result Groups to ensure greater convergence of the programmes for the wider initiatives, to support lessons learned, knowledge-sharing, and monitoring and coordination of activities. There were important successes in terms of a joint approach to communications during the UNSDF period, and a need was identified to further build on **joint communications** both in terms of promoting programmes and overall perception of the UN in Sri Lanka.

Sustainability

In relation to sustainability, **political developments and security events** that took place in 2018 and 2019, along with the global **COVID-19** pandemic, considerably impacted the sustainability of the framework. Most government key informants were appreciative of the role played by the UN during



the COVID-19 pandemic and highlighted the continuing role the UN must play in Sri Lanka, in particular around technical assistance for data collection, policy development, and monitoring as the country is building back from the initial years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some government key informants also noted the continuous engagement with several UN agencies throughout the annual planning process of their respective ministries.

Results Groups proved to be an effective way to capture and communicate existing institutional knowledge about what different UN agencies are doing and their further strengthening will be key for the sustainability of the UNSDF. Even though there has been limited collaborative action yet, agency key informants remain optimistic about the potential to work towards more joint programming. Still, it should be noted that **inadequate funding** is a central risk to the sustainability of the progress made under the UNSDF. Also, the UNSDF **lacked periodic review mechanisms** – such as annual reviews and/or a mid-term review – making an essentially static framework since its initial development and approval, which impeded its uptake and sustainability.

Conclusion

The UNSDF 2018-2022 identified some of the **key priorities towards sustainable development** in Sri Lanka, notably data, governance, human security, social protection, and climate change. Key informants all noted the technical comparative advantage the UN has is to provide assistance at policy advisory level, to strengthen national capacities, and to undertake skill training to help solidify Sri Lanka's status as a middle-income country. The UN in Sri Lanka also has an important role to play as a **convener of different stakeholders**, especially in acting as a bridge between government, on one hand, and donors and CSOs, on the other. The UN has been able to advocate for and create space for the **rights of the most vulnerable** using the authority that various UN-driven international frameworks create. While the government appeared to be aware of the UN programmes in general, the effectiveness and

impact of the UNSDF at the strategic level beyond programmatic interventions was hindered by **lack of clear government ownership** – due to little awareness of the cooperation framework process, something partly explained by turnover of government officials during the political transition.

As the UNSDF was implemented in the context of significant political, security and public health challenges, **adjusting to the 2019 UN reform agenda** was more difficult than it would have been otherwise, even as progress was made towards strengthening the coordination role of the de-linked RCO and remaking Results Groups. The 2023-2027 **UNSDCF** will be the first framework to be designed and developed after the UNDS reform, and is expected to capitalise on important gains and insights that have been realised during the implementation of the UNSDF.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made with a view to the 2023-2027 UNSDCF that is currently being developed and represents an opportunity to fully implement the UNDS reforms at the country level. Insights from the UNSDF Evaluation are be important in terms of adjusting this framework to the specific requirements, and challenges, of the Sri Lankan context.

Recommendations relative to cooperation framework **strategic orientation**:

- **Recommendation 1:** Continue to **strengthen the comparative advantages of the UN in Sri Lanka**, especially providing multi-sectoral technical support for systems building and convening partners around thematic areas/priorities and important issues related to development, human rights, peacebuilding, etc.
- **Recommendation 2:** **Capitalise on** the comparative advantage of the UN to bring human rights and peacebuilding issues to the attention of government, by ensuring that the RCO and all UN agencies **further build on foundations the UN in Sri Lanka has in terms of the human rights-based agenda**.



- Recommendation 3: Create clear links between framework priorities and agency programmes by developing the upcoming 2023-2027 UNSDCF based on a **common understanding of the change processes** that need to occur to meet those priorities; and clearly link challenges to a set of **driver priorities that speak to and articulate the contribution of UN agencies** toward them.
- Recommendation 4: Support the 2023-2027 UNSDCF through an **active and engaged Joint Steering Committee** (and Working Committee) to ensure oversight and monitoring through the meaningful buy-in and participation of all development stakeholders. This will include **regular reviews to ensure the UNSDCF remains relevant** and useful.
- Recommendation 5: Leverage multi-stakeholder partnerships more comprehensively, especially with CSOs and volunteer involving organizations (VIOs), integrating them into the official planning, implementation, and monitoring mechanisms within the cooperation framework at the Steering and Working/Operational committee level.

Recommendations relative to cooperation framework **institutional mechanisms**:

- Recommendations 6: Facilitate **consensus-building** work under the 2023-2027 UNSDCF by creating **priority areas that are more focused and better defined** from the outset, so that these are supported by common understandings of and approaches to development priorities. Based on this, identify, and define **baselines and targets that reflect both the comparative advantage of the UN and its expected measurable contribution to sustainable development in Sri Lanka**.
- Recommendation 7: **Consolidate knowledge-sharing successes** within Results Groups by creating incentives for moving towards further integration of

knowledge activities building on initial successes in knowledge-sharing and collaboration in a way that leads to **increased joint action**, avoiding replication; this might for instance, include linking key performance indicators of agency staff in these groups to increased joint action.

- Recommendation 8: Develop a **clear strategic communications strategy around the 2023-2027 UNSDCF**. Communicating as one under the UNSDCF can help make communication a strategic function that actively incorporates political analysis and pursues the ‘political’ objective of demonstrating the UN in Sri Lanka’s value-added and building support for the mission among the government and the general public.
- Recommendation 9: Increase efforts to **raise awareness about the 2023-2027 UNSDCF among different stakeholders**, especially at different levels of government, including **greater efforts to sensitise donors** and sell the benefits of the UNSDCF.

Recommendations relative to cooperation framework **joint programming/financing**:

- Recommendation 10: Reinforce a **sense of co-ownership of UN agencies in joint activities** and further encourage agencies to take on a leadership role and **accountability for joint results in agreed-up areas**, as ‘the agency’ is where much of the technical sector-specific knowledge and capacities of the UN is housed.
- Recommendation 11: **Build on increased perception of effectiveness of One UN approaches thanks to the UN's joint-up pandemic response**, in order to **work with donors to pursue more flexible funding and joint programmatic initiatives in other key priority areas**, especially those identified by the 2023-2027 UNSDCF, **utilising more fully the RCO’s role as a key broker of new streams of funding for key programmes**;



this will require both the building of support among donors for pooled funding and strong coordination among agencies to avoid unnecessary project management

overhead costs and other programmatic redundancies.



Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Purpose and Objectives	1
1.2	Scope.....	2
2	Background.....	3
3	Methodology.....	5
3.1	Evaluation Criteria	6
3.2	Stakeholder Mapping	7
3.3	Desk Research.....	7
3.4	Discussions on Framework Priorities and Theory of Change.....	7
3.5	Key Informant Interviews	8
3.6	Online Questionnaire	9
3.7	Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting	9
3.8	Limitations and Management Strategies.....	9
4	Findings	11
4.1	Relevance	11
4.1.1	How Well Does The UNSDF Reflect The Key National Development Priorities in Sri Lanka?.....	11
4.1.2	How Relevant Is The UNSDF for Setting, Implementing, and Monitoring UN Priorities?	16
4.1.3	How Well Did The UNSDF Adapt to The Changing Policy and Programming Environment?.....	17
4.1.4	How Aligned Is the UNSDF with Its Comparative Advantage in A MIC Like Sri Lanka?.....	19
4.2	Coherence	20
4.2.1	How Well Did The DaO Approach Promote Coherence across The UN in Sri Lanka?.....	20
4.2.2	Is The UN Working Capitalising on The Comparative Advantages and Capacities of Other Actors? 21	
4.3	Effectiveness.....	24
4.3.1	Are Indicator Targets under Driver 1 Met? And Has UN System Contributed towards Improved Data, Knowledge Management, and Evidence-Based Policy?	25
4.3.2	Are Indicator Targets under Driver 2 Met? And Has UN System Contributed to Strengthened Innovative Public Intuitions and Engagement towards A Lasting Peace?.....	28
4.3.3	Are Indicator Targets under Driver 3 Met? And Has UN System Contributed to Human Security and Socioeconomic Resilience?.....	32
4.3.4	Are Indicator Targets under Driver 4 Met? And Has UN System Contributed to Enhancing Resilience to Climate Change, and Disasters and Strengthening Environmental Management?.....	37
4.3.5	Effectiveness Summarised.....	42
4.4	Orientation towards Impact.....	42



4.4.1	Did The UNSDF Adequately Use RBM to Ensure A Logical Chain of Results and Establish An M&E Framework?.....	42
4.4.2	How Effective Has The UN Been in Working towards Each Driver Outlined In The UNSDF?	43
4.4.2.1	Driver 1.....	43
4.4.2.2	Driver 2.....	44
4.4.2.3	Driver 3	45
4.4.2.4	Driver 4	46
4.4.3	To What Extent Was The Design and Implementation of The UNSDF Consistent with The Country’s International on Human Rights and The Recommendations of Human Rights Mechanisms? .	47
4.5	Efficiency	49
4.5.1	Did The DaO Approach Promote Efficiencies among UN agencies?.....	49
4.5.2	Was the UNSDF Adequately Funded and Implemented in A Timely Manner?	50
4.6	Coordination.....	51
4.6.1	To What Extent Has The UNSDF Fostered Internal Coordination, through The Promotion of Synergies and Inter-linkages Between Its Interventions?.....	51
4.6.2	How Effectively Did Different UN Stakeholders Coordinate under The UNSDF?	53
4.6.3	Has The UNSDF Strengthened The Position, Credibility, and Reliability of The UN System as A Partner for The Government and Other Actors?.....	54
5	Sustainability	56
5.1.1	What Is The Likelihood That Development Progress Is Sustained by National Partners and Stakeholders over Time?.....	56
5.1.2	What Is The Buy-in of Public Institutions to Participate in The Plan, Implement and Evaluate Relevant Policies and Programmes under The UNSDF?	58
6	Conclusions	59
7	Recommendations	61
7.1	Recommendations for Strategic Orientation of UNSDCF 2023-2027.....	61
7.1.1	Recommendation 1: Strengthen the Comparative Advantages of the UN in Sri Lanka.....	61
7.1.2	Recommendation 2: Strong Advocacy for The Human Rights Agenda.....	61
7.1.3	Recommendation 3: Create Clear Links between Framework Priorities and Agency Programmes	62
7.1.4	Recommendation 4: Support the UNSDCF through Joint Steering Committee and Regular Reviews	62
7.1.5	Recommendation 5: Better Leverage Multi-stakeholder Partnerships, Especially with CSOs and VIOs	63
7.2	Recommendations for Institutional Mechanisms of UNSDCF 2023-2027.....	63
7.2.1	Recommendation 6: Create Clear and Focused Priorities, Baselines, and Targets	63
7.2.2	Recommendation 7: Consolidate Knowledge-sharing and Increase Joint Action	64



7.2.3	Recommendation 8: Develop A Communications Strategy as Part of the Framework.....	65
7.2.4	Recommendation 9: Raise Awareness about UNSDCF at All Levels.....	65
7.3	Recommendations for Joint Programming/Financing of UNSDCF 2023-2027.....	66
7.3.1	Recommendation 10: Increased Agency Leadership and Ownership through Joint Workplans ..	66
7.3.2	Recommendation 11: Work with Donors to Pursue Joint Programming and More Flexible Funding	66
	Annex A: Evaluation Design Matrix	68
	Annex B: Secondary Sources and Data	81
	Annex C: List of Stakeholders Consulted	83
	Annex D: Selection Criteria for Key Informants	85



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Limitations and Management Strategies10

Table 2: Availability of Data for SDG Indicators for Sri Lanka 26

Table 3: Sri Lanka EGD and EPI Performance 29

Table 4: World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators: Sri Lanka Scores and Percentile Ranking.....27

Table 5: Proportion of Population Covered by Social Security Scheme.....33

Table 6: Commonwealth Global Youth Development Index for Sri Lanka..... 35

Table 7: Proportion of Integrated Water Resources Management Implementation 39

Table 8: List of NDCs..... 40

Table 9: Evaluation Design Matrix 68



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAEP	Climate Action Enhancement Package
CPD	Commission on Population and Development
CSO	civil society organisation
DaO	Delivering as One
DCS	Department of Census and Statistics
DTI	Digital Transformation and Innovation
EGDI	E-Government Development Index
EPI	E-Participation Index
EU	European Union
GBV	gender-based violence
GDP	gross domestic product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GOALS	Governance of Labour Migration in South and South-East Asia
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
GTG	Gender Thematic Group
HDI	Human Development Index
IFI	international financial institution
IHDI	Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JPP	Joint Programme for Peace
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MIC	middle-income country
MTR	mid-term review
NRIFAP	National REDD+ Investment Framework and Action Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDP	National Development Plan
NPD	Department of National Planning
ODA	official development assistance
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee



OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OMP	Office on Missing Persons
ONUR	Office for National Unity and Reconciliation
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PPP	Peacebuilding Priority Plan
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
RBM	results-based management
SCRM	Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms
SDC	Sustainable Development Council
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
ToR	terms of reference
UN	United Nations
UNCG	United Nations Communications Group
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN IGME	United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNSDF	United Nation Sustainable Development Framework
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
VIO	volunteer involving organisation
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation



1 INTRODUCTION

The 2018-2022 United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) provides the overarching structure and agenda for the work of the United Nations in Sri Lanka, representing a common programmatic framework for development activities upon which the individual United Nations (UN) agencies, funds, and programmes formulate their actions for the period. As the UNSDF 2018-2022 cycle nears its end, a mandatory system-wide country-level independent evaluation is required as part of an effective transition towards the next cooperation framework. In line with these requirements, this evaluation will assess both the processes underlying the UNSDF, in particular its effectiveness and efficacy as a coordinating mechanism for the UN's activities in country, and the extent to which the UNSDF contributes to the UN's impact on sustainable development in Sri Lanka. It includes a critical appraisal of design and development of the UNSDF, as well as its implementation and monitoring, through an evaluation of the UNSDF that learns from past and current work and informs the future cooperation framework design and implementation.

1.1 Purpose and Objectives

The Purpose of the 2018-2022 UNSDF evaluation is two-fold: To support greater learning about **what worked, what did not**, and **why** in the context of the UNSDF, and to support **greater UNCT accountability** to UNSDF stakeholders, including national counterparts and development partners.

The evaluation is guided by **four strategic objectives**² designed to speak to the overall purpose, including:

- 1) To independently assess the performance (and contribution³) of the UNSDF to national development results (**accountability**).
- 2) To identify the factors that have affected the UNSDF's contribution, answering the question of why the performance is as it is and explaining the enabling factors and bottlenecks (**learning**).
- 3) To assess the UN Sri Lanka "Business Model" and the ways in which it was operationalised through the UNSDF⁴.
- 4) To provide actionable and forward-looking recommendations for improving the UNSDF's contribution, especially for incorporation into the new cooperation framework programming cycle.

To adequately assess the UNSDF against these four objectives, the evaluators sought to understand more about the broader context of the UN's role in Sri Lanka and what the UN's 'comparative advantage' is in the country and whether the United Nations Development System (UNDS) is 'fit for purpose' to deliver its organisational strengths reliably, cohesively, accountably, strategically, and systematically. The 2030 sustainable development agenda is transformative, rights-based, and universal and requires a purpose of fit, based on an approach that is more integrated and more horizontal than ever before⁵. In this context, there

² These objectives are stated as per the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this evaluation of *UNSDF 2018-2022* and are in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group's (UNEG) *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) Guidelines*.

³ As per footnote 7.

⁴ The Business model is defined in terms of the UN systems coordination strength, programming cooperation, streamlined operations to deliver greater efficiencies, Results

Based Management Processes, resources mobilised through the One UN Fund, financial efficiencies, Strengthened Joint advocacy, and influencing partnership with agency and other stakeholders.

⁵ "Fit For What Purpose?".

2015. *Sustainabledevelopment.Un.Org*.

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=2101&menu=1515>.



are six key lessons that are especially relevant if the UN system is: providing coherent and strategic policy advice, communicating with ‘one voice’, scaling up Delivering as One (DaO), adequate and sustainable funding, broad and inclusive partnerships, and behavioural changes from all UN and non-UN partners to work ‘as one’, in response to cross-government, multi-sectoral challenges⁶. Further, there is a need to analyse the role and the key core competencies of the UN in Sri Lanka, and the comparative strengths or comparative advantages such competencies create relative to other actors in a middle-income (MIC)⁷ like Sri Lanka. Studies suggest that the UNDS has been most effective within MICs where its focus is on “the delivery of thinking, not things”⁸; in other words, when it is able to identify and fill policy and technical gaps, and where it can help governments scale-up pro-poor policy innovations to build state systems and capacities. It is expected that evaluating these important areas of the performance of the UN in Sri Lanka, in relation to the UNSDF can yield conclusions and recommendations that can be used to strengthen strategy, systems, programming, and results, informing the planning and decision-making for the upcoming 2023-2027 UNSDCF programme cycle and country programmes of individual agencies.

1.2 Scope

The UNSDF evaluation covered the period from January 2018 to June 2021, and focused on reviewing, analysing the progress and the contribution of UN agencies to the four priority drivers set out in the 2018-2022 UNSDF:

- **Driver 1:** Towards Improved Data, Knowledge Management and Evidence-Based Policy.
- **Driver 2:** Strengthened, Innovative Public Institutions and Engagement Towards a Lasting Peace.
- **Driver 3:** Human Security and Socioeconomic Resilience.
- **Driver 4:** Enhancing Resilience to Climate Change and Disasters and Strengthening.

The evaluation systematically assessed progress against these priorities and their associated indicators in partnership with UN resident and non-resident agencies in Sri Lanka. This evaluation was carried out with reference to the evaluation criteria based on in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) guidelines, as recommended by United Nation Evaluation Group (UNEG)⁹:

- **Relevance (and adaptability):** Is the UNSDF doing the right things? And adapted well to emerging needs?
- **Coherence:** How well does the UNSDF ‘fit’ in the context of the broader re-organisation of the UN Development System in Sri Lanka over the period 2018-2022?
- **Effectiveness:** Has the UNSDF achieved its objectives? Is the UNSDF doing it right?

⁶ Hendra, John. 2014. "Making the UN ‘Fit for Purpose’: Lessons From The ‘Delivering As One’ Experience". *Daghammarskjold.Se*. http://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/dd-paper_no11.pdf.

⁷ Findings related to an analysis of accountability and learning will yield conclusions and recommendations based on how Sri Lanka can solidify progress made in the context of internal and external shocks, while otherwise also improving on its performance through its dual transitions – economic and social, and financing – that the CCA 2021 identified as central to securing its position as a MIC. This is based on understanding that “the exchange of experiences, improved

coordination and better and focused support of the United Nations development system” and that “[UN] activities should complement state capacity and delivery systems, rather than substituting for these systems, and identify and effectively scale up policy innovations in partnership with government”, as also stated in the draft CCA 2021.

⁸ "Delivering The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The Role of The UN Development System in Middle-Income Countries". 2016. United Nations. https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/de_sa_mics_paper_abdenur_may18_-_final.pdf, p. 4.

⁹ UNDG. *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework - Internal Guidance (Final Version)*. 2021. p. 11.



- **Orientation towards Impact:** What difference do the UNSDF interventions make?
- **Efficiency:** How well have resources being used?
- **Coordination:** How well has the cooperation framework implementation being coordinated?
- **Sustainability:** Will the benefits last?

The evaluation captured UN contributions made through programmes, projects, and activities within the scope of the UNSDF, including activities implemented at an overall country level. The evaluation does not evaluate individual programmes or activities of UN agencies, but instead builds on agency-level programming experiences and evaluations to determine the extent to which the UNSDF supported the overall contribution of the UN to sustainable development in Sri Lanka.

Assessments against the OECD-DAC criteria were informed by key informant interviews (KIIs). Evidence compiled from these KIIs contributed to assessments of how the UNSDF supported the UN’s normative agenda of ‘No One Left Behind’, particularly in areas of human rights, conflict sensitivity, youth, volunteering, disability, and gender, as well as other core UN functions on building resilience to humanitarian emergencies, deepening strategic partnerships, and promoting innovative approaches to development cooperation. Where possible, the evaluation attempts to contextualise its findings by building on analysis, evidence, and evaluation generated under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2013-2017¹⁰.

The rest of this report is organised as follows: Section 2 provides a status update on key national developmental, humanitarian, and peace challenges and opportunities, as well as the changes at the country level since the last evaluation was conducted. Section 3 details the methodological approach, research design, and data collection methods, including data sources, data analysis. Section 4 articulates the findings of the evaluation based on the gathered evidence according to each of the seven key criteria for evaluation. Section 5 synthesises the main evaluation findings into conclusions and Section 6 outlines how these translate into recommendations.

2 BACKGROUND

The UN and the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) signed the 2018-2022 UNSDF, on the 3rd of August 2017. The UNSDF served as a common strategy in four strategic areas throughout 2018-2022, mainstreaming all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹¹ into the national development agenda: 1) towards improved data, knowledge management and evidence-based policy; 2) strengthened, innovative public institutions and engagement towards a lasting peace; 3) human security and socioeconomic resilience; and 4) enhancing resilience to climate change and disasters and strengthening environmental management.

Driver 1 of the UNSDF sought to alleviate continuing inequalities in Sri Lanka by enabling evidence-based policymaking underpinned by digitisation and data, to help create better public service policies¹². In 2019, Sri Lanka ranked 72 out of 180 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) with a score of 0.782. However, when the HDI is adjusted for inequalities, Sri Lanka’s HDI score falls by 13.9 per cent to an Inequality-

¹⁰ For example, the Common Country Analysis (CCA), the UNDAF 2013-2017 mid-term review (MTR) and the UNDAF 2013-2017 evaluation.

¹¹ Driver 1 is envisioned to help Sri Lanka achieve ten SDGs including: goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Driver 2 seeks to support the attainment of nine SDGs, including: goals 5, 10, and 16; Driver 3 builds on the very substantial body of work through which the UN will support the state to achieve eleven SDGs,

including: goals 1,2,3,4,5, and 11; and Driver 4 will help Sri Lanka achieve it’s national objectives under seven SDGs, including: goals: 6, 7, 13, and 15.

¹² Alahakoon, Mudalige Uthpala Indeelinie, and Shahzadah Nayyar Jehan. 2020. "Efficiency of Public Service Delivery—A Post-ICT Deployment Analysis". MDPI. <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7099/8/4/97>.



adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) score of 0.673¹³. This underlines the continuing need to ensure that further progress in terms of economic and social welfare are more evenly distributed across the population, and to deliver greater coverage and access to government service provision for those in greatest need. More inclusive service provision through digitisation is a long-term commitment in Sri Lanka, with only around half of Sri Lanka's population familiar with digital technologies in 2020, and only a third of the population regularly using the Internet¹⁴.

Driver 2 focused on strengthening public institutions for lasting peace, including gender empowerment and elimination of discrimination against women, equitable treatment of all communities, equitably and without discrimination, and peacebuilding. The low female labour force participation rate of 35.4 per cent, low representation of women in national politics of 5.3 per cent, and a high adolescent birth rate among other factors contribute to the inequality between men and women in Sri Lanka¹⁵.

Through **Driver 3**, the UNSDF focused on putting in place a dynamic and responsive social protection system that equitably benefits vulnerable and marginalised groups of children, youth, women, migrants, elderly and disabled. As part of the COVID-19 response, the UN recognised the need to support households and has provided over Rs 50 billion (USD 270 million) in monthly transfers in April and May 2020 - most with a value of Rs 5,000 to mirror government benefits - to beneficiaries across the country using existing and new social

protection schemes. This initial response compared favourably to other MICs in Asia¹⁶. Driver 3 supported a comprehensive approach to social protection that builds on these measures with a view to guaranteeing the right of access to comprehensive health care, basic income security for children, those unable to work and the elderly, and unemployment protection, old age pensions, and parental leave.

Driver 4 of the UNSDF concentrated on enhancing resilience to climate change and natural disasters, and sustainable management of natural resources, better environmental governance, and blue/green development. The World Bank categorises Sri Lanka as vulnerable to climate change related risks. Sri Lanka faces significant challenges from extreme heat, with the number of days exceeding 35 degrees Celsius, potentially rising from a baseline of twenty days annually to more than one hundred days annually by 2090. This rise is expected to affect the marginalised areas in the north of the country, the tourism sector and cause agriculture yields to fall, such as rice¹⁷. Sri Lanka is ranked 106th of 181 countries with a score of 46 in the 2019 ND-GAIN Index, which summarises a country's vulnerability and readiness to adapt to the effects of climate change¹⁸. Sri Lanka's increasing 'readiness' to "*leverage investments and convert them into adaptation actions*" has driven a recent improvement in its index rating. However, increasing readiness belies growing vulnerability to climate change in the form of projected changes in cereal yields and variability of water runoff¹⁹.

¹³ "Human Development Report 2020: Sri Lanka". 2020. *Hdr.Undp.Org*. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/LKA.pdf>.

¹⁴ "DCS Computer Literacy Statistics, 2020 (First Six Months)". 2020. *Statistics.Gov.Lk*. <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PressReleases/ComputerLiteracyStatistics-2020-FirstSixMonths>.

¹⁵ "Human Development Report 2020: Sri Lanka". 2020. *Hdr.Undp.Org*. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/LKA.pdf>.

¹⁶ UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socioeconomic Response To COVID-19 In Sri Lanka". 2020. United Nations. https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/LKA_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan_2020.pdf

¹⁷ "Climate Risk Country Profile: Sri Lanka". 2020. The World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/653586/climate-risk-country-profile-sri-lanka.pdf>.

¹⁸ "ND-GAIN Country Index". 2019. *University of Notre Dame*. <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>.

¹⁹ The ND-GAIN Index ranks 181 countries using a score which calculates a country's vulnerability to climate change and other



Several key national and international developments throughout the period served as a test of the flexibility of the UNSDF to accommodate changing national priorities and changes in governance arrangements – both in government and in the UN system. Most importantly, perhaps, the election of HE Gotabaya Rajapaksa President in late 2019 ushered in a change in the national priorities as his election manifesto – *Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour*²⁰ – was adopted as his government’s national development policy²¹. *Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour* is aimed at achieving four outcomes: productive citizenry, a contented family, a disciplined and just society, and a prosperous nation²². There were other key developments as well, which included: the constitutional crisis in November 2018, reforms to the UNDS in January 2019, the Easter Sunday attacks in April 2019, and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. These developments throughout the UNSDF period served as a test of the flexibility of the UNSDF to accommodate changing national priorities and changes in governance arrangements – both in government and in the UN system. The evaluation will consider the extent to which the UNSDF supported the response of the broader UN system to changing governance arrangements and the changing needs of the country in relation to the priority drivers identified at the inception of the framework.

Another key development was the **2019 UNDS reform** mandated by General Assembly resolution 72/279, which created several significant change processes. The adoption of the resolution elevated

the priority of the cooperation framework, which required the entire footprint of the UN to be included, joint ownership with government, and greater alignment of country programme documents. This meant that the existing UNSDF developed in 2016/2017, was no longer fully aligned with the new global guidance as a planning and implementation instrument. However, given that this was the only overarching agreement of the UN's programme and operations in country, the UNCT undertook several initiatives to repurpose the UNSDF to align and complement the new agenda of the government. Further, the de-linking of the Resident Coordinator’s Office (RCO) from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2019 resulted in an initial period marked by significant administrative changes and reduced capacities. These challenges were gradually addressed until a fully staffed RCO was in place by late 2020, to help support the UNCT and help implement the reformed mandate of the Resident Coordinator (RC) System.

3 METHODOLOGY

The evaluation relied on a mixed methods approach. Initial stakeholder mapping and desk-based research was triangulated²³ with KIIs and an online survey. Desk-based research included tracking quantitative progress from the UNSDF baselines towards indicator targets. Qualitative data – both from desk-based research and KIIs – was then also used to determine causal factors related to quantitative data and also examined key strengths and challenges of the framework’s design and implementation. Interviews were semi-structured, which that allowed for follow-up

global challenges as well as their readiness to improve resilience. The more vulnerable a country is, the lower their score, while the more ready a country is to improve its resilience, the higher it will be.

²⁰ GOTABAYA Presents to You A Reconstructed Country with A Future Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour". 2019. *Gota.Lk*. <https://gota.lk/sri-lanka-podujana-peramuna-manifesto-english.pdf>.

²¹ "National Policy Framework: Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour". 2019. *Doc.Gov.Lk*. <http://www.doc.gov.lk/images/pdf/NationalPolicyframeworkEN/FinalDovVer02-English.pdf>.

²² These outcomes are pursued according to the ten following policy aims: 1) priority to national security; 2) friendly, non-aligned, foreign policy; 3) an administration free from corruption; 4) new constitution that fulfils the people’s wishes; 5) productive citizenry and a vibrant human resource; 6) people centric economic development; 7) technology based society; 8) development of physical resources; 9) sustainable environmental management; and 10) disciplined, law abiding and values based society.

²³ Triangulation is of particular importance considering that quantitative data came exclusively from secondary sources, which may be of variable quality, reliability, and frequency.



questions in order to develop deep analysis of the evaluation criteria, along with qualitative elements of processes, successes, and challenges related to the UNSDF 2018-2022. A final breakdown of secondary and primary data methods is summarised in the evaluation matrix (see Annex A) submitted as part of the evaluation inception report.

3.1 Evaluation Criteria

The OECD-DAC’s seven evaluation criteria – relevance (and adaptability), coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, coordination, and sustainability – were used to guide all stages of the evaluation, adapting the criteria and their underlying questions to the context of the UNSDF, the UN system in Sri Lanka, and the country’s political, social, and economic climate, in consideration for inclusion of marginalised groups as per the UN’s normative agenda of ‘No One Left Behind’. These questions are summarised below, and are articulated again in the evaluation matrix.

Relevance:

- How well does the UNSDF reflect the key national development priorities in Sri Lanka?
- How relevant is the UNSDF for setting, implementing, and monitoring UN priorities?
- How well did the UNSDF adapt to the changing policy and programming environment?
- How aligned is the UNSDF with its comparative advantage in a MIC like Sri Lanka?

