



Working together to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

**Joint annex on the common chapter of the strategic plans, 2018–2021  
of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women**

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## **I. Introduction**

1. The respective strategic plans for 2018–2021 of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) incorporate a common chapter to enhance collaboration in line with their respective mandates. This unprecedented alignment was anchored in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 (of 21 December 2016) on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR), and it anticipated the repositioning of the United Nations development system (UNDS) in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. Important shifts within the United Nations system over the past few years have guided the four agencies as they implemented their strategic plans and, in 2021, developed new ones for the period 2022–2025. At the country level, new or revised instruments and mechanisms shifted the focus from the common chapter as a separate initiative in the early stage to the broader implementation of the United Nations reforms adopted through the General Assembly resolution 72/279 in June 2018. In 2020, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) response further brought the system together at the global level, validating the need for joint programmatic work through the systemwide harmonization of processes, results architecture, approaches and methodologies.

3. In December 2020, General Assembly resolution 75/233 on the QCPR emphasized the need for a more integrated and coherent system-wide offer. Its monitoring and reporting framework, developed under the coordination of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 2021, reflects the need for system-wide action on 27 of the 66 new or expanded QCPR mandates, including in such key areas as climate action, partnerships and financing.

4. The four agencies’ new strategic plans for 2022–2025 respond to these shifts and build on lessons learned from the implementation of the common chapter, including the findings of the 2020 evaluability assessment, which showed that greater progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals can only be achieved through coordinated action and integrated, multidimensional approaches across sectors, partners and programming areas. The respective plans articulate each agency’s contributions to UNDS reform, align with the 2020 QCPR, and embody a country-focused approach where comparative and collective advantages steer support to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) and the United Nations country teams (UNCTs). In developing their underlying theories of change, each agency identified strategic areas of collaboration with other United Nations entities to better leverage the expertise of the entire United Nations to scale up impacts and accelerate change towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. In this context, this joint annex to the annual reports of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UN-Women highlights the key results collaboratively achieved at global, regional and country levels, as well as the challenges faced in implementing the common chapter in its final year. A compendium on common Sustainable Development Goal indicators and a tracking framework of the common chapter in the respective strategic plans for 2018–2021 are included as annexes.

## **II. Highlights of key achievements, 2018–2021**

### **2018–2021 progress scorecard in six key areas of collaboration**

6. In line with the commitment made in the common chapter of their strategic plans, 2018–2021, as well as with broader United Nations reform efforts, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women worked in a complementary manner and collaboratively, both in the field and at headquarters, to support the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. Over the past four years, joint work between the agencies took many forms, from designing and implementing joint programmes in the six key areas of collaboration of the common chapter, conducting Common Country Analyses and co-designing a new generation of UNSDCF's within UNCTs, to ensuring a cohesive and effective pivot of all programming to better respond to the unprecedented crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. Overall progress can be assessed through the tracking framework of the common chapter (see annex 2) which was introduced in 2020. It draws on the Integrated Results and Resources Frameworks 2018–2021 of the four agencies. Support from the four agencies working on the common chapter contributed to the following key results over the period 2018–2021.

#### **Eradicating poverty**

8. In support of Sustainable Development Goal 1, enhancing social protection and reaching groups in danger of being left behind were key priorities for increased collaboration over the strategic plan 2018–2021 period. Since the onset of the pandemic, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women and other United Nations agencies have conducted socio-economic assessments of the crisis, outlined and identified mitigation strategies to address the impacts, and engaged with and supported Governments and partners. UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF partnered in several countries in 2021, including Jamaica, Nepal, Namibia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, supporting Governments to measure and monitor multidimensional poverty. In 2021, efforts continued to be made to assess and alleviate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the most vulnerable communities. UNFPA and UN-Women together with some development partners released a global assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls with disabilities. UNDP, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners on the ground are working together to help realize the global target of vaccinating at least 70 per cent of the global population against COVID-19 by mid 2022, as a critical foundation for an equitable recovery from the pandemic.

