



Early Lessons and Evaluability of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF

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Preface

Since early 2020, the world has struggled with the coronavirus pandemic and its devastating impact on our society, healthcare, and economy. The pandemic is reversing crucial progress on SDGs during the decade of action. Because of the terrible toll this pandemic has taken, it is a moral imperative for the UN Development System to learn timely shared lessons to better manage its efforts to support the world to recover better.

This report was commissioned by the SG's Designate for COVID-19 in line with the SG's April 2020 report on the quadrennial policy review to evaluate COVID-19 MPTF as a system-wide evaluation. It represents a first effort to realise the potential of System-Wide Evaluation as an approach to contribute to shared learning and provide an assessment of mutual accountability. This report has been produced in a timely manner so as not to be too late to make a difference in providing lessons to recover better.

It is hoped that the report will contribute to member states' and UN entities' understanding of the value of pooled funds as an incentive for the UN Development System to work together and the importance of collaborative work on strengthening gender, disability inclusion, leave no one behind, and human rights. The overarching lesson has been that leadership and collaboration between UN agencies can indeed bring greater results for countries than UN entities' programmes can achieve alone. This is the key rationale for the ongoing reform process of the UN development system. The report demonstrates the potential that lies in the reforms but also points out important constraints.

This complex and complicated system wide exercise would not have been possible without the collaboration and cooperation of so many colleagues. We appreciate the early authorization given by the SG's designate for COVID-19 and the Advisory Committee by valuing learning and accountability for the COVID-19 MPTF, the professionalism and hard work of the evaluation team, continuous technical review by the Quality Assurance Panel, guidance by the Evaluation Reference Group, comments at all stages from the UN Evaluation Advisