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Evaluation

Evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries

Executive summary

Contents

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I. Background

1. Over the past decade, increasing conflict, violence and tensions relating to natural resources and climate change have been a cause of growing concern, with overwhelming human, social and economic costs. It is estimated that by 2030, two thirds of the world's extreme poor, estimated at 2.3 billion people, will live in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Conflict remains a major obstacle to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Addressing the challenges of conflict and related fragilities is central to UNDP achieving its goals for poverty reduction and sustainable development.

2. The UNDP Independent Evaluation Office undertook an evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries to assess the UNDP contribution to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and State-building. This evaluation is part of the office's workplan for 2018-2021, approved by the Executive Board. The evaluation covered programmes between 2014 and 2020, which coincides with the organizational restructuring of UNDP crisis response and includes the periods of the previous and current Strategic Plans, 2014-2017 and 2018-2021.

3. The evaluation will contribute to the elaboration of the next UNDP strategic plan, the corporate strategy for programming in conflict and fragile contexts, and its positioning and role in the context of the reforms and repositioning of United Nations peacebuilding mechanisms. The evaluation was carried out within the overall provisions of the UNDP evaluation policy to support greater accountability of UNDP to global and national stakeholders and development partners and contribute to programme strategizing and learning at corporate and country levels.
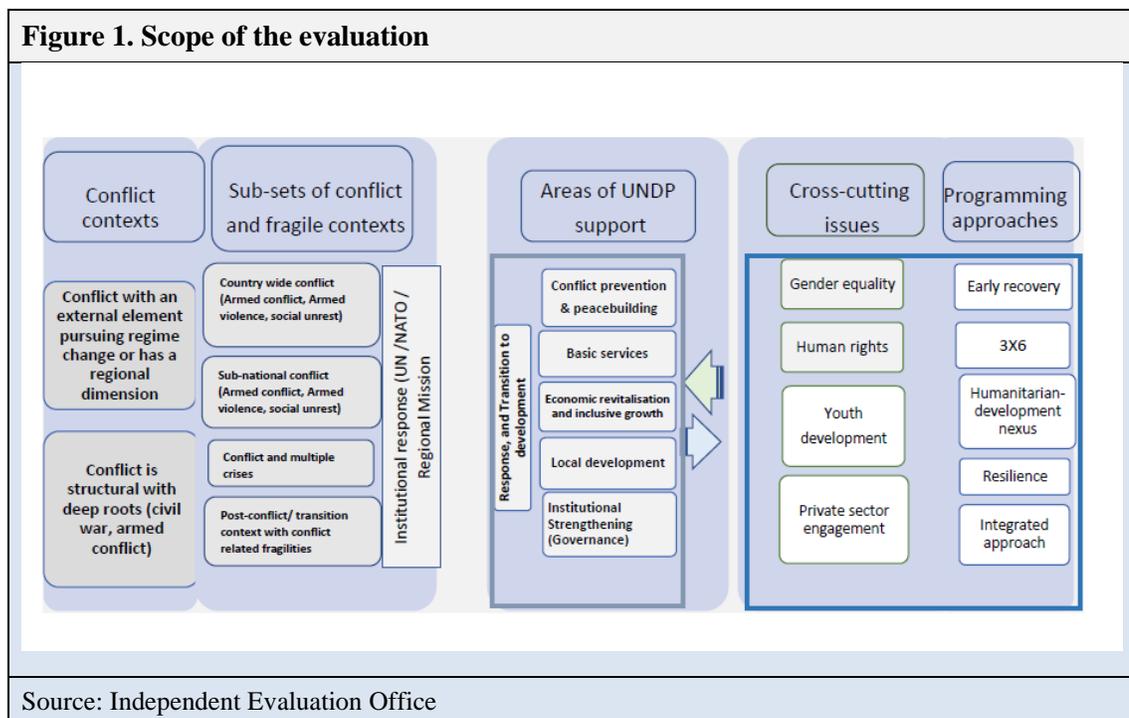
4. The evaluation assessed the UNDP role and contributions in 34 conflict-affected countries in the key areas of crisis prevention, response (including early recovery and stabilization), peacebuilding and State-building for the transition to medium- to long-term development. The evaluation builds on country programme and global thematic evaluations in conflict-affected countries. Besides assessing the UNDP contribution at the country level, the key streams of programme interventions were assessed, including programme principles and cross-cutting issues. Specific attention was paid to the concepts and approaches used by UNDP, and its global advocacy role, in promoting the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and resilience.

II. UNDP programme scope and scale

5. UNDP strategic plans have explicitly emphasized that strengthening peace and stability and increasing resilience were fundamental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP programmes seek to support sustainable development while building resilience to future shocks. The Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 aimed to achieve this through a significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion, while the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 also envisaged accelerating structural transformation. The importance of building resilience to crises and shocks was stressed in both plans.

6. UNDP supports countries affected by conflict in their efforts towards conflict prevention, recovery, stabilization and the transition to development. The key streams of UNDP programme support are conflict prevention and peacebuilding, basic services, economic revitalization and inclusive growth, local economic development, institutional strengthening (public administration capacity, democratic processes, rule of law) and gender equality and women's empowerment. Processes and policies affecting the UNDP programme response in conflict-affected countries include the Sustainable Development Goals, the World Humanitarian Summit, the new way of working, emphasis on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and the repositioning of the United Nations development system.

7. Programme expenditure in 34 conflict-affected countries for the period 2014-2019 accounted for more than half (51 per cent) of total programme expenditure, amounting to approximately $13 billion. There was a significant increase in expenditure, mainly due to programmes in Iraq and Yemen in 2018 (representing 25 per cent of the total annual UNDP expenditure of $2.5 billion).

Figure 1. Scope of the evaluation

Source: Independent Evaluation Office

III. Key findings

A. UNDP positioning and support to global policy and advocacy

8. UNDP programmes sought to address the most intractable challenges in conflict-affected countries. Across different contexts, UNDP demonstrated the value of its support in enabling peace and accelerating development. During the two strategic plan periods, UNDP has supported a range of interrelated interventions for response, stabilization, recovery and prevention in a diverse range of conflict and post-conflict contexts. A large component of UNDP programme areas has remained fairly consistent over the past decade, although UNDP strategies and approaches have taken a more holistic perspective since 2014, reinforcing the importance of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and resilience-based peace and development. In countries where peacekeeping and stabilization missions have been deployed, UNDP collaborated with them in the areas of rule of law, elections, security and gender equality. The contribution of the UNDP Crisis Bureau since its establishment in 2019 has been significant in the organization's global positing and in providing technical support, policy and practice tools to country offices.

9. The UNDP strategic plans were implemented within an enabling global policy environment which gave renewed impetus to the humanitarian-development-peace interface, including a host of intergovernmental agreements. UNDP has made considerable progress in its global partnerships with humanitarian agencies, international financial institutions and donors. Despite inter-agency efforts, challenges remain in addressing peace as part of the wider agenda and enabling more concrete solutions for a

stronger humanitarian-development interface. While its contribution to these global policy processes is important, UNDP has not asserted its expertise in development and peace and its unique advantage of country-level experience, to provide leadership to the global and country-level humanitarian-development-peace agenda. The UNDP role in advocating for the implementation of global commitments to the nexus approach, particularly within the United Nations system, does not match the urgency of the issue. Given the severity of challenges in enabling sustainable solutions for peace, security and development in the Sahel, a strategic and concerted engagement on the part of UNDP is needed.

B. Strengthening national institutional capacities

10. **Economic revitalization and employment**. As the development agency of the United Nations, UNDP has a longer-term development perspective at the country level which intersects the peace, security and humanitarian interventions of the United Nations system, and positions UNDP to facilitate multidimensional and integrated responses. This unique advantage also placed UNDP in leadership positions in the United Nations system and provided opportunities to inform United Nations deliberations on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

11. UNDP was consistent in its support to revive local economies and strengthen local and national plans and strategies, using an array of adaptable approaches to incorporate economic revitalization in countries affected by conflict. Medium-term economic revitalization programmes at the subnational level provided opportunities for sustainable livelihood approaches. Economic revitalization efforts were based on an integrated approach, incorporating social cohesion, peacebuilding, environment and renewable energy objectives. Livelihoods were used as an entry point to improve community social cohesion and facilitate dialogue to promote peace, security and development. When humanitarian and development programmes were pursued simultaneously, they had the potential to address significant drivers of economic revitalization and peace in conflict contexts.

12. UNDP has prioritized inclusive business and markets to integrate communities as consumers, suppliers, employees and entrepreneurs in value chains and markets. To be successful, inclusive market development initiatives need to operate at different levels, linking small-scale producers, policy, infrastructure and incentives. There were limitations in combining downstream support with upstream policy and fiscal incentive components, which is key to the sustainable development of value chains in key sectors. While the programme approaches are pertinent to enable medium- to long-term change processes for economic revitalization, the application has been inconsistent.

13. **Restoration and strengthening basic services.** UNDP support to infrastructure restoration, ranging from large stabilization programmes to small-scale infrastructure rehabilitation, contributed to the operationalization of basic services. The UNDP comparative advantage lies in its integrated approach to the restoration of basic services, connecting reconstruction with recovery, development and peacebuilding. A development approach to the restoration of infrastructure has resulted in a substantial ripple effect for recovery across sectors.

14. Key areas of infrastructure support included the rehabilitation of public buildings, a livelihoods infrastructure and social services (construction of health centres, schools and wells). Besides small- to medium-scale infrastructure rehabilitation support across conflict-affected countries, the UNDP portfolio includes large-scale infrastructure projects in post-conflict contexts, for example in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Yemen. These are undertaken to restore destroyed infrastructure and accelerate basic services as part of stabilization or early recovery interventions. Community infrastructure and service projects were used as a tangible symbol to promote peace and as a means to

strengthen community participation in the rebuilding and reconciliation of their communities.

15. Reconstruction efforts in post-conflict contexts delivered more than physical infrastructure, strengthening community and national recovery efforts and helping to reduce tensions. Lack of services is one of the underlying causes of conflict. UNDP efforts to restore basic services including electricity, water and food security (through water provision) helped to address some of the root causes of conflict and reduce tensions around absent or scarce resources. Support for community and social infrastructure strengthened national efforts to improve health, education, the environment and energy.

16. UNDP played a major role in the establishment and successful management of large stabilization facilities and enabled the restoration of services in a highly risky environment. Since 2015, UNDP has managed one of its largest single programmes, the Funding Facility for Stabilization in Iraq and the Iraq crisis response and resilience programme. The Iraq experience has come to be emblematic of UNDP work on stabilization, and the model has been exported to a wide variety of contexts and modalities.

17. **Strengthening governance and rule of law.** The UNDP contribution to strengthening institutions and governance includes support to public administration capacities (public administration institutional structures, processes and capacities at the national level, local governance, civil service, accountability and transparency), rule of law (justice sector, police, security sector reform) and democratic political process (inclusive political processes such as elections, Parliament, civil society, human rights institutions). The key UNDP programme assumption is that strong and accountable institutions, able to promote inclusive economic growth and social cohesion, are central to both development and lasting peace.

18. UNDP contributes to strengthening government capacities in conflict-affected countries to advance reforms, deliver services and engage citizens in ways that increase responsiveness and accountability of institutions. Support to strengthen institutional capacities was important in improving the functionality of the government. UNDP has contributed to strengthening processes for a more structured and transparent engagement of parliament, and has effectively supported electoral processes. UNDP has yet to fully build on its comparative advantage by promoting democratic processes through medium- to long-term support.

19. In the area of inclusive governance, whether through parliamentary strengthening or electoral capacities, UNDP is one of the few agencies with the comparative advantage of earned trust and engagement of national institutions in conflict contexts. UNDP has effectively built the capacity of parliaments to pursue legislation, engage citizens transparently and promote the rights of women. UNDP support has enabled engagement between federal and subnational levels, boosted opportunities for citizen engagement and instituted parliamentary rules and procedures.

20. Lack of a longer-term engagement in core areas of governance reduced the UNDP contribution to promoting fundamental institutional change processes. Sustainability of governance outcomes was harder in least developed countries and lower-capacity policy contexts compared to middle-income or local-level conflict contexts. In many lower-capacity, conflict-affected States, UNDP support included funding and deploying technical specialists in public sector entities. Often such technical support enabled the government's strategies to be delivered and programmes implemented.

21. Support to the rule of law, human rights and the security sector is one of the major areas of UNDP work. UNDP has funded and trained police; supported physical and functional infrastructure for police and the judiciary (buildings, vehicles, uniforms, computers and forensic equipment); trained judicial personnel and prison officers;

developed legislation, regulations and procedures governing the criminal justice sector; and built the capacity of ministries and other oversight bodies. Such support, for example in West Africa, Libya, Afghanistan and South Sudan, has directly contributed to stability, increased trust in government and improved access to justice, especially for vulnerable groups such as women.

22. Extending formal State justice into areas where it had been previously absent was an important contribution of UNDP. Technical and material support was provided to chief justices, ministries of justice, mobile courts, legal education programmes, legal aid groups and established traditional justice mechanisms. In several conflict-affected countries, justice sector programmes built the organizational capacity of the justice ministry and courts, undertook awareness-raising, supported legal aid clinics and in general improved access to justice, especially for women. Transitional justice is an especially sensitive area, connecting justice reform with peacebuilding. UNDP assisted in several such processes, with mixed results. Despite the vast scope of UNDP engagement, its impact has at times been undermined by challenges of sustainability and the lack of a comprehensive strategy informed by robust political economy and conflict analysis.

23. Security sector reform, including ensuring democratic control of security forces and right-sizing forces, is central to good governance and peacebuilding. UNDP has provided technical support to security sector reform secretariats but sustainable reform is dependent on strategic political calculations by powerful domestic and international actors, usually outside of the control of UNDP. A complex political and donor environment, in which there are many actors interested in a fragmented security sector, limits what UNDP can achieve. Where security sector reform can be brought within the remit of a national development plan, there is a greater chance of making a sustainable impact. UNDP has yet to take stock, learn lessons and see how it can leverage results at the level of institutional reform of police forces in complex environments.

24. **Building national capacity for conflict prevention**. In line with United Nations efforts, UNDP adopted an integrated approach to sustaining peace, working simultaneously across all phases of conflict and seeking to take comprehensive approaches that involve working with all relevant actors. This approach was informed by reviews of United Nations work on peace which shaped the direction of United Nations policy, calling for more investment in conflict prevention, Pathways for Peace and a renewed emphasis on the human-development-peace nexus. UNDP work on prevention and peacebuilding has been dominated in recent years by work on physical infrastructure and services, rather than on building governance capacities and dialogue, and enabling timely conflict analysis. Prevention-related programmes were short-term, lacked policy linkages and remained micro-level. UNDP has yet to demonstrate its thought leadership, building on some of the good research it has done to target violent extremism more directly and link this very closely to work on conflict prevention.

25. **Social cohesion and peacebuilding:** UNDP used post-conflict livelihood recovery and infrastructure rehabilitation initiatives as avenues for peacebuilding and promoting social cohesion. These interventions have been important in stabilization, reducing community tensions and laying the foundations for trusted government and inclusive development. They helped to create jobs; rehabilitate infrastructure; establish local peace committees, public councils and community security working groups; support legal aid provision; and train community police.

26. The overlap of peacebuilding initiatives with what is classified as stabilization is considerable. Where UNDP has been able to scale up its work to the broader national peace architecture, it has demonstrated greater impact. However, it has sometimes been challenging to reach an agreement with national authorities. UNDP support in the area of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration has lessened since 2014, although it

has continued work on weapons collection in West Africa; reintegration and livelihoods programmes targeting former fighters have remained part of the peacebuilding portfolio.

27. UNDP interventions around the infrastructure for peace can be useful in themselves but are not always relevant to the wider conflict prevention or peacebuilding contexts. The limitation of pursuing an infrastructure for peace approach alone amidst the significant structural challenges of conflict was evident in most countries.

28. **Furthering gender equality and women's empowerment.** UNDP has made gender equality and women's empowerment a strategic priority, developed sufficient institutional guidance and tools to mainstream gender in the programme cycle and established an accountability system to track its performance. The sum of these efforts, however, does not culminate in tangible gender-responsive programming, much less gender-transformative results on the ground. There is a distinct gap between UNDP corporate policy commitments and the operational reality, with consequences for programme outcomes in conflict-affected countries. At country level, UNDP has yet to adopt an intersectional perspective. Country office projects and programmes complied with gender-targeted and/or gender-responsive programming, but there were very few gender-transformative results.

29. **Youth development.** UNDP programmes in conflict-affected countries included a range of youth-related initiatives comprising livelihoods and skills development programmes; youth engagement in local peace processes and social cohesion; and rehabilitation programmes. Strengthening the capacity of young people's organizations, networks and youth advocacy groups has fostered partnerships. Initiatives such as Active Labour Market, YouthConnekt or the youth leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship project Youth Co:Lab (youth-led social enterprises funded by impact investment) are important to create viable models in conflict contexts. Notwithstanding successes, the sustainability of the initiatives remains to be addressed and needed linkages to larger programmes of governments or other agencies.