9. Mobilizing financing for the Sustainable Development Goals and supporting Governments to fund social protection and other measures towards more equitable, inclusive societies were key areas of work. The Joint SDG Fund, a multi-partner initiative aims to close the financing gap to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through concerted action by the United Nations system. In 2021, UNDP and UNICEF collaborated on a global finance partnership, with a focus on helping to close funding gaps in social sectors by improving strategic planning and aligning government budgets with the Sustainable Development Goals, while leveraging additional public and private financing. Through the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, UNDP and UN-Women worked with partners to support 73 countries to make their social protection systems responsive to women's specific vulnerabilities and to create additional opportunities for women in the labour force.

10. UNDP, UNICEF, UN-Women, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) supported research conducted in partnership with the subgroup on alignment on national planning, spending and implementation in the cluster on sustainability and climate action, to highlight opportunities for national Governments to integrate social inclusion and climate mitigation and adaptation into national budget processes.

11. In Uzbekistan, UNDP, UNICEF and the International Labour Organization (ILO) supported the Government in establishing a state agency for social protection in 2019. In 2021, the Issue-Based Coalition on Empowerment and Inclusion (composed of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Volunteers, World Food Programme, UNFPA, and UNICEF) in partnership with CONNECT – a pioneering multi-stakeholder network of public and private institutions and non-for-profit organizations in the Asia Pacific region, working together to bridge the gaps in Social Health Protection. In Georgia, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN-Women, together with OHCHR and WHO, contributed to the formulation of a law on the rights of persons with disabilities that was adopted by the parliament in 2020, and strengthened protection mechanisms for children, women and girls with disabilities across the country.

12. The four agencies worked to support productive capacities, decent jobs and sustainable livelihoods – particularly for women, youth and persons with disabilities, and for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises led by them. UNFPA and UNICEF jointly sharpened the learning and life skills in Nepal and other countries covered by the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage. UNDP, UNICEF and UN-Women conducted joint programming efforts, including initiatives in Nepal, Trinidad and Tobago and Uzbekistan, to provide technical and business development skills training, improve access to social protection schemes, promote recovery from COVID-19-related shocks, and support ventures into the digital economy.

### **Addressing climate change**

13. From 2018 to 2021, collaborative efforts to address climate change focused on improved resilience and disaster preparedness as well as disaster risk reduction (DRR). The four agencies leveraged their comparative advantages to ensure that efforts engaged children, young people, women and the most vulnerable groups in societies, and were responsive to their rights and needs.

14. Among other initiatives, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women worked together to implement DRR in countries under the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI). In 2021, CADRI partners revised key sector tools (in water, sanitation and hygiene, education and nutrition) for government capacity development, and revamped joint offers on preparedness and risk information.

15. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, FAO and UNESCO supported efforts to mainstream DRR into local strategies and budgets, and to strengthen the capacities of communities, especially vulnerable groups, to ensure they are more resistant to catastrophes. In Bangladesh, UNDP, UN-Women and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), through the National Resilience

Programme, worked to strengthen policy frameworks and build the capacities of sectoral stakeholders to build risk-informed and gender-responsive plans as a means of strengthening resilience.

16. Together with other partners, the four agencies contributed to the development of official guidelines on the integration of DRR and climate change adaptation in UNSDCFs, and to a common guidance note on building resilient societies. In 2021, the Guidance Note on Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, accompanied by a training package, and the UN Common Guidance on Helping Build Resilient Societies were rolled out with UNCTs, while the Checklist and Recommendations for Scaling up Disaster Risk Reduction in Humanitarian Action was built upon through implementation of a senior leadership group recommendation to scale up DRR/climate change adaptation in humanitarian efforts, with a mapping of capacities co-led by UNDP, UNICEF, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Led by UNFPA, UNDRR and UN-Women, together with a wider task team of 22 United Nations agencies including UNDP and UNICEF, a United Nations joint study on the status of gender equality and women's leadership in DRR was issued, with an accompanying action plan, which identifies critical actions for the United Nations system to make significant and practical progress on gender equality in DRR by 2030.

17. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee produced a technical note titled Linking DRR and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS): Practical Tools, Approaches and Case Studies, as the first global guidance on integrating MHPSS and DRR and better address Priority 4 of the Sendai Framework, which explicitly includes psychosocial support – a provision that many countries struggle to implement.

18. Through the Nationally Determined Contributions partnership (NDC Partnership), common chapter agencies and other United Nations entities supported a pavilion and advocacy activities at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26), including a side event and the release of a paper titled 'Making climate policies with and for young people'. During the 2021 inaugural NDC Partnership Youth Engagement Forum, participants reflected on lessons learned for meaningful engagement with young people within NDC processes, implementation projects and recommendations.

19. UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, the United Nations Environment Programme and FAO led efforts to update the national climate change policy in Jordan, doubling the country's NDCs to a 28 per cent reduction by 2030. In Rwanda, the African Development Bank issued its first green bond to inject \$50 million into renewable energy, clean transportation, sustainable water, waste management and biodiversity conservation. In Suriname, UNDP, UNFPA and partners worked together – through the joint programme funded by the Joint SDG Fund – to strengthen the financial sector, the artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector, commercial forests, community forests, non-timber forest products and protected areas.

### **Improving adolescent and maternal health**

20. Over the past four years, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women have worked jointly, with key partners to address socioeconomic and cultural barriers as well as bottlenecks in health systems. Through key partnerships such as the H6 partnership; UNAIDS; UHC2030 (the global movement to build stronger health systems for universal health coverage); the Global Action Plan on Healthy Lives and Well-being;

and country-level joint programmes on reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, the four agencies have sought to increase the volume and coherence of technical support, policy engagement, advocacy and investments to improve adolescent and maternal health worldwide.

21. Access to essential services such as health and education remained important as the pandemic continued, and extensive support was provided to health-care systems, including HIV and tuberculosis-related services. Together with other UNAIDS cosponsors and its secretariat, the four agencies supported Governments, civil society and United Nations partners in 106 countries to strengthen HIV and tuberculosis responses, with a focus on human rights, gender, key populations and sustainable financing.

22. UNDP, UNFPA and UNAIDS worked together to support the Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS in developing action plans for civil society organizations in Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, to ensure continued access to services addressing gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health services and antiretroviral drugs for women living with HIV and other vulnerable women during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Cuba, a joint programme involving the four agencies and WHO contributed to strengthening the national response to HIV.

23. The mid-term review of the joint United Nations regional programme (2018-2020) that combines the efforts of UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO to improve the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of all people in Eastern and Southern Africa, particularly adolescent girls, young people, and key populations, confirmed that significant progress was made across all four objectives of creating an enabling legal and policy environment, scaling up the provision of client-centred quality assured integrated and sustainable SRHR, HIV, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) services, empowering all people to exercise their SRH rights, and amplifying the lessons learnt from the implementation of the Joint United Nations Regional Programme to strengthen integrated SRHR, HIV, SGBV services for all people, in particular among adolescent girls, young people and key populations in the Eastern and Southern Africa region, by 2021.

24. At the 2021 Generation Equality Forum, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNESCO and UN-Women launched Education Plus, a new initiative to accelerate action and investments to ensure secondary education for all young people. The initiative responds to the urgent need to effectively address the increasing rates of HIV among adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa, further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Lesotho and Sierra Leone have signed on to champion the initiative with a wide range of commitments.

25. In response to a disrupted supply chain due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNFPA combined procurement efforts with UNICEF and other partners to meet immediate demand and support countries with limited buying power to access essential sexual and reproductive health related supplies.

### **Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls**

26. Between 2018 and 2021, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls remained the most common focus area of most joint programmes within the United Nations system, and among the four agencies implementing the common chapter. Along with other partners, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women harnessed synergies to more effectively promote women's empowerment,

contribute to the elimination of harmful social norms and practices, and address the shadow pandemic of rising gender inequality and gender-based violence during COVID-19.

27. Joint work with WHO, United Nations Statistics Division, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) resulted in a new methodology producing comparable global, regional and country estimates of rates of physical and sexual intimate partner violence, enabling greater understanding of its prevalence, nature and impact, and how it may differ across settings and change over time. In 2021, WHO, UNFPA, and UN-Women provided national partners in Bangladesh, India and Nepal with a first-of-its-kind opportunity to build a common and coordinated vision of effective evidence-based prevention programming.

28. In Zambia, joint programming between UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, ILO and IOM with civil society organizations and the Ministry of Health focused on strengthening institutions, systems and strategies to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in all its forms.

29. Through the first phase of the Gender Justice Platform, and with the support of UNDP and UN-Women, women and girls in 14 conflict-affected countries received support and access to services; 34,179 individuals (89.4 per cent women), including 500 women survivors of SGBV, received access to justice. The partnership built a network with more than 20 partners and contributed to wider initiatives such as the Secretary-General's Transitional Justice guidance note, the Secretary-General's report "Our Common Agenda", the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights, and the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Global guidance set out in the Essential Services Package, a tool developed by UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN-Women and WHO, is now being used in over 60 countries to support survivors across the health, police and justice, and social services sectors, as well as strengthen the coordination of these sectors.

30. UNICEF and UNFPA continued to lead the largest global programme to accelerate the abandonment of female genital mutilation. Fourteen countries under this programme now have legal and policy frameworks banning female genital mutilation, with nearly 1,700 cases of legal enforcement and arrests.

31. Child marriage and early unions are a complex phenomenon related to gender inequalities, poverty, dropout, violence and teenage pregnancy. Child marriage puts girls' lives and health at risk, as well as limiting their future prospects. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to major setbacks in efforts to end child marriage and an estimated 10 million more child marriages may take place before the end of the decade. In response to this challenge, in 2020 and 2021, the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage rapidly developed innovative programming approaches to mitigate the increased risks of child marriage, especially for the most vulnerable adolescent girls. Since 2017, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women have been working together in implementing a regional programme in Latin America and the Caribbean to assure girls who will be adults in 2030 have opportunities for their full development. This initiative is promoting regional and national actions to prevent child marriage and early unions by expanding options for girls and promoting gender equality through education, protection and social inclusion measures, as well as access to key public services. A gender-transformative accelerator tool to assess the structural barriers and bottlenecks to gender equality was field tested in Ethiopia, India, Mozambique and Niger and will be scaled up in 2022. Child marriage-related prevention and care interventions – delivered through safe spaces, mentorship, literacy, sexual and reproductive health services,

and livelihood skills – reached close to 7.6 million adolescent girls across 47 countries, 1.6 million more than in 2020.

32. UNFPA and UN-Women launched a regional report on the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality and women’s empowerment in Eastern and Southern Africa, based on a 28-country study. To advance evidence collection to support gender justice, UNFPA, UNDP, UN-Women and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia collaborated on a joint regional report on the status of women in national legislation in 20 countries in the Asia-Pacific region that highlighted legal gaps and recommendations for change. This also included a review of regional laws and policies related to mental health and sterilization, promoting a supportive and safe legal and policy environment for women with psychosocial disabilities.

33. To improve the effectiveness and collective accountability of humanitarian response for the prevention, risk mitigation and response to all forms of gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies, UNFPA continued to coordinate the gender-based violence area of responsibility with other United Nations entities, especially with UN-Women.

### **Ensuring greater availability and use of disaggregated data for sustainable development**

34. UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women worked collaboratively with the rest of the United Nations to ensure greater availability and use of disaggregated data at all levels in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including leaving no one behind as well as a data-informed COVID-19 response and recovery. One of the key results under this area of work between 2018 and 2021 was the co-design of a socioeconomic framework for the COVID-19 response, as part of the UNSDG Task Force. Common chapter agencies were instrumental in designing the framework, monitoring indicators and taking the lead on UNCT monitoring of key socioeconomic response plan programme indicators at the country level.

35. Support for progress towards the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals remained a high priority. The four agencies supported countries with coordination activities of data producers and users involved in measurement and monitoring, modernizing statistical processes and systems to better support monitoring and strengthen basic statistics and accounts in compiling Sustainable Development Goal indicators. The digital transformation enhanced by COVID-19 provided opportunities to advance and support rapid improvements in digital open planning and monitoring systems for the Sustainable Development Goals. Support continued to sharpen disaggregated data collection and modernize statistical systems. This growing effort to strengthen national statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals bodes well for the future of cooperation and mutual support between government policy agencies and their statistical counterparts.

36. The four agencies supported the global shift towards Sustainable Development Goals localization, with the Goals integrated into local planning and budgeting, and expanded collaboration with leading United Nations and non-United Nations experts to further develop analytical tools for Sustainable Development Goals-based integration, budgeting and financing, and for country-level application. UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank launched a web platform to gather country reports and unify the data collection on multidimensional poverty. The Economic Commission for Africa, UNFPA, WHO, ILO, UNICEF, UNDP, UN Women working together to strengthen integrated data and statistical systems for



sustainable development in the region. In Guinea-Bissau, UNDP and UNICEF jointly developed a study in 2021 to better understand multidimensional poverty among the population, using the Multidimensional Poverty Index and Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis. In Saudi Arabia and the Sudan, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF contributed to the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals to enable reporting on indicators using a digital approach.

37. The common chapter agencies continued to support national Governments in their preparation of voluntary national reviews and in making sure that delegations have access to the best data pertaining to their thematic topics. The fact that these reviews and the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development continued despite COVID-19 attests to the importance with which countries treat the Sustainable Development Goals, even during a period when progress was severely undermined.

38. The four agencies continued to support Governments in strengthening the production, dissemination and use of high-quality, disaggregated data and statistics to monitor national development strategies and plans. In most cases, support was provided in collaboration with UNCTs.

39. OECD, UNDP and UN-Women expanded comparable data on gender-responsive budgeting through monitoring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.c.1. Data from 105 countries and areas show that 26 per cent have systems to track gender budget allocations and 59 per cent have some system features. The data identify moderate progress in integrating gender-responsive budgeting into fiscal standards/guidelines and show areas requiring intensified support.

40. Between 2018 and 2021, 56 national reports (17 in 2021) were produced on Sustainable Development Goal implementation from a gender perspective. The proportion of gender-specific indicators with available data rose from 26 to 40 per cent. The UN-Women and UNDP COVID-19 Policy Tracker and 78 rapid gender assessments on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls shed light on countries' responses; as a result, over 20 countries enacted gender-sensitive policies.

41. UNFPA and UNICEF continued to support governments in strengthening civil registration and vital statistics. In 2021, at the second Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific that was facilitated by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and other United Nations entities, ministers from across Asia and the Pacific recommitted to increasing the number of national birth and death registrations, with an emphasis on reaching the most vulnerable populations.

### **Peacebuilding and sustaining peace**

42. To promote peacebuilding and sustaining peace, collective efforts by the four agencies working on the common chapter sought to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and to enhance the role of women, youth and children in crisis prevention, recovery and peacebuilding. In addition to joint programmes and initiatives within country teams, the four agencies sought greater coherence and impact through a number of partnerships involving other key stakeholders, such as the Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration and the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan for the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic.

43. UNDP, UNFPA and the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, in partnership with the Swedish Agency for Peace, Security and Development, developed *Youth, Peace and*

*Security: A programming handbook*, aiming to strengthen the capacity of practitioners to implement the youth, peace and security agenda. In Sierra Leone, the UNDP, UNFPA and FAO joint programming contributed to reducing tensions and increasing social cohesion and inclusion of at-risk youth in community planning and decision-making in communities, through joint coordination, implementation and monitoring of the project intervention. It also led to learning and experience-sharing opportunities for all partners, helping to harmonize their respective project interventions.