Coherence:

- How well did the DaO approach promote coherence across the UN in Sri Lanka?
- Is the UN working capitalising on the comparative advantages and capacities of other actors (e.g., government, INGOs, and CSOs)?

Effectiveness:

- Are indicator targets under Driver 1 met? And has UN system contributed towards improved data, knowledge management and evidence-based policy?
- Are indicator targets under Driver 2 met? And has UN system contributed to strengthened innovative public intuitions and engagement toward a lasting peace?
- Are indicator targets under Driver 3 met? And has UN system contributed to human security and socioeconomic resilience?
- Are indicator targets under Driver 4 met? And has UN system contributed to enhancing resilience to climate change, and disasters and strengthening environmental management?

Orientation towards Impact:

- Did the UNSDF adequately use RBM to ensure a logical chain of results and establish an M&E framework?
- How effective has the UN been in working towards each driver outlined in the UNSDF?
- To what extent was the design and implementation of the UNSDF consistent with the country’s international on human rights and the recommendations of human rights mechanisms (Including its commitments to SDGs under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development)?

Efficiency:

- Did the DAO approach promote efficiencies among UN agencies?
- Was the UNSDF adequately funded and implemented in a timely manner?

Coordination:

- To what extent has the UNSDF fostered internal coordination, through the promotion of synergies and inter-linkages between its interventions?



- How effectively did different UN stakeholders coordinate under the UNSDF?
- Has the UNSDF strengthened the position, credibility and reliability of the UN system as a partner for the government and other actors?

Sustainability:

- What is the likelihood that development progress is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time?
- What is the buy-in of public institutions to participate in the plan, implement and evaluate relevant policies and programmes under the UNSDF?

3.2 Stakeholder Mapping

Key contacts within the UN system identified the main stakeholders regarding the design, implementation, monitoring, coordination, and funding of the UNSDF. The RCO facilitated initial briefings on the country context and the structure of the UN in Sri Lanka (for example, on political/peacebuilding affairs and inter-agency coordination and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms), while agency organisational structures helped guide the selection of appropriate informants relating to the UNSDF and its development. Consultations of this type were useful for developing a shared understanding of the main stakeholders to the UNSDF in Sri Lanka, their respective roles and responsibilities, the institutional structures they fit into, and the interrelations among them. Additionally, to map the broader stakeholder network most relevant to the UNDS. This included stakeholders from within the UN, who were selected based on a number of criteria: those who participated in the UNSDF development in 2017, leads of Results Groups and Thematic Groups, UNCT, and relevant technical staff across agencies. This mapping exercise was further informed by creating profiles for individual UN agencies, including highlighting the UN partner agencies involved in joint programming and the relevant government ministries and external implementing partners from the CSO sector. Likewise, profiles for government stakeholders and

CSO partners too were created. These helped identify key government ministries, donor agencies, international organisations, and civil society organisations most directly engaged in the UNSDF and most relevant to the UNDS as government partners (line ministries), funders (donors and IFIs), and implementing partners (CSOs).

3.3 Desk Research

Secondary data sources included those specifically outlined as means of verification in the UNSDF, such as the *Demographic and Health Survey*, household income surveys, census data and official statistics, and other specific representative surveys carried out by the RCO, UN agencies, and partners. Moreover, the evaluation team worked with the UN and other key informants, to identify important documentation and data – annual reporting, programmatic evaluations, etc. – that reflected the UN’s contributions to the UNSDF. Where possible, these secondary sources were compared against publicly available data sources as part of the data validation process. Desk research was used primarily to gauge relevance, effectiveness, and impact of UNSDF-related activities. It was also important for formulating discussion guides for KIIs, in particular as this pertains to creating evaluation questions and sub-questions tailored to each stakeholder’s activities, priorities, and programmes; see Annex B for specific secondary sources included in the evaluation.

3.4 Discussions on Framework Priorities and Theory of Change

The UNSDCF guidance recognises theory of change activities as integral in the design process of a cooperation framework, including visioning the outcome of the frameworks’ interventions in the host country based on national needs, as opposed to the capacities and resource availability of the UN



system and other development partners²⁴. Therefore, taking stock of the design process that formed the foundations of the UNSDF 2018-2022 was a vital starting point for the evaluation, in particular to ensure that UNCT members and the evaluators had a common understanding of the goals, activities, and the changes being sought under the framework. Key UN actors involved in the design and development of the UNSDF 2018-2022 offered input on the background and context to the framework through a series of discussions on the development of the framework, including insight into the criteria for selecting priorities, its relate theory of change (or lack thereof), and the processes related to the implementation of the priorities and theory of change. Although key priorities were identified for the framework, it was noted that these were not supported by a theory of change for the UNSDF 2018-2022 – a key limitation, already mentioned above. Although no theory of change was explicitly articulated for the UNSDF 2018-2022, discussion conducted with those who participated in the development of the framework in 2017 helped capture the thinking behind how the different elements of the UNSDF were prioritised, designed, and drafted.

3.5 Key Informant Interviews

KIIs²⁵, which also included small group discussions, were conducted with personnel of the RCO, UN staff of key agencies, government partners, a sample of UN implementing partners and donors, relevant civil society organisations (CSOs, especially those representing rights holders and the most marginalised constituencies across the country), and relevant private sector partners. A total of 68 interviews/discussions were conducted with stakeholders from 49 organisations; see Annex C for list of stakeholders consulted. An initial stakeholder mapping exercise has been conducted in order to identify potential key informants for the evaluation. These will include the following groups:

1. As stated in the preceding section, the interview process started with key UN actors involved in the design and development of the UNSDF 2018-2022. Later, interviews with current representatives from all resident and non-resident agencies then took place at two key levels: strategic level interviews with stakeholders familiar with overarching agency activities and priorities in relation to the UNSDF; for example: Resident Representatives and Deputy Representatives; and technical level interviews with stakeholders working in flagship programmes, interventions of key relevance to the UNSDF, important joint programmes, etc.; for example: Focal Points, Coordinators, etc.
2. Participants of Results Groups, Thematic Groups, and other groups within the UNSDF structure were interviewed in order to gauge how effective these mechanisms were in contributing to the priorities and objectives of the framework.
3. Members of the RCO were able to provide insights into higher level coordination experiences and mechanisms, as well as input into key aspects of DaO.
4. Government stakeholders from key ministries were able to give key feedback on the progress and partnership related to the framework.
5. Civil society representatives were important in informing the evaluation about how the UN in Sri Lanka partners with and leverages non-governmental actors, and the extent to which civil society was included in the UNSDF.
6. Donors and representatives of financial institutions to provide perspectives on the

²⁴ UNDG. *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework - Internal Guidance (Final Version)*. 2021. p. 17.

²⁵ For a list of all stakeholders consulted see Annex C.



effectiveness and efficiency of funding modalities.

Selection criteria for individual interviewees focused on those with insight and expertise in relation to key UNSDF priorities and activities, with consideration made to reach a broad range of stakeholders in a way that is inclusive of representatives of key groups (women, youth, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, etc.); see Annex D for selection criteria. Interviews were tailored to the knowledge of discussants to guide conversations. Interview formats were semi-structured following predefined discussion guidelines, which allowed for non-standardised follow-up questions, to conduct an in-depth analysis of key points as they arose. Primary research of this type contributed to both the accountability and learning elements of the evaluation, by yielding primary findings relative to the evaluation purpose, objectives, scope, criteria, programming principles, etc. Primary research also offered an opportunity to cross-check the veracity of secondary resources and data.

3.6 Online Questionnaire

An electronic questionnaire was administered to UNCT participants as an additional means to solicit views on key successes and obstacles related to the UNSDF. The questionnaire focused on operational successes, main strengths of the UNSDF, its main challenges, and priority recommendations for improvement. The online questionnaire was also an opportunity to provide some quantitative measures of UNCT perspectives related to the performance of the UNSDF and its administration. Unfortunately, due to a low response rate – only 28 per cent of respondents

completed and returned the online questionnaire – results from this method were not included in the evaluation; strategies used to mitigate this limitation are outlined below.

3.7 Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting

In all its activities, the evaluation team followed closely the *UNEG Norms and Standards* and *Ethical Guidelines* in selecting interviewees, in interacting with them and in respecting their right to: informed voluntary consent, confidentiality, security, etc. Interview data was captured through a combination of notetaking and digital recording. Notes were compiled and analysed throughout the research process, while digital recordings were transcribed using online communications platforms when required. Conclusions from all research were drawn from the identification of generalisable patterns and trends through the analysis of data. For quantitative data, analysis was conducted using Excel. For qualitative data, this was specifically undertaken through content analysis. Analysis of data involved coding of important issues and using these to determine qualitative trends to complement quantitative data, with a focus on generating a set of clear, forward-looking, and actionable recommendations logically linked to the findings, conclusions, and recommendations outlined below.

3.8 Limitations and Management Strategies

Several limitations were identified throughout the evaluation. These, along with appropriate management strategies, are listed in the table below.



Table 1: Limitations and Management Strategies

Limitations	Management Strategy
<p><i>Lack of theory of change:</i> a key challenge is analysing impact related to the activities of the UNSDF, 2018-2022 was the lack of theory of change associated with the framework.</p>	<p>Every possible effort was made seek out different data sources – both quantitative and qualitative – to not only measure different aspects of change, but to also explain why that change has happened (or has not), to be able to attribute cause-and-effect and estimate impact. Speaking with stakeholders present for the design of the UNSDF also allowed evaluators to gauge thinking related to the change mechanisms and processes expected of the different priority areas.</p>
<p><i>Working remotely:</i> movement constraints to and within Sri Lanka due to the COVID-19 pandemic creates challenges in terms of accessing and communicating with evaluation stakeholders, especially those in remote areas.</p>	<p>By working closely with RCO counterparts to plan research activities in advance, arrangements were made to remotely connect to those individuals and groups with adequate connectivity. For those without telecommunication, alternative strategies were pursued.</p>
<p><i>Turnover of UN personnel and key partners:</i> Given the high level of change in staff in UN mission in Sri Lanka in recent years (especially heads of agencies), as well as turnover in government ministers (especially high-level ministry personnel) it may be difficult to adequately capture institutional knowledge related to the design and implementation of the UNSDF over its entire lifecycle, as well as in the lead-up to that period.</p>	<p>Close collaboration with RCO to the most relevant key informants helped overcome this constraint and mitigate the risk that important perspectives were missed in the evaluation. RCO counterparts provided initial insights into who are the most appropriate stakeholders – past or present – to input into the evaluation from the point-of-view of its various objectives. Also, proactive snowballing additional key informants through the interview process was important to uncover other interviewees who were no longer actively working in areas relevant to the UNSDF, but whose input was otherwise valuable to the evaluation.</p>
<p><i>Unavailability of stakeholders:</i> the responsiveness of evaluation participants determines the fullness and quality of the data for analysis.</p>	<p>The evaluators were able to access the key informants with the assistance of RCO, and by providing timely notice and requests to interviewees, including providing for written responses at the convenience of the respondents. UNCT was sensitised early on regarding the evaluation objectives, timeline, approach, etc., helping ensure that UN stakeholders prioritised their participation in evaluation activities. Availability of government</p>



	was facilitated by beginning formal request for participation early on. The same can be said for CSOs and other non-state actors, linking to competent focal persons in the respective institutions and providing them with timely requests, with assurance of confidentiality, where necessary.
<i>Low response rate for online questionnaire:</i> perspectives captured through the online questionnaire offer another important form of data collection.	Due to a lower response rate (28 per cent), it was not possible include results of the online questionnaire in the evaluation. Given that questionnaires of this type are often subject to low response, this method was included only a mode of triangulating others. In fact, the methodology expected that the bulk of data would be collected through secondary research and interviews, meaning the disqualification of the online questionnaire did not have a significant impact on the overall quality of the evaluation.
<i>Some secondary data was unavailable:</i> some data, especially those required for measuring effectiveness, were found missing either because programmes that relate to the required data have not commenced, government stakeholders have not collected and published the data, or no other verified source of data was available.	At all times, only verified and reputed sources of secondary data have been used. All secondary data sources have been referenced. Where secondary data is not available, the report clearly mentions the same in the body of this report. The Evaluation Team reached out to the parties collecting and maintaining the data that is missing to directly collect the necessary data. This was done either through KIIs or written requests. Where required, the evaluation used supplementary data from verified sources.

4 FINDINGS

This section presents the main findings of the evaluation of the UNSDF. It is structured by presenting data relevant to the criteria outlined in the evaluation matrix: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, orientation towards impact, efficiency, coordination, and sustainability. Also presented is pertinent forward-looking analysis aimed at informing the 2023-2027 UNSDCF framework design and strategy.

4.1 Relevance

4.1.1 How Well Does The UNSDF Reflect The Key National Development Priorities in Sri Lanka?

Key findings related to relevance:

- Key Finding 1: Driver priorities outlined under the UNSDF are mostly aligned with national priorities of the GoSL.



- Key Finding 2: The UNSDF was largely considered in programme development and activity-based discussions only after agency-specific priorities were met.
- Key Finding 3: During the implementation period covered by this evaluation the UNSDF was largely static.
- Key Finding 4: Outside of the UNSDF, the UNDS played an integral role in assisting the national response to the COVID-19 crisis and adapting UN support to meet the growing health emergency.
- Key Finding 5: All non-UN stakeholders interviewed noted the capacity of UN agencies to provide technical assistance, capacity building, and systems strengthening as comparative advantages of the UN.

Key Finding 1: As per the following analysis, the evaluation found that driver priorities outlined under the UNSDF are mostly aligned with national priorities of the GoSL. The priority areas identified under the framework – data, governance, human security and social protection, and climate and environment – remain relevant today.

4.1.1.1 Driver 1

At the time of the designing the UNSDF, Sri Lanka was riding a consistent wave of growth in gross domestic product (GDP) following the end of the

thirty-year civil conflict in 2019²⁶. The country was aspiring to reach upper middle-income status, eventually reaching the categorisation in 2019²⁷. However, Sri Lanka’s economy needed long overdue reforms²⁸, which were identified in the election manifesto of HE Former President Maithripala Sirisena under the headings of: “A Development Economy”, “Industry and Services to Eradicate Unemployment”, and an “Energy Secure Sector”²⁹. Central among the proposed policies was the establishment of a National Economic Planning Council to prepare a sustainable economic development plan for the country³⁰. The government’s commitment to a sustainable economic development plan was further reiterated when the GoSL endorsed the UN SDGs at the UN General Assembly in September 2015³¹. Leading on from these policy proposals and commitments, a Presidential Expert Committee was set up in January 2017 to prepare a report on *Sustainable Sri Lanka 2030 Vision and Strategic Path*³². Against this backdrop, the government identified accessible, timely, disaggregated data, and building national statistical capacity as a priority in the process of achieving the SDGs by 2030³³. However, in 2017, the country was compiling data for only 46 of the 244 SDG indicators, highlighting the gaps in the reporting capacities of the government to ensure data is on hand to plan, implement and revise its strategies for creating a sustainable economy and

²⁶ "GDP Per Capita (Current US\$) - Sri Lanka | Data". 2020. *Data.Worldbank.Org*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=LK>.

²⁷ "New Country Classifications by Income Level: 2019-2020". 2019. *World Bank Blogs*. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/new-country-classifications-income-level-2019-2020>.

²⁸ "Reforms Sri Lanka Needs to Boost Its Economy". 2017. *World Bank Blogs*. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/reforms-sri-lanka-needs-boost-its-economy>.

²⁹ "Manifesto: Compassionate Government Maithri: A Stable Country". 2015. *President.Gov.Lk*. <http://www.president.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Manifesto-EN.pdf>.

³⁰ "Manifesto: Compassionate Government Maithri: A Stable Country". 2015. *President.Gov.Lk*. <http://www.president.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Manifesto-EN.pdf>.

³¹ At UN, President of Sri Lanka Details Country’s ‘New Vision’ Built on Sustainability and Reconciliation". 2015. *UN News*. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2015/09/510682-un-president-sri-lanka-details-countrys-new-vision-built-sustainability-and>.

³² "Sustainable Sri Lanka 2030 Vision and Strategic Path". 2019. *Presidentsoffice.Gov.Lk*. <http://www.presidentsoffice.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Final-v2.4-Typeset-MM-v12F-Cov3.pdf>.

³³ "Status Of Sustainable Development Goals Indicator In Sri Lanka: 2017". 2017. Department of Census and Statistics. <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/sdg/application/publications/book.pdf>.



achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development³⁴.

Driver 1 of the UNSDF reflects these national priorities as it seeks for the UN's activities in this area to ensure that data and knowledge driven decision-making, and actions effectively address inequalities and benefit the people of Sri Lanka. Indicators 1.1 and 1.3 were directly concerned with the proportion of SDG indicators developed at the national level and developing the national statistical reporting plan. Indicator 1.2, which concerned the proportion of individuals using the Internet, aligns itself with important government priorities. In 2015, only 12.1 per cent of the country's population was using the Internet³⁵ and to increase this proportion the election manifesto proposed policies for increasing access to the Internet through expanded Wi-Fi networks and other cost-effective access points. While the proportion of the population accessing the Internet increased to 21.3 per cent in 2017, the government continued to reiterate its commitment to expanding Internet usage through "Smart Classrooms" in the country, as stated in the 2018 Budget speech³⁶.

4.1.1.2 Driver 2

Governance was a key platform issue during the formulation of the UNSDF priorities. This included the Right to Information Act, establishing new independent commissions, and safeguarding the space for citizens' organisations. Government policy also highlighted proposed changes to the public administration sector under the heading "An Advanced and Responsible Public Sector"³⁷. In line with the proposed public sector modernisation policies, Rs 2,000 million was allocated in the 2018 national budget to modernise public sector service delivery through digitisation and technology³⁸. In 2015, Sri Lanka committed to several transitional justice-focused peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives in the country after the co-sponsoring of UN Human Rights Commission Resolution (UNHRC) A/HRC/RES/30/1³⁹. Alongside this, the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR)⁴⁰, Office of Missing Persons (OMP)⁴¹, Office of Reparations⁴² and the Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms (SCRM)⁴³ were set up as the government sought to fulfil both its domestic and international commitments. The 2018 national budget allocated Rs 12,750 million for reconciliation efforts, including Rs 2,000 million for ONUR and Rs 1,400 million for OMP⁴⁴.

³⁴ "Status of Sustainable Development Goals Indicator In Sri Lanka: 2017". 2017. Department of Census and Statistics. <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/sdg/application/publications/book.pdf>.

³⁵ "Individuals Using the Internet (per cent of Population) - Sri Lanka | Data". 2020. *Data.Worldbank.Org*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=LK>.

³⁶ "Budget Speech: 2018". 2017. *Treasury.Gov.Lk*. https://www.treasury.gov.lk/documents/budget/2018/budget_speech_english.pdf

³⁷ "Manifesto: Compassionate Government Maithri: A Stable Country". 2015. *President.Gov.Lk*. <http://www.president.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Manifesto-EN.pdf>.

³⁸ "Budget Speech 2018". 2017. *Parliament.Lk*. <https://www.parliament.lk/files/pdf/budget/2018/budget-speech-2018.pdf>.

³⁹ "Resolution Adopted by The Human Rights Council On 1 October 2015". 2015. *Mfa.Gov.Lk*. <https://www.mfa.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/RES-30-1.pdf>.

⁴⁰ "Office For National Unity and Reconciliation". 2021. *Moj.Gov.Lk*. Accessed December 9. https://www.moj.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=168&Itemid=244&lang=en.

⁴¹ "Office For Missing Persons". 2021. *Moj.Gov.Lk*. Accessed December 9. https://www.moj.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=169&Itemid=245&lang=en.

⁴² "Office For Reparations". 2021. *Moj.Gov.Lk*. Accessed December 9. https://www.moj.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=170&Itemid=246&lang=en.

⁴³ "Remarks By Mr. Mano Tittawella Secretary-General Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms (SCRM)". 2017. *Mfa.Gov.Lk*. https://www.mfa.gov.lk/images/stories/Remarks_by_SG_SCRM-pdf.pdf.

⁴⁴ "Budget Speech: 2018". 2017. *Treasury.Gov.Lk*. https://www.treasury.gov.lk/documents/budget/2018/budget_speech_english.pdf



Driver 2 of the UNSDF sought to align the UN activities to ensure people in Sri Lanka, especially the marginalised and vulnerable, benefit from more rights-based, accountable, inclusive, and effective public institutions, and to enhance trust amongst communities and towards the State. Under this Driver, indicators 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4 reflected the specific support required to achieve its vision for good governance, national reconciliation, and peacebuilding. Indicator 2.3 was concerned about the rights of women, including gender empowerment and elimination of discrimination against women. Sri Lanka ranked 76th out of 189 countries with a score of 0.354 in the Gender Inequality Index (GII) in 2017⁴⁵. While performing better than its South Asian counterparts, Sri Lanka's score was below the average for "high human development" countries. To its credit, the GoSL indicated a multitude of policies to empower women, including specific programmes for rural female entrepreneurs, a women's rights act, a sexual violence and anti-discrimination act and quotas in elections⁴⁶. Of these, the government enacted a 25 per cent quota to women under the Local Authorities Elections (Amendment) Act No. 1 of 2016⁴⁷.

4.1.1.3 Driver 3

Sri Lanka's economic recovery in the post-conflict period coincided with considerable progress in the HDI, being categorised as a high human development country since 2002 and performing

ahead of its regional peers⁴⁸. Building on this progress the government put in place additional plans for furthering the human development in the country. Increasing the national public sector health budget from 1.8 per cent to 3 per cent of GDP, initiating a national drive to create one million jobs through the private sector, allowances for pregnant mothers, increasing the value of allowances under the "Samurdhi" poverty alleviation scheme, and increasing the national public education budget from 1.7 per cent to 6 per cent of GDP were policies proposed in both manifestos^{49,50}. In 2017, youth unemployment was at its lowest of 17.36 per cent but remained a concern for the government⁵¹. The 2018 budget presented in November 2017 to the Parliament of Sri Lanka expanded further on the initiatives proposed in the manifestos through allowance schemes for students, expansion of education facilities, establishment of an Employment Preparation Fund for youth, enhancing social safety nets and expansion of the Grama Shakthi initiative to eradicate poverty and unemployment⁵². In 2017, Sri Lanka's female labour force participation was 35.1 per cent, which was below the average of 55 per cent for high human development nations. The 2018 Budget, in line with policies outlined in the manifestos proposed the "Enterprise Sri Lanka" and "Grama Shakthi" schemes to encourage women's participation in the labour force and entrepreneurship. Concessionary credit schemes and amendments to the Shop and Office

⁴⁵ "2018 Human Development Statistical Update | PDF". 2018. *Scribd*. https://www.scribd.com/document/388797452/2018-Human-Development-Statistical-Update?secret_password=ncEFk15SziNGsnVSyywX#download&from_embed.

⁴⁶ "UNF Election Manifesto". 2021. *Fdocuments.In*. Accessed December 9. <https://fdocuments.in/document/unf-election-manifesto.html>.

⁴⁷ Bandara, Hansani. 2021. "The 25 Percent Quota & Women in Sri Lankan Politics". *Colombo Telegraph*. <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/the-25-percent-quota-women-in-sri-lankan-politics/>.

⁴⁸ "Human Development Report 2015". 2015. *Hdr.Undp.Org*. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015_human_development_report.pdf.

⁴⁹ "UNF Election Manifesto". 2021. *Fdocuments.In*. Accessed December 9. <https://fdocuments.in/document/unf-election-manifesto.html>.

⁵⁰ "Manifesto: Compassionate Government Maithri: A Stable Country". 2015. *President.Gov.Lk*. <http://www.president.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Manifesto-EN.pdf>.

⁵¹ "Unemployment Rate | Central Bank of Sri Lanka". 2020. *Cbsl.Gov.Lk*. <https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/en/economic-and-statistical-charts/unemployment-rate-chart>.

⁵² "Budget Speech: 2018". 2017. *Parliament.Lk*. <https://www.parliament.lk/files/pdf/budget/2018/budget-speech-2018.pdf>.



Employees Act, No. 15 of 1954 and Wages Boards Ordinance, No. 27 of 1941 were proposed in the 2018 Budget to encourage higher female labour force participation and entrepreneurship.

Aligning with these national priorities, Driver 3 of the UNSDF sought to enable the conditions for people in Sri Lanka, especially the vulnerable and marginalised groups of children, youth, women, migrants, elderly, and disabled, to benefit equitably from dynamic and responsive social protection systems. All 4 indicators under Driver 3 were attributable to the national priorities as identified in the election manifestos and 2018 Budget. The social support measures mentioned above plus others such as an insurance scheme for pensioners and expanding the government the coverage of education allowances for children in the 2018 Budget⁵³ directly linked with Indicator 3.1, which sought to increase the proportion of the population covered by social protection systems, with specific attention to vulnerable groups. While the government had only identified a limited set of vulnerable groups, including pregnant women, pensioners and children, Indicator 3.1 sought to ensure a wider population of vulnerable groups are captured in line with the UNs' 'No One Left Behind' principle. Indicator 3.2 relating to child nutrition, Indicator 3.3 relating to youth in education, training and employment, and Indicator 3.4 relating to unemployment all aligned with national priorities, as explained in the previous paragraph.

4.1.1.4 Driver 4

In 2015, Sri Lanka ranked 54th in the Climate Risk Index with a score of 64.33 for the period 1996-2015. Meanwhile, in the same index, the country

ranked 98th with a score of 86 for the calendar year 2015. In this backdrop, the 2015 election manifestos of both HE Former President Maithripala Sirisena and HE Former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe strongly recognised the climate related challenges to be faced by the country. Renovating and upgrading irrigation systems, introducing a national policy for disaster risk reductions and management, policies to enhance and develop sustainable agriculture practises that are resilient against climate change and development of a national environment protection policy featured in both manifestos^{54,55}. The "Blue-Green Budget: Enterprise Sri Lanka" of 2018, presented in November 2017 was underpinned by an environmentally sustainable development strategy⁵⁶. The *Sustainable Sri Lanka 2030: Vision and Strategic Plan* which was formulated by the Presidential Expert Committee heavily features climate change, natural disasters, mitigation, and an economic policy which delivers the country's 2030 SDG targets. In 2016, Sri Lanka experienced multiple natural disasters, including drought, floods, and landslides, causing a loss of over 100 lives, and estimated economic damages of USD 2 billion. By 2017, Sri Lanka was working on formulating or had already released multiple disaster risk reduction, mitigation, and response plans, including the *National Adaptation Plan for Climate Change Impacts 2016-2025*⁵⁷, *Roadmap for Disaster Risk Reduction 2017*⁵⁸, and the *National*

⁵³ "Budget Speech: 2018". 2017. *Parliament.Lk*. <https://www.parliament.lk/files/pdf/budget/2018/budget-speech-2018.pdf>.

⁵⁴ "Manifesto: Compassionate Government Maithri: A Stable Country". 2015. *President.Gov.Lk*. <http://www.president.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Manifesto-EN.pdf>.

⁵⁵ "UNF Election Manifesto". 2021. *Fdocuments.In*. Accessed December 9. <https://fdocuments.in/document/unf-election-manifesto.html>.

⁵⁶ "Budget Speech: 2018". 2017. *Parliament.Lk*. <https://www.parliament.lk/files/pdf/budget/2018/budget-speech-2018.pdf>.

⁵⁷ "National Adaptation Plan for Climate Change Impacts in Sri Lanka". 2016. *Www4.Unfccc.Int*. <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/Documents%20NAP/National%20Reports/Nation>

⁵⁸ "Roadmap For Disaster Risk Reduction ~ Safe and Resilient Sri Lanka ~". 2017. *Jica.Go.Jp*. https://www.jica.go.jp/english/our_work/thematic_issues/disaster/c8hovm00obwgemq-att/study_04.pdf.



Disaster Risk Management Plan for 2018-2030⁵⁹. Furthermore, the agency submitted its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)⁶⁰ in 2016 and published *The National REDD+ Investment Framework and Action Plan (NRIFAP)* for the period 2018-2022 in 2017⁶¹. Throughout all these policies, plans and documents, the need for technical assistance, capacity development and funding were recognised as key inputs required to ensure the successful implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of the initiatives.

Driver 4 of the UNSDF was focused on ensuring the vulnerable and marginalised are more resilient to climate change and natural disasters and benefit from increasingly sustainable management of natural resources, better environmental governance, and blue/green development. Indicator 4.1 had a direct focus on the implementation of Disaster Risk Reduction plans at district level in the country. The implementation of these plans at district level was critical as the agency had already recognised the need to streamline its disaster management policies with the District Secretariate empowered to undertake risk reduction initiatives⁶². Indicators 4.3 and 4.4 were focused on the implementation of the NDCs and NRIFAP, bringing both indicators in line with the national priorities. The 2018 Budget had already recognised the need for Climate Resilience Programmes along the country's major river basins, including the Kelani basin⁶³. Indicator 4.2 was directly concerned with the implementation of integrated water management systems.

4.1.2 How Relevant Is The UNSDF for Setting, Implementing, and Monitoring UN Priorities?

The *Final UNSDCF Internal Guidance* states that "United Nations entity-specific country programmes are derived from the Cooperation Framework, not vice versa"⁶⁴. However, consultations conducted during the evaluation revealed that this was not always the case when it came to organisational strategic planning over the period 2018-2021. It should be noted that the Final UNSDCF guidance was released in June 2019 and revised in July 2020 aligned with the UNDS resolution 72/279. The UNSDF was developed in early 2017 when explicit guidance and buy-in across the system was not forthcoming. Secondly, in the design and formulation of the UNSDF, the RC/UNCT jointly agreed to promote and incentivise joint work, moving away from siloed work streams of the previous UNDAFs. Areas of work for each Driver were identified where 3 or more agencies were working together, and a measurable indicator identified.

Key Finding 2: Although the UNSDF identified priorities that are important to sustainable development in Sri Lanka, consensus among key informants within the UN system in Sri Lanka suggest that the UNSDF was largely considered in programme development and activity-based discussions only *after* agency-specific priorities were met. The priorities of the UNSDF were secondary to 1) agency global strategies, country strategic frameworks, and international

⁵⁹ "National Disaster Risk Management Plan 2018-2030". 2021. *Mobilise-Project.Org.Uk*. Accessed December 9. <http://www.mobilise-project.org.uk/assets/presentations/SriLanka/Mr.%20Nuwan%20Madawan%20Arachchi.pdf>.

⁶⁰ "Nationally Determined Contributions". 2016. *Www4.Unfccc.Int.*. <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/Sri%20Lanka%20First/NDCs%20of%20Sri%20Lanka.pdf>

⁶¹ "Sri Lanka National REDD+ Investment Framework and Action Plan (NRIFAP) 1/2 - UN-REDD Programme Collaborative Online Workspace". 2017. *Unredd.Net*. [https://www.unredd.net/documents/un-redd-partner-countries-181/national-redd-strategies-1025/16263-national-](https://www.unredd.net/documents/un-redd-partner-countries-181/national-redd-strategies-1025/16263-national-redd-investment-framework-and-action-plan-nrifap-12.html?path=un-redd-partner-countries-181/national-redd-strategies-1025)

[redd-investment-framework-and-action-plan-nrifap-12.html?path=un-redd-partner-countries-181/national-redd-strategies-1025](http://www.unredd.net/documents/un-redd-partner-countries-181/national-redd-strategies-1025/16263-national-redd-investment-framework-and-action-plan-nrifap-12.html?path=un-redd-partner-countries-181/national-redd-strategies-1025).

⁶² "Roadmap For Disaster Risk Reduction ~ Safe and Resilient Sri Lanka ~". 2017. *Jica.Go.Jp*. https://www.jica.go.jp/english/our_work/thematic_issues/disaster/c8hovm000obwgemq-att/study_04.pdf.

⁶³ "Budget Speech: 2018". 2017. *Parliament.Lk*. <https://www.parliament.lk/files/pdf/budget/2018/budget-speech-2018.pdf>.

⁶⁴ UNDG. *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework - Internal Guidance (Final Version)*. 2021. p. 5.



commitments like the SDGs, 2) the national priorities of line ministries the agencies were mostly working with, and 3) donor requirements. While priorities identified under the UNSDF provided a large enough ‘umbrella’ for agencies to work under, they were generally not perceived as intrinsic to the mandates of specific agencies. Key informants suggested that the prioritisation exercise conducted as part of the development of UNSDF was too much of a “desk exercise”, without properly considering how UN contributions might be specified, prioritised, and measured. One UN key informant suggested: “we were sort of thinking to produce a nice document. But maybe we forgot to really focus on how to make it useful and move it forward from design to action”.

What smaller agencies do, in particular, is difficult to quantify under high-level indicators. A representative of a smaller agency stated: “we should be reflected in the UNSDF, regardless of how small we are. So, it should be clear that this is what the UNSDF mandates and how we fit into that”. All agencies should be able to “see themselves” and their organisational priorities reflected in its text, priorities, and indicators. Otherwise, they are also unlikely to see value in the framework, instead only retroactively connecting organisational activities during reporting, rather than using the framework as a way of setting priorities and acting on them. Currently, agencies see it as an additional administrative burden – additional processes, forms, meetings, etc. amongst the many that are already required of agency staff and management – as opposed to as an additional strategic resource for their agencies to tap into.

A key challenge is that high-level national indicators – like unemployment and health, nutrition, learning and psychosocial well-being indicators – are affected by many externalities, making it very hard to determine how the UN in Sri Lanka contributes to these. “Not enough time was taken to reflect on

indicators and what types of indicators would be useful. There was a discussion that the indicators could be more reasonable and better represented. But this did not happen in the end”, said another agency key informant. Driver 3 – human security and socioeconomic resilience – was especially broad in scope. No doubt this was due to a praiseworthy desire to include within the UNSDF important initiatives aimed at social protection, especially in the effort to reach marginal populations and leave nobody behind. However, the result is a driver made up of a disparate set of issues that do not necessarily fit together operationally, creating difficulties in collaboration and the creation of synergies for the purposes of joint programming. “Under Driver 3 there’s everything under the sun in terms of the social sector”, said an agency key informant. Splitting the driver into three thematically based sub-groups provided more focus and is a positive step towards providing better focus through Results Group activities. Across all driver priorities, key informants indicated that the next iteration of the cooperation framework should better connect its priorities to its indicators, baselines, and targets. While indicators and their related baselines and targets must be aspirational enough, there is a practical necessity to make them achievable and measurable, to generate buy-in from UN actors by better linking them to agency priorities.

4.1.3 How Well Did The UNSDF Adapt to The Changing Policy and Programming Environment?

The UNSDF was developed after the 2015 political transition and before the significant political changes that occurred during the latter part of 2018 and much of 2019 - starting with the constitutional crisis in end October 2018⁶⁵, followed by the Easter Sunday Attacks in April 2019⁶⁶ and culminating with the election of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and a new

⁶⁵ Meixler, Eli. 2018. "Sri Lankan Strongman's Return Sparks 'Constitutional Crisis'". *Time*. <https://time.com/5437457/sri-lanka-mahinda-rajapaksa-president-crisis/>.

⁶⁶ "Sri Lanka Attacks: Easter Sunday Bombings Marked One Year On". 2020. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52357200>.



Parliament the following year⁶⁷. The shifting political landscape also altered the development focus and approach of the country. These major political changes, a global pandemic, and terrorist attacks made the 2018-2022 period highly unpredictable. During this period, important efforts were made to adapt and respond to the changing landscape of sustainable development in Sri Lanka. Individual agencies, for instance, were in continuous communication with their ministry counterparts, adapting as national priorities shifted. The RCO also engaged in important relationship building, as well as crisis response support and joint advocacy efforts with government partners on behalf of the agencies. Perhaps most importantly, the pandemic galvanised health response that was widely lauded by government and other actors as effectively adapting to the quickly changing emergency in a coordinated, effective, and impactful manner, with key institutional and technical leadership from UN actors.

Key Finding 3: Despite efforts just mentioned to adapt UN programmes to changes in Sri Lanka, key informants suggested that during the implementation period covered by this evaluation the UNSDF was largely static. A primary reason for this was the absence of a government co-chaired Steering Committee to which the UN’s collective results are reviewed regularly for accountability. To stay relevant and effective, interviewees noted that the cooperation framework needs to become a “living document” that dynamically accounted for shifts that occurred throughout its lifecycle. Preparing systematic mechanisms to accommodate such shifts was noted by interviewees as important to relevance and success of the cooperation framework. Indeed, UNSDCF guidance also states that “the Cooperation Framework must remain responsive

to emerging and unforeseen needs”⁶⁸. This included a requirement for carrying out regular reviews to help adapt to changing priorities, something not done during the UNSDF period. Some level of uncertainty should always be expected from the Sri Lankan development context. As was noted in the mid-term review (MTR) for the UNDAF 2013-2017, even the change in government beginning in January 2015 can be “interpreted as fitting within the historically cyclical nature of Sri Lanka’s political transitions, rather than as a decisive break from this general trajectory”⁶⁹. Therefore, a key long-term lesson is that an effective cooperation framework requires sufficient flexibility to be able to adapt to changing development contexts and priorities. The 2023-2027 UNSDCF will undoubtedly incorporate a reprioritisation to account for the preceding political transition. Still, it will itself come against another electoral cycle that is likely to bring further changes. With national elections likely to be held in 2024-2025, annual reviews conducted through a fully functioning and totally engaged Steering Committee will be needed to maintain relevance and continuity. This is in line with framework guidance also stipulates that “Annual reviews of progress towards strategic priorities, outcomes and outputs, and assessment of significant changes in the country context inform agreement with the agency and relevant development partners on UN planned contributions”⁷⁰.

Aside from domestic factors, the agenda of the UNSDF was also greatly affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic spread, the government initiated strict measures, including – island-wide lockdowns – to contain the spread of

⁶⁷ Hashim, Asad. 2019. "Gotabaya Rajapaksa Wins Sri Lanka Election". *Aljazeera.Com*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/17/gotabaya-rajapaksa-wins-sri-lanka-election>.

⁶⁸ UNDG. *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework - Internal Guidance (Final Version)*. 2021. p. 10.

⁶⁹ Since gaining Independence in 1948, political power has oscillated between parties holding contrasting ideological approaches to government; see: p. 5.

⁷⁰ UNDG. *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework - Internal Guidance (Final Version)*. 2021. p. 10.



the virus during multiple waves of infections in 2020 and 2021^{71,72,73}.

Key Finding 4: Outside of the UNSDF, the UNDS played an integral role in assisting the national response to the COVID-19 crisis and adapting UN support to meet the growing health emergency. Agencies throughout the UN System have stepped up efforts to provide the country with emergency funding, access to vaccinations, personal protective equipment and other emergency supplies, relief items, technical expertise, and other services. The UN's interventions have been primarily guided by the strategic priorities identified in the *UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 in Sri Lanka* released in June 2020. The deliverables identified in the advisory paper informed the realignment of agency support towards the COVID-19 response⁷⁴. The pandemic also motivated important adaptations to the structures supporting the UNSDF. One example is the cessation of the UN's 'Driver Groups' as an implementation mechanism under UNSDF in favour of Results Groups along specific thematic areas as opposed to the broader Driver Group. This has resulted in specific areas, health for instance, which was previously clumped under Driver 3, to be given separate focus. The restructuring of Driver Groups was associated with structural changes to their focus areas, arrangements, and activities, which contributed to more focused engagement and furthered a collective spirit for information and knowledge-sharing and for identifying gaps, akin perhaps to a support group during this crisis period. Results Groups brought together the COVID-19 response activities of different UN agencies because the thematic areas were well defined and relatable to the activities undertaken by each agency. Thus, the changes brought about to the ways of working within the UNSDF Results Groups

were necessary improvements to help make the UNSDF more relevant and coherent, even if additional steps are still required to make it more effective, impactful, efficient, etc.

4.1.4 How Aligned Is the UNSDF with Its Comparative Advantage in A MIC Like Sri Lanka?

Key Finding 5: All non-UN stakeholders interviewed noted the capacity of UN agencies to provide technical assistance, capacity building, and systems strengthening as comparative advantages of the UN. Government key informants, especially, highlighted the value of UN technical expertise, especially when focused on programmatic design, capacity-building, and policy advice. Throughout the period evaluated, many agencies were able to offer direct technical support to government institutions for capacity building, policy planning, and programme implementation. Case in point, the UN actors supported the development of vital national plans and strategies in the areas of water resources development and management, environmental action, environmental migrants, communications for the governance and management of water, as well as national quality infrastructure and geographic identification (of Sri Lankan produce) and a national communications campaign on COVID-19 prevention measures during the monsoon season. CSOs, as well, indicated that they benefited from technical capacity building, and collaborative work with UN partners to reinforce systems for better programme delivery, project management, financial oversight, M&E, etc. As said by one CSO partner, "the UN is recognised as collaborative and neutral and has capacities to provide technical support and advice... And it is able to develop CSO capacities. And the UN has experience working

⁷¹ Friberg, Samantha. 2020. "Sri Lanka'S COVID-19 Response: Successes & Shortcomings - BORGEM". <https://www.borgenmagazine.com/sri-lankas-covid-19-response/>.

⁷² (www.dw.com), Deutsche. 2021. "Sri Lanka Votes In Pivotal Election Following Coronavirus Delay". DW.COM. Accessed December 9. <https://www.dw.com/en/sri-lanka-votes-in-pivotal-election-following-coronavirus-delay/a-54443080>.

⁷³ "COVID-19 Cases Continue to Surge in Sri Lanka". 2020. *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/covid-19-cases-continue-to-surge-in-sri-lanka/article32947203.ece>.

⁷⁴ "UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socio-Economic Response To COVID-19 In Sri Lanka". 2020. United Nations Sri Lanka. https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/LKA_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan_2020.pdf.



with different stakeholders across different sectors”.

International research indicates that the UNDS has been most effective within MICs where its focus is on identifying and filling policy and technical gaps, where it is assisting governments in strengthening policy innovations that build state systems. As stated in a Centre for Global Policy Development Paper on the role of aid in MICs, “To increase expected impact, ODA [official development assistance] should support home-grown systems, designed to address country specific vulnerabilities and work with the existing capabilities and infrastructure”⁷⁵. By providing policy and institutional support through many of its activities, the UN in Sri Lanka should be best able to capitalise on its key strengths of drawing on a diverse range of policy and technical expertise, using experiences and good practices from other countries to offer contextualised local solutions. Moreover, the provision of coherent and strategic policy advice is a key element of staying fit for purpose, in support of a substantive policy agenda that is up to the task of cross-cutting, cross-stakeholder, and multi-dimensional challenges⁷⁶.

4.2 Coherence

Key findings related to coherence:

- Key Finding 6: In general, agency key informants expressed reservations that the design process was too much of a desk exercise, with too little regard given afterwards about how to enhance coordination when the UNSDF was operationalised.
- Key Finding 7: Individual agencies have strong working partnerships with individual ministries, but the UNSDF was not particularly effective in promoting partnerships and accountability between

the UN in Sri Lanka and the GoSL at the cooperation framework level.

- Key Finding 8: From the perspective of the donor community, the UN’s close relationship with the GoSL at the ministerial level across areas of government and its technical knowledge of national priorities in different sectors was important to informing how funding can effectively and efficiently be targeted to where it is most needed.
- Key Finding 9: Even those CSOs that were consulted originally at the design stages of the UNSDF had very little awareness of its priorities or contents, implying a lack meaningful engagement and feedback during the lifecycle of framework.

4.2.1 How Well Did The DaO Approach Promote Coherence across The UN in Sri Lanka?

Key Finding 6: In general, agency key informants expressed reservations that the design process was too much of a desk exercise, with too little regard given afterwards about how to enhance coordination when the UNSDF was operationalised. No regular reviews were conducted due to delays in convening the Joint Steering Committee, and in part because of uncertainty created by internal and external shocks 2019-2021. Results Groups were mostly useful for the purposes of knowledge-sharing and initial discussions around coordination and have been able to take tangible steps in this regard by generating annual joint workplans through the UNSDF Results Groups. This was a learning during this UNSDF and lays the groundwork for far lower transaction costs in the future. Even if this has largely not fulfilled the promises of better coordinated and more synergistic action under the current UNSDF, it does set the stage for more harmonised programme and business practices

⁷⁵ "What Is the Role of Aid in Middle-Income Countries?". 2020. Centre for Global Development. <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/PP201-ODA-MICs.pdf>, p. 16.

⁷⁶ Hendra, John. 2014. "Making the UN 'Fit for Purpose': Lessons From The 'Delivering As One' Experience". Daghammarskjold.Se. http://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/dd-paper_no11.pdf.



built on economies of scale and reduce transaction costs for the UN and its partners in the coming years. Additionally, it should be noted that Results Groups are just one of several coordination mechanisms throughout the UNDS that compete for agencies' attention and time, sometimes creating inefficiencies. Most notably, an independent PPP process was meant to focus and “elevate” the peace and reconciliation agenda. As stated previously, it tended to duplicate some of the coordination mechanisms – PPP Working Groups versus UNSDF Results Groups – adding administrative and management burdens to agencies. The PPP could have instead been integrated as part of the UNSDF, under Driver 2.

4.2.2 Is The UN Working Capitalising on The Comparative Advantages and Capacities of Other Actors?

The new generation of cooperation frameworks is meant to play two key roles as “a core accountability tool” between the UNCT and the host government for “collectively-owned development results”⁷⁷. **Key Finding 7: Both UN and government informants reported that individual agencies have strong working partnerships with individual ministries, including the Ministries of: Foreign Affairs, Health, Finance, Agriculture, Labour, and others. However, feedback on the UNSDF suggests it was not particularly effective in promoting partnerships and accountability between the UN in Sri Lanka and the GoSL at the cooperation framework level. Key informants suggested there was limited awareness of the UNSDF framework, its purpose, and its strategic objectives across government.** At the political level, this is attributable to the fact that the UNSDF was developed with the previous GoSL. The new administration brought a considerable change in political leadership, meaning that new relationships with government partners had to be forged. Moreover, between 2016-2017 under the previous generation of ‘assistance’ frameworks,

which predate current guidance for ‘cooperation’ frameworks associated with reforms that reposition the UNDS. This is expected to change under the cooperation framework guidance, which calls for systematic alignment by agencies to the framework. Future efficiencies are more likely with the operationalisation of UN reforms; if agencies follow through on requirements under the system for alignment of agency country programming strategies to the cooperation framework, transition costs can be reduced, leading to greater gains in coherence and efficiency under the coming framework.

During the UNSDF period, however, it was reported that limited reference is made to the framework during planning, implementation, or monitoring discussions between agencies and government counterparts in line ministries. Said one agency key informant, “there’s no ownership for the UNSDF from the government. We just does programming with our line ministries, and they do not have the [slightest] idea what the UNSDF is. Just that we do projects with them”. The evaluation suggested limited awareness about UNSDF among most government stakeholders, especially in terms of its functions and details. Many of the KIIs from the government, who were high ranking officials responsible for implementation of programmes within the subject area of their respective ministry of department, were unaware of the framework. There was no Joint Steering Committee with government that would generally provide leadership and guidance during the implementation of the framework, and review regularly, progress made. Despite multiple attempts by the UN at trying to constitute the Steering Committee, there was limited traction at the time for putting an overall planning and accountability mechanism in place. It would be unreasonable to expect ministry officials, outside of central government agencies like the Ministry of Finance and departments like the National Planning Department (NPD), to possess a detailed awareness of the parts of the UNSDF. However,

⁷⁷ UNDG. *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework - Internal Guidance (Final Version)*. 2021. p. 5.



creating greater ministerial and department awareness of the framework as a planning and accountably tool in those areas pertinent to them, in particular in their partnerships with various UN entities, would be a useful starting point for the UN in Sri Lanka to make the fullest use of its relationships within government through the UNSDF.

Several factors were found to have impeded the uptake of the UNSDF by the government. As stated above, political changes shifted the development focus and its approach to the UN. The change in political administration also came with considerable turnover in terms of decision-makers, resulting in a loss any existing institutional memory relative to the UNSDF. Decision-making within government during much of the 2018-2022 timeframe was complicated because of issues such as crises and instability between the coalition parties during the 2018-2020 period, followed by a period of elections and political change. These challenges in terms of continuous and coherent policymaking was exacerbated by a high level of overlapping mandates amongst government agencies. Uncertainty was further compounded when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Combined, these factors created considerable impediments to the functional coherence of the UNSDF, as perhaps exemplified most conspicuously by the absence – until 2020 – of a Joint Steering Committee to ensure strategic direction and oversight of the cooperation framework. Indeed, it was noted in interviews that the government institutions in Sri Lanka are at most times considered dynamic and complex, making it difficult to sustain relationships with and promote ownership among the government. Change that often happens between administrations only compounds this problem; as political actors are replaced, there is a loss of institutional familiarity with the UN in terms of its organisational structure, its mandate, and its value added. Incoming government counterparts may only be familiar with larger UN agencies, or the RC as a representative of the UN brand but are unaware of what relatively smaller UN entities do. Thus, each time there is turnover within ministries, UN agencies must reacquaint those coming in with

agency-related mandates first and foremost, leaving little time to engage in sensitisation about the UNSDF. Efforts in this regard included joint of the RC and relevant Heads of Agencies with newly appointed Ministers in 2020.

Key Finding 8: From the perspective of the donor community, the UN’s close relationship with the GoSL at the ministerial level across areas of government and its technical knowledge of national priorities in different sectors was important to informing how funding can effectively and efficiently be targeted to where it is most needed. The UN in Sri Lanka is seen by donors as a “trusted partner”, said one key informant from an international financial institution (IFI), adding that “because agencies work closely with different ministries they can act as a go-between, providing valuable information about where capacities, needs, and gaps are in the country”. This comparative advantage was particularly apparent during the COVID-19 response, where government relationships, knowledge of the national context, and technical expertise played an important role in helping to coordinate the emergency response. One donor stated that “coordination and prioritisation were key during the response. Whereas government just sent lists of things they needed, we really relied on the UN to assist in vetting these [requests]”. Another noted that, “because we saw that the UN had a close relationship and was able to leverage these relationships and knowledge to help with the COVID response. [We] don’t have those relationships with government, so these are a key comparative advantage of the UN that other actors like CSOs don’t have”.

Donors also noted that the UN can advocate for and create space for the rights of the most vulnerable via various UN-driven international frameworks. Key informants suggested that the UN’s global and multilateral standing is key source of legitimacy in the country. There was broad consensus among donors, which was echoed by many civil society interviewees, that the UN can get rights on the agenda in its engagement with government. Peace and reconciliation are another area where donors stressed that UN leadership is



important, and which is closely linked to and mutually reinforcing of progress on human rights issues. Even if action is not always forthcoming, human rights issues in Sri Lanka are provided more prominence through UN advocacy. There are good examples of times where a strong public stance from the RC has contributed positive action on issues such as: violence against minorities, the cremations of Muslims who had died of COVID-19, overcrowding in prisons, deaths in the custody of security forces, overhaul of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, right of freedom of assembly, capital punishment, among others. In addition, many agencies are working on rights-based issues too, for instance to improve refugee and migrant rights, increase sexual and reproductive rights, decrease gender-based violence, etc. Using the UN's soft power to 'create space' and legitimise the activities of UN agencies or other development partners is a form of impact is not easy to measure, but which is nonetheless very important to undergirding progress in sustainable development. The mainstreaming of the human rights agenda in the 2023-2027 UNSDCF is a crucial part of affirming the UN's normative agenda in everything it does – from development to peacebuilding to humanitarian work – whether within the UN Development System itself, or with partners.

Key Finding 9: From CSO stakeholders interviewed, the large national level CSOs reported that they were consulted in the UNSDF design process. Importantly, some of these CSOs have had long-standing relationships with individual agencies and have a significant presence throughout the country. But even those CSOs that were consulted originally at the design stages of the UNSDF had very little awareness of its priorities or contents, implying a lack of meaningful engagement and feedback during the lifecycle of framework. Most CSOs mentioned that they were totally unaware of the framework and were not consulted as part of

the design process. In addition, private sector stakeholders commented that there was only minimum involvement at design phase and that too in an ad hoc manner and not followed up. Given CSOs' core competencies in connecting to and mobilising community-based actors, there might be gains in coherence, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability to be made through more inclusion of CSOs and other non-governmental actors in consultations related to the design of the next framework, as well as its monitoring. Also, as per the 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of UN⁷⁸ volunteerism can be better utilised as a resource looking forward into the next iteration of the cooperation framework. Volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) provide important support to the 2030 Agenda – especially SDG 17 – and cuts across different UNSDF priorities. For instance, according to one key informant, most priority areas have support from V-Force, which creates a space for communication between volunteers and UN entities and enhancing collaboration towards achieving national and international development goals. Fully utilising CSOs and VIOs can better localise SDGs. CSOs have the knowledge, experience, and access to beneficiaries much more than the UN entities. Moreover, CSOs continue to work with the same group of beneficiaries in long term even beyond the project duration, creating benefits in terms of long-term programming impacts.

Much more can be done to build and include multi-stakeholder partnerships with non-government actors, including promoting collaboration across CSOs, VIOs, private sector, academia, etc. through the various processes of design, implementation, and monitoring related to the cooperation framework. A universal, transformative rights-based agenda requires all development partners to change and to work 'as one', in response to cross-government, multi-sectoral challenges⁷⁹. This is

⁷⁸ United Nations General Assembly. 2020. "Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 2020: A/RES/75/233 Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system". 75th Session United Nations General Assembly. <https://documents-dds->

[ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/381/87/PDF/N2038187.pdf?OpenElement](https://www.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/381/87/PDF/N2038187.pdf?OpenElement)

⁷⁹ Hendra, John. 2014. "Making the UN 'Fit for Purpose': Lessons From The 'Delivering As One'"



coherent with calls to make the UN more fit for purpose by “Really open[ing] up the UN to be much more consultative not only with civil society but also with the private sector”⁸⁰. Multi-stakeholder partnerships should be encouraged as part of the next cooperation framework, especially as this relates to its design and monitoring. Further, key informants recognised the role played by CSOs in the implementation of programmes and highlighted the need for greater integration of stakeholders from the CSO sector into programming design. They suggested that this would lead to efficiencies in the delivery of programmes by leveraging the grassroots level knowledge and last mile delivery capabilities of the CSOs, helping make gains in made in coherence, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability a practical reality in communities.

From the perspective of the civil society KIIs, a key strength of the UN is its convening power, and in particular its ability to bring government stakeholders to the table around key issues, which CSO’s and other non-governmental groups are less able to do. CSO key informants stated that the UN is positioned to be a bridge between non-governmental actors and government, using its ability to open and facilitate at policy and advocacy processes for civil society, perhaps creating a forum within, or connected to, the UNSDCF Steering Committee for non-governmental actors. But CSO informants also suggested that the extent to which the UN is effective in supporting non-governmental sectors depends on how its power is leveraged and how participatory its relationships with non-governmental actors are. Meetings and consultations can be effective only if they are broadly representative, and only in so far as CSOs are genuinely allowed to be a part of decision-making, rather than consulted regarding issues on which decisions are made elsewhere. “The UN has listening sessions or meetings with CSOs... There is a certain nature to those discussions that

is centred around the UN. But it would be interesting to create forums like this that does not centre the UN, but are led by CSOs, so the UN can contribute and support. It would not be an agenda driven by the UN, but rather one that the UN decentres itself and can examine priorities and its own role through a process that it does not drive”, suggested one CSO key informant.

4.3 Effectiveness

Key findings related to effectiveness:

- Key Finding 10: Although UN programming made important contributions to priority areas under the UNSDF, overall progress towards indicators was mixed. Again, this can largely be explained by a lack of fit between drivers and their indicators, targets, and baselines. In some cases, targets, and baselines – as well as data to measure them – are unavailable, making evaluation of some indicators difficult.

Experience". *Daghammarskjold.Se*.
http://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/dd-paper_no11.pdf.

⁸⁰ "Fit For What Purpose?". 2015. *Sustainabledevelopment.Un.Org*.
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=2101&menu=1515>.





4.3.1 Are Indicator Targets under Driver 1 Met? And Has UN System Contributed towards Improved Data, Knowledge Management, and Evidence-Based Policy?

Driver 1 seeks to enable the necessary conditions for improved data, knowledge management, and evidence-based policies to address inequalities and ensure inclusive and responsive decision-making; the indicators identified under Driver 1 are as follows:

1. Proportion of SDG indicators produced at the national level with full disaggregation when relevant to the target, in accordance with the *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*
2. Proportion of individuals using the internet
3. A national statistical plan [in line with UN guidelines] is fully funded and under implementation



4.3.1.1 Indicator 1.1

As per the *Status of Sustainable Development Goals Indicators in Sri Lanka* report published by the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) in December 2017, the DCS relied heavily on other institutions and agencies in the National Statistical

System for capturing the necessary data for 54 per cent of the SDG indicators. The DCS compiled data for only 46 of the 244 SDG Indicators⁸¹; see Table 2. This remained the same as per the *Review of the National Statistical System of Sri Lanka* report published in December 2019 by the DCS⁸².

Table 2: Availability of Data for SDG Indicators for Sri Lanka⁸³

Classification	Number of Indicator	Percentage
Already compiled by the DCS	46	19%
To be compiled by the DCS	29	12%
Available or to be compiled by other institutions	131	54%
Regional/global indicators	35	14%
Not relevant to Sri Lanka	3	1%
Total	244	100%

The 2019 report published baseline data for only the 46 SDG indicators compiled by the DCS. At the same time, only three indicators under Goal 3 of the SDGs were reported with updated data in the 2019 report. At the time of writing this report, the online SDG dashboard published by the DCS has not been updated with latest data for the SDG indicators, with the only the 46 indicators for which data is maintained by the DCS having baseline data indicated⁸⁴. The SDG dashboard website offers an

important step forward to track and communicate national progress towards the SDGs. But effective monitoring requires more timely data. As noted by one UN key informant, “it does not help to have data from 2012 on a dashboard created in 2019”. Also, improving the usefulness of the dashboard as an analytical policy tool requires more regard for the entire data value chain, and how data is used by decision-makers at all levels, to complement the ways data is presented. Overall, there are other

⁸¹ “Status of Sustainable Development Goals Indicator In Sri Lanka: 2017”. 2017. Department of Census and Statistics. <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/sdg/application/publications/book.pdf>.

⁸² “Review of the National Statistical System of Sri Lanka”. 2019. *Statistics.Gov.Lk*. <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/reference/SriLankaNSSReviewReport>.

⁸³ Table is based on most recent publicly available data. “Status of Sustainable Development Goals Indicator In Sri Lanka: 2017”. 2017. Department of Census and Statistics. <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/sdg/application/publications/book.pdf>.

⁸⁴ “Sri Lanka, Sustainable Development Goals”. 2021. *Statistics.Gov.Lk*. Accessed December 9. <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/sdg/index.php/sdg/page/home>.



important contributions that have been made by the UN in Sri Lanka in terms of data and innovation. The UN has provided technical and financial support to conduct surveys or to add modules to existing surveys. In addition, the UN system has supported the Sustainable Development Council (SDC) to develop a dashboard. A series of workshops were conducted for capacity development. A national sample survey review was also conducted in 2019, with the support of the UN. Agencies also supported implementation of some of the recommendations in regard to different subject areas. The UN in partnership with the government convened Sri Lanka's First National Data Symposium on the SDGs bringing together all government ministries as a means of advocating and building capacity and knowledge around data.

4.3.1.2 Indicator 1.2

As of June 2021, Sri Lanka had a total of 2.36 million fixed broadband subscribers⁸⁵ in the country, which is an increase of 77 per cent from June 2018⁸⁶. In the same period, mobile broadband subscriptions in the country have increased by over 200 per cent, to 18.3 million subscribers in June 2021. However, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are important to factor here as many persons who previously worked from offices had to plan to start working from home. This is reflected in the statistics, which shows only 1.65 million fixed broadband subscribers and 11.75 million mobile broadband subscribers in December 2019⁸⁷. According to national surveys 34.4 per cent of the country's population between 5-69 years use the Internet. Between the period 2018 and 2020, both Internet and email users have increased nationally, both in the urban and rural sectors. In the period

January to June 2020, Sri Lanka surveyed digital literacy⁸⁸ and computer literacy⁸⁹ rates of 49.5 per cent and 32 per cent respectively. The low rate of computer literacy is attributable to the low ownership of desktops and laptops, which are used by only 22 per cent of the country's households in the same survey period⁹⁰. Smartphones account for 75.6 per cent of the devices used to access the Internet or send emails, again corroborating the significantly high number of mobile broadband subscriptions in the country.