30. **Programme approaches:** The humanitarian-development-peace nexus and the new way of working provided a much-needed framework for international and national stakeholders to operationalize and surpass the humanitarian-development divide, by collectively working towards outcomes based on comparative advantage over multi-year timelines. While there are good examples of joint efforts and programme synergies among agencies, overall there was a lack of a committed collective impetus to enhance peace and development outcomes. The new way of working and the nexus approach have yet to gather momentum, lacking a deliberate strategy to overcome agency programme silos. The humanitarian-development-(peace) interface still needs to be more systematically harmonized in programming at the country level, in coordination with United Nations country teams (UNCTs) as well as the government.

31. UNDP has collaborated with humanitarian agencies on a range of activities within the humanitarian-development nexus, from stabilization, recovery and development to peacebuilding. While UNDP prioritized support to the nexus approach, more concrete efforts are needed to provide thought leadership in terms of practical ways to break humanitarian-development-peace silos in country responses. The concept of resilience has been used by UNDP as a vehicle to catalyse the nexus approach and engage at multiple levels in a programme response to address drivers of conflict and peace at the sectoral level. UNDP has yet to assert its programming across the spectrum of the humanitarian-development-peace approach and capitalize on its country-level presence to provide leadership in this area.

32. There have been several missed opportunities in comprehensively addressing multiple crises by UNDP programmes as well as at country level. Weak synergies

between UNDP initiatives and the lack of a well-conceptualized prevention programme undermined efforts to address the interlinking dimensions of conflict and other crises.

C. Partnerships

33. A strength of UNDP that adds significant value when operating in conflict-affected environments is its long-standing and trusted relationships with programme country governments. There is scope for leveraging partnerships with government for accelerating efforts on sustainable solutions.

34. Partnerships expanded the reach and contribution of UNDP to outcomes in reconstruction and service provision. Partnering with UNCT members such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization provided technical and specialized support to strengthen the quality of services. UNDP worked through existing structures and agreements with other United Nations agencies and peacekeeping and special political missions to provide a joint response and programming. In the area of institutional strengthening and governance, UNDP has forged partnerships at the global level with relevant United Nations bodies. Significant collaboration with the United Nations Department of Peace Operations resulted in the establishment of the Global Focal Point on Rule of Law in 2012, which provides a "One United Nations" approach to rule of law issues. Global partnerships have yet to be fully leveraged at country levelCollaborations with World Bank in Yemen and the European Union, especially in the Sahel and Horn of Africa region, enhanced the UNDP contribution.

IV. Conclusions

Conclusion 1. In conflict-affected countries, UNDP has made important contributions to stabilize, build and strengthen institutions, as well as enabling processes for State-building and peacebuilding.

35. The evaluation period has been marked by major escalations of violent conflict in regions of great strategic and geopolitical importance; escalations of both internationalized and localized conflicts; protracted armed conflicts; growing concerns about international violent extremism; the increasing intersection of climate change with conflict and displacement; and politically sensitive peace processes. UNDP responded to this diversity of contexts and complex challenges with effective interventions supporting national and international partners, filling critical gaps across the spectrum of recovery and stabilization. UNDP has been responsive, facilitating core government functions, restoring services and providing temporary employment and livelihoods. Notwithstanding challenges in arriving at the right response in some cases, UNDP should be credited for its contributions to the progress made in conflict-affected countries.

36. While the programme areas UNDP supported have remained consistent over the years, the contexts and scale of conflicts have varied, forcing UNDP to learn and adapt rapidly. UNDP has displayed agility in adapting to context, whether swiftly setting up a large stabilization facility in Iraq and delivering at scale, supporting peace processes in Colombia or promoting resilience-based approaches in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. UNDP has the unique distinction of having operational and strategic capability to mobilize multisectoral, whole-of-government responses together with agency-specific expertise to promote peace and development in crisis-affected countries. In line with changing geostrategic trends, the UNDP focus has shifted from post-conflict peacebuilding and disarmament to a greater focus on stabilization and countering extremism across the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia.

37. UNDP made concerted efforts to strengthen partnerships with other United Nations agencies, particularly humanitarian agencies and the international financial institutions. This assumes significance given the corporate emphasis on furthering the new way of working and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Although there is considerable scope for improvement, partnerships with United Nations agencies enhanced contributions in improving basic services and institutional capacities. Programmatic partnerships for a consolidated engagement in line with the new way of working have yet to be prioritized.

38. The UNDP programme presence in all conflict contexts gives it the comparative advantage to contribute to global policy and advocate on the new way of working and the triple nexus. There is scope for improving its global and regional engagement by identifying areas for consistent participation and optimizing its regional presence. The ad hoc nature of UNDP engagement has reduced its contribution to the global policy space and in providing thought leadership to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus agenda. At the global level, there is a vacuum in leading the operationalization of that agenda, leaving scope for UNDP to provide thought leadership in translating the humanitarian-development-peace nexus concept into a practical inter-agency solutions. UNDP did not strengthen synergies between country programmes and global-level engagement to further consolidate its positioning in global policy discourse.

39. UNDP has yet to comprehensively address the challenge of the reduction in programme funding for longer-term livelihoods and employment and core governance support in conflict-affected countries, with implications for the role it can play. Donor funding for these thematic areas has increased in recent years, but UNDP has not been able to tap into this funding. A significant component of the UNDP programme portfolio comprises fiduciary support, and funding for programme support is currently smaller. Although conflict-affected countries account for a significant proportion of overall UNDP expenditure, the amount of actual resources is small. Considering that traditional donor contributions are the primary source of UNDP programme resources, there has been insufficient diversification of funding sources.

Conclusion 2. UNDP made a significant contribution to stabilization efforts. Anchoring stabilization support in peacebuilding and institutional strengthening processes is essential for sustainable outcomes.

40. Stabilization support in protracted crises is a major component of the UNDP portfolio, laying the groundwork for peacebuilding and preventing the reoccurrence of violence. UNDP has played a significant and constructive role in the establishment and successful management of large stabilization facilities and enabled the restoration of services in high-risk environments. As such, UNDP has served to create a clear niche in complex post-conflict responses. The Iraq experience has been successfully replicated, globally supporting infrastructure and other early recovery efforts in immediate post-conflict contexts.