44. The mapping exercise conducted and convened by OCHA in collaboration with UNDP and UNFPA indicated an increasing numbers of countries are implementing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to reduce need, risk and vulnerability. It provided a global overview of where and how nexus approaches are implemented, which covers Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, State of Palestine, Sudan and Ukraine.

45. Across Kyrgyzstan, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women implemented a project funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, to build community resilience to violent and manipulative ideologies through civic education, empowerment and dialogue in target municipalities. The project successfully empowered youth, women and other beneficiaries. Concerning youth, the project increased young people's confidence and self-esteem and helped them to develop critical thinking, communication, teamwork and leadership skills. At the same time, other beneficiaries, such as community leaders, local authorities and adult community members, have been empowered by the project to engage with youth and deliver positive messages to counter violent extremism.

46. In Nigeria, UNFPA and UNICEF collaborated on an inclusive participation project focused on building the capacity of girls and boys on peacebuilding themes in line with the agencies' mandates. The project also worked with local authorities, religious leaders and informal Qur'anic schools. By the end of the project in 2020, 1,500 young people aged 15 to 24 years old were actively participating in debates and conflict-resolution processes for peacebuilding. Inclusive youth participation mechanisms were set up and formalized in five municipalities, and 45 intergenerational dialogue sessions took place, sparking great enthusiasm among the different age groups. In order to create an enabling environment, an electronic platform for youth engagement and participation was created by a group of 50 young people, 45 per cent of whom were girls. The Muryar Matassa ('Voices of Youth') platform has been deployed as an information and data-collection tool with a focus on the COVID-19 pandemic.

47. Through a new global partnership, supported by the Central Emergency Response Fund managed by OCHA, UNFPA and UN-Women responded to high rates of gender-based violence in humanitarian crises in Bangladesh, Cameroon, Colombia, Ethiopia, Myanmar and the State of Palestine.

### **Spotlight Initiative**

48. Since its launch, the Spotlight Initiative has committed to advancing the principles of reform of the United Nations development system. Serving as a unique model for integrated programming, the Initiative has made a concerted effort to bring together the entire United Nations system to eliminate violence against women and girls by leveraging the newly empowered role of the United Nations resident coordinators; harmonizing coordination across UNCTs; effectively capitalizing on existing resources and capacities;

streamlining back offices and operational processes; collectively establishing and strengthening partnerships; and setting clear accountability lines. UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women identified gender-based violence as one of the flagship gender results under the Common Chapter and are the technical co-leads of the Initiative and the main implementing agencies at the country level.

49. The Initiative's inter-agency work has helped programme teams leverage existing coordination mechanisms to better engage civil society and advance the principle of leaving no one behind, including in response to COVID-19 and the climate crisis. The Initiative has also leveraged United Nations agencies' technical expertise to enhance programming and foster a needs-based, context-specific approach. This commitment to "a new way of working" jointly has resulted in global impact, with programmes collectively contributing to key results for women and girls.

50. In 2021, Spotlight contributed to the development or strengthening of 198 laws focused on ending violence against women and girls, or advancing gender equality more broadly. To strengthen the implementation of laws and policies, 913 parliamentarians, 2,639 government officials and 885 women's rights advocates were trained on gender-responsive budgeting and are, as a result, better able to advocate for the allocation of resources to end violence against women and girls across all levels government. Further institutionalizing and improving the sustainability of efforts to end violence, 43 countries strengthened their national action plans to eliminate violence against women and girls with the Initiative's support.

51. Services are critical, particularly during protracted crises, and the Spotlight Initiative helped to strengthen the availability and accessibility of comprehensive multisectoral services for more than 630,000 women and girls in 2021, including through mobile sites, improving reach to marginalized communities. Quality disaggregated data help drive targeted policies and interventions and ensure that the rights of marginalized groups are upheld. Through the Initiative's support, over 75 per cent of countries in which Spotlight programmes supported efforts now have publicly available data on intimate partner violence.

52. Finally, evidence unequivocally demonstrates that support to building and strengthen local feminist, women's rights and grass-roots organizations is essential to ending violence against women and girls, and Spotlight has, since its launch, supported civil society organizations in their efforts in this regard. The Initiative has allocated \$179 million to civil society (49 per cent of its activity funding) and awarded \$144.5 million since its launch. Of this, 72 per cent was invested directly in women's rights and women-led organizations, and 78 per cent in national, local and grass-roots organizations, strengthening a diversity of organizations and movements to catalyse change from the ground up.

### **III. Lessons learned**

53. The introduction of the common chapter has had a positive influence on collaboration among the four agencies. At the same time, constraints have emerged, as highlighted by the important shifts related to the repositioning of the United Nations development system adopted by the General Assembly in 2018.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the four years of the common chapter implementation, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women have learned several valuable lessons, as elaborated below.

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<sup>1</sup> A/RES/72/279.

54. **Working together more effectively entails rethinking comparative advantages.** The common chapter provided the four agencies with the momentum to rethink how they can achieve results in common areas by leveraging the comparative advantage of each agency. An independent survey conducted by the evaluation offices of the four agencies in 2019, as part of an evaluability assessment, found that 55 to 65 per cent of respondents perceived that the common chapter had a positive effect on collaboration – and all respondents identified the common chapter as a key driver or positive influence in improving collaboration among the four agencies.

55. Reporting from regional offices confirmed that the common chapter has strengthened existing mechanisms for planning and working together, as well as enhancing multi-stakeholder partnerships. It has generated incentives to better leverage the collaborative advantages of the four agencies, and beyond, to address cross-border and subregional issues and work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

56. **Clear joint results, action plans and dedicated funding are critical for operationalization of joint efforts.** While the introduction of the common chapter created positive momentum, the agencies encountered several challenges during its operationalization. As part of the strategic plans of the four agencies, the common chapter identified six key areas of collaboration and four ways of working together. Lacking clear joint results or action plans, it was interpreted more as a commitment to working together or “as a statement of intent that did not lend itself to operationalization.”<sup>2</sup>

57. As a way to operationalize the common chapter, in 2018 accelerator initiatives were identified across all regions to achieve greater and more transformational results around the Sustainable Development Goals. While global pooled funds such as the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund and the Joint SDG Fund have created important incentives to operationalize the common chapter, resource constraints have hindered the uptake of the common chapter, particularly the accelerator initiatives, which have not gained traction.

58. **System-wide collaboration, as laid out in reform of the United Nations development system, is necessary to address complex, multidimensional development challenges.** As the implementation of the reform commenced in 2019 by the Secretary-General, collaboration among the four agencies naturally came to be more influenced by the repositioning of the UNDS, diluting the relevance and added value of the common chapter. The development of the UNSDCF, with its emphasis on whole-of-UNCT common analysis and strategic outcomes, has provided even stronger impetus for joint initiatives and for scaling up collaboration efforts across the entire UNDS to address complex multidimensional development changes.

59. As UNDS reform progresses, it has gradually become evident that the common chapter cannot afford to be perceived as the four agencies working independently of the rest of the United Nations system. Four agencies further extend their collaboration beyond the “exclusive club of four” that currently makes up the common chapter in alignment with the UNDS reform. The COVID-19 pandemic and other crises further demonstrated the need for system-wide-collaboration, beyond the common chapter.

60. While the common chapter was a valuable driver of collaborative efforts among agencies in early stages, UNDS reforms superseded this initiative. Achieving transformative results for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals requires the integration of specialized expertise across all relevant United

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<sup>2</sup> Joint report on the evaluability assessment of the common chapter to the strategic plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women, Background paper, 30 March 2020, para. 38.

Nations agencies, and to scale up impact that goes beyond the expertise of the four agencies. The lessons the four agencies learned from the implementation of the common chapter have informed the design of the new strategic plans of the four agencies and accompanying integrated results and resources frameworks for 2022–2025.

#### **IV. The way forward and conclusion**

61. In 2021, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women developed new strategic plans for the period 2022–2025. Deeply rooted in the vision of the 2030 Agenda, the new plans build on the lessons learned from the implementation of the common chapter, but also reflect a move beyond it – towards a broader United Nations system-wide approach, in line with the implementation of UNDS reform and the 2020 QCPR, which have pointed United Nations funds and programmes towards more coherent development support to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. They are also informed by the experience of the system-wide COVID-19 response, which demonstrated that an effective, dynamic and coordinated United Nations system is critical to mounting an effective response to the global crisis and supporting Member States to respond and to recover.

62. The four agencies and UNOPS developed their respective Strategic Plans for 2022–2025 in a collaborative manner, including through joint informal briefings with the respective Executive Boards, joint online discussions and consultations with resident coordinators, and using a harmonized approach following the guidance of the agencies’ respective Boards. This collaboration is reflected in harmonized methodologies and results reporting, strengthened partnerships across the United Nations system and beyond, enhanced common approaches, and growing adoption of common service lines – which will further harness agencies’ collaborative and comparative advantages and realize the ambitious potential of the United Nations development system reforms.

63. As reflected in the integrated results and resources frameworks of the four agencies’ strategic plans, 2022–2025, coordinated approaches for joint results will be measured using common and complementary results and indicators. The common indicators capture efforts to support ambitious results towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals through coordinated action and integrated, multidimensional approaches across sectors, partners and programming areas, as well as 11 indicators from the QCPR monitoring and reporting framework, 2021–2024,<sup>3</sup> through an improved system-wide harmonization of processes, results-architectures, approaches and methodologies. The integrated results and resources frameworks also include indicators at the output level to track agency-specific complementary work towards shared goals with other relevant United Nations agencies.

64. Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations system established a global framework for reporting on the socioeconomic response, centred in UN INFO, as the primary tool for United Nations system-wide reporting. This generated critical lessons on efficient and effective joint data collection and reporting, including on maximizing use of existing agency reporting systems and avoiding duplication. These lessons are informing ongoing work to establish a systemwide framework for reporting on the United Nations contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations Sustainable

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<sup>3</sup> The 11 QCPR indicators incorporated in the IRRF are 1.4.13, 1.4.19, 1.4.25, 2.3.3, 3.5.10, 3.6.7, 3.6.8, 3.6.9, 4.3.5, 4.4.2, 5.4.1, 1.4.28, and 5.4.3.

Development Group (UNSDG) has 84 UNCTs with resource flows to the Sustainable Development Goals available on UN INFO, and work is accelerating on strengthening joint results reporting. For 2021 results reporting, the Development Coordination Office has supplemented COVID-19 framework data with agency-provided data. For 2022 results reporting, the UNSDG has undertaken to develop a governance framework and menu of common indicators. UNCTs will subsequently be requested to draw on a menu of indicators for Cooperation Framework implementation via joint workplans. Alongside further work to enable interoperability of UN INFO with agency information and communication technology systems, this will enable greater harmonization and alignment across all UNSDG entities with regard to tracking the system-wide contribution towards achieving the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

65. The common chapter played a key role at an early stage of the United Nations reform process, articulating a strong statement of intent towards deeper collaboration, and driving important efforts to improve joint analysis, planning, policy advocacy and a shared understanding of priorities. The progress and ambition have moved on significantly since 2018. Looking ahead, broadened collaboration across the entire United Nations system can more effectively harness collaborative and comparative advantages and address the multidimensional root causes of global challenges during this time of crisis. This new phase of system-wide development reform is geared towards enhancing the leadership of the United Nations at a time when global cooperation is needed more than ever, to rally support for the Sustainable Development Goals so that no one is left behind, and for a renewed social contract, anchored in human rights, as called for in Our Common Agenda.