4.3.1.3 Indicator 1.3

While the UN supported the *Review of the National Statistical System of Sri Lanka* in December 2019, there is insufficient public evidence to determine the extent to which the *National Statistical Plan* has been funded and implemented. Notwithstanding, several subject specific surveys are being carried out by the DCS with assistance from various UN agencies, including surveys focusing on water quality, migration, housing, women's well-being, and technical assistance in methodology and question design for the *2022 Census of Population and Housing*.

4.3.1.4 Driver 1 Summary

The findings pertaining to the effectiveness of Driver 1 shows inconsistent progress in data and innovation. Creating the SDG dashboard was a good achievement, even if it is still incomplete and lack up-to-date indicators. Also, the DCS still relies considerably on outside actors to measure and monitor SDG indicators. Overall Internet usage in the country is broadly increasing, digital and computer literacy is still low. Many key informants stressed that prioritising data as a separate driver,

⁸⁵ Bandusir, Sanath. 2021. "Statistical Overview Report". <https://trc.gov.lk/images/pdf/StatisticalOverViewReportQ220212607.pdf>.

⁸⁶ "Statistical Overview Report". 2018. https://trc.gov.lk/images/pdf/statis_q2201824082018.pdf.

⁸⁷ "Statistical Overview Report". 2020. https://trc.gov.lk/images/pdf/statis_q4_03032020.pdf

⁸⁸ Digital Literacy is defined as "a person (aged 5-69) is considered as a digital literate person if he/she could use computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone on his/her own"

⁸⁹ Computer Literacy is defined as "a person (aged 5-69) is considered as a computer literate person if he/she could use computer on his/her own"

⁹⁰ "Computer Literacy Statistics – 2020 (First Six Months)". 2020. *Statistics.Gov.Lk*. <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PressReleases/ComputerLiteracystatistics-2020-Firstsixmonths>.



as opposed to a cross-cutting issue, was a worthwhile initiative. Yet, there is considerable work that first needs to take place within the government sector to create a culture that recognises the importance of data and its application in the entire policy cycle, including implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. This culture needs to come from the political leaders and needs to be a consistent policy across political cycles. That being said, the evidence suggests that there is a slowly growing recognition of the importance for data – key informants highlighted evidence-based decision-making is increasing among government stakeholders, as reflected in a growing number of data requests received from the DCS. However, the slow progress made so far, as highlighted in the lack of up-to-date SDG data, points to the lack of demand for data generally amongst government. As a result, there exists a disconnect between Indicator 1.1 relating to SDG indicators and 1.3 relating to the *National Statistical Plan*, and the results observed above – where neither indicator was satisfactorily achieved. In addition, questions exist with regard to the extent to which indicators associated with internet coverage and usage are a good measure of the UN’s contribution to development in Sri Lanka, including that of enhancing the use of data in policy design. As opined by key informants, data is of critical importance for the government and the foundations must be placed first. Therefore, indicators which concentrate on these foundational elements will be more effective for the UNSDCF.

4.3.2 Are Indicator Targets under Driver 2 Met? And Has UN System Contributed to Strengthened Innovative Public Intentions and Engagement towards A Lasting Peace?

Driver 2 seeks to enable an environment, where people in Sri Lanka, especially the marginalised and

vulnerable, benefit from more rights-based, accountable, inclusive, and effective public institutions, to enhance trust amongst communities and towards the state; the indicators identified under Driver 2 are as follows:

1. Extent to which innovative governance platforms are strengthened at national and sub national levels, focusing on people engagement
2. Proportion of people who believe that state institutions are treating people of all groups fairly, equitably and without discrimination
3. Amount of national budget allocation for gender empowerment and elimination of discrimination against women
4. Extent to which priorities identified to the Peacebuilding Priority Plan (PPP) are implemented to achieve the country’s peacebuilding and reconciliation vision

4.3.2.1 Indicator 2.1

The United Nations E-Participation Index (EPI), which is derived as a supplementary index from the UN E-Government Survey, measures the use of online services for the provision of government information for citizens, stakeholder consultations with citizens by the government, and engaging citizens in the decision-making process⁹¹. Sri Lanka was ranked 85th out of 193 countries in 2018 with a score of 0.63 in the EPI; see table below. This improved to 66th position out of 193 countries in 2020 with a score of 0.71 in the EPI⁹². The government’s use of technology to increase access and inclusion of its people in the governance of the country is measured by the E-Government Development Index (EGDI) Sri Lanka ranked 85th (score 0.67) in the EGDI in 2020, up from 94th (score 0.58) in 2018⁹³.

⁹¹ "E-Participation Index". 2021. <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/About/Overview/E-Participation-Index>.

⁹² "E-Government Development Index". 2020. <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/161-Sri-Lanka>.

⁹³ "E-Government Development Index". 2020. <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/161-Sri-Lanka>.



Table 3: Sri Lanka EGD and EPI Performance

	2018		2020	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
EGDI	94	0.58	85	0.67
EPI	85	0.63	66	0.71

Several UN initiatives support innovative governance during the UNSDF period. The UNDP supported the remote court hearings initiative of the Ministry of Justice under its long-term digitisation and court automation drive by handing over 55 laptops to the Ministry in December 2020. The laptops are to be used to facilitate the expansion of remote court hearings in the courts identified by the Judicial Service Commission as part of the wider project to reduce delays in the judicial system in the country⁹⁴. The UN in Sri Lanka⁹⁵, as part of its work to implement the 2030 UN Youth Strategy, facilitated the meaningful participation of young people in peacebuilding through the establishment of the Youth Peace Panel and enhanced their capacity to function as independent young advocates and leaders⁹⁶. As part of the same initiative the UN also established and supported inclusive dialogue and consultation platforms for young people’s contribution to developing provincial youth policies and action plans (consultation workshops, symposiums etc.). The UNDP project - Capacity Development for Local Government - helped to improve local planning and service delivery, enable local

governance systems to be innovative and inclusive to address multidimensional challenges; and strengthen the ability of Central and Provincial institutions to support local government authorities to deliver better⁹⁷.

4.3.2.2 Indicator 2.2

As per the World Banks’ Worldwide Governance Indicators, the control of corruption indicator captures perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as ‘capture’ of the state by elites and private interests; Sri Lanka had a 44.2 percentile rank out of 214 countries in 2019 compared to 43.3 percentile rank in 2018 for control of corruption. The corresponding scores were -0.3 in 2019 and 2018 with -2.5 being the lowest score and 2.5 being the highest score. At the same time, in the same World Bank indicator for rule of law, Sri Lanka had a score of 0 in 2018 and 2019 placing the country in the 55.8 and 53.8 percentile ranks in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

⁹⁴ "UNDP Assists Justice Ministry to Facilitate Remote Court Hearings". 2020. *Dailymirror.Lk*. https://www.dailymirror.lk/print/breaking_news/UNDP-assists-Justice-Ministry-to-facilitate-remote-court-hearings/108-202367.
⁹⁵ Exact UN agency involved not indicated in source material
⁹⁶ "UN Sri Lanka Ongoing Work towards Implementation of the 2030 UN Youth Strategy". 2021. Accessed December 10.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hnMEuynKaeolvvJUnH1I9jIUlFmWZrO6O546-xB5rCg/edit>.
⁹⁷ "Capacity Development for Local Government | UNDP In Sri Lanka". 2021. UNDP. https://www.lk.undp.org/content/srilanka/en/home/projects/Capacity_Development_for_Local_Government.html



Table 4: World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators: Sri Lanka Scores and Percentile Ranking⁸

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Control of corruption: Score	-0.3	-0.5	-0.3	-0.3
Control of corruption: Percentile ranking	45.7	41.3	43.3	44.2
Rule of law: Score	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
Rule of law: Percentile ranking	58.2	55.3	55.8	53.8
Voice and accountability: Score	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0
Voice and accountability: Percentile ranking	43.3	43.3	46.8	43.8

The rule of law indicator captures perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence. Meanwhile, under the voice and accountability indicator which captures perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens can participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media, Sri Lanka had a score of 0 in 2018 and 2019 with corresponding percentile ranks of 29.6 and 28.6 in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

4.3.2.3 Indicator 2.3

The new government elected in August 2020 under the leadership of HE President Gotabaya Rajapaksa removed the subject of Women's Affairs at the Cabinet of Ministers and moved it down to the

State Ministry level. Currently the State Ministry for Women and Child Development, Pre-Schools and Primary Education, School Infrastructure and Education Services is mandated with promoting gender empowerment and ending gender-based discrimination. Under the GoSL 2021 Budget, Rs 30 billion was allocated in total that includes capital expenditure of Rs 5.6 billion⁹⁹. This is in comparison to the 2018 budget allocation of Rs 2.66 billion allocated to the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, of which Rs 1.5 billion was for capital expenditure¹⁰⁰. In addition, under the GoSL Budget 2021 the following funds and initiatives were allocated¹⁰¹: 1) provide loans of Rs 500,000 at an interest rate of 4 per cent as start-up capital to support the young women and men, who start their own business on the successful completion of vocational education; 2) establish a network of Samurdhi shops in all Grama Niladari divisions targeting 25,000 female entrepreneurs chosen

⁹⁸ "Worldwide Governance Indicators | Databank". 2021. *Databank.Worldbank.Org*. <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/worldwide-governance-indicators/preview/on#>.

⁹⁹ The exact breakdown of this allocation is not provided in the Appropriation Bill and not disclosed at the ministry level; see: "A Bill to Provide for The Service of The Financial Year 2021". 2020. *Parliament.Lk*. <https://www.parliament.lk/uploads/bills/gbills/english/6202.pdf>.

¹⁰⁰ "A Bill to Provide for The Service of The Financial Year 2021". 2020. *Parliament.Lk*. <https://www.parliament.lk/uploads/bills/gbills/english/6202.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ "Budget Speech 2021". 2021. *Treasury.Gov.Lk*. https://www.treasury.gov.lk/documents/budget/2021/budget_speech_en.pdf.



from Samurdhi families to sell their produce and goods, allocate Rs 3 billion for improving sports facilities in schools, including implementing development activities to encourage women's participation in sports, and 4) give a Rs 1 billion allocation for encouraging and developing young women entrepreneurs.

4.3.2.4 Indicator 2.4

The Joint Programme for Peace (JPP) was established to provide a framework for coordinated funding towards peacebuilding efforts, as an interim measure to connect the learning from the PPP and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The overall aim of the JPP is to ensure harmonised and sustainable support towards securing peace in Sri Lanka in areas like: dealing with the past, social cohesion, and resettlement¹⁰² and to mobilise resources from multiple development partners,¹⁰³. Key informants suggested that the JPP is the best example of pooled funding established by UNCT, providing a foundation for some of the other UN reform initiatives in the country. In particular, the lessons learned from the JPP have led to the establishment of the first UN SDG Multi Partner Trust Fund in Sri Lanka, which has paved the way for wider joint resource mobilising efforts including responding to the COVID-19 pandemic through the resilience envelope. Further, the UNDP in collaboration with International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) initiated the Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice programme between 2017 and 2021. The programme strengthened capacities to

undertake reforms to advance peacebuilding and transitional justice processes in Sri Lanka. The programme had a total funding of USD 5.8 million allocated to it. It also assisted in effective implementation of the PPP through technical support to the government's Secretariat for Coordinating the Reconciliation Mechanism (SCRM) and support towards the effective functioning of the PBF Secretariat in the RCO¹⁰⁴. Another initiative, the Promoting Reconciliation in Sri Lanka project jointly undertaken by UNICEF, UNDP, and World Health Organisation (WHO) with USD 1.9 million funding from the PBF was initiated in July 2017 and was due to complete by September 2020. The final evaluation report for the project highlighted the challenges faced due to the change in government, change in policies around peacebuilding and reconciliation, and the impact of COVID-19¹⁰⁵. Supporting the governments' PPP, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN), and UNV jointly developed and implemented the project on the "Participation of Youth and Women in the Peacebuilding Process". The programme, which was funded by PBF with USD 1,626,699, aimed to empower women and youth with a greater understanding of peacebuilding issues and catalyse their participation and engagement in governance and decision-making processes and responses related to sustaining peace. This is the first time that these three UN entities implemented a joint

¹⁰² "Project Factsheet: Programme for Peace in Sri Lanka". 2019. *Mptf.Undp.Org*. <https://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/project/00118629>.

¹⁰³ "Project Factsheet: Programme for Peace in Sri Lanka". 2019. *Mptf.Undp.Org*. <https://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/project/00118629>.

¹⁰⁴ Important to note that this project was initiated under the previous government while the current government, which was elected in August 2020, has policies diverging from the previous government including dissolving the Ministry of National Integration and Resettlement and the Secretariat for

Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms, and withdrawing from HRC resolution 40/1 and related resolutions (refer to "Promotion Reconciliation, Accountability And Human Rights In Sri Lanka: Report of The Office of The High Commissioner For Human Rights". 2021. Human Rights Council. <https://cutt.ly/WWFeKyf>.)

¹⁰⁵ UNDP, UNICEF, and WHO. 2021. "Promoting Reconciliation in Sri Lanka". Evaluation Report. 6 April 2021. https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/LKA/Final%20Evaluation%20of%20Promoting%20Reconciliation%20in%20Sri%20Lanka%20Project_Final%20Report_07.04%202021.pdf



project in Sri Lanka supported by the PBF and focused on a multi-stakeholder approach¹⁰⁶.

4.3.2.5 Driver 2 Summary

Progress under this driver is made difficult because indicators 2.1 and 2.2 do not have baselines or targets. This highlights a disconnect between the UNSDF indicators and on-the-ground realities of the country, leading to indicators which were designed several steps ahead of the current circumstances in the areas of concern. Based on supplementary sources, in terms of innovative governance, both the EGDI and EPI suggest a regression in the extent to which innovative governance platforms are strengthened at national and sub-national levels, focusing on people engagement. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and its recovery might present an opportunity in this regard. As digital platforms increase across all forms of communications, these can be better incorporated into improved relations between government and its citizens. According to the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators there was little change in terms of corruption and rule of law in the country. More positively, the amount of national budget allocated for gender empowerment and elimination of discrimination against women – Indicator 2.3 – has been consistently increasing; the government's annual budgetary allocation for between 2017 and 2021. However, the impact of these allocations is put into question as the country regressed in the Gender Inequality Index (GII), from 76th in 2017 to 91st in 2019. Given the structural issues impeding gender equality in the country as highlighted in the GII, a high-level indicator such as national budget figures will draw a misleading picture of the progress on the ground. The same applies to Indicator 2.4, where again the indicator focuses on the national level and is unable to adequately capture ground realities and challenges that might impede the implementation of peacebuilding. Challenges have been documented, in particular those mentioned

in the June 2020 report of the Promoting Reconciliation in Sri Lanka programme. Key informants, specifically from the CSO sector, highlighted the increasing pressure from the government, in particular with regards to those CSOs engaged in the peacebuilding and reconciliation space¹⁰⁷.

4.3.3 Are Indicator Targets under Driver 3 Met? And Has UN System Contributed to Human Security and Socioeconomic Resilience?

Driver 3 seeks to enable an environment, where people in Sri Lanka, especially the vulnerable and marginalised groups of children, youth, women, migrants, elderly and disabled, benefit equitably from dynamic and responsive social protection systems; the indicators identified under Driver 3 are as follows:

1. Proportion of the population covered by social protection floors/systems, disaggregated by gender, and distinguishing children, the unemployed, old-age persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women/new-borns, work injury victims, the poor and vulnerable
2. Proportion of children under five years who are developmentally on track in health, nutrition, learning and psychosocial wellbeing, by gender (and location)
3. Proportion of youth (aged 15-29 years) engaged in education, unemployment, training, or volunteer activities, by gender and location
4. Unemployment rate, by gender, age, and persons with disabilities

4.3.3.1 Indicator 3.1

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 36.4 per cent of Sri Lanka's population was covered under at least one social protection

¹⁰⁶ Centre for Poverty Analysis. 2021. Participation of Youth and Women in the Peacebuilding Process End of Project Evaluation: Final Evaluation Report.

¹⁰⁷ "Sri Lanka: UN Rights Council Scrutiny Crucial". 2021. *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/10/sri-lanka-un-rights-council-scrutiny-crucial>.



scheme in 2020, which is up from 30.4 per cent in 2016¹⁰⁸; see

Table 5. In 2017, 21.5 per cent of the population over the retirement age were covered by a social protection scheme while this increased

to 35.7 per cent in 2020. Eighteen per cent of persons with disabilities were covered by a social protection scheme in 2020, which was down from 20.7 per cent in 2018. In 2019, mothers with new-

borns receiving maternity benefits were recorded at 29.4 per cent. Households and children receiving childcare cash benefits was 32 per cent of the population in 2019 and 2020. The proportion of vulnerable persons covered by social assistance was 16 per cent in 2019 and 2020, up from 4.4 per cent in 2016. Social protection coverage data disaggregated by gender and geography was unavailable.

Table 5: Proportion of Population Covered by Social Security Scheme

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Population covered by at least one social protection benefit	n/a	n/a	31%	36.4%
Persons above retirement age receiving a pension	21.5%	n/a	35.7%	35.7%
Mothers with new-borns receiving maternity benefits	n/a	n/a	29.4%	29.4%
Children/households receiving child/family cash benefits	n/a	n/a	32%	32%
Vulnerable persons covered by social assistance	4.4% (2016)	n/a	16%	16%

In terms of programming, the Under the School Meal Programme, implemented by the World Food Programme (WFP) has so far supported two initiatives to provide school children with take-home food packs in lieu of the school meals children are no longer receiving with the closure of schools due to COVID-19. This included supporting the Ministry of Education and the State Ministry of

Women and Child Development, Pre-school and Primary Education, School Infrastructure and Education Services in 2020 and 2021 to distribute food packs to 80,000 and 41,000

children respectively. WFP has long embraced school feeding as a means to improve the nutritional status of children, as well as school enrolment and graduation rates, particularly among girl children around the world¹⁰⁹. International evidence¹¹⁰ suggests that school feeding in Sri Lanka can have numerous

educational and nutritional benefits for students, families, and communities.

4.3.3.2 Indicator 3.2

The mortality rate for a child under the age of five years in Sri Lanka in 2019 was 7.1 per 1000 lives and 7.4 in 2018 according to the United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN

¹⁰⁸ "SDG Indicator 1.3.1 - Proportion of Population Covered by Social Protection Floors/Systems (%)". 2020. Ilo.Org. https://www.ilo.org/ilostat-files/Documents/Excel/INDICATOR/SDG_0131_SEX_SOC_RT_A_EN.xlsx.

¹⁰⁹ WFP. 2020. State of School feeding Worldwide 2020. https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000123923/download/?_ga=2.52704552.1279791117.1632936974-1669797964.1632936974.

¹¹⁰ Drake et al, editors. Global School Feeding Sourcebook: Lessons from 14 Countries, PCD, Imperial Press, 2016;



IGME)¹¹¹. Sri Lanka shows a steady gradual decrease in the mortality rate for children under the age of five years from 11.6 per 1000 lives in 2010, to 8.2 in 2017, to 7.1 in 2019¹¹². In 2019, the under-five mortality was higher among boys (7.7 per cent) than it was for girls (6.5 per cent). Last available data reported in 2016 shows 41.6 per cent of all children one year before the official primary entry age in formalised education. However, recent data or other education data relevant to children under the age of five are not available.

Sri Lanka scores well in child immunisations, recording 99 per cent coverage of eligible children. The exception is females who received the last dose of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine per national schedule, which had a coverage of 51 per cent in 2020 down from 58 per cent in 2018. According to modelled estimates by the WHO, stunting is prevalent in 16 per cent of children below the age of five years and this is an indication of possible malnutrition¹¹³. Moreover, modelled

estimates by the WHO indicate that stunting is prevalent in 16 per cent of children below the age, which is down slightly from 16.2 per cent in 2017.

4.3.3.3 Indicator 3.3

Sri Lanka has 4.64 million young people between the ages of 15 and 29 years, constituting 23.2 per cent of the population¹¹⁴. From a low of 17.36 per cent of youth unemployment in 2017, the rate has increased to 20.6 per cent in 2019. This is the highest level of youth unemployment in the country since 2009 when the rate was at 20.7 per cent. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent impact on the country's economy, the level of employment amongst youth is expected to increase as overall unemployment increased from 4.8 per cent in 2019 to 5.5 per cent in 2020¹¹⁵. Unemployment amongst females is twice as much as amongst males, with the same trend being reflected amongst youth as well¹¹⁶.

¹¹¹ "Child Mortality Rate under five: Sri Lanka". 2021. *UN Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation*. <https://childmortality.org/data/Sri%20Lanka>.

¹¹² "Country Profiles: Sri Lanka". 2021. UNICEF. <https://data.unicef.org/country/lka/>

¹¹³ "Stunting Prevalence Among Children Under 5 Years of Age (% Height-For-Age <-2 SD) (JME Country)". 2021. *Who.Int*. [https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/gho-jme-country-children-aged-5-years-stunted\(-height-for-age--2-sd\)](https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/gho-jme-country-children-aged-5-years-stunted(-height-for-age--2-sd)).

¹¹⁴ "Sri Lanka National Human Development Report 2014". 2014. *Hdr.Undp.Org*. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/sri-lanka_nhdr_on_youth.pdf.

¹¹⁵ "Unemployment Rate". 2020. *Cbsl.Gov.Lk*. <https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/en/economic-and-statistical-charts/unemployment-rate-chart>.

¹¹⁶ "Sri Lanka: Factsheets". 2014. *Youthpolicy.Org*. <https://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/sri-lanka/>.



Table 6: Commonwealth Global Youth Development Index for Sri Lanka

	2016	2020
Overall rank (score)	31 (0.731)	61 (0.747)
Education rank (score)	108 (0.721)	92 (0.769)
Employment and opportunities rank (score)	24 (0.751)	56 (0.806)
Equality and inclusion rank (score)	Not available	117 (0.798)
Political and civic participation rank (score)	17 (0.82) for civic, and 54 (0.703) for political	12 (0.395) overall

According to the Global Youth Development Index published by The Commonwealth Secretariat, Sri Lanka is recognised as a High Youth Development nation with a ranking of 61 out of 181 nations¹¹⁷. The Global Youth Development Index assesses nations against youth education, employment and opportunities, equality and inclusion, health and wellbeing, peace and security and political and civic participation. In 2020, Sri Lanka had an overall score of 0.747 in the Index, same as 2018. However, this is a drop from the score recorded in 2015 of 0.754; see Table 6 above. UNDP is implementing its flagship programme on Youth, Innovation and Entrepreneurship – HackaDev, where UNDP since several years is creating a national platform for youth to develop their social innovations, equip themselves with entrepreneurial skills and build sustainable social enterprises¹¹⁸.

According to the Charities Aid Foundation’s annual World Giving Index, 46 per cent of Sri Lankans allocated their time for volunteering in 2019 making Sri Lanka the country with the highest proportion of population allocating time for volunteering¹¹⁹. However, in the 2021 World Giving Index, this fell to 26 per cent ranking Sri Lanka 26th out of 114 countries surveyed for the year 2020¹²⁰. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including extended lockdowns are a likely impact to this drop.

4.3.3.4 Indicator 3.4

Sri Lanka had an overall labour force participation rate of 50.6 per cent in 2020, which was down from 51.8 per cent in 2018¹²¹. When broken down by gender, male labour force participation is more than twice the female labour force participation. In the first quarter of 2020, male labour force participation stood at 72.4 per cent while female

¹¹⁷ "Global Youth Development Report 2020". 2020. *Thecommonwealth.Org*. https://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/5023_V3_Book_lores_smaller.pdf.

¹¹⁸ "UN Sri Lanka Ongoing Work Towards Implementation of the 2030 UN Youth Strategy". 2021. Accessed December 10. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hnMEuynKaeolvvJUnHllgjlUlfmWZrO6O546-xB5rCg/edit>.

¹¹⁹ Charities Aid Foundation. "CAF World Giving Index 10th Edition: Ten Years of Giving Trends".

https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/caf_wgi_10th_edition_report_2712a_web_101019.pdf

¹²⁰ Charities Aid Foundation. "CAF World Giving Index 2021: A Global Pandemic Special Report".

https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-research/cafworldgivingindex2021_report_web2_100621.pdf

¹²¹ "Prices, Wages and Employment". 2018. *Cbsl.Gov.Lk*. <https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/en/statistics/statistical-tables/real-sector/prices-wages-employment>.



labour force participation was at 32.5 per cent¹²². This is consistent with the data shown in the Human Development Index, where when assessed by inequality across genders, Sri Lanka ranks 90th with a score of 0.401 in 2019 in the GII. While Sri Lanka performs better than its South Asian counterparts in the GII, the average score for High Development countries is 0.34^{123,124}. This is in comparison to a GII score of 0.354 in 2017 which ranked Sri Lanka 76th out of 189 countries. Also, the average GII score for High HDI nations was 0.289.¹²⁵

Overall unemployment in the country increased to 5.5 per cent in 2020 from 4.4 per cent in 2018. While the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the economy potentially contributed to the increase¹²⁶, Sri Lanka was experiencing an upward trend with the overall unemployment rate increasing in 2019 to 4.8 per cent¹²⁷. Broken down by gender, in 2020 female unemployment stood at 8.5 per cent compared to male unemployment at 4 per cent. Between 2018 and 2020, consistent with the increase in overall unemployment, both male and female unemployment increased. In 2018, female unemployment was recorded at 7.1 per cent and male unemployment was recorded at 3 per cent. Therefore, between 2018 and 2020, male unemployment has increased faster at 33.3 per

cent compared to female unemployment increasing by 19.7 per cent.

In the first quarter of 2020, unemployment in the 15 to 24 years age category was reported at 26.8 per cent, which is the highest for any age category. Again, female unemployment in this age category was higher than male unemployment. Female unemployment between the ages of 15 and 24 years was 36.3 per cent compared to male unemployment of 21.1 per cent in the same age category during the first quarter of 2020¹²⁸. This is in comparison to an overall unemployment rate of 21.4 per cent in 2018 in the same age category. Again, female unemployment in the age category was nearly twice as higher than male unemployment, with female unemployment between the ages of 15 and 24 years at 30 per cent compared to male unemployment of 16.8 per cent in the same age category¹²⁹. The Public Administration Circular No.27/88 of August 18, 1988, instructs all Ministries, Departments and Corporations to allocate 3 per cent of job opportunities to Persons with Disabilities, however, there is neither evidence of this implementation for evaluation nor are their lessons learned¹³⁰.

¹²² "Sri Lanka Labour Force Statistics Quarterly Bulletin: Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey 1st Quarter - 2020". 2020. *Statistics.Gov.Lk*. http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/en/LabourForce/Bulletins/LFS_Q1_Bulletin_2020

¹²³ "Human Development Report 2020". 2020. *Hdr.Undp.Org*. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/LKA.pdf>

¹²⁴ Sri Lanka is categorised as a High Development country with an overall HDI score of 0.782. A lower score signifies lesser inequality between genders

¹²⁵ "2018 Human Development Statistical Update". 2018. *Scribd*. https://www.scribd.com/document/388797452/2018-Human-Development-Statistical-Update?secret_password=ncEFk15SzINGsnVSyywX#download&from_embed

¹²⁶ Arunatillake, Nisha. 2021. "Sri Lanka's Labour Market Amidst COVID-19: The Need For Targetted Interventions". *Ips.Lk*.

<https://www.ips.lk/talkingeconomics/2021/06/28/covid-19-and-sri-lankas-labour-market-the-need-for-targetted-interventions/>

¹²⁷ "Unemployment Rate". 2021. *Cbsl.Gov.Lk*. <https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/en/economic-and-statistical-charts/unemployment-rate-chart>

¹²⁸ "Sri Lanka Labour Force Statistics Quarterly Bulletin: Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey 1st Quarter - 2020". 2020. *Statistics.Gov.Lk*. http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/en/LabourForce/Bulletins/LFS_Q1_Bulletin_2020

¹²⁹ "Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report - 2018". 2018. *Statistics.Gov.Lk*. <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/LabourForce/StaticInformation/AnnualReports/2018>

¹³⁰ "Unlocking The Potential of Youth with Disabilities by Strengthening Labour Market Participation". 2018. *UNDP*. <https://www.lk.undp.org/content/srilanka/en/home/blog/2018/16082018.html>.



4.3.3.5 Driver 3 Summary

Generally, coverage of social protection schemes improved over the UNSDF period. Still, only a small percentage – 16 per cent – of vulnerable persons are covered by social assistance. It is important to note here the recognition of local stakeholders of the need to relook at the social protection scheme model in the country while the UNSDF was measuring indicators at a high level within the existing social protection scheme model. Again, this highlights the need for specific indicators to measure the effectiveness of interventions at the ground level, considering ground realities, including the suitability of existing structures and mechanisms. Engaging local stakeholders who are involved in the area of focus for a particular indicator therefore is important. Indicator 3.2 lacks baselines and targets. But available data for key development measures shows decreases in under-five mortality rate for children under the age of five years and high scores for children immunisation, but still finds too many children outside of formalised education. Youth unemployment has been increasing recently, while overall unemployment has remained relatively steady. But both are expected to grow due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unemployment amongst females is twice as much as amongst males for both youth and adults, indicating key structural barriers to female participation in the Sri Lankan economy. In addition, the country's regression in the GII should raise further concern. Indicators measuring the structural enablers of social development therefore can be seen as of more importance than tracking high-level national indicators. These will be more nuanced to ground realities and help align the framework with the work undertaken by UN agencies of all sizes – in particular drawing a realistic picture of the progress being made and the areas of concern that remain.

¹³¹ The Global Climate Risk Index measures countries by the extent of losses incurred by a country due to weather related events during a defined period in the past. Therefore, it is not reflective of a country's vulnerability to future weather related disasters.

4.3.4 Are Indicator Targets under Driver 4 Met? And Has UN System Contributed to Enhancing Resilience to Climate Change, and Disasters and Strengthening Environmental Management?

Driver 4 seeks to enable an environment, where people in Sri Lanka, in particular the vulnerable and marginalised are more resilient to climate change and natural disasters and benefit from increasingly sustainable management of natural resources, better environmental governance and blue/green development; the indicators identified under Driver 4 are as follows:

1. Number of districts with funded Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Response and Resilience Strategies
2. Percentage increase in implementation of integrated water management systems
3. Percentage of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under implementation following NDC submitted to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in September
4. Percentage of National REDD+ Investment Framework and the Plan of Action (NRIFAP) policies and measures under implementation following the 2017 launch of the NRIFAP policies and measures under implementation following the 2017 launch of the NRIFAP.

4.3.4.1 Indicator 4.1

In the 2018 Global Climate Risk Index¹³¹ published by Germanwatch, Sri Lanka was ranked as the 4th country with the highest losses incurred from weather related disasters in 2016 only and 48th during the review period of 1997 to 2016.¹³² Sri Lanka improved its ranking to 30th in the Global Climate Risk Index 2021 having experienced a reduction in weather related disasters in 2019 in

¹³² "GLOBAL CLIMATE RISK INDEX 2018". 2018. *Germanwatch.Org*. <https://germanwatch.org/sites/default/files/publication/20432.pdf>.



comparison to other nations.¹³³ However, over the twenty-year review period of 2000-2019, Sri Lanka's ranking dropped to 23rd in the Global Climate Risk Index. Additionally, Sri Lanka is ranked 95th out of 191 countries with a score of 3.6 in the 2022 INFORM Risk Index¹³⁴ and classed as "medium risk"¹³⁵. This is in comparison to a score of 4.0 in the 2018 INFORM Risk Index which ranked Sri Lanka 82nd and classing as a medium and stable risk country.¹³⁶

Sri Lanka remains vulnerable to climate change related risks, and by 2050 is expected to experience a decline of 7.7 per cent in GDP, equivalent to USD 50 billion.¹³⁷ The country has devised multiple plans and frameworks for dealing with climate change related risks and disasters, with varying degrees of success in implementation at local level. Most recent plans devised include the *National Adaptation Plan for Climate Change Impacts 2016-2025*¹³⁸; and the *National Disaster Risk Management Plan for 2018-2030*¹³⁹ (only 1st draft available for public review). The first draft of the *National Disaster Risk Management Plan for 2018-2030* and the *Roadmap for Disaster Risk Reduction 2017* alludes to DRR district and divisional level plans, something attested to by a government key informant. According to this informant, district and divisional plans are annually evaluated, revisited,

and upgraded to meet changes disaster scenarios. Further, informant reported that the Annual National Budget allocates an "adequate" amount of money for planning, preparation, training, awareness, mitigation, and response activities; the allocation provided for year 2021 is approximately Rs 468 million. However, the 2018¹⁴⁰, 2019¹⁴¹, 2020¹⁴², and 2021 national budget speeches make no mention of funding for such plans and their implementation at district level, including no information to this extent on the Disaster Management Centre website. As per the *DRR in Sri Lanka: Status Report 2019* published by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, localisation of DRR plans is yet to be carried out.¹⁴³ The change in Sri Lanka's political landscape in 2019 and 2020, and the subsequent changes in ministries and allocation of departments under ministries, changes in government personnel are potential causes for delays or changes to previously envisioned plans.

¹³³ "GLOBAL CLIMATE RISK INDEX 2021". 2021. *Reliefweb.Int*. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202021_1_0.pdf

¹³⁴ INFORM risk index is a global tool which measures the risk of humanitarian crises and disasters based on 50 indicators assessing hazards, vulnerability, and capacity

¹³⁵ "Inform Risk 2022". 2021. *Drmkc.Jrc.Ec.Europa.Eu*. https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/Portals/0/InfoRM/2021/INFORM_Risk_2022_v061.xlsx

¹³⁶ "Inform Global Risk Index: Results 2018". 2021. *Publications.Jrc.Ec.Europa.Eu*. https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC111091/inform_annual_report_2018_online.pdf

¹³⁷ "Disaster Risk Reduction in Sri Lanka: Status Report 2019". 2019. *Unisdr.Org*. https://www.unisdr.org/files/68230_10srilankadmstatusreport.pdf

¹³⁸ "Disaster Risk Reduction in Sri Lanka: Status Report 2019". 2019. *Unisdr.Org*. https://www.unisdr.org/files/68230_10srilankadmstatusreport.pdf

¹³⁹ "National Disaster Risk Management Plan 2018-2030". 2021. Accessed December 10. <http://www.mobilise-project.org.uk/assets/presentations/SriLanka/Mr.%20Nuwan%20Madawan%20Arachchi.pdf>

¹⁴⁰ "Budget Speech 2018". 2017. *Treasury.Gov.Lk*. https://www.treasury.gov.lk/documents/budget/2018/budget_speech_english.pdf

¹⁴¹ "Budget Speech 2019". 2018. *Treasury.Gov.Lk*. https://www.treasury.gov.lk/documents/budget/2019/budget_speech.pdf

¹⁴² "Budget Speech 2020". 2019. *Treasury.Gov.Lk*. https://www.treasury.gov.lk/documents/budget/2020/budget_speech_english.pdf

¹⁴³ "Disaster Risk Reduction in Sri Lanka: Status Report 2019". 2019. *Unisdr.Org*. https://www.unisdr.org/files/68230_10srilankadmstatusreport.pdf



4.3.4.2 Indicator 4.2

According to UN Water Sri Lanka’s overall score of integrated water management implementation

increased from 25 per cent in 2017 to 47 per cent in 2020¹⁴⁴. This exceeds the 10 per cent target increase stated in the UNSDF 2018-2022.

Table 7: Proportion of Integrated Water Resources Management Implementation

	2017	2020
Final WRM Score	25%	46%
Enabling Environment	16%	53%
Institutions and Participation	36%	64%
Management Instruments	26%	40%
Financing	23%	32%

The Climate Resilient Integrated Water Management project covering the three river basins of Malwathu Oya, Mi Oya, and Yan Oya for effective water management, and safe drinking water commenced in 2017 and on-going until 2024 is a key project in this area with USD 63.4 million contributed by the Green Climate Fund¹⁴⁵. Overall, Sri Lanka received official development assistance for water and sanitation related projects of USD 484 million in the period 2017-2019. Additionally, a sustainable water and land management, and disaster risk management and climate change adaptation.

number of UN agencies have effectively partnered with the GoSL under Driver 4 on emergency response and supported better disaster preparedness and risk identification, including: livelihood-resilience, assessment approaches, risk modelling, analyses and reporting. UN agencies also continue to engage government partners in line ministries to increase their capacities in sustainable technologies, lowering greenhouse gas emissions,

¹⁴⁴ "Country (Or Area) | SDG 6 Data". 2021. *Sdg6data.Org*. Accessed December 10. https://www.sdg6data.org/country-or-area/Sri%20Lanka#anchor_6.5.1.

¹⁴⁵ "Integrated Water Management Project | UNDP In Sri Lanka". 2021. *UNDP*. Accessed December 10. <https://www.lk.undp.org/content/srilanka/en/home/projects/integrated-Water-Management-Project.html>.



4.3.4.3 Indicator 4.3

Sri Lanka submitted both its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) and improved version of INDCs 2015, at the time of signing the Paris Agreement¹⁴⁶. The government submitted its

NDCs in 2016 and identified a readiness phase from 2017 to 2019. NDCs were divided into the four areas of mitigation, adaptation, loss, and damage, and means of implementation; see Table 8. 2021-2030 was defined as the target period for the implementation of the NDCs.

Table 8: List of NDCs

	Sector	No of NDCs
Sectoral Mitigation NDCs	Electricity (Power) Sector	5
	Transportation Sector	13
	Industry Sector	7
	Waste Management	5
	Forestry Sector	5
	Agriculture Sector	6
Sectoral Adaptation NDCs	Agriculture Sector	6
	Fisheries Sector	7
	Livestock Sector	3
	Water Sector	10
	Biodiversity Sector	5
	Coastal and Marine Sector	4
	Health Sector	5
	Urban Planning and Human Settlement Sector	4
	Tourism and Recreation Sector	3
Loss and Damage NDCs		5

¹⁴⁶ "Nationally Determined Contributions". 2016. www4.unfccc.int.

<https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/Sri%20Lanka%20First/NDCs%20of%20Sri%20Lanka.pdf>



An update to the NDCs was published in July 2021 by the Ministry of Environment. Under the revised NDCs, a total of 93 NDCs were defined in the areas of Mitigation, Adaptation, and Loss and Damage. As originally envisioned in the 2016 NDC report, the implementation timeframe for the revised NDCs will be 2021-2030.¹⁴⁷ As all NDCs are scheduled to commence implementation in 2021, no updates on the implementation progress or number of NDC already commenced implementation in 2021 are available. Through the UNDP's Climate Promise project, the agency attempts to ensure that all countries enhancing their NDCs can access the necessary financial and technical support to do so. Central to this strategy is UNDP's engagement

99 million, from both domestic and international sources¹⁴⁹. There is no information on Sri Lanka's progress under the NRIFAP 2018-2022 is available in the public domain, including on the UN-REDD Programme Collaborative Workspace online¹⁵⁰.

4.3.4.5 Driver 4 Summary

Several UN agencies have effectively partnered with the government under Driver 4 on emergency response and supported better disaster preparedness, risk identification, and developing shock responsive social protection systems; agencies are also working to ensure that activities aimed at strengthening resilience were child-centred, socially inclusive and gender responsive. Otherwise, secondary sources to validate their implementation of DRR plans at district level are limited. But available data suggests localised DRR plans are yet to be implemented. Several UN

with, and through, the NDC Partnership – especially in the context of the Partnership's new initiative, the Climate Action Enhancement Package (CAEP), which also is supporting enhancement of NDCs and fast-tracking of NDC implementation. The project was initiated in March 2020 and has an estimated end date of December 2021 with overall funding of US\$ 19.1 million¹⁴⁸

4.3.4.4 Indicator 4.4

The National REDD+ Investment Framework and Action Plan (NRIFAP) for the period 2018-2022 was published in 2017. The NRIFAP identifies 13 Policies and Measures within three key policy areas that will be implemented to help achieve Sri Lanka's vision for REDD+ over the five-year period with an investment of USD

agencies have effectively partnered with the government under Driver 4 on emergency response and supported better disaster preparedness and risk identification; and agencies are engaging government partners to increase their capacities in key areas under the driver. Further, Sri Lanka's integrated water management implementation improved beyond the target set out in the UNSDF. Consistent with the government's plans to commence implementation of the NDC's in 2021, no data is available to measure impact under Indicator 4.3 at the time of this evaluation. Questions need to be asked why indicators which were not aligned with the government's implementation timeline for NDCs have been used in the UNSDF, rendering such measures ineffective. In terms of Indicator 4.4, no data is available to assess the impact of the NRIFAP. Overall, while the government and various

¹⁴⁷ "UPDATED Nationally Determined Contributions Sri Lanka". 2021. *Climatechange.Lk*. <http://www.climatechange.lk/CCS2021/UpdatedNDCsSriLanka2021.pdf>.

¹⁴⁸ "Climate Promise | UNDP In Sri Lanka". 2020. *UNDP*. https://www.lk.undp.org/content/srilanka/en/home/projects/Climate_Promise.html

¹⁴⁹ "Sri Lanka National REDD+ Investment Framework and Action Plan (NRIFAP)". 2017. *Unredd.Net*. <https://www.unredd.net/documents/un-redd-partner->

[countries-181/national-redd-strategies-1025/16263-national-redd-investment-framework-and-action-plan-nrifap-12.html?path=un-redd-partner-countries-181/national-redd-strategies-1025](https://www.unredd.net/documents/un-redd-partner-countries-181/national-redd-strategies-1025/16263-national-redd-investment-framework-and-action-plan-nrifap-12.html?path=un-redd-partner-countries-181/national-redd-strategies-1025).

¹⁵⁰ "UN-REDD Programme Collaborative Online Workspace: All Documents". 2021. *Unredd.Net*. Accessed December 10. https://www.unredd.net/documents.html?layout=form&view=search&search_phrase=Sri+Lanka&search_catid=0&catname=&search_ordering=newest&search_mode=all&action=browse



UN agencies engaged in programmes to address environment and climate related issues, the nature of the indicators, either being at national level or outside the implementation timelines of the government, made it difficult to evaluate Driver 4’s effectiveness.

4.3.5 Effectiveness Summarised

The sub-sections below analyse the UNSDF effectiveness criteria according to indicators and means of verification set out in its results framework. Where these are not available, other analytical tools are used. **Key Finding 10: Although UN programming made important contributions to priority areas under the UNSDF, overall progress towards indicators was mixed. Again, this can largely be explained by a lack of fit between drivers and their indicators, targets, and baselines. In some cases, targets, and baselines – as well as data to measure them – are unavailable, making evaluation of some indicators difficult.**

4.4 Orientation towards Impact

What follows is an analysis of the extent to which UNDS activities articulated in the UNSDF have driven progress towards impact, taking into consideration key factors that have affected the achievement of outcomes. The section also lists several impactful collaborative programmes between UN agencies throughout the UNSDF period and some which will extend beyond to the next 2023-2027 UNSDCF¹⁵¹.

Key findings under orientation towards impact:

- Key Finding 11: Results Groups have devolved greater autonomy to agencies and have provided flexibility to participating agencies, and as a result are more aligned with agency priorities. In particular, increased ownership through ToR’s that are drafted by each group gives participants more ownership, focus, and authority over their activities.

- Key Finding 12: There was insufficient interrogation of what the priorities Digital Transformation and Innovation (DTI) Results Group were, in particular what sort of data is important and what type of data – statistics, administrative data, data technologies, etc. – would be most useful for the government to contribute to evidence-based policymaking.
- Key Finding 13: Bringing coherence to any priority area means building common understandings of social protection by clearly and consistently defining it within the cooperation framework.
- Key Finding 14: Many key informants suggested that advocacy on human rights issues is a comparative advantage of the UN, citing its capacity to leverage its reputation for neutrality and its strong institutional relationships with the state to promote the principles of human rights and dignity as nationally owned priorities.
- Key Finding 15: here is a need for greater consideration of gender equality and empowerment of women according to a wider range of gender-related topics, including those that emphasise for equitable participation for females (economic participation, representation in parliament and local government, etc.).

4.4.1 Did The UNSDF Adequately Use RBM to Ensure A Logical Chain of Results and Establish An M&E Framework?

Aligning with the *UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 in Sri Lanka*’ released in June 2020¹⁵², the implementation of the UNSDF was reorganised under Results Groups by end of 2020. **Key Finding 11: In general, the evaluation found that Results Groups are an improvement on Driver Groups and Outcome Groups, which were believed to be too rigid,**

¹⁵¹ It is important to note that the programmes described here do not represent an exhaustive list of effective joint programming, but are examples

¹⁵² "UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socio-Economic Response to Covid-19 In Sri Lanka". 2020. *Unsdg.Un.Org*. https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/LKA_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan_2020.pdf.



exclusive, and unfocused to effectively support the UNSDF implementation. Results Groups have devolved greater autonomy to agencies and have provided flexibility to participating agencies, and as a result are more aligned with agency priorities. In particular, increased ownership through ToR's that are drafted by each group gives participants more ownership, focus, and authority over their activities. Given the level of change experienced through to the evolution of the Results groups (from Driver to Outcome to Driver Groups), their approaches and organisation structures – especially efforts to give more autonomy to member agencies – should be continued where possible, keeping in mind that UNSDCF Guidance stipulates that “Each Cooperation Framework strategic priority must have a corresponding Results Group”¹⁵³. Maintaining continuity the decentralised approach taken to these groups – with necessary readjustments account for changes in cooperation framework priorities – can help ensure continuity and capitalise on momentum created from knowledge-sharing, planning, and coordination, in an attempt to move these towards action under the forthcoming cooperation framework.

Joint monitoring of Results Groups was coordinated through the RCO. The RCO provided convening and coordination support to all the Results Groups and Thematic Groups and joint programming initiatives. This has contributed to ensuring momentum with regular meeting and follow-ups of Results and Thematic Groups, as will be described in greater detail below. However, much still needs to be done to better integrate results-based management (RBM) into the coming UNSDCF. Individual agencies generally have robust M&E capacities to measure their own programming. Also, where agencies are conducting joint programming they come together on data, analytics, monitoring and reporting. Having said that, the disconnect between UNSDF priority areas and indicators, on one hand, and

agency activities, on the other, limited the usefulness of the framework in terms of RBM. A more logical chain of results between UNSDF priorities and programmes delivered in each area could improve progress reporting against the UNSDF to measure and demonstrate the impact of UN activities in Sri Lanka more clearly.

The evaluation found that there could be an enhanced role for the M&E Thematic Group to promote RBM tools and principles in UNSDF annual planning, monitoring, and reporting. There is possible value-added from the M&E Thematic Group as a good technical-level advisory forum. For instance, it could offer guidance on how to take existing data from agencies and provide guidance on how to better tie agency reporting structures to the progress indicators outlined under a cooperation framework. Such an advisory role would be well-suited to the group based on an in-depth understanding for agency programming approaches and operations, and an in-house appreciation of how their separate M&E systems can connect to and feed a framework of this type. Participants from within the group could act as effective points-of-contact for communicating with agencies about M&E processes related to the cooperation framework and its Results Groups, helping to streamline organisational activities and cooperation framework priorities and processes; those agency staff sitting in the M&E group can advocate to agency heads, why and how organisational M&E systems might be better brought in line with the machinery of the UNSDF, which could in turn create greater buy-in from agencies and more symmetry between their systems and the cooperation frame.

4.4.2 How Effective Has The UN Been in Working towards Each Driver Outlined In The UNSDF?

4.4.2.1 Driver 1

Innovation and data were given a central place in the UNSDF. Efforts in these areas were situated

¹⁵³ UNDG. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework - Internal Guidance (Final Version). 2021. p. 25.



mostly under Driver 1 and are relevant effort towards creating a UNDS aims to “Ensure that data and evidence are used much more effectively, more systematically and more transparently”¹⁵⁴. While the need to drive forward the data revolution has been identified as a key step toward a UN that is fit for purpose, globally, most UN key informants in Sri Lanka agreed that the purpose and objectives under DTI were unclear. An initial overarching Data Outcome Group was split into a DTI Results Group and the M&E Thematic Group to improve focused engagement in these respective areas. The latter focuses on supporting the UNCT to monitor and report against the UNSDF, whereas it is meant to engage with outward facing data initiatives, working with government and others in order to strengthen data systems for the purposes of sustainable development in Sri Lanka.

Key Finding 12: However, interview suggest that there was insufficient interrogation of what the priorities DTI Results Group were, in particular what sort of data is important and what type of data – statistics, administrative data, data technologies, etc. – would be most useful for the government to contribute to evidence-based policymaking. Impact in this area would have been improved by more carefully assessing the data ecosystem in Sri Lanka to determine how the supply and demand of data connects to usage, and what role the UN can best play in this regard; this might be able to generate more or better data, to build capacities of the Sri Lankan state to generate data, to build some sort of innovative technical platform, to strengthen back-end data usage, or some other strategic focus. To determine where it would focus, the data driver would have benefited from higher level thinking to develop a systematic understanding of how to help government become more digitally savvy. If ‘data’ and ‘innovation’ continue to be packaged together for the coming UNSDCF, then additional thought should also be given to what this innovation really means to the GoSL in terms of data, in particular the kinds of data problems that could reasonably

be solved through technological innovations, and whether less technical solutions might be useful. Before it moves into more technical questions related to how to implement a digital transformation and innovation strategy, there is need to develop a clear vision of what a digital transformation and innovation agenda for Sri Lanka looks like. From there the agencies could more effectively move forward together towards more ‘technical’ questions of how to implement this agenda. Further, to the extent that digital transformation and data remains a priority under the next cooperation framework, key activities around capacity building for data collection, reporting, and usage could wherever possible link to government’s ability to monitor and evaluate the cooperation framework baselines and targets.

4.4.2.2 Driver 2

The PBF strategic plan was developed in 2016 and predates the design phase of the UNSDF. Therefore, the PBF’s PPP framework was developed with a set of assumptions as to what the eventual high-level indicators of the UNSDF would be. Further, one key informant noted that the PBF played no role in the subsequent development of the UNSDF framework. While personnel engaged in the development of the UNSDF had expressed the need to ensure complementarity between the PPP and UNSDF and capture results measured at a broader level, the relationship between the two frameworks was vague, according to key informants related to the PPP. This vagueness in turn resulted in a duplication of efforts as the Working Groups within the PPP and the Results and Thematic Groups within the UNSDF replicated the same activities. Key informants felt the effectiveness of the PPP would have been enhanced if it was integrated into the UNSDF process entirely. Better mainstreaming of peacebuilding across framework priorities could help integrate transitional justice and peace into the UN’s activities across the UNDS. At the same time, it is worth noting that the PPP was formulated very specifically for the implementation

¹⁵⁴ "Fit For What Purpose?".
2015. [Sustainabledevelopment.Un.Org](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org).

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=2101&menu=1515>



of the ambitious political commitments of HRC 30/1. While it laid out governance and reconciliation priorities, its operation and funding, which was closely co-owned by the key government partners, was heavily focused on delicate transitional justice priorities such as setting up the OMP and the Office on Reparations. These priorities are narrower, though complementary to the wider outlook of Driver 2.

Mainstreaming of peacebuilding may become particularly needed since the government withdrew its support for UNHRC Resolution 40/1 on ‘Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka’ in early 2020. This signified a significant shift from the peacebuilding and reconciliation commitments laid out by the previous government. Gaps have been observed in relation to Driver 2 concerning the social cohesion and reconciliation interventions. The project progress report released in June 2020 for the Promoting Reconciliation in Sri Lanka jointly undertaken by UNICEF, UNDP and WHO allude to these challenges caused by the change in national priorities following the 2019 presidential elections. UNDP in collaboration with IOM, OHCHR, UNV, and UNICEF initiated the Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice programme between 2017 and 2021. With a total funding allocation of USD 5.8 million, the programme strengthened capacities to undertake reforms to advance peacebuilding and transitional justice processes in Sri Lanka. It also helped effective implementation of the PPP through technical support to the SCRMM and support towards the effective functioning of the PBF Secretariat in the RCO.

4.4.2.3 Driver 3

It was already mentioned above that key informants suggested that social protection was thought of “too broadly” and lacking a clear focus in terms of the thematic areas that would be included under this priority. There were many thematic areas incorporated under the human

security and socioeconomic resilience pillar – nutrition, social security, health, cohesion, etc. – that key informants suggest did not always fit together well, creating what one called a “social protection mixed bag” that intermingled different definitions of and approaches to social protection. Breaking social protection into three thematic groups subgroups helped focus agency activities. But considerable additional work was still needed to bring group approaches and activities into alignment with each other. **Key Finding 13: Bringing coherence to any priority area means building common understandings of social protection by clearly and consistently defining it within the cooperation framework.** Much of the narrative in the UNSDF under Driver 3 focuses on strengthening social protection systems: economic security, a shock-responsive social protection system, resilient livelihoods, quality of health care and education, decent employment, etc.¹⁵⁵. This is largely in line with the UN’s approach systems strengthening in a MIC like Sri Lanka, which should aim to improve the robustness of social systems, through designs aimed at addressing country-specific vulnerabilities and strengthening existing institutions and capabilities¹⁵⁶. Yet, indicators under Driver 3 largely looked at extending coverage of *existing* systems. A clearer common interpretation of what constitutes ‘social protection’ makes it more likely that potential that policy aspirations and progress measures can optimise delivery in this area, especially in the context of the UN’s comparative advantage in MICs, by focusing mostly on systems strengthening, rather than increasing coverage social protection arrangements. Of course, different social protection policies may be advocated by different agencies based on their sectoral specialities. However, refining what is meant by social protection opens the door for targeting a more sophisticated set of progress measures in this area, which might consider rate the quality and depth of service offerings under

¹⁵⁵ UN. 2018. *UNSDF 2018-2022*. p. 30

¹⁵⁶ Dissanayake, Ranil, Charles Kenny, and Mark Plant 2020. “What Is the Role of Aid in Middle-Income Countries?” CGD Policy Paper 201 December 2020. p. 16



various social protection schemes, instead of simply looking at coverage.

All that being said, important gains in social protection were made during the UNSDF period. Take for instance a key joint programme in this area – one which is also very pertinent given the impact of COVID-19 on migrants – is the Governance of Labour Migration in South and Southeast Asia (GOALS) project involving IOM, ILO, and UN WOMEN. This is an example of a joint programme effectively securing donor funding – USD 5.2 million from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The programme relates directly to Driver 3 as the programme seeks to ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life. The programme is also effective in the sense it addresses a request from multiple key government informants for regional and South-South cooperation mediated by the UN. The programme attempts to make labour migration safe, orderly, and regular for all women and men from the Colombo Process member states through strengthened collaboration and effective labour migration governance.

4.4.2.4 Driver 4

The UNSDF sought to promote environmental sustainability and address climate change, environmental governance, resource management, and sustainability concerns through Driver 4. Driver 4 included several large-scale programmes to carry out climate adaptation, livelihood, and resilience activities, including some which were undertaken by a collaboration of UN agencies together with a wide range of partners from other sectors. Operations under Driver 4 were largely aligned with calls for a system-wide approach to assessing risk, and promoting resilience, based on partnerships and collaboration

that build national and local capacity to manage shocks and stresses, and better coordinate emergency response and prevention work with sustainable development¹⁵⁷. For example, several UN agencies have effectively partnered with key government partners on emergency response and better disaster preparedness and risk identification, including livelihood-resilience, assessment approaches, risk modelling, analyses, and reporting. The UN is also working with different government ministries to building state capacities in sustainable technologies, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, creating sustainable water and land management, strengthening disaster risk management, improving climate change adaptation, and helping adaptation and compliance with different multilateral environmental agreements (like the Stockholm and Minamata conventions, for instance). Strengthening state systems in these areas will have important impacts on long-term sustainable development climate resilience in Sri Lanka.

Another key programme under Driver 4 is the Climate Change Adaptation Project led by the WFP and implemented jointly with the UNDP was a long-term programme predating the UNSDF. The programme which commenced in 2013 and ended in 2020 with a budget of over USD 7.9 million was regarded as a critical programme to build diversified and resilient livelihoods for marginalised farming communities in the Mahaweli River Basin through effective management of land and water resources. The project was designed to address specific vulnerabilities faced by rain-dependent farmers; strategies to overcome dry season food and income security; introduction of diversified income sources to broad-base risk, improved water storage and irrigation to overcome uncertainty of rainfall, improved soil quality and fertility for increased production, and timely, quality agriculture advice and extension¹⁵⁸. According to

¹⁵⁷"Fit For What Purpose?". 2015. *Sustainabledevelopment.Un.Org*. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=2101&menu=1515>

¹⁵⁸ "Final Evaluation of Addressing Climate Change Impacts on Marginalized Agricultural Communities Living in The Mahaweli

River Basin of Sri Lanka From 2013 To 2020". 2020. https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000123898/download/?_ga=2.188113709.484435523.1626367093-



an external evaluation of the project, it was able to deliver numerous significant outcomes, notably in terms of irrigation infrastructure and livelihood diversification¹⁵⁹. The more recently implemented Joint Programme for Resilience draws on the comparative advantage of WFP, UNICEF, and UNFPA to promote institutional strengthening and policy dialogue by improving linkages between national and provincial planning, as well as promoting more harmonised capacity building and technical support to the GoSL. The partnership is based on resilience strengthening activities that advocate for better coherence between disaster response, preparedness and climate-risk policy and practice, that provides a strategic and cohesive way of UN support to national priorities in the areas of climate resilience and disaster response.

4.4.3 To What Extent Was The Design and Implementation of The UNSDF Consistent with The Country's International on Human Rights and The Recommendations of Human Rights Mechanisms?

Political changes and abovementioned developments in relation to the HRC increased the sensitivity of the UN's operations in the national context, amplifying perceived tensions between the human rights agenda and the development agenda. This can create seemingly contradictory positions, where the UN advocates on the human rights agenda in areas that it is able to do so, while engaging with government for incremental positive change. At times, this approach has resulted in condemnation from advocacy groups. Some agencies also expressed apprehensions about being aggressive in communicating sensitive issues, fearing that this may impede their project level work with the government. Despite these challenges, there were important instances of progress made with the human rights agenda during the UNSDF period. As mentioned, the RC

has taken strong stances on issues such as on anti-Muslim violence and on Muslim cremations, prison overcrowding, deaths in custody, threats to civic space, and improvement to drug policies. In addition, the RC engaged with the government, alongside various member states, for a drastic overhaul of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The RC has established a task force for the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, that regulates the conditions in which UN can support security forces, and that the UNCT implements strictly. As well, the Human Rights Team, UNDP, OHCHR, and other UN entities are pursuing significant initiatives related to the human rights and normative agenda.

Key Finding 14: Many key informants – from inside and outside the UN – suggested that advocacy on human rights issues is a comparative advantage of the UN, citing its capacity to leverage its reputation for neutrality and its strong institutional relationships with the state to promote the principles of human rights and dignity as nationally owned priorities. Key informants also noted that transparency and consistency when communicating human rights issues to government are key. It is vital to work with the government directly to come to a mutual agreement on how to incorporate issues of human rights in the UNSDCF 2023-2027. Language that directly highlights human rights principles should be at the core the next cooperation framework, which can be important starting point for obtaining strong normative commitments from government. The framework design process represents a venue – and opportunity – for building a shared commitment to and understanding of how a human rights-based approach fits into sustainable development in Sri Lanka. Moreover, there may also be an opportunity to use indicators within the results framework as a tool to specifically reference marginal groups. By being more explicit about issues that are often at risk of being side-lined – like

696813373.1626367093&_gac=1.45988182.1626367093.Cj0K CQjwub-HBhCyARIsAPctr7w-gtIwrdz12EV3kJoStDjvdJyFagzCO3UcdMrMEca_A6FIYPgKWA oaAk9hEALw_wcB.