41. UNDP programme frameworks recognize the importance of the stabilization-peace-development interface but in practice, the approach to stabilization focused on immediate tasks to restore and rebuild social infrastructure. While there are tangible outcomes in terms of improved social services and the return of internally displaced persons, these were not anchored in local institutional processes and peace initiatives, reducing the sustainability of outcomes and opportunities to strengthen institutional capacities. The emphasis of stabilization programmes on the quick restoration of services widened the stabilization-peace-development divide. Treating stabilization programmes as quick rehabilitation and restoration of public infrastructure runs the risk of missing leveraging opportunities for peacebuilding and institutional strengthening.

42. Conflict-sensitive, inclusive processes would have further enhanced the UNDP contribution to stabilization programmes. UNDP has yet to clarify its value addition in stabilization programmes, irrespective of adaptation to different country contexts. In the absence of defined stabilization principles, UNDP is predisposed to comply with different donors' requirements, which often do not pay attention to institutional strengthening.

Conclusion 3. Prevention, as an overall framework for UNDP work, is evolving. UNDP programme response has been predominantly in conflict recovery and stabilization areas, with only a small proportion for conflict prevention. As the largest United Nations development agency, UNDP did not take a proactive approach to develop an integrated prevention offer at global and country levels. Lack of systematic efforts to address prevention accelerators reduced the UNDP contribution to peace and development.

43. Underprioritization of conflict prevention is a common issue in international support, not just for UNDP. At the corporate policy level, UNDP acknowledges the significance of conflict prevention for progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and is committed to enhancing synergies between development and peace interventions. But this commitment has not translated into concrete prevention programming support. In conflict and post-conflict contexts, UNDP sought to build institutional resilience through initiatives such as strengthening public administration, rule of law and the security sector; and community resilience through inclusive economic revitalization and addressing climate impacts. But such efforts were short-term and did not always result in a coherent and critical mass to contribute to conflict prevention. UNDP has yet to clarify its conceptual approach to integrated prevention before, during and after a conflict, and how its conflict and development programming can be leveraged towards this end.

44. Work on identifying the accelerators of prevention for more sustained engagement was limited. This gap is more evident in the Sahel and Horn of Africas, where prevention of violent conflict assumes significance given the interlinked security, humanitarian, political and climate risks. UNDP country and regional programmes have deprioritized systematic support to institutionalized prevention mechanisms. The increase in the climate-conflict interface required systematic efforts to address interlinked dimensions and prevent tensions and conflict. A minor role in the prevention of conflict and violent extremism has also weakened the UNDP youth development agenda in fragile contexts.

Conclusion 4. In conflict-affected countries, UNDP programmes are predisposed towards short-term programming, reducing its contribution to accelerating peace and sustainable development. Important contributions were made in enabling temporary employment, infrastructure for basic services and core governance functionality, which form a basis for longer-term efforts. Notwithstanding such contributions, post-conflict contexts require sustained engagement in providing durable livelihood solutions and stronger governance processes.

45. The rehabilitation of basic services infrastructure contributed to the stabilization of conflict-affected areas. Short-term local- and community-level recovery and rehabilitation efforts have been a useful strategy for restoring services, enabling the operation of public administration and generating temporary employment, encouraging the return of displaced populations. For this progress to be sustained, linkages between stabilization or early recovery programmes and peacebuilding and institutional strengthening are required; UNDP was not always successful in enabling these linkages. Similarly, UNDP economic revitalization programme interventions, while appropriate for coping and recovery, fall short of addressing key constraints in durable solutions for employment and livelihoods and the necessary institutional processes. UNDP has yet to

balance short-term inventions with medium- to long-term engagement to address key drivers of peace and development.

46. While UNDP adopted pertinent programme approaches for a medium- to longer-term solution, their application and implementation remain uneven, reducing its contribution to accelerating the transition to development. UNDP introduced sustainable livelihood practices through approaches such as 3x6 and area-based development. There were, however, challenges in microfinance and the expansion of markets for the sustainable development of value chains. The concept of resilience is theoretically an improvement on the livelihoods approach, but in practice did not provide a dynamic model for livelihood change processes at household, community and institutional levels. Area-based development has been promising in post-conflict contexts but has not been consistently pursued.

47. UNDP has the distinction of supporting the functionality of institutions in responding to public administration needs and providing services. In post-conflict contexts and countries transitioning to development, functionality alone is not sufficient, and UNDP approaches are not fit for purpose to strengthen government institutions and governance processes.

48. Strengthening governance capacities would require sustained engagement, and there were missed opportunities in positioning governance as central to the conflict prevention agenda. UNDP rightly makes the case that its work on governance and institutional strengthening helps to prevent conflict and promote peace, but has yet to position its support. A lack of long-term focus and demonstration of technical domain expertise are factors undermining UNDP positioning as a key governance actor. Major donors are making extensive use of consultancy firms to implement governance programmes. UNDP did not reposition its governance support in tune with current public management practices and has yet to go beyond technical policy and functionality substitution to consistently pursue the institutional reform agenda. There are pockets of innovation in UNDP work in conflict-affected countries, but these are isolated and limited.

Conclusion 5. Compartmentalized responses to different crises at country level had shortcomings in addressing cross-cutting and intersecting elements of the crises. Cumulative impacts of multiple crises in the Sahel and Horn of Africa needed comprehensive strategies.

49. The recent coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic notwithstanding, the intertwined security, humanitarian and climate challenges in the Sahel and Horn of Africa demand a comprehensive approach. Several strategies adopted by regional institutions require operationalization. The response was needed at multiple levels, through a combination of short-term support and measures to address the strategic issues of institutions and governance to promote peace, stability and inclusive growth. While there have been isolated efforts, such as the Lake Chad Basin facility, overall UNDP regional and country programmes did not demonstrate the urgency and intensity demanded by the Sahel and Horn of Africa situations. UNDP did not build on programme interventions addressing conflict and refugee crises, climate impacts and poverty reduction, to enable advocacy and coordinated engagement. A common issue in Africa and the Arab States region is the lack of comprehensive regional programmes to develop well-tested programme models to inform country programmes and regional discourse on prevention and response. Similar to other regions, the new way of working has yet to manifest in practice in the Sahel. UNDP did not have much success in forging programme partnerships with humanitarian and development agencies in the Sahel for a consolidated response.

Conclusion 6. The UNDP commitment to strengthening the role of youth as agents of peace and change is undermined by the lack of a multi-pronged programme in select areas. Given the small scope of UNDP programmes in conflict countries, mainstreaming youth development and extremism prevention had limited outcomes.

50. UNDP corporate policies and strategies have consistently emphasized youth as agents for development and resolving and preventing conflict, and thus as key stakeholders in programme support. Youth development is considered a cross-sectoral priority, and addressed in various UNDP interventions, specifically in employment, prevention of violent extremism and social cohesion programmes. With some exceptions, youth programmes had micro-level success, but there is limited evidence of them addressing policy bottlenecks in youth employment and development. In the absence of targeted programmes and collaboration with agencies with large youth programmes to scale up, contributions have been minimal. Furthermore, UNDP is yet to use programme tools such as accelerator labs to develop more sustainable solutions for youth development in conflict contexts.

Conclusion 7. Conflict contexts present challenges and opportunities for private sector engagement. While the corporate strategy for private sector engagement and development prioritizes conflict-affected counties, UNDP has made slow progress as concerted efforts are lacking at the programme level. UNDP has not adequately considered the area of global partnerships for private sector development in conflict-affected countries.

51. Private sector development in post-conflict contexts reflects both the complexity of this important area and the lack of sustained UNDP engagement. With programmes in key areas of development, UNDP has opportunities for private sector engagement. There are examples where UNDP has demonstrated replicable and sustainable private sector models that could be adapted to other fragile and post-conflict contexts. In the sustainable energy sector in Sudan, UNDP enabled private sector investments resulting in transformative agricultural livelihoods. Such successful examples, while important, are small in number and private sector engagement was not consistently taken into account during reconstruction and redevelopment. Notwithstanding the enabling environment challenges posed by post-conflict and conflict contexts, opportunities were missed in leveraging UNDP programme areas for private sector engagement. Economic revitalization, inclusive growth and jobs have been constrained by the absence of clearly prioritized and sequenced support for a focused medium- to long-term strategy for private sector engagement.

52. Stabilization and other early recovery efforts have yet to prioritize private sector development as a solution for financing and sustaining redevelopment. A lack of sustained attention undermined the promotion of the private sector as a legitimate driver of economic revitalization. To succeed, initiatives for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) required business support along the entire supply chain, suggesting that programmatic engagement in private sector development is now more of a necessity than an option. Opportunities were missed particularly in countries with localized conflict, where engagement in more stable areas could be leveraged for engagement in affected areas. UNDP is in the process of testing various tools apt for adaptation to conflict contexts, such as the venture accelerator and MSME action platforms. Constraining such efforts is the lack of prioritization of private sector engagement as integral to UNDP programme support.

53. Countries where there was success show the importance of nurturing the enabling environment for private sector development and investment. Supporting the business environment is most challenging in conflict contexts, and therefore require a more collaborative approach. UNDP support to derisking the policy and investment space has been sparse in conflict contexts and lacked partnerships. Government policies can play

an important part in providing a private sector-friendly environment, but UNDP has not sufficiently used the evidence gathered through its support to business development to engage governments on policy reform.

Conclusion 8. The UNDP contribution to enhancing women's role in peacebuilding and addressing gender inequality remains weak. The lack of prioritization of gender equality and women's empowerment is reducing the UNDP contribution to conflict-affected countries.

54. The UNDP approach to gender equality and women's empowerment was not commensurate with the severity of the challenges for women and of gender inequalities perpetuated by multiple crises. While there has been progress on mainstreaming gender in UNDP programme support, targeted policy and advocacy contributions in conflict-affected countries are limited. Viewing women as beneficiaries, rather than supporting them as agents of change in areas of early recovery, peacebuilding and State-building, undermines transformative outcomes. UNDP support to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) has considerably reduced over the years, more so with the closure of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery. A minimalist approach to gender conflict responses has significantly undermined peace and security efforts. The consequences of this are more severe in the Sahel and Horn of Africa.

55. Although UNDP has prioritized gender equality and women's empowerment as a strategic objective, and there is an acknowledgement of the critical importance of support to women, peace and security, this is not reflected in resource allocations for gender-related programmes. UNDP was a pioneer in promoting programming solutions to advance gender equality in crisis contexts, such as the minimum 15 per cent expenditure for gender-related initiatives, which informed the United Nations system-wide policy. UNDP has not been successful in making a case for the strategic contribution it can make through its support to different thematic areas in conflict countries. The potential of UNDP to strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment is underutilized, in part because of the donor funding to specialized agencies.

Conclusion 9. The reconstitution of the Crisis Bureau has provided a much-needed anchor for UNDP support to conflict-affected countries and an impetus for consolidating programme responses at global and national levels and is a significant step forward.

56. The reconstitution of the Crisis Bureau has been important in positioning UNDP in the evolving context of reforms of the United Nations development system and peace and security architecture, and the emphasis of the Secretary-General on prevention for peace. Having a dedicated bureau focusing on crisis response has improved the consolidation of UNDP conflict-related support, streamlined technical support to country offices, rationalized programme approaches and ensured that steps were taken to move beyond immediate response-related programming towards a more substantive role in prevention. The Crisis Bureau has been successful in repositioning UNDP conflict programming, addressing disengagement issues since the closure of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, and enabling UNDP to engage in global debates on peace and security and policy discussions with the United Nations Secretariat. In line with the new way of working and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus agenda, there have been concerted efforts to strengthen global-level partnerships. There is scope for further deepening partnerships with other United Nations agencies such as FAO, ILO and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and system-wide partnerships for comprehensive support in the Sahel region.

57. The UNDP business model in conflict-affected countries has improved in terms of programme management processes and instruments for greater efficiency of country programmes, with the streamlining of surge deployment, fast-track finance processes and access to advisory services. The recently introduced Global Policy Network is being

streamlined to improve technical support to country offices. Technical assistance from headquarter bureaux and regional offices adds value to county programmes, and the distributed model of the Global Policy Network is a sensible way to tap UNDP-wide expertise. UNDP was able to respond quickly to the immediate needs of conflict-affected countries, though maintaining that level of response over the long term was difficult. The current structure can promote efficient advisory and technical services, but this also requires investments in technical expertise to support prioritized areas of programme support.

58. The division of responsibilities between the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support and the Crisis Bureau is evolving. Further clarity in the functioning of the two bureaux would avoid duplication and build on synergies and coordinated approaches for a more comprehensive response in post-conflict contexts. In prevention programming, where the overlap between the two policy bureaux is greatest, and particularly in inclusive growth and core governance functions, parallel programming could reduce the contribution of UNDP. Similarly, clarity of roles and responsibilities between policy and regional bureaux is fundamental, to better leverage the various UNDP programme units, though there are areas yet to be clarified.

59. The delinking of the resident coordinator system from UNDP has provided an opportunity for the organization to strategically reposition its programmatic analytical, policy advisory and advocacy work at the country level. In conflict contexts, this is particularly important in countries with United Nations missions, where the change processes have impacted UNDP programmes. Identifying areas for repositioning and strengthening the UNDP response post-delinking is key to the continued contribution of UNDP in crisis-affected countries.

V. Recommendations

Recommendation 1.   UNDP needs a well-focused corporate policy that responds to the Secretary-General's call for a coordinated and integrated approach to sustainable peace. UNDP should demonstrate global leadership in facilitating and promoting the humanitarian-development-peace nexus agenda.

60. UNDP should prioritize its support and engagement in the United Nations peace reform agenda. Within UNCTs, UNDP should support joint analysis, planning and programming towards collective outcomes in select sectors.

61. Given the favourable global policy environment, with the United Nations impetus for sustainable peace and the new way of working for programme collaboration and the nexus approach, UNDP should identify areas where country offices will consistently contribute to policy and advocacy around the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. At the country level, UNDP should enable programming instruments for linking humanitarian, development and peace responses that are anchored in development frameworks.

62. For unpacking the complexity of programming for the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, UNDP should identify sectors where programme models will be developed to demonstrate development and peace outcomes for informing policy; and prioritize solutions at the local level in efforts to strengthen services and livelihoods. For policy lessons in nexus programming to strengthen pathways to peace and address drivers of conflict, UNDP should implement well-tested signature programme models in a select area in all conflict-affected countries.

Recommendation 2.   UNDP should prioritize support to conflict prevention at the global and country levels. It should develop its prevention offer with a focus on facilitating long-term structural change and a generational transformation agenda in conflict-affected countries. UNDP should identify areas where there will be a sustained long-term

focus and as part of the prevention offer, address the interlinked dimensions of climate and conflict.

63. The core added value of UNDP is its ability to work long-term with government institutions and communities to build effective and accountable governance and peace ecosystems. In line with the Secretary-General's priorities, conflict prevention should become a central theme of country programmes in fragile contexts. Rather than automatically qualifying all institutional strengthening and economic growth as prevention interventions, UNDP should identify and pursue key accelerators of prevention; focus on the drivers of conflict and related fragility to address risks early on, before they escalate into a crisis; and anchor UNDP support at the local level to enable bottom-up change processes.

64. As UNDP develops its corporate strategy for support to fragile and conflict-affected countries, it should build on the organization's comparative strengths in multiple programme areas for system-wide engagement on key areas of conflict prevention and response. The evaluation recommends three areas for prioritizing prevention support. UNDP should:

(a) Bring prevention of violent extremism more explicitly brought into the conflict prevention fold, to ensure that this subset of conflict prevention is not ad hoc and disconnected; prioritize youth development in a sustained manner as part of prevention efforts; collaborate and invest in integrated, multisectoral approaches to youth empowerment and youth-inclusive and -focused national action plans and other national policy frameworks to build peace;

(b) Given the extensive environment and crisis programme portfolios of UNDP, address interlinked dimensions of risk from multiple crises that exacerbate conflict; identify UNDP programmes where the integration of a prevention dimension can add value;

(c) Consistently support monitoring of local risks and tensions and early warning systems as a signature offer of UNDP, separately or as part of ongoing data collection mechanisms; collaborate with United Nations and other agencies for collective efforts in data collection and the interpretation of risk.

Recommendation 3.   UNDP management should ensure organization-wide policy coherence to address inconsistent conceptual and programmatic responses across regions. UNDP should address constraints that are limiting its substantive and long-term engagement in core areas of support.

65. UNDP should ensure that there is policy coherence across programme countries to put corporate strategies and tools into practice. Predominantly generalist support can reduce the potential role of UNDP in post-conflict countries. It should consistently prioritize both long-term engagement in select areas with technical depth; and comprehensive global programmes on select themes to provide well-tested signature solutions to country offices, for conceptual coherence and to facilitate UNDP engagement in global policy and advocacy on integrated responses to peace and development.

66. The regional bureaux and Crisis Bureau should enhance their coordination for conceptual and programmatic coherence; and take measures to ensure corporate strategies and guidance are used by country offices to stay ahead of the curve in responding to crises.