¹⁵⁹ "Addressing Climate Change Impacts on Marginalized Agricultural Communities Living in The Mahaweli River Basin

of Sri Lanka 2013 - 2020". 2021. WFP Sri Lanka Country Office. https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000128802/download/?_ga=2.76539025.580638414.1635369258-451571563.1635369258.



refugee issues, gender-based violence (GBV), sexual and reproductive health (SRH), etc. – might generate more government ownership. Even the necessity to disaggregate indicators along particular lines creates a strategic imperative to focus on certain populations or perspectives. In this sense, the cooperation framework can become an important advocacy tool.

Multiple joint programmes concerning human rights were observed during the review period of the UNSDF. The Catalytic Support to Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka is a programme implemented through a collaborative approach between several UN agencies – UNICEF, UNDP, and UN-Habitat – together with technical support from OHCHR, UN WOMEN, and UNHCR. This project is a prime example of how multiple UN agencies have come together for programme delivery while leveraging the domain expertise of other sister agencies to effectively achieve the outlined deliverables. The programme is funded by the European Union (EU) up to EUR 8.1 million and has a vision to contribute towards national peacebuilding efforts in Sri Lanka. The expected result is to provide improved land tenure for 20,000 conflict affected returnee households in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka through the provision of survey plans and land titling documents. The main beneficiaries of the project are victims of the conflict and victims of human rights violations and abuses, families affected by conflict related displacement, marginalised and excluded groups and the general public¹⁶⁰.

In addition, gender is a cross-cutting issue in the UNSDF, but there is only one gender-specific indicator in the framework – Indicator 2.3 – the size of the budget allocated for gender empowerment and elimination of discrimination against women.

Key Finding 15: There is a need for greater

consideration of gender equality and empowerment of women according to a wider range of gender-related topics (SRH, maternal and newborn health, GBV, etc.), including those that emphasise for equitable participation for females (economic participation, representation in parliament and local government, etc.). Over the years, Sri Lanka has made significant progress on gender equality, particularly in terms of free and equal access to education and healthcare¹⁶¹. However, structural barriers and discriminatory societal norms continue to perpetuate inequalities, undermining the well-being of women and girls in the economic, political, and social spheres. For instance, according to the 2019 *Women's Wellbeing Survey*, 35.3 per cent of women in Sri Lanka agreed that men could have a good reason to hit their wife and about one-in-five reported to have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime¹⁶². The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic will only intensify the pressures females face¹⁶³, increasing the need for a framework that is based on a proactive whole of UN approach to gender-responsive programming. Equality is a prerequisite for development. It will be difficult to achieve development goals set out through the 2023-2027 UNSDCF unless gender is more actively mainstreamed in the framework text and priorities and indicators.

Beyond the framework itself, agency key informants agreed that the Gender Thematic Group (GTG) was an effective mechanism for mainstreaming gender into the UNSDF process. A key success of GTG was the UN gender scorecard. There is an opportunity to further leverage the GTG within the UNSDCF, for example, to review the workplans of the Results Groups. Text, priorities, and indicators of the UNSDCF must continue to include those populations most likely to be left behind, as it does in its cross-cutting issues section

¹⁶⁰ "Catalytic Support to Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka". 2021. *Unhabitat.Lk*. Accessed December 10. <https://unhabitat.lk/projects/past-projects/catalytic-support-to-peacebuilding-in-sri-lanka/>.

¹⁶¹ "UN Women Sri Lanka". 2021. *UN Women | Asia And The Pacific*. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/sri-lanka>.

¹⁶² "Women's Wellbeing Survey Sri Lanka - 2019". 2019. *Statistics.Gov.Lk*. http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/reference/WWS_2019_Final_Report

¹⁶³ Fernandez, Belen. 2021. "COVID-19: The Patriarchal Pandemic". *Aljazeera.Com*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/3/22/covid-19-the-patriarchal-pandemic>



and for those indicators under Driver 3 that are disaggregated for gender and other key groups (females, children, persons with disabilities, elderly, etc. Every effort should be made to explicitly include references in the results framework itself, both as stand-alone indicators and in the disaggregation of indicators). The results frame is a centrepiece of the framework and ultimately where accountability is to determine how effective and impactful efforts were to reach the most vulnerable and marginal populations.

4.5 Efficiency

Key findings under efficiency:

- Key Finding 16: Commitment to the joint programming has been uneven, with ‘business as usual’ prevailing among donors and agencies because several disincentives impede closer collaboration.
- Key Finding 17: Key informants from the UN, government and CSO sector all agreed that the collective response demonstrated by these three sectors was efficient and to a great degree effective during the initial stages of the pandemic, in the country.
- Key Finding 18: There is a need to sensitise donors about the benefits of pooled funding initiatives. As noted by one key informant, this is essential to move “beyond a framework of understanding to a framework of action”, as agencies work together on joint initiatives and report on joint results.

4.5.1 Did The DaO Approach Promote Efficiencies among UN agencies?

Apart from the collaborative programming between UN agencies seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, key informants highlighted instances of joint programming efforts that delivered results that would not have been achieved if the respective agency attempted the same alone. Agencies develop specific domain expertise overtime because of their specific thematic concentrations. Therefore, it is often useful for agencies to collaborate with sectors and share expertise. Also, such collaborative action between

agencies saw efficiencies being created throughout the lifecycle of the respective joint programmes. Key informants noted instances where joint programming between agencies – drawing on another agencies domain expertise – to reconceptualise previously unfunded programmes have delivered positive results by securing new funding. Likewise, joint efforts have seen agencies bring on board specific technical expertise from sister agencies to ensure the programmes remain compliant and efficient to deliver the desired outcomes. Some of these collaborations have taken place within the UNSDF. The role played by the RCO to create structures for collaboration and joint accountability for results between agencies was welcomed by these UN key informants, including expressing their desire to respond favourably to requests for collaboration with sister agencies that can bring domain expertise and resources that are aligned with the respective agency’s objectives. Within the UNSDF itself, with the adoption of the Results Groups and the subsequent information sharing it fostered led to instances where agencies have leveraged the previous work of other agencies without duplicating the effort again for new programmes.

Key Finding 16: Commitment to well-coordinated and collaborative programming requires buy-in from all relevant stakeholders. Commitment to the joint programming has been uneven, with ‘business as usual’ prevailing among donors and agencies because several disincentives impede closer collaboration. Most donor partners perceive the costs of joint programming as high – especially in terms of overhead costs and duplicated activities – and that it is simply easier to work with individual agencies. Therefore, donors must create incentives for joint programming by funding cross-agency ventures. Individual agencies, especially larger more established agencies, must show leadership in this regard too. Some can find it easier to go it alone, taking advantage of their already established position in certain development sectors and among government stakeholders to operate more easily. From the perspective of the RCO, there needs to be clear criteria – even formal guidelines, selection criteria, or standard operating



procedures – by which funding opportunities are prioritised through the RCO. Therefore, support for joint programming must be improved across the board. All actors must make DaO a priority, and more can certainly be done to create incentives in this regard. The UNSDF was not a perfect mechanism for prioritising each agency's roles, but a reinvigorated UNSDCF can be a mechanism for collaboration, and a place to find points of commonality in ways that facilitate a stronger One UN approach. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented and wholly unexpected shock to the UNSDF.

Key Finding 17: Key informants from the UN, government and CSO sector all agreed that the collective response demonstrated by these three sectors was efficient and to a great degree effective during the initial stages of the pandemic, in the country. Specifically, government interviewees highlighted the efficient reallocation of emergency funds budgeted under on-going UN projects as a case in point. Also, they were appreciative of the flexibility shown by UN agencies to adapt their response efforts to align with government activities during the pandemic thereby ensuring funds and resources were efficiently allocated. Key informants commended the role played by the RC as convener of the UNHCT to solicit and pool funding and resources from other donor agencies, thereby making the process efficient and allowing the government and CSOs to concentrate on delivering measures on the ground for those affected by the pandemic. Also, the coordination led by the RCO, including the operationalisation of the UNHCT was seen as critical to the efficient and effective coordination of COVID-19 response efforts, including mobilising stakeholders from a variety of sectors in the country to coordinate the response as one without duplicating interventions.

4.5.2 Was the UNSDF Adequately Funded and Implemented in A Timely Manner?

Many aspects of the UNSDF were implemented in a timely manner. For instance, design and development was timely. Further, several concerted and detailed workshops and meetings were held amongst the UNCT after the UNSDF was commended to restructure the Results Groups, in an effort to operationalise, repurpose, and reinvigorate the framework. However, while there was progress in some areas like nutrition and climate, there was very little traction in others. Agencies still tended to focus more on agency programming activities, as opposed to joint work planning and implementation through the Results Groups.

Key informants suggested that funding for the UNSDF was largely adequate, with most funds being secured through funding from donors for stand-alone programming initiatives. Greater improvements in efficiency for the cooperation framework could be gained if donors come on board to finance joint strategic priorities over a more siloed approach that prioritises individual programmes. While contributions to the PBF, the Joint SDG Fund, or other pooled funds incentivise cooperation. Pooled resources are also required to help ensure negotiated, sustained, and coherent financing for long-term support in relation to the sustainable development agenda¹⁶⁴. Unfortunately, donor interviewees participating in this evaluation suggested that the UNSDF is not well understood as an instrument to mobilise joint funding initiatives – if they are aware of it at all. Further, a minority of donors prioritise joint programming initiatives due to the belief that joint programming is associated with high project management costs and programmatic redundancies. More buy-in is needed from the donor community to support joint programming through pooled funds. Funding creates incentives for action. As said by one UN key informant, “funds make or break the way that joint plans are put into action”. Funding of joint programming might be

¹⁶⁴“Fit For What Purpose?”.
2015. [Sustainabledevelopment.Un.Org](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org).

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=2101&menu=1515>



incentivised through a greater emphasis on pooled resources like the SDG Fund. Some possibility might exist to reallocate portions of unused funding from the COVID-19 response to joint funding aimed at recovery from the pandemic.

Key Finding 18: There is a need to sensitise donors about the benefits of pooled funding initiatives. As noted by one key informant, this is essential to move “beyond a framework of understanding to a framework of action”, as agencies work together on joint initiatives and report on joint results. Bringing donors into the conversation around monitoring of the UNSDCF could be a way of influencing funding priorities of donors from the outset. There is undoubtedly an important role to be played by the RCO as being a negotiator with key for brokering new streams of funding for key programmes. Donors voiced a need for improved leadership by the RCO specially to set programmatic priorities, to coordinate agencies to reduce duplication and competition, and to help align agencies around their respective comparative advantages before funding proposals are submitted. Focusing RCO support for the cooperation framework in these areas can help strengthen and expand the efficiencies achieved through the next framework.

4.6 Coordination

Key findings under coordination:

- **Key Finding 19:** UNSDF and its various groups, especially the Results Groups, served as an environment for collaborative dialogue and knowledge-sharing.
- **Key Finding 20:** Joint workplans have largely been an aggregation of individual plans brought together into a single document, rather than building on what is done to come together in innovative and novel ways that creates additional value through joint action.

- **Key Finding 21:** Little time is usually afforded to develop programmatic concepts, in responses to calls for proposals, so agencies most often aggregate already existing capacities without time to create and flesh out novel joint programmatic modalities. However, in a culture where competition for resources has been the norm.
- **Key Finding 22:** Key informants, from the donor and IFI community especially, expressed the need for RCO leadership in terms of helping guide and coordinating agencies according to where they are best placed to contribute to joint programming based on the comparative advantage of each.
- **Key Finding 23:** There is a role for the RCO to further strengthen communication as one, especially as it relates to both promoting and protecting the work of the UN in Sri Lanka.

4.6.1 To What Extent Has The UNSDF Fostered Internal Coordination, through The Promotion of Synergies and Inter-linkages Between Its Interventions?

Better coordination is key to DaO and was a central to the wide-ranging UNDS reform enacted in 2019. There is power in a joint approach that builds on what each agency has already built alone, by creating a ‘joint front’ that increases credibility of the UN among government, donors, and other partners. A cooperation framework “provides the overarching framework for development results delivered collectively and by individual entities. Entities derive country programme outcomes from the Cooperation Framework, not vice-versa”¹⁶⁵. **Key Finding 19:** In Sri Lanka, activities under the UNSDF provided a starting point for better coordinating collective action creating room for discussion among agencies about planning together, albeit at the latter stages. To this end,

¹⁶⁵ UNDG. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework - Internal Guidance (Final Version). 2021. p. 5.



UNSDF and its various groups, especially the Results Groups, served as an environment for collaborative dialogue and knowledge-sharing. In fact, evaluation participants identified information sharing and learning about the activities of other agencies as the main benefit of UNSDF. The UNSDF allows for a “quick scan” to see what UN in Sri Lanka priorities are, and then allow agencies to share information and communicate around their respective activities in the Results Groups. For the most part, it was reported that mapping and joint work-planning exercises helped align the agency activities to avoid duplication. Jointly drafting workplans, ToRs, etc. provided Results Group members a sense of what each other were already working on, which is the foundation for greater collaboration. “Earlier, the left hand did not know what the right hand was doing. So that is a good first step”, revealed one key informant. If recent progress is continued, these groups can move further through phases of increased cooperation, with the final product of these engagements being a host of joint programmes.

Although important joint programming initiatives were undertaken during the UNSDF period, as noted above, under the framework itself (within its Results Groups in particular) knowledge-sharing and planning were the main improvements, with little initial momentum created through the UNSDF towards implementation of joint initiatives. Since their inception, the groups “so far has only been a mechanism for reporting, rather than acting on common areas of interest”, noted one agency key informant, echoing the sentiments of many others. Therefore, an important step will be to move the emphasis of the Results Groups under the future UNSDCF 2023-2027 from coordination towards joint action. Several key informants indicated that increased joint action could come in the form of joint proposals drafted through the Results Groups and pursued with clear central guidance – for instance, through the RCO – regarding conditions and modalities where joint programming might be applied. An overarching focus of Results Groups should be towards ‘transformative change’ that will require synergies at all levels of design and delivery. For this to take place, Results Groups need

to move beyond just coming together for Joint Proposals, but designing core areas of programming together, identifying comparative advantages and delivering by complementing available resources, as much as possible eliminating redundancies, competition, and the duplication across the UNDS.

Key Finding 20: Joint programming must become a tool for creating and acting on synergies. Many interviewees noted that joint workplans have largely been an aggregation of individual plans brought together into a single document, rather than building on what is done to come together in innovative and novel ways that creates additional value through joint action. Collaboration must be based on comparative advantage, technical expertise, and experience in particular sectors, with agencies working according to where they are best positioned to do so, and ceding work to others when partners have the advantage. Currently, where joint designs do happen, it is generally not along the lines of synergistic co-design. Design of individual agency contributions to programming usually occurs separately, with indicators aligned to already-existing agency priorities. Strengthening Results Groups as mechanisms of coordination can create more buy-in for them – both among the leadership and their participants. Heads of Agencies can promote leadership and accountability on the purpose, goals, and strategies of UNSDF and ensure that they assign staff with adequate seniority and expertise to participate in the Results Groups, so that staff feel that agencies value participation in Results Groups. More might also be done to create incentives for action within Results Groups through mechanisms at agency level that monitor – through performance indicators, for example – each participant’s contributions to Results Groups; a place to begin might be to contribute to the submission of joint proposals. Even if these are not successful, they are an important first step towards joint programming. The UNINFO platform, currently being rolled out, will be the main vehicle for this in the future.

It should also be noted, however, that producing better, and more synergistic joint action needs a



different approach, one that takes a longer-term view and provides sufficient time in terms of planning, design, funding, implementation, etc. Very critically, “adequate, sustainable funding is vital if the UN is to be ‘fit for purpose’. Donors get what they fund, and at present, what is being funded is a UN that is more short-term than sustainable, is more competitive than coherent, and is more driven by individual donor priorities than collective commitments”¹⁶⁶. **Key Finding 21: Looking forward, it will be critical to expand on funding approaches that support greater coordination by not only rewarding collaboration through greater funding, but also creating the conditions for such joint programming. As it stands, little time is usually afforded to develop programmatic concepts, in responses to calls for proposals, so agencies most often aggregate already existing capacities without time to create and flesh out novel joint programmatic modalities. In addition, a collaborative mindset and attitude is also needed to enable synergistic joint programming. However, in a culture where competition for resources has been the norm, a mindset shift of this nature could be daunting to begin with and focussed attention and action should be given to enable a collaborative spirit among agencies; perhaps with relevant trainings and retreats etc. The goal is a structural cultural shift in how the UN does business, which will require time to adequately developed and take hold. But key informants were clear that not all projects must require inter-agency partnership. Therefore, initial activities around joint programming must be manageable. There is balance to strike in terms of collaboration. Agency actors expressed a clear desire to work together, but in those areas that there is a clear benefit in doing so, according to the real comparative advantage of each. Through strategic collaboration, the combined strengths of different**

agencies can be mobilised to generate improved efficiencies and synergies, leading to greater effectiveness and enhanced development results.

4.6.2 How Effectively Did Different UN Stakeholders Coordinate under The UNSDF?

UN guidance on the new cooperation framework mandates an enhanced leadership role for the RC as compared to UNDAF¹⁶⁷. “Under the leadership of the RC, with substantive support from the RCO, UN development entities are expected to contribute their expertise, tools and platforms in a coherent, integrated and synergistic manner, in line with their respective mandates and as agreed in the Cooperation Framework”¹⁶⁸ The de-linking of the RCO from UNDP in 2019 resulted in an initial period marked by significant administrative changes and reduced human resource capacities. However, these were gradually addressed, until a fully staffed RCO was in place by late 2020, with value-add to support the UNCT and help implement the reformed mandate of the RC System.

The RC, supported by RCO, have played important roles communicating and negotiating with government partners, brokering funding streams with donors, especially in terms of joint programmes and pooled fund mechanisms, and providing representational support for the non-resident entities. Further, the facilitated platforms such as a new set of Result Groups in 2020 to ensure agency ownership and greater convergence of the programmes for the wider initiatives, to support lessons learned, knowledge-sharing, and monitoring and coordination of activities. The coordination work of the RCO has been satisfactory, according to most key informants. The RCO has effectively undertaken coordination activities between groups, including troubleshooting issues as they come up between

¹⁶⁶Hendra, John. 2014. "Making the UN 'Fit for Purpose': Lessons From The 'Delivering As One' Experience". *Daghammarskjold.Se*. http://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/dd-paper_no11.pdf

¹⁶⁷ Hub, IISD's. 2019. "UN Publishes Guidance on Revamped UNDAF". *Sdg.Iisd.Org*. <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/un-publishes-guidance-on-revamped-undaf/>.

¹⁶⁸ UNDG. *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework - Internal Guidance (Final Version)*. 2021. p. 10.



them, and manage disseminating good practices where possible.

RCO has a key role to play in coordination and oversight, and for troubleshooting and removing blockages in coordination, while allowing agencies themselves to take the lead on the technical aspects of programme design and delivery. **Key Finding 22:** Key informants, from the donor and IFI community especially, expressed the need for RCO leadership in terms of helping guide and coordinating agencies according to where they are best placed to contribute to joint programming based on the comparative advantage of each. Said one donor key informant, for instance, “from a donor perspective we are looking for agencies that are best placed to deliver that work. And when many agencies bid for the same thing [we would like the RCO] to provide guidance of which UN agencies are best positioned in a particular sector and have those take the lead”. Thus, RCO has a key coordination or facilitation between agencies and as an interlocutor between agencies and donors. Donor key informants suggested that as a coordinating entity, the RCO can take the lead on how to collaborate, help set strategic priorities, and help agencies avoid mission creep. However, other key informants suggested that donors themselves may undercut RCO leadership in the area coordination, reaching out to agencies directly, while at the same time calling for a better coordinated UNDS. Success of joint activities under the 2023-2027 UNSDCF will require all actors – RCO, agencies, donors, and others – to take on well understood and mutually supportive roles and responsibilities within the larger aim of DaO.

4.6.3 Has The UNSDF Strengthened The Position, Credibility, and Reliability of The UN System as A Partner for The Government and Other Actors?

Despite good working relationships at the technical level between agencies and GoSL ministerial partners, insufficient in-depth familiarity with and clarity about the mandate of the UN among GoSL political leadership feeds into narratives advanced by some political actors that the UN is an outside force with ‘its own agenda’ and not working for the

national interest of Sri Lanka. The rejection of the UN HRC resolution on Sri Lanka by the incoming government, and critical reports on the country by the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, exacerbated matters in this regard. As one key informant put it, “more strategic communications between government can help de-mystify what the UN agenda is among government”; this is part of a key finding of the evaluation that will be dealt with in greater detail later when the report considers options for ‘communicating as one’. Sri Lanka's relationship with other member states in the HRC has at times been strained over issues of post conflict reconciliation and accountability, creating a political narrative within the country that leads some sections of society to view the UN's role as ambiguous. This context requires greater attention, as one key informant put it for “more strategic communications between government and the UN can help demystify” what the UN's role in Sri Lanka is.

For now, it is enough to say that sensitisation efforts about the UNSDCF should be conducted at different levels of political leadership – and where possible with technical management, by creating links to the annual workplans/reviews of ministries – working with the government as a whole to see what points of entry work best in terms of sensitisation and sustainability of engagement around the UNSDCF. To effectively engage with decision-makers, sensitisation should start at the highest levels of government – Ministers and Secretaries – identifying and working with key government actors, like members of the Steering Committee and/or the SDC, as champions of the UN agenda, which can help create awareness and legitimise the UNSDCF among their government colleagues.

Moreover, key informants suggested that better coordination of joint communications is key to strengthening the position, credibility, and reliability of the UN in Sri Lanka. As part of the DaO approach, Communicating as One “facilitates coherent messaging and advocacy on normative and operational matters, and a consistent and teamed-up strategic dialogue with host countries”. Especially in the Sri Lankan context,



which has a complex recent history and political landscape, it is vital that the UN invests in developing and adopting a One UN communication strategy. Creating unique and separate communications function within the RCO was an important way of building capacities to support this important strategic function of the UN. It counters the tendency of many agencies towards communications efforts that concentrate on programmatic media efforts, based on accountability to operational priorities and donor requirements. Such communications tend to be project-specific and ad-hoc, and not always in sync across the rest of UNDS.

There were important successes in terms of a joint approach to communications during the UNSDF period. UN International Days and the UN75 anniversary included good collaboration across agencies. The Meet the UN campaign included agencies large and small. Each agency had a voice, irrespective of how many resources and production capacities they brought to the table. Also important were UN-wide communications efforts around the COVID-19 response, during which the RCO became a clearing house for admin issues, or procurement issues, etc. instead of each agency having to undertake these functions themselves. During the COVID-19 pandemic the UN was able to support the government in health messaging at the onset of the pandemic on short notice and bring in innovative measures, such as monitoring COVID-19 disinformation and providing support for dynamic counter messaging. During other crises, like the Easter Sunday attacks and the constitutional crisis, the communication role of the RC could “give space” to the rest of the UN agencies; the RC led the public communications response of the UN, by taking a proactive rights focused approach to voice the concerns of the UN system in Sri Lanka while maintaining avenues for engagement as needed by UN agencies for their programmatic work.

Key Finding 23: Drawing on these experiences, there is a role for the RCO to further strengthen communication as one, especially as it relates to both promoting and protecting the work of the UN in Sri Lanka. Given the overarching mandate of the

RC, she has been able to represent the UN’s work across a variety of issues and demonstrate the synergies between the different mandates and programmatic initiatives of the UN. Practically speaking, communicating as one can be prioritised when approaching larger projects, big summits, key dates, etc. There are also opportunities to engage in communications activities that are linked to the various milestones of the UNSDF, like the annual review, MTR, evaluation, etc. In the design and development of the 2023-2027 UNSDCF, it is essential that a rigorous communications strategy be developed to showcase the results and successes of the UN as a whole, especially to the government and the general public; a majority of the latter are largely unaware of UN work beyond the normative agenda in the country. Strategic communication should be thought of as a public good, the benefits of which outweigh agency fears of agencies that communicating as one is going to dilute the standing of their voice and brand. Using the communication capacities of the UN as a whole can shield the agencies from the potential fallout of communicating on sensitive issues and offer agencies a cohesive story about a common approach to present to donors, which can be leveraged when seeking technical and financial support to meet the objectives set out in the framework. Furthermore, an opportunity exists to ‘outsource’ some communications functions to the UNCG to find economies of scale and purchasing power in terms of pooled efforts for important resources. Strategic communications should be embedded right from the design and planning phase and not be an afterthought, as is the practice now according to key informants. Communicating the good work done is a way to build support and can be used as a strategic tool to create space for implementation. In the Sri Lankan context, the UN must contend with a legacy from the period of armed conflict and therefore human rights and conflict sensitivity is paramount in communications. A coordinated UN approach can bring those lenses into UN communications, moving beyond project communications towards communications that better consider the political economy of undertaking policy and programming activities in Sri Lanka.



5 SUSTAINABILITY

Key findings under sustainability:

- **Key Finding 24:** Inadequate funding is a central risk to progress made under the UNSDF. The reforms towards a One UN and the sustainability of any cooperation framework crucially depend on agencies to shift towards more strategic and more coordinated funding, with support from the RCO.
- **Key Finding 25:** Engaging and empowering CSOs, especially in the provinces of the country, is another area where key informants mentioned that sustainability could be strengthened. There is also a crucial role for the UN to play to act as a neutral mediator between government and CSOs to ensure that broad perspective of voices is heard and are syncing with each other.

5.1.1 What Is The Likelihood That Development Progress Is Sustained by National Partners and Stakeholders over Time?

The political and security changes that took place in the country during the UNSDF period, along with the global COVID-19 pandemic considerably impacted the sustainability of the framework. While the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁶⁹, the Constitutional Crisis of 2018¹⁷⁰, and the 2019 Easter Sunday Attacks¹⁷¹ were shocks which cannot reasonably be forecasted, 2019 and 2020 were already known as election years as per the 19th Amendment to the Constitution which was passed in April 2015¹⁷². Failure to utilise the mechanisms embedded into the UNSDF, such as annual reviews and MTR, resulted in further rendering the framework static, undermining its sustainability. Given that change is constant especially in the Sri Lankan context, it is

vital that the UNSDCF have embedded the necessary review and feedback mechanisms to ensure their adaptability and to strengthen their sustained relevance. In addition, it is crucial that sustainability is considered as a key consideration at design phase and indicators in this regard needs to be built into project proposals so that there is accountability in this aspect, especially by donors.

Despite these challenges, several points of progress were also noted by key informants. There was a general agreement amongst UN key informants that there has been an improvement in the evolution of the structure and functioning of the Results Groups because the groups now are more aligned with agency priorities, giving more autonomy to agencies. These Results Groups are an effective way to capture and communicate existing institutional knowledge about what different UN agencies are doing. Even though there has been limited collaborative action yet, agency key informants remain optimistic about its potential to work towards joint programming. A successful implementation modality to bring agencies and their work together, overcomes some of the key sustainability challenges faced by the UNSDF. An increased role of the RCO in supporting and coordinating the functioning of the Results Group – for instance, by leading the sharing of knowledge-sharing and good practices between groups – could be of added value.

Although it is not always under the UNSDF, individual agencies are in continuous communication with the government and their counterparts – usually at the ministerial level – and working on national priorities of the government on a regular basis. Some government key informants noted the continuous engagement with several UN agencies throughout the annual planning process of their respective ministries. This

¹⁶⁹ "Sri Lanka: The Latest Coronavirus Counts, Charts and Maps". 2021. Reuters. <https://graphics.reuters.com/world-coronavirus-tracker-and-maps/countries-and-territories/sri-lanka/>

¹⁷⁰ Meixler, Eli. 2020. "Sri Lankan Strongman's Return Sparks 'Constitutional Crisis'". Time. <https://time.com/5437457/sri-lanka-mahinda-rajapaksa-president-crisis/>.

¹⁷¹ "Sri Lanka Attacks: Easter Sunday Bombings Marked One Year On". 2020. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52357200>.

¹⁷² "Nineteenth Amendment to The Constitution". 2015. Parliament.Lk. <https://www.parliament.lk/uploads/acts/gbills/english/5974.pdf>.



level of engagement was welcomed and encouraged by other key informants from the government sector. One government key informant praised the holistic and human-centric view taken by UN agencies when responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. These were regarded as important learnings for the respective ministry and government service at large when responding to crises. These positive experiences were not limited to the COVID-19 response or building back better after the pandemic. Government key informants were keen to highlight the role the UN can play in other areas, such as education and peacebuilding. Several government and CSO key informants requested the UN to play the role of convener in “north-south” forums to share best practises and experiences in areas of education, peacebuilding, and health, amongst others. Most of these key informants were cognisant of the limitations, in terms of both institutional and individual technical capacity, the government is faced with and see the UN as having a leading role to play to overcome these limitations, in particular by government entities outside the main districts and urban centres.

Throughout the interviews, both government and CSO interviewees made direct references to the relevance of SDGs to the country’s long-term objectives. The continuous engagement with UN agencies throughout the lifecycle of individual programmes have helped build among the government a familiarity with and commitment to the SDGs. Along with the setting up of the SDC by an Act of Parliament, integration of SDGs into national plans have moved up the government agenda - even if government stakeholders remained largely unaware of the UNSDF during its implementation period. Government key informants are keen to continue engaging the UN with particular interest in SDG data collection and reporting. Whilst they were quick to acknowledge the on-going support received, they also highlighted the work that remains to be done in this regard and the role the UN can play in it.

There are positive signs, however, in government counterparts’ proactive engagement in the development of the upcoming UNSDCF, and

efforts being made by the UN to better secure state buy-in from start. Further, a Joint Steering Committee has been established to manage the implementation and monitoring of the cooperation framework, as has a Working/Operational Committee to help operationalise the framework. This engagement further builds on the relationships and goodwill fostered with the government as a result of immediate UN response during the COVID-19 pandemic, largely around the health sector. The role of the RCO, as a key convener in navigating political and high-level government buy-in should be enhanced while at the same time ensuring that representation by minority and vulnerable groups are genuinely encouraged via formalised mechanisms. It’s important that the successes achieved during the humanitarian response during the pandemic continues to be leveraged to build forward for better peacebuilding and development response.

Key Finding 24: Inadequate funding is a central risk to progress made under the UNSDF. The reforms towards a One UN and the sustainability of any cooperation framework crucially depend on agencies to shift towards more strategic and more coordinated funding, with support from the RCO. Internal competition for funding in such a resource scarce environment is likely undermine hard-won progress in these areas. The prospect of fiscal space continuing to tighten and financing conditions changing in line with Sri Lanka’s accession to upper-MIC status also means the coordination and resource mobilisation functions of the RCO may become increasingly important during the next iteration of the cooperation framework. While a robust coordination arrangement between agencies is led by the RCO, it is vital that they also take the lead in ensuring that sustainability aspects are integrated at the core of policy and programming, which would also be an added incentive for donors to invest in UN programmes. Moreover, strategic prioritisation of how funds are allocated in this environment becomes doubly important. It increases the need for coordinated efforts to bring about synergies through joint programmes that eliminate redundant activities and leverage the comparative



advantages of individual agencies to engage in forward-looking programming that builds government systems, institutions, and capacities for long-term sustainability.

Key Finding 25: Further, engaging and empowering CSOs, especially in the provinces of the country, is another area where key informants mentioned that sustainability could be strengthened. CSOs work closely with community leaders, local government and provincial authorities and the UN can utilise their partnerships with CSOs as a conduit by which they can reach the grassroots level of the country. There is also a crucial role for the UN to play to act as a neutral mediator between government and CSOs to ensure that broad perspective of voices is heard and are syncing with each other. CSOs, especially in the provinces of the country, have consistently been working on the ground with their constituencies, including vulnerable and marginalised groups, for prolonged periods of time and throughout the various crisis periods in the country, making them resilient and agile in meeting the needs of these communities. KIIs revealed that, even during lockdown periods, they were able to continue their work with the most vulnerable of communities ensuring that no one was left behind; supporting the government and reaching a community that the latter were not able or less likely to focus on. In fact, during the first of the lockdowns in March 2020, government had acknowledged this role by authorising a collective of CSO's support and assist in the COVID-19 immediate response in particular in addressing the urgent food security, hygiene, and medical needs of identified vulnerable groups in Sri Lanka especially in shelters, homes, centres for people with special needs, rehabilitation centres, safe house for women and probation centres¹⁷³. Building on the good work done by CSO in Sri Lanka, civil society representation should be better integrated into the official planning, implementation, and monitoring mechanisms within the cooperation framework at the Steering and Working/Operational Committee level. A

genuine attempt to engage the CSOs in this manner will not only increase their ability to contribute to national policy and planning but could also enable a robust, credible, and independent monitoring of deliverables set out by the cooperation framework.

5.1.2 What Is The Buy-in of Public Institutions to Participate in The Plan, Implement and Evaluate Relevant Policies and Programmes under The UNSDF?

The GoSL is the key stakeholder for the UN. However, when the design phase of cooperation frameworks only includes senior leadership from ministries, the continuity of previously implemented frameworks – and their related interventions – become challenging. Political changes frequently result in changes to high-level personnel. Therefore, there are sustainability gains that can be achieved through constructive long-term sensitisation of and engagement around the cooperation framework with ministry and department officials at technical levels. In addition, government ownership can be further ensured by integration of projects and programmes into ministry action plans and budgets which are regularly audited and monitored as which are likely to withstand sudden changes in leadership and priorities.

Key informants from the government sector were keen to praise the UN's contribution to build capacity at an institutional and individual level within the public service. They feel extending this to elected representatives will help them develop a better understanding of the role played by the UN, including the need for sustainable cooperation frameworks. Some government key informants suggested the creation of a parliamentary committee to engage with the UN throughout the lifecycle of a cooperation framework as a mechanism for insulating such frameworks from changes in the country's political landscape. They requested the UN to create cross-party buy-in through such a parliamentary committee for long-

¹⁷³ Government Circular No. PTF/01/Circular/02 of 29 March 2020



term targets, such as the 2030 Agenda, so that political leadership from across the parliament will be collectively on-board with a long-term vision. These steps will help to ensure such frameworks are not drastically affected due to changes in the political landscape. An existing and important point of entry for creating bi-partisan buy-in is the SDC, which was established as an Act of Parliament. Therefore, all political parties with the Parliament have agreed on the need for the SDC, achieving the SDG 2030 targets, and are collectively behind it. The continuity of the SDC after the change in political leadership in the country after 2019 is evidence of this. Therefore, aligning future cooperation frameworks with the long-term targets of the 2030 Agenda will help to ensure commitment from political leadership to ensure the sustainability of such cooperation frameworks.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The development of the UNSDF preceded the 2019 UN reform process, – so it was to be expected that adjusting institutional structures, processes, roles, and responsibilities to new directives resulted in challenges. ‘Growing pains’ under the UN reform process are not limited to Sri Lanka but have been cited frequently in the last years throughout the global UN system¹⁷⁴. As in other contexts, the conclusions outlined below should be taken as a learning opportunity and in a constructive manner. The upcoming 2023-2027 UNSDCF, which will be based squarely on new post-reform directives, promises to build on the initial gains made already, working according to the comparative advantage of the UN – technical capacities, multi-stakeholder relationships, convening power, human rights-based approach, etc. – to help build national capacities, institutional strength, and government systems for lasting gains in sustainable development in Sri Lanka. The following are conclusions for each of the key evaluation criteria.

Relevance: Driver priorities outlined under the UNSDF identified important national priorities that are still relevant today. But these priorities did not

sufficiently serve as a primary focus of strategic for agencies. Lack of a Joint Steering Committee, annual review process, or MTR made the framework essentially a stagnant document, even if adaptations to the changing development landscape were being carried out elsewhere. Now that a functional steering body has been created, the upcoming cooperation framework promises to be much more relevant and adaptable institutional instrument. The familiarity, buy-in, procedures, relationships, trust, etc. that underpin all must develop organically around mandated institutional changes, and will all take time to mature. The next cooperation framework should build on gains made under the UNSDF to develop a collectively owned cooperation framework in which there are well-defined UN contributions towards national development needs and the Agenda 2030 that are based on the strengths and capacities of UN agency operations, with an emphasis on relevant and SMART indicators. It should be noted that most agencies were working according to the technical comparative advantage the UN has in assisting to provide policy advice, to strengthen national capacities, and to undertake skill training to help solidify Sri Lanka’s status as a MIC. The UN in Sri Lanka also has important comparative advantages in promoting human rights and convening different stakeholders, especially in acting as a bridge between government, on one hand, and donors and CSOs, on the other.

Coherence: While the UNSDF generally did not serve as a tool to improve the coherence of the UNDS at the framework level, individual agencies do have robust working relationships with government counterparts at the ministerial level; however, more needs to be done to actively include CSOs – beyond just as implementing partners – into programmatic decision-making. The close collaboration between agencies and ministries is a key strength, and offer important gains in the area of coherence. Importantly, in the future there is an opportunity to use the UNSDF as an entry point to coordinate funding in different

¹⁷⁴ "The Review of The Resident Coordinator System: Give UNDS Reform A Chance!". 2021. *International Development*

Blog. <https://blogs.die-gdi.de/2021/07/21/the-review-of-the-resident-coordinator-system-give-unds-reform-a-chance/>.



sectors among donor, so that funds can be targeted more effectively and efficiently.

Effectiveness: The UNDS made important contributions to priority areas under the UNSDF. However, overall progress towards indicators was mixed, and often difficult to measure. For example, the findings pertaining to the effectiveness of Driver 1 shows inconsistent progress in data and innovation. Further, progress under Driver 2 was made difficult because Indicators 2.1 and 2.2 do not have baselines or targets and Indicator 2.4 focuses on the national level and did not adequately capture ground realities and challenges that might impede the implementation of peacebuilding. More positively, the amount of national budget allocated for Indicator 2.3 consistently increased. Under Driver 3, Indicator 3.2 also lacks baselines and targets. Though coverage of social protection schemes – Indicator 3.1 – improved over the UNSDF period, many vulnerable persons remain uncovered by social assistance. Finally, several UN agencies effectively partnered with the government under Driver 4 on emergency response and supported better disaster preparedness, risk identification, and developing shock responsive social protection systems; but limited data available generally made progress towards the framework targets difficult to track.

Orientation towards Impact: Because the UNSDF was implemented in the context of significant political changes, controversy regarding the UNHRC process on Sri Lanka security crises, making progress towards the UN reform agenda was more difficult than it would have been otherwise. Moreover, the impact of the UNSDF was hindered by lack of clear government ownership of the process, with very little awareness of the cooperation framework among state actors. Still there were instances of impactful progress. Within individual priorities – especially DTI and human security and socioeconomic resilience – more should have been done to build common understandings of conceptualisations of and approaches to key priorities. For example, changes to Results Groups helped devolve greater autonomy to agencies and provided flexibility to participating agencies, and as a result are more

aligned with agency priorities. Positively, important contributions were made to human rights in Sri Lanka, but additional efforts are required to better consider gender equality and empowerment of women, according to a wider range of gender-related topics, directly into the next framework.

Efficiency: The collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic was efficient and to a great degree effective during the initial stages of the pandemic. Further, knowledge-sharing among Results Groups and Thematic Groups and the coordination of these groups through the RCO has created greater awareness about what different actors in the UN system are doing relative to each other, with some important joint programming initiatives offering lessons learned for how collaborative work can be expanded in the coming years. Uneven progress in the area of joint programming undermined the efficiency gains that could have been made under the UNSDF. To further increase efficiency gains in the future there is a need to sensitise donors about the benefits of pooled funding initiatives.

Coordination: Overall, the UNSDF did not serve as an effective coordination tool. Though the UNSDF and its various groups, especially the Results Groups, served as an environment for collaborative dialogue and knowledge-sharing, joint workplans were largely an aggregation of individual plans brought together into a single document, rather than building on what is done to come together in innovative and novel ways that creates additional value through joint action. The 2023-2027 UNSDCF, which will be the first framework to be designed and developed after the UNDS reform, will be able to capitalise on important gains that have been realised during the implementation of the framework. More can be done under the new framework, especially by RCO, to help coordinate agencies according to where they are best placed to contribute and find synergies through joint programming based on the comparative advantage of each. Further, there is also an opportunity for the RCO to further strengthen communication as one of a strategic function of the UNDS. Better channelling communications efforts for larger joint initiatives through common



communications initiatives can be used to directly supported collaborative work.

Sustainability: Sustainability is built into all UN programmes and is reflected in the comparative advantage of the UN in Sri Lanka to build national institutions and systems. Unfortunately, funding shortfalls in the coming years present a risk to momentum created under the UNSDF. The reforms towards a One UN and the sustainability of any cooperation framework crucially depend on agencies to shift towards more strategic and more coordinated funding, with support from the RCO. More work to better engage CSOs and other non-governmental national actors to another area where sustainability needs to be strengthened.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents recommendations based on the analysis made above. It focuses on areas identified as comparative advantages, and presents recommendations seen through the lens of towards good practices for creating a UNDS that is fit for purpose.

7.1 Recommendations for Strategic Orientation of UNSDCF 2023-2027

7.1.1 Recommendation 1: Strengthen the Comparative Advantages of the UN in Sri Lanka

Continue to *strengthen the comparative advantages of the UN in Sri Lanka* in providing multi-sectoral technical support for systems building and convening partners around important issues related development, human rights, peacebuilding, etc.

(Based on Key Findings 5 and 8).

With the GoSL, the UN in Sri Lanka is a provider of technical support for building capacities that enhance institutions, systems, and policies. Assistance in a MIC like Sri Lanka is most impactful when targeted at supporting home-grown institutions and systems, and when it is designed to address country-specific vulnerabilities by working

with existing capabilities. In providing policy and institutional support through its various agencies and entities, the UN in Sri Lanka should be best able to capitalise on its key strengths of drawing on a diverse range of policy and technical expertise, using experiences and good practices from other countries to offer solutions in the Sri Lankan context. The UN is also a trusted partner and convener of multi-stakeholder partnerships with the government, CSOs, and other actors to provide services and engage in programming where each are best suited to do so. The partnership and advocacy role that agencies provide non-governmental sectors is likely to only become more critical in the future to maintain a conducive space for CSOs, VIOs, and other non-governmental groups at a time where their public power might be shrinking.

7.1.2 Recommendation 2: Strong Advocacy for The Human Rights Agenda

It is recommended the RCO and all UN agencies to *continue to engage in the human rights-based agenda*, and important cross-cutting issues like gender, as the ability to bring such issues to the attention of government constitutes a comparative advantage of the UN system.

(Based on Key Findings 14 and 15).

The UN's ability to bring human rights issues to the attention of government is an important comparative advantage of the UN system. Therefore, all UN actors must continue to strongly advocate for interventions related to the human rights-based agenda – a central pillar of the UN's work from its inception¹⁷⁵. For the upcoming UNSDCF, this will mean mainstreaming of the cross-cutting topics of human rights, gender, disability, etc., and the inclusion of strong language that advocates for marginalised populations, with every effort made explicitly to include references in the results framework priorities and indicators themselves. Buy-in from government in these areas – through its acceptance of the UNSDCF – will help

¹⁷⁵ "UNSDG | Human Rights-Based Approach". 2021. *Unsdg.Un.Org*. <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/human-rights-based-approach>.



the UN in communicating and advocating for its broader normative agenda, the operations of agencies working on specific human rights issues, and the rights-based advocacy efforts of CSOs and other national partners. Of course, thinking strategically about how to present human rights is essential. Connecting advocacy activities to the broader spectrum of indivisible economic and social rights may create more traction for progress amongst government partners that are likely to be relatively more enthusiastic about embracing socioeconomic progress than concepts such as transitional justice.

7.1.3 Recommendation 3: Create Clear Links between Framework Priorities and Agency Programmes

Clearly link national development challenges to a set of driver priorities that speak to and articulate the contribution of UN agencies toward them through the UNSDCF based on common understanding of the change processes that need to occur to meet those priorities.

(Based on Key Findings 1 and 2).

The *UNSDCF Internal Guidance* calls for a vision where “its contribution and the design of medium-term support [needed to achieve it] must be grounded in a clearly articulated, evidence-based, robust theory of change that describes the interdependent changes necessary for the country to achieve the 2030 Agenda”¹⁷⁶. Hewing closer to this guidance as part of the next Cooperation Framework means that the expected collective contributions of individual agencies will be better reflected in the 2023-2027 UNSDCF, in a way that will allow agencies in particular to better identify their respective areas of focus and contribution within the UNSDCF. Doing so will increase the accountability of UN mission interventions vis-à-vis the framework, as well as the demonstrability of the impact and value-added of its interventions.

7.1.4 Recommendation 4: Support the UNSDCF through Joint Steering Committee and Regular Reviews

Support the UNSDCF through an active and engaged Joint Steering Committee (and Working Committee) to ensure oversight and monitoring through the meaningful buy-in and participation of all development stakeholders. This will include regular reviews to ensure the UNSDCF remains relevant and useful.

(Based on Key Findings 3 and 6).

A strong Steering Committee will enhance implementation and adaptive management to accommodate changing development context and capture and scale up lessons learned in the 2023-2027 UNSDCF. Government representatives within the Steering Committee should, as part of their role, be asked with helping to sensitise government colleagues – for example, through regular presentations, updates, and information sessions – about key activities, and milestones related to the cooperation framework. This may even be codified in memorandum of understanding that defines the types of activities that are expected in this regard. In addition, periodic updating of framework through annual review processes will help to keep it relevant year-to-year. Given that the cooperation framework lifecycle falls halfway through that of Sri Lanka’s election cycle, a systematic review through an MTR might also present an opportunity to reassess the framework at its midpoint to better create political coherence and consistency in the event of a political transition. All review activities would greatly benefit from active participation of the government and CSOs, sensitising national partners to the framework and creating further buy-in among them. For their part, CSOs can be used to play a greater role through processes such as the Voluntary Peoples Review, undertaken as part of the Voluntary National Review of the SDGs.

¹⁷⁶ UNDG. *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework - Internal Guidance (Final Version)*. 2021. p. 17.



7.1.5 Recommendation 5: Better Leverage Multi-stakeholder Partnerships, Especially with CSOs and VIOs

The UNSDCF can be strengthened by better including CSOs and VIOs, as well as the private sector, academia, and other groups. The UN should be proactive about leveraging the comparative advantages of different actors – CSOs and VIOs capacities at the grassroots are an example – as an important sustainability aspect for their own work in the country and foster effective and closer partnerships with non-governmental groups.

(Based on Finding 9 and 25).

To ensure this adequate representation, civil society groups should be integrated into the official planning, implementation, and monitoring mechanisms within the cooperation framework at the Steering and Working/Operational committee level. A genuine attempt to engage the civil society groups of different types in this manner will not only increase their ability to contribute to national policy and planning but could also enable a robust, credible, and independent monitoring of deliverables set out by the cooperation framework. Gaining a better understanding of which CSOs, VIOs, and others are working where, and in what sectors might be accomplished by mapping organisations throughout the country, identifying those that have capacities to work with UN Agencies, and leveraging them more fully in project conceptualisation, planning, implementation, and monitoring processes.

7.2 Recommendations for Institutional Mechanisms of UNSDCF 2023-2027

7.2.1 Recommendation 6: Create Clear and Focused Priorities, Baselines, and Targets

Facilitate consensus-building work under the UNSDCF by creating priority areas that are more focused and better defined from the outset, so that these are supported by common understandings of development priorities, as well as well mutually agreed upon approaches to achieving them. Based on this, identify, and define baselines and targets that reflect the comparative advantages of the UN in Sri Lanka and its expected key contributions to sustainable development in the country.

(Based on Key Findings 10, 12, and 13).

Priority areas under the UNSDCF will be better supported by a common understanding of the nature of development priorities and the approaches to achieving the same. To enable this, consensus-building work under the UNSDCF must be facilitated by creating priority areas that are more focused and better defined from the outset¹⁷⁷. All baselines and targets should be well-elaborated, clear, and measurable, so that they reflect both the comparative advantage of the UN and its expected contribution to sustainable development in Sri Lanka. The results matrix and its associated indicators should have utility as a monitoring tool and be set with close involvement of the government to increase their role as the custodian of data and information needed to assess progress towards achieving target values outlined in results framework. This does not mean simply replicating wholesale top-level government priorities, but rather identifying where in those priorities the UN is best positioned to contribute.

¹⁷⁷ For instance, efforts under DTI should start with developing a clear vision for digital transformation and innovation that is underpinned by the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats along the country's entire data value chain (including: supply, demand, and use) before focusing on more technical questions related to how to operationalise digital transformation and innovation. In terms of social protection, the UN's approach to systems

strengthening in a MIC like Sri Lanka is likely best reflected in efforts to improve the robustness of social systems, based on designs aimed at addressing country-specific vulnerabilities and strengthening existing institutions and capabilities. Related indicators should reflect this focus, so as to better measure and show progress in this important area of development.



As per the *UNSDCF Internal Guidance*¹⁷⁸, achievable and measurable indicators that link to agency priorities are more likely to generate buy-in from UN actors. Where possible, indicators should rely on national data systems, with close focus on SDGs, to further strengthen the data and information capacities of the government. Different potential modalities exist for better aligning drivers to agency work – for instance, through the M&E Thematic Group or external M&E specialists¹⁷⁹ – through specialist technical input in the formulation of relevant indicators, baselines, and targets¹⁸⁰, to emphasise the operational aspects of the next cooperation framework and help agencies capitalise on work done against priorities elaborated in the framework.

7.2.2 Recommendation 7: Consolidate Knowledge-sharing and Increase Joint Action

Consolidate knowledge-sharing successes within Results Groups by creating incentives for moving towards further integration of knowledge activities, building on initial successes in knowledge-sharing and collaboration in a way that leads to increased joint action.

(Based on Key Findings 6, 11, and 19).

Results Groups offer an opportunity to focus on knowledge across agencies, projects, and other interventions, perhaps increasing its utility as a forum for pushing forward, sharing research and evidence. The RCO can act as a catalyst for regular knowledge-sharing sessions between groups (perhaps tied to reviews/evaluation of the UNSDCF) to help in the sharing of knowledge and good practices to help cross-pollinate experiences and learnings. The Regional Evaluation Unit might

also be tasked with leading or coordinating – for example, through an external consultancy process – a systemic review of regional or global UNDAF/UNSD/UNSDCF evaluations to develop applicable lessons, good practices, etc. for future frameworks. Further, a more proactive approach is needed towards joint programming as a foundation for improved collaboration and coordination under One UN in the UNSDCF.

Under the guidance and discretion of Results Groups Leads, ToRs within each Results Group can be reviewed for new and additional areas for collaborative action to identify where joint programming synergies might be possible, including these in group workplans alongside already-existing joint-agency or single-agency activities. Newly identified opportunities for collaboration can then be developed into joint proposals that include multiple agencies within the group base on the comparative advantage of each. Results Groups Leads also can help to solicit the input of key donors to ensure that joint programming workplans are congruent with donor priorities and mandates. While platforms such as Result Groups must be led by agencies themselves, engaged RCO support can help ensure greater convergence and efficiency of programming, and improved system-wide learning through the dissemination of lessons learned and knowledge management. A concerted effort should be made to better sensitise donors to opportunities for joint programming, and proactively promote joint funding initiatives co-developed through Results Groups, in line the RCO's important role as a broker of new streams of funding for key programmes. There is also an important support role for the RCO to take in providing guidance on how collaborative

¹⁷⁸ “The UN development system cannot and should not attempt to address all development issues in a country. It must choose, in consultation with national partners, strategic priorities and related development results (outcomes and outputs) in which to invest its collective efforts, capacities and resources”; see: *UNDG. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework - Internal Guidance (Final Version)*. 2021. p. 18.

¹⁷⁹ One option is the greater inclusion of M&E Thematic Group in helping provide practical input into the final UNSDF results

framework, in a proactive effort to refine and make UNSDCF indicators as compatible as possible with agency data systems and internal monitoring processes. Another option is inviting heads of agencies to include M&E specialists in the main sessions of developing the results framework for the cooperation framework.

¹⁸⁰ Though not the strategic level input already provided by UNCT in prioritising and formulating UNSDF content.



action can be prioritised and where it might be streamlined and made more efficient.

7.2.3 Recommendation 8: Develop A Communications Strategy as Part of the Framework

*It is recommended that RCO and agencies work together to develop a **clear strategic communications strategy around the UNSDCF**. Communicating as one under the UNSDCF can help make communication a strategic function rather than one that is mostly procedurally focused on project-based communication.*

(Based on Finding 23)

It is crucial that a clear strategic communications strategy around the UNSDCF, which is also aligned with thematic and mandate-driven priorities at the regional and global levels, is developed. Communicating as one under the UNSDCF can help make communication a strategic function rather than one that is mostly procedurally focused on project-based communication. Emphasis to be placed on integrating a strategic communication during design of the UNSDCF and not as consideration afterwards. As mentioned already, common communications around the UNSDCF can be prioritised when approaching larger projects, big summits, key dates, etc. There is also an opportunity to centralise some communications functions in support of the UNCG to find economies of scale and purchasing power in terms of pooled efforts for important resources like editors, photographers, designers, etc. which can have benefits across all agencies. Additional opportunities exist to engage with government partners in communications activities that are linked to the various milestones of the UNSDCF like: launch, annual reviews, MTR, evaluation, etc. But Communicating as One should not be limited to information sharing and one-off events, but concerted efforts to design and execute

coordinated advocacy and communication campaigns that will drive behavioural change and desired outcomes of the programmes delivered under the UNSDCF and by the UN system. A communication strategy embedded into the heart of the UNSDCF, with clear connections to the regional and global agendas relevant to Sri Lanka will contribute towards raising the profile of the UNDS, better managing perceptions of the UN – and its perceived value-add – among the general public of Sri Lanka.

7.2.4 Recommendation 9: Raise Awareness about UNSDCF at All Levels

*Increase efforts to **raise awareness about the UNSDCF among different stakeholders**, especially at different levels of government, including **greater efforts to sensitise donors** and sell the benefits of the UNSDCF.*

(Based on Key Findings 7 and 18)

The next framework should be supported by awareness raising and sensitisation efforts that state clearly how different priorities intersect with various government objectives or activities, and even individual ministries, to create an incentive for government action within the context of the framework's priorities. Sensitisation efforts should be conducted at different levels of government about the UNSDCF, including how it should be used by government counterparts for priorities, planning, etc. At the highest levels, these might be led by government champions of the cooperation framework process¹⁸¹. Awareness raising is also needed at the technical level within line ministries by UN agencies, both through formal presentations/workshops aimed at explaining the UNSDCF to counterparts, as well as informally by referencing the UNSDCF in day-to-day dealings with state partners. These efforts might be aided by policy briefs or factsheets in all national languages that can inform UN actors when liaising

¹⁸¹ For example, at the beginning of the next cycle, a joint communique should be sent from the Government and the UN to all Ministries, Departments, and Divisions at National and Sub National levels highlighting the centrality of the UNDS' programmes to the UNSDCF, and any future

programme to be linked concretely to the priorities of the UNSDCF. Other activities could include: presentations to parliament, key inter-ministerial groups, etc.



with government and can be distributed directly to government partners to give them practical info on the applicability and utility of the UNSDCF. There should be greater efforts made to sensitise donors and sell the benefits of the UNSDCF. Bringing donors into the conversation around monitoring of the UNSDCF – through reports to the Working Groups of the Development Partners Forum¹⁸² and/or as part of its annual review process – is also a way of incentivising funding opportunities. The RCO has a key role to play in this regard as an interlocutor between the UN and the donor community in Sri Lanka. At the same time, member states and donors also need to support reform more coherently. Greater uptake of the One UN approach on the part of all partners – not only the UN, but also donors – is essential. It is “not just the UN system that will need to be more ‘fit for purpose’ to deliver the new agenda.

7.3 Recommendations for Joint Programming/Financing of UNSDCF 2023-2027

7.3.1 Recommendation 10: Increased Agency Leadership and Ownership through Joint Workplans

Creation of joint workplans should be led by agencies, especially by Results Group leads, and underpinned by joint accountability for common results between all participating agencies. Joint workplans can be leveraged to create an increased *sense of co-ownership of UN agencies in joint activities* and further *encourage agencies to take on a leadership role and accountability for joint results in agreed-up areas.*

(Based on Findings 16 and 20).

‘The agency’ is where the technical sector-specific knowledge and capacities of the UN are housed. Leveraging this important knowledge and capacities, agencies have an opportunity to create

greater programmatic coherence in key areas through Results Groups, by agreeing on common approaches in key sectors and by acting together, with guidance from the RCO, in important key joint programming initiatives. More can be done to create incentives for action within Results Groups by creating mechanisms at agency level that monitor – through performance indicators, for example – each participant’s contributions to Results Groups; a place to begin might be to contribute to the submission of joint proposals. Even if these are not successful, they are an important first step towards joint programming. Sustained effort through joint funding and programming will help ensure that agency shifts in organisational planning and strategic orientation moves constantly towards common goals, purposes, and practices. With coordinated action from agencies at all levels, joint action can be leveraged to improve cooperation and reduce the transaction costs for the UN-associated funds.

7.3.2 Recommendation 11: Work with Donors to Pursue Joint Programming and More Flexible Funding

Build on increased perception of effectiveness of One UN approaches thanks to the UN's well-coordinated and impactful pandemic response, to work with donors to pursue more flexible funding and joint programmatic initiatives in other key priority areas, especially those identified by the UNSDCF.

(Based on Findings 4, 17, 21, 22, and 24).

The momentum and reputational gains created by the COVID-19 response can be leveraged to better work with donors to pursue more flexible funding that more closely aligns with UNSDCF priority areas and joint programmatic initiatives. In particular, a more relevant UNSDCF could contribute to aid effectiveness in Sri Lanka by acting as a guide for

programmes, and new initiatives. Thematically the DP Forum covers a broad range of sectors; see: "The Development Partners Secretariat". 2021. *Erd.Gov.Lk*. Accessed December 10. http://www.erd.gov.lk/images/The_Development_Partners_Secretariat.pdf.

¹⁸² The Development Partners (DP) Forum is an informal, broad, and inclusive mechanism towards information and experience-sharing within the foreign aid community. It provides opportunities for the DPs to identify and discuss topics of common interest and areas that may require further dialogue with the GoSL authorities. The DP Forum allows missions to brief each other on their aid strategies,



funds that flow to the areas of greatest need for sustainable development in Sri Lanka; the framework is also an opportunity for development partners – bilateral donors, CSOs, IFIs, etc. – to engage in work that results in greater funding opportunities for UN agencies, and more access for partners to the UN’s strengths in convening power, relationships with government, and coordination capacity.

While many projects do not require joint implementation, there is a growing awareness of collaborative programming to improving aid’s coherence, effectiveness, impact, and efficiency. Internationally, donors are intentionally increasingly allocating funding flows behind the UNSDCF, and this should be strongly encouraged. Increased emphasis on common funding priorities is consistent with the 2019 Funding Compact that responds to Member States’ request for “whole of UN” approaches that accelerate results for countries through more collaboration and accountability for common results, notably through UNSDCF¹⁸³. Some possibility might exist, for instance, to reallocate portions of unused funding from the COVID-19 response to pooled funding aimed at recovery from the pandemic. In general, the RCO has a role to play as a key broker of new streams of funding for key programmes. This includes the role of interlocutor between agencies and donors to solicit information about how joint programming proposals could better align with donor needs. With guidance from RCO, agencies can take the lead in terms of adjusting their individual programmatic modalities towards work together with the objective of transitioning some bilateral funding flows towards joint funding and programming. Donors themselves stress that the RCO has key responsibility in terms of providing guidance to agencies about where programmatic duplication might be avoided, transaction costs might be reduced, and synergies can be gained. With better coordinated action from all stakeholders more funds for joint action can be

leveraged to improve cooperation and reduce the transaction costs for the UN-associated funds.

¹⁸³ Hub, IISD's. 2019. "Governments, UN Finalize Funding Compact For Sdgs". *Sdg.Iisd.Org*.

<https://sdg.iisd.org/news/governments-un-finalize-funding-compact-for-sdgs/>.



ANNEX A: EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX

The evaluation design matrix is a centrepiece of the evaluation and plays a critical role at all the steps of the evaluation process. For a breakdown of the criteria, key questions, sub-questions, criteria, and data sources related to the UNSDF evaluation, see the evaluation design matrix below; in considering this matrix it is important to note that the questions and sub-questions include references to UN programming principles and lines of inquiry that coincide with the

strategic objectives of the evaluation, as summarised above. Further, all questions and sub-questions are a high-level guide that provides a general frame for evaluation, and questions aimed at individual key informants will be tailored to those stakeholder groups based on those questions that are outlined below. Guidelines pertaining to these specified questions would be communicated to colleagues prior to KIIs and other discussions.

Table 9: Evaluation Design Matrix

Criteria and Key Questions	Sample Evaluation Sub-Questions	Indicators of Success	Means of Verification
<i>Relevance:</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well does the UNSDF reflect the key national development priorities in Sri Lanka? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the UNSDF address the key development challenges in Sri Lanka? Were all geographies, groups, etc. accounted for? To what extent does the UNSDF align development priorities with peacebuilding needs as a continuation of the PPP? To what extent was civil society included in the development of the UNSDF? Which groups were included? Were they inclusive in representing all relevant groups so that no one was left behind? Is this true for district level CSOs, as well as national level CSOs? Was the UNSDF adequately flexible to respond to economic developments, political developments and/or other events in Sri Lanka? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNSDF drivers and indicators coincide with national development priorities and priorities of UN agencies UNSDF is relevant strategic reference and tool for individual agencies in their work Key constituencies, geographies, etc. are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary sources include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sri Lanka Preparedness and Response Plan COVID-19 National Policy Framework Sustainable Sri Lanka 2030 Vision and Strategic Path Strategy for Public Service Delivery Voluntary National Review;



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How relevant is the UNSDF for setting, implementing, and monitoring UN priorities? • How well did the UNSDF adapt to the changing policy and programming environment? • How aligned is the UNSDF with its comparative advantage in a MIC like Sri Lanka? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does the UNSDF fully reflect the interests, priorities, and mandate of UN agencies in the country? • To what extent has the UNSDF integrated leanings identified by the 2016 UN CCA and the MTR and the evaluation of the UNDAF 2013-2017 relevant to the UNSDF throughout its implementation? • Was the UNSDF adequately flexible to respond to economic developments, political developments and/or other events in Sri Lanka? • Has the COVID-19 pandemic threatened to reverse progress made towards the SDGs in Sri Lanka? What are those areas most under threat of reversal? • Was the ‘business model’ of the UN in Sri Lanka under the UNSDF optimised to development priorities in a MIC? • What policy innovations in partnership with government are considered to be ‘impactful’ and ‘scalable’? 	<p>represented in drivers and indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN business model fits the MIC context in Sri Lanka • UNSDF has adapted relative to shifting economic, social, and political landscape in Sri Lanka 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CCA 2021 ○ UNSDF 2018-2022 ○ UNDAF 2013-2017 Final Evaluation ○ Voluntary Peoples Review, • KIIs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ UN actors involved in development of the UNSDF (including those who have contributed to driver and outcome groups) ○ Other RCO and agency stakeholders ○ Government representatives ○ CSOs • Online questionnaire
Criteria and Key Questions	Sample Evaluation Sub-Questions	Indicators of Success	Means of Verification
<i>Coherence:</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well did the DaO approach promote coherence across the UN in Sri Lanka? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the UNSDF approach ensured that successful interventions and projects are replicable and leverageable elsewhere in the country’s development agenda and Sri Lanka’s efforts towards the SDGs? • To what extent has the UNSDF brought greater coherence to the UN’s activities by highlighting key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN in Sri Lanka is fit for purpose and priorities and activities are positioned according 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary sources include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PPP ○ Peacebuilding Context Assessment ○ CCAs 2016 and 2021



	<p>synergies, inter-linkages, or opportunities for collaboration across agencies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was the UNSDF helpful in formulating a coherent response to the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19? Were all agencies equally effective in responding to the pandemic? Were there any challenges? 	<p>to its comparative advantage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framework was designed and delivered in line with international and national programming principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN SDG Cooperation Framework Companion Package, UNSDCF Guidelines UNDAF 2013-2017 Final UNDAF Final Evaluation UNSDF 2018-2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the UN working capitalising on the comparative advantages and capacities of other actors (e.g., government, INGOs, and CSOs)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the UN in Sri Lanka in its current form fit for purpose to deliver on the 2030 Agenda in a Middle-Income Country like Sri Lanka? To what extent has the current UNSDF supported better, more integrated, SDG-focused policy support? Has the current UNSDF helped coordinate, harmonise, or complement activities with key non-UN actors (e.g., development banks and other IFIs) for better results? To what extent has the UN in Sri Lanka leveraged partnerships with civil society, private sector, local government, parliament, national human rights institutions, gender equality advocates and other partners to achieve its strategic objectives? Has the UNSDF contributed to a better-shared understanding of the UN's activities in Sri Lanka with our key partners? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNSDF was incorporated evidence, analysis, and recommendations from relevant strategic documents and evaluations, building on these and scaling up successes where possible UNSDF used DaO approach to promote overall strategic and operational coherence through joint programming and other collaborative activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KIIs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results groups leads and other relevant actors in UNSDF working and thematic groups (including those who have contributed to driver and outcome groups) RCO and agency actors at the strategic level Government representatives Online questionnaire
Criteria and Key Questions	Sample Evaluation Sub-Questions	Indicators of Success	Means of Verification



Effectiveness:

- Are indicator targets under Driver 1 met? And has UN system contributed towards improved data, knowledge management and evidence-based policy?

- What are the areas of government data capacity development that have been the strongest/weakest during the UNSDF period? What needs to be done support this area? What role can the UN in Sri Lanka play?
- Do key government plans, strategies, policies, etc. have data (i.e., evidence-base) supporting their design? What about their implementation and monitoring by civil servants?
- To what extent did UNSDF strengthen the capacities for data collection and analysis to ensure disaggregated data on the basis of race, colour, sex, geographic location, etc. and did those subject to discrimination and disadvantage benefited from priority attention?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the statistical capacities of the country to create a baseline driver indicators and to monitor and report on their progress? What are the opportunities to improve data collection and use?
- Is the government able to contribute to monitoring of the UNSDF process? How strong are data capacities under each driver? What about key policies and programmes under it?

- Are indicator targets under Driver 2 met? And has UN system contributed to strengthened

- As there been key legislation, strategies, and plans the government has passed during the UNSDF period? How did the UN support/facilitate these processes? Have these changes translated into more effective

- UN system activities articulated in the UNSDF have driven progress towards, or supported achievement of driver indicators
- UN activities stemming from the UNSDF have strengthened economic and individual resilience and contributed to reducing vulnerability against shocks and crises
- UNSDF activities have institutionalised progress towards UN normative agenda and human rights
- UN activities stemming from the UNSDF have improved the position of most marginal

- Secondary sources include:
 - Data sources identified in the UNSDF
 - Other data sources: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Demographic and Health Survey, census data and official statistics, and other specific representative surveys carried out by UN agencies and partners.
 - UN Sri Lanka Annual Report
 - UN One Country Reports
 - RCO Annual Report
 - Agency Annual Country Reports
 - Evaluations of important interventions
- KIIs include:



<p>innovative public intuitions and engagement toward a lasting peace?</p>	<p>institutions at all levels of government? In all regions? For all constituencies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there clear examples or evidence that show how governance has improved during the latest UNSDF mandate? Have these changes translated into more effective institutions at all levels of government? In all regions? For all constituencies? • What needs to be done to develop remaining institutional gaps? • To what extent have priorities identified to the PPP been implemented to achieve the country's peacebuilding and reconciliation vision? • How has good governance and institutional progress support peace and transitional justice? • To what extent does good governance and access to justice (that treats all groups fairly, equitably and without discrimination) serve the interests of human rights? Gender equality? Youth empowerment? And 'no one left behind'? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNSDF has promoted a just transition to environmental sustainability and addressed environmental and sustainability concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Results groups leads and other relevant actors in UNSDF working and thematic groups (including those who have contributed to driver and outcome groups) ○ RCO and agency actors at the strategic level ○ Agency actors at technical level ○ Government, CSOs (especially those representing marginal groups),
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are indicator targets under Driver 3 met? And has UN system contributed to human security and socioeconomic resilience? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What needs to be done to ensure that economic growth overcomes persistent pockets geographical poverty? And large and persistent disparities in employment outcomes remain between men and women? • What can the UN do to work with the government to initiate reforms to move toward a modern social protection system would serve as an investment in social and economic resilience in Sri Lanka? • Has there been improved and maintained progress in many key social development indicators (increased life 		



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are indicator targets under Driver 4 met? And has UN system contributed to enhancing resilience to climate change, and disasters and strengthening environmental management? 	<p>expectancy, reduced infant and maternal mortality rates, increased school enrolment, achievement of gender parity in schools, and the country's reduced poverty rate)? What role has the UN in Sri Lanka played in contributing to these?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has progress be consistent (e.g., across age, sex, urban-rural, region, ethnicity, etc.)? • What are the key challenges still remaining in improving progress towards key indicators? What needs to be done to meet these challenges? • Have there been joint efforts among UN agencies to strengthen the effectiveness and responsiveness of essential social services (health, education, and the social safety net)? In what ways have these joint efforts strengthened systems to deliver quality services? • Have capacities been appropriately built to integrate environmental, climate and disaster considerations into government development planning? What are the remaining capacity gaps? How can these be filled? • How have these supported overall resilience and adaptive capacities to environmental, climate and disaster events? • Has rising wealth (driver 3) changed consumption patterns for food, water, energy, etc. in a way that makes it more difficult to achieve driver 4? What conservation and sustainable management practices (land, forests, wildlife, and fish) have been put in place? How did the UN contribute (technical assistance, support for regulatory frameworks and policies)? What role has civil society play in this regard? 		
--	---	--	--



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given Sri Lanka’s small overall impact on climate, what can be done from the perspective of resilience and adaptability to mitigate the effects of: natural disasters, extreme weather, etc.? And how to support GoSL to help ensure that policy ambitions translate into practical implementation? What role can increase the capacity of Sri Lanka’s risk analysis, early-warning systems, anticipatory action, preparedness, and emergency response play in mitigating climate-related impacts? How has climate and sustainability been streamlined into the other drivers (e.g., climate smart communities; sustainable livelihoods, etc.)? 		
Criteria and Key Questions	Sample Evaluation Sub-Questions	Indicators of Success	Means of Verification
<i>Orientation towards Impact:</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the UNSDF adequately use RBM to ensure a logical chain of results and establish an M&E framework? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the UNSF M&E Group effectively promote RBM tools and principles in UNSDF annual planning, monitoring, and reporting? What were the successes? Challenges? How can challenges be overcome? Does the UN in Sri Lanka work together on data, analytics, monitoring, and using the same data for its shared policy/programming? How effective has this been (i.e., setting common standards for monitoring and reporting, and applying these given divergent agency needs)? Are there ways that shared data usage can be improved? “Innovation” is given a specific focus in the UNSDF, what does innovation mean in terms of the design of the framework and its ToC? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The UNSDF has achieved the results outlined in the results framework, in a way that targeted and benefited the people and institutions targeted by the interventions Where UNSDF target indicators are unavailable, M&E has been undertaken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary sources include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN Sri Lanka Annual Report UN One Country Reports RCO Annual Report Agency Annual Country Reports Evaluations of important interventions



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can innovation be measured (e.g., UNSDF lists innovative data uses, climate conducive innovation, non-traditional collaboration, etc.)? • What are examples of innovative interventions implemented under the UNSDF period? Were these successful? Have they been brought to scale? 	<p>according to other relevant measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RBM is incorporated into on-going monitoring of the UNSDF and related activities across all drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 In Sri Lanka</i> ○ <i>UNSDF 2018-2022</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective has the UN been in working towards each driver outlined in the UNSDF? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are examples of key interventions that have been put in place to support each driver? Have they been evaluated? What were the successes? What were the challenges? • What have been the benefits for the people and institutions targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalised population? • For those indicators that do not have baselines or targets (2.1, 2.2, 3.1, and 3.2) and those that do not have targets (3.3 and 3.4), how do you define and measure progress? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In pursuing its priorities and activities the UNSDF applied innovative strategies programming approaches, monitoring methods, etc. • UNSDF contributed to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, environmental sustainability and support followed human rights principles and contribute to the promotion of human rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIIs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Results groups leads and other relevant actors in UNSDF working and thematic groups (including those who have contributed to driver and outcome groups) ○ RCO and agency actors at the strategic level ○ Agency actors at technical level ○ Donors and international financial institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent was the design and implementation of the UNSDF consistent with the country's international on human rights and the recommendations of human rights mechanisms (Including its commitments to SDGs under the 2030 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the UNSDF prioritised the needs of those who need assistance most (e.g., the most vulnerable, the poor and the marginalised)? How are vulnerability hotspots identified and beneficiaries targeted in the context of an MIC - are there are examples of UN direct implementation and what is the justification? • Has the UN in Sri Lanka ensured that unintended or negative effects on the population or social groups outside their programme's scope have been properly addressed and/or minimised? • Were specific provisions made to focus development intervention in specific geographies? (e.g., rural areas, 		



<p>Agenda Sustainable Development)?</p> <p>for</p>	<p>or war-affected Northern and Eastern provinces; and Uva province)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the UN in Sri Lanka’s work properly addressed human-rights issues? • Which commitments to international norms and standards are being achieved and which are not? • Did the UNSDF effectively use the principles of environmental sustainability to strengthen its contribution to national development results? 		
Criteria and Key Questions	Sample Evaluation Sub-Questions	Indicators of Success	Means of Verification
<i>Efficiency:</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the DaO approach promote efficiencies among UN agencies? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the UNSDF help identify strategic priorities? Promoting partnership? Joint resource mobilisation? And improving coordination to deliver as one and ‘speak with one voice’? • Has the DaO Business Operations Strategy resulted in more common services and the removal of redundancies, resulting in greater efficiencies and the optimal use of resources. More harmonised programme and business practices build on economies of scale and reduce transaction costs, for the UN and its partners? • Have synergies between UN agencies helped to achieve broader-based results and greater value for money than would have been the case, had the work been done individually? • How could the UNSDF transaction costs be further reduced? (i.e., could its implementation have been 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNSDF was fully funded and implemented in a timely way • UNSDF was used effectively to reduce transaction costs for partners through greater UN coherence and discipline • UNSDF collectively prioritised activities based on the demand-side needs rather than on the availability of supply- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary sources include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ UN Sri Lanka Annual Report ◦ UN One Country Reports ◦ RCO Annual Report ◦ Agency Annual Country Reports ◦ Evaluations of important interventions ◦ Common Budgetary Framework



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the UNSDF adequately funded and implemented in a timely manner? 	<p>more efficient?) If so, how and in what areas of intervention?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What other strategies do you consider critical for enhancing programme efficiency? How adequate has the UNSDF been in facilitating the effective reallocation of resources to emerging needs and priorities due to political shocks, COVID-19 pandemic, etc.? Was the UNSDF supported by an integrated funding framework and by adequate funding instruments? What were the gaps, if any? Have resources been allocated efficiently? Were all drivers properly funded based on the estimated total budgets outlined for each under the UNSDF? If not, what were the shortfalls (i.e., amounts)? Were there factors to explain lower-than-anticipated resources mobilisation? And what were the impacts of these shortfalls? Where there any challenges when it came to programming due to different funding structures, programming cycles timeframes, etc. across agencies? In what drivers were the UNSDF resources put to best/poorest use (i.e., there were they achieved the best value-for-money relative to impact? Has the UNSDF facilitated the identification of and access to new financing flows at scale for national partners? 	<p>side resources, and reallocated resources according to the collective priorities and changing needs if/where necessary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNSDF facilitated the effective reallocation of resources to emerging needs and priorities UNSDF facilitated the identification of and access to new financing flows at scale for national partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other budgetary information/data KIIs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results groups leads and other relevant actors in UNSDF working and thematic groups (including those who have contributed to driver and outcome groups) RCO and agency actors at the strategic level Agency actors at technical level Donors and international financial institutions
Criteria and Key Questions	Sample Evaluation Sub-Questions	Indicators of Success	Means of Verification



Coordination:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To what extent has the UNSDF fostered internal coordination, through the promotion of synergies and inter-linkages between its interventions? ● How effectively did different UN stakeholders coordinate under the UNSDF? ● Has the UNSDF strengthened the position, credibility and reliability of the UN system as a partner for the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What role has the UNSDF served as a coordination mechanism towards DaO under the five pillars: One Programme, Common Budgetary Framework, One Fund, One Leader, Communicating as One, and Operating as One?? How might it be improved in this regard for the future? ● What are the mechanisms for turning information sharing and joint planning into joint implementation? What are the main impediments to this? ● Have different UN agencies contributed to the functioning and consolidation of UN in Sri Lanka coordination mechanisms keeping in mind the spirit of the UN reform and adhering to it? ● What have key non-resident agencies played a role in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the UNSDF? Is it sufficient (inclusive, meaningful, etc.)? ● To what extent the planning and coordination of UNSDF structures (e.g., through the Results Groups with the RCO support) efficiently contributed to a coherent implementation and to the achievement of indicators targets? How was this affected by structural changes from driver groups to outcome groups to Results Groups? What are the lessons going forward? ● What other mechanisms were created throughout the implementation process to ensure participation of civil society and other partners? ● To what extent has the UNSDF promoted complementarity, harmonisation and co-ordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordination has enhanced ability to deliver as one, helping agencies to effectively balance and coordinate collective efforts with individual agency priorities ● UNSDF has strengthened the position, credibility, and reliability of the UN in Sri Lanka ● UN in Sri Lanka engaged effective and impactful partnerships with civil society, private sector, and other development partners ● UNSDF has laid a platform for future collaborations between UN actors and key partners ● UN system effectively coordinated and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Secondary sources include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>UN Sri Lanka Annual Report</i> ○ <i>UN One Country Reports</i> ○ <i>RCO Annual Report</i> ○ <i>Agency Annual Country Reports</i> ○ <i>Evaluations of important interventions</i> ● KIIs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Results groups leads and other relevant actors in UNSDF working and thematic groups (including those who have contributed to driver and outcome groups) ○ RCO and agency actors at the strategic level ○ Agency actors at technical level ○ Government, CSOs (especially those
--	---	--	---



government and other actors?	with non-UN key actors to maximise the achievement of results? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role does the government play as an effective oversight entity that helps with align to national priorities UNSDF and hold the UN accountable to deliver? Is the process inclusive and transparent? 	communicated changing priorities due to political shocks, COVID-19, etc.	representing marginal groups),
Criteria and Key Questions	Sample Evaluation Sub-Questions	Indicators of Success	Means of Verification
<i>Sustainability:</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the likelihood that development progress is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What UNSDF achievements are likely/unlikely to continue beyond the 2018-2022 period? • What factors could undermine the sustainability of the UNSDF? • Were risks and change adequately accounted for in the development of the UNSDF? • Is the current UN business model (or implementation model) likely to become embedded? How will this enhance sustainability? • How can the sustainability of the UNSDF be enhanced in future? • How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect indicators of ‘middleness’ (e.g., sustainability of income indicators and other indicators of well-being, etc.)? What can be learned from this experience for future iterations of the UNSDF to promote sustainability? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success under UNDAF 2013-2017 have been consolidated and built on under the UNSDF 2018-2022 • UNSDF was used as a mechanism to promote and establish socio-political, institutional, financial and environmental sustainability, with benefits to the most marginal groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary sources include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ UN Sri Lanka Annual Report ◦ UN One Country Reports ◦ RCO Annual Report ◦ Agency Annual Country Reports ◦ Evaluations of important interventions • KIIs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ RCO and agency actors at the strategic level



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the buy-in of public institutions to participate in the plan, implement and evaluate relevant policies and programmes under the UNSDF? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent and in what ways did UNSDF contribute to capacity development of government and civil society institutions? • What are the key bottlenecks and capacity constraints for planning, implementing and monitoring within government? What ideas do stakeholders have about how they can be overcome? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts under UNSDF led to key policy and institutional changes across drivers, building capacities of national partners and stakeholders to sustain UNSDF gains over time • UNSDF activities have further entrenched peace and transitional justice in Sri Lanka 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Government, CSOs (especially those representing marginal groups), • Online questionnaire
--	--	--	---



ANNEX B: SECONDARY SOURCES AND DATA

Key documents that were consulted in a review of secondary sources and data included (documents are directly cited in the footnotes to the report):

- *Sri Lanka Preparedness and Response Plan COVID-19*, April 2020
- *COVID-19 Contingent Emergency Response Component - CERC: Environmental And Social Framework*, June 2020
- *GoSL Budget Speeches*, 2017-2021
- *Election Manifesto: Gotabaya Rajapakse - Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour*, 2019
- *National Policy Framework - Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour*, GoSL, 2019
- *Public Investment Programme*, GoSL, 2017-2020
- *Sustainable Sri Lanka 2030 Vision and Strategic Path*, GoSL, January 2019
- *Strategy for Public Service Delivery*, GoSL, 2018
- *Sri Lanka Voluntary National Review*, June 2018
- *Sri Lanka Draft CCA 2021 and CCA 2016*
- *United Nations Sri Lanka Annual Report 2020*
- *Peacebuilding Priority Plan*, UN Sri Lanka
- *Peacebuilding Context Assessment*, UN Sri Lanka
- *UN One Country Reports*
- *RCO Annual Report*
- *Agency Annual Country Reports 2020* (where available)
- *Evaluations of important interventions* (e.g., flagship programmes, joint programmes, etc.)
- *UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 In Sri Lanka*, June 2020
- *UN SDG Cooperation Framework Companion Package*, May 2020
- *Sri Lanka UNSDF 2018-2022*
- *Sri Lanka UNDAF Framework 2013-2017*
- *UNDAF 2013-2017 MTR*, 2015
- *UNDAF 2013-2017 Final Evaluation*, 2017
- *Voluntary Peoples Review*, Sri Lanka, 2018
- *Human Development Report 2014: Sri Lanka*, UNDP
- *Human Development Report 2015: Sri Lanka*, UNDP
- *Human Development Report 2020: Sri Lanka*, UNDP
- *Department of Census and Statistics, Computer Literacy Statistics*, 2020
- *The World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank, Climate Risk Country Profile: Sri Lanka* (2020)
- “*ND-GAIN Country Index*”, University of Notre Dame, 2021
- *Election Manifesto: Maithripala Sirisena – Maithri: Compassionate Government, A Stable Country*, 2015
- “*Open Data Platform*”, The World Bank Group
- *Status of Sustainable Development Goals Indicators in Sri Lanka: 2017*, Department of Census and Statistics, GoSL
- *Election Manifesto: United National Front*, 2015
- *Ministry of Justice*, website, 2021
- *Ministry of Mahaweli Development Environment, National Adaptation Plan for Climate Change Impacts in Sri Lanka, 2016-2025*, 2016.
- *Roadmap for Disaster Risk Reduction – Safe and Resilient Sri Lanka*, Ministry of Disaster Management (in cooperation with: Japan International Cooperation Agency)



- *National Disaster Risk Management Plan 2018-2030 (draft)*, Disaster Management Centre, 2018
- *Nationally Determined Contributions 2016*, Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment, GoSL
- *Sri Lanka National REDD+ Investment Framework and Action Plan (NRIFAP) 2018*, The Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment, GoSL
- *Review of the National Statistical System of Sri Lanka 2019*, Department of Census and Statistics, GoSL
- *Telecommunication Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka, Statistical Reports*, GoSL
- “United Nations E-Government Survey”, 2018
- Parliament of Sri Lanka, GoSL, <https://www.parliament.lk/> [accessed 21 October 2021]
- ILOSTAT, ILO, <https://ilostat ilo.org/> [accessed 19 October 2021]
- *State of School Feeding Worldwide 2020*, WFP
- UNICEF, UNICEF Data: Monitoring the situation of children and women (2021)
- The Global Health Observatory, 2021, WFP
- “Talking Economics Series”, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka
- “Labour Force Bulletin Q1 2020”, DCS, GoSL
- *Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2018*, DCS, GoSL
- “Global Climate Risk Index 2018”, Germanwatch e.V.
- “Global Climate Risk Index 2021”, Germanwatch e.V.
- “INFORM Risk Index 2018”, INFORM
- “INFORM Risk Index 2022”, INFORM
- *Disaster Risk Reduction in Sri Lanka Status Report 2019*, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
- “UN Water – Sri Lanka”, UN in Sri Lanka, <https://www.unwater.org/country/asia-and-the-pacific/sri-lanka/> [accessed 22 October 2021]
- “Integrated Water Management”, UNDP, <https://www.lk.undp.org/content/srilanka/en/home/projects/Integrated-Water-Management-Project.html>
- *Updated Nationally Determined Contributions 2021*, Ministry of Environment, GoSL
- Climate Promise, UNDP, www.undp.org/climate-promise [accessed 29 October 2021]
- *PBF Project Progress Report 15 November 2019 - 30 June 2020*, PBO
- “Catalytic Support to Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka”, UN Habitat, <https://lk.one.un.org/our-work/catalytic-support/> [accessed 21 October 2021]
- Department of Census and Statistics, Women’s Wellbeing Survey 2019
- *Final Evaluation of Addressing Climate Change Impacts on Marginalized Agricultural Communities Living in the Mahaweli River Basin of Sri Lanka from 2013 to 2020*, WFP
- The Commonwealth, Global Youth Development Report 2020
- “Youth Policy Labs”, www.youthpolicy.org [accessed 29 October 2021]
- *United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME), Report 2020*, UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation



ANNEX C: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

Within the UNDS, stakeholders consulted included: RCO representatives, actors from agencies participating in UNSDF Results Groups, Thematic Groups, etc., agency representatives with relevant strategic and technical knowledge, and others, so that respondents are broadly representative of UNSDF drivers, the UN's normative agenda, peacebuilding priorities, etc. For government, respondents were drawn from those ministries and offices directly linked to the strategic direction and oversight (e.g., Department of National Planning,

Sustainable Development Council, etc.), as well technical expertise in the implementation and monitoring of key UNSDF activities (e.g., ministries included in as development partners). CSO interviews are to focus on key implementing partners and groups advocating for vulnerable constituencies (e.g., women, youth, refugees and displaced persons, persons with disabilities, etc.), to help ensure that evaluation design adheres to principle of no one left behind. Further, care will also be taken to ensure inclusive representation and perspectives from respondents representing different: genders, regions, ethnicities, ages, etc.

The following stakeholders were consulted as part of this evaluation:

1. Asian Development Bank (ADB)
2. Australian High Commission in Sri Lanka
3. British High Commission in Sri Lanka
4. Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA)
5. Ceylon Chamber of Commerce
6. Chrysalis, Sri Lanka
7. Department of Census and Statistics
8. Embassy of Japan in Sri Lanka
9. Environmental Foundation Limited
10. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)
11. Former Commissioner, Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka
12. Former Consultant/Formal Team Leader, Office of the Resident Coordinator
13. HelpAge Sri Lanka
14. High Commission of Canada in Sri Lanka
15. Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka
16. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
17. International Labour Organization (ILO)
18. International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
19. Sustainable Development Council (SDC)
20. The Asia Foundation
21. The Good Practice Group
22. Office of the Resident Coordinator (RCO)
23. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
24. United Nations Communications Group (UNCG)
25. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
26. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN)
27. Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena
28. Social Organisations Networking for Development (SOND)
29. State Ministry of Home Affairs
30. State Ministry of National Security and Disaster Management
31. State Ministry of Samurdhi, Household Economy, Micro Finance, Self-Employment and Business Development
32. State Ministry of Women and Child Development, Pre-schools and Primary Education, School Infrastructure & Education Services
33. Sustainable Development Council (SDC)
34. The Asia Foundation
35. The Good Practice Group
36. Office of the Resident Coordinator (RCO)
37. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
38. United Nations Communications Group (UNCG)
39. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
40. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN)



19. Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya
20. Ministry of Agriculture
21. Ministry of Education
22. Ministry of Environment
23. Ministry of Health
24. Ministry of Justice
25. Ministry of Labour
26. Ministry of Trade

41. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
42. United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat)
43. United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)
44. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
45. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
46. United Nations Volunteers (UNV)
47. Women and Media Collective
48. World Food Programme (WFP)
49. World Health Organization (WHO)



ANNEX D: SELECTION CRITERIA FOR KEY INFORMANTS

For UN Agencies, selection criteria prioritised management level key informants, as well as those with key sectoral and technical expertise related to UNSDF priorities and direct participation in UNSDF processes and institutions.

- RCO representatives.
- Representatives and Deputy Representatives of UN agencies in Sri Lanka.
- UN officials who had in various ways contributed to the creation of the UNSDF 2018-2022.
- Agency leads for Outcome, Driver, Results and Thematic Groups.

For government partners, priority was given to those line ministries most involved in working with UN agencies, as well as those most directly connected to the UNSDF process.

- Ministries and departments identified by assessing the relevant UN programmes, further validated by RCO and UN Agencies.
- Officials nominated by relevant Government Ministries as key informants.

For donors and IFIs:

- Identified and prioritised as per size of funding towards UN programmes, further validated by the RCO.

For CSOs and other individual interviewees:

- Organisations identified by assessing the relevant UN programmes, further validated by RCO and UN Agencies.
- Organisations from across Sri Lanka, different representing rights holders inclusive of representatives of key groups (women, youth, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, etc.).
- Individual interviewees focused on those with insight and expertise in relation to key UNSDF priorities and activities.

For the private sector:

- Business networks representing a cross-section of the private sector in Sri