Recommendation 4.   UNDP should emphasize medium- to long-term livelihood and employment support. It should take measures to put holistic employment and livelihood options into practice, for wider use and replication in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

67. In conflict-affected countries, UNDP should seek opportunities for more substantive programmatic engagement on poverty reduction, developing more realistic medium- to long-term frameworks for livelihoods and employment. UNDP should emphasize employment and livelihood approaches that seek to address the structural underpinnings of poverty and fragility. Programme areas which enable structural transformation in income generation and employment, such as inclusive business and markets, need consistent engagement. Specific attention should be paid to the peace dividend as a way to address challenges for sustainable businesses and livelihoods. Likewise, conflict-sensitivity should be ensured in the design and implementation of livelihood programmes.

68. UNDP should prioritize analysis and planning support related to the Sustainable Development Goals in conflict-affected countries, to keep the focus on sustainable development and peace. It should consider strengthening the UNDP economist programme for more consistent support to policy analysis and planning.

Recommendation 5.   UNDP should make long-term governance interventions central to its agenda of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. UNDP governance programmes should invest in new public administration models, with emphasis on planning and analysis, digital technologies and private sector engagement.

69. An excessive focus on short-term support can be counterproductive to the role UNDP can play in addressing governance challenges. To stay relevant in the governance area, UNDP needs to engage in reform-oriented core governance support at national and local government levels. It should identify select areas of core governance function for consistent, long-term engagement across conflict-affected countries.

70. There will inevitably be pressure from partner governments and donors alike to support short-term technical facilitation or play a fiduciary role, and this may be to the financial benefit of UNDP. Too much focus on short-term technical facilitation support runs the risk of UNDP not being seen as an agency with governance expertise that can facilitate reform and an institutional strengthening agenda.

Recommendation 6.   The Sahel programme is considerably underfunded. UNDP should demonstrate the urgency and intensity of the response that the Sahel and Horn of Africa situations demand. It should recognize the unique challenges faced by the Sahel and prioritize the regional programme to galvanize support. It should also prioritize partnerships for a coordinated and collective response.

71. UNDP should take measures to put the new way of working into practice in the Sahel, forging partnerships with humanitarian and development agencies for a consolidated response. UNDP should pay specific attention to mobilizing resources for its programme in the Sahel, while at the same time taking concrete measures to enable financing. It should consider developing a Sahel programme to address intersecting elements of security, climate and development challenges.

Recommendation 7.   Stabilization programmes need further consolidation. Merely focusing on infrastructure rehabilitation and building will not produce the desired outcomes unless combined with the capacity development of local institutions and peace initiatives. Building on lessons from ongoing stabilization programmes, UNDP should anchor future programmes within a peace and development framework.

72. UNDP support to stabilization demonstrates the importance and unique value proposition of its work in conflict and post-conflict countries. UNDP should ensure that its stabilization approaches are linked to institutional strengthening, peacebuilding and other early recovery interventions. It should provide a stabilization programme framework for country offices, with mandatory principles of linkages with peace and development efforts.

Recommendation 8.   UNDP should further improve collaboration with United Nations agencies, the World Bank and bilateral donors for contributions to long-term outcomes in conflict-affected countries.

73. UNDP has embarked on a strong partnership with humanitarian and peace agencies and with the World Bank. It should systematize and clarify expectations for more efficient collaboration to further the humanitarian-development-peace nexus at global and country levels. The delinking of the resident coordinator function from UNDP has consequences for its programmes in countries with United Nations missions. UNDP should strengthen partnerships with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations for engagement in the areas of rule of law, the security sector and elections. Instead of one-off project-based partnerships, UNDP should identify areas of synergy for regular collaboration with FAO and ILO to strengthen value chain and employment interventions.

74. UNDP should leverage its comparative advantage in conflict-affected countries to strengthen partnerships with the World Bank and develop global thematic initiatives in key areas of prevention and response, to further the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. It should consolidate programmatic and advocacy partnerships for a comprehensive Sahel response.

Recommendation 9.   UNDP should make private sector engagement integral to its economic revitalization, inclusive growth and service delivery support. UNDP should accelerate the pace and scale of its engagement, with context-specific tools and interventions.

75. The recently adopted corporate private sector strategy is important for the momentum of private sector development and engagement in conflict-affected countries. While UNDP recognizes the significance of private sector engagement in a crisis context and has developed tools to enable this engagement, further efforts and resource investments are needed to systematically pursue it. UNDP should ensure a long-term commitment to private sector-related support, which should be integral to country programmes.

76. Conflict contexts are diverse, and UNDP should have a more customized approach to private sector engagement to address structural constraints in harnessing market opportunities. Innovative private sector finance tools should be developed and promoted. UNDP should strengthen partnerships to address private sector development policy bottlenecks, to catalyse and de-risk private sector investments in conflict contexts. It should select sectors for consistent private sector development.

Recommendation 10.   UNDP should prioritize support to gender equality and women's empowerment for enabling gender-inclusive prevention, response and peace solutions.

77. Notwithstanding the initiatives of specialized agencies, UNDP should make concerted efforts to address the drivers of gender inequality; and improve the effectiveness of gender-responsive and gender-transformative interventions based on a well-grounded programme approach. To this end, the indicators developed by the United Nations Technical Working Group on Global Indicators for Security Council resolution 1325, currently being revised, are a suitable framework.

78. Going beyond the mainstreaming approach, UNDP should develop sectoral strategies for enhancing women's productive capacities and livelihoods. UNDP should increase the capacity of gender expertise in the organization, which is on a downward trend. Likewise, the Crisis Bureau should build its capacity to support gender equality in conflict-affected countries, in coordination with the regional bureaux. Addressing gender equality in conflict contexts requires dedicated resources; UNDP should take

measures to mobilize resources for gender-related programming in crisis contexts, given the opportunities provided by the range of UNDP programme engagement. UNDP should take measures to address issues of coherence in the comparative advantages between UNDP and UN-Women at the country level.

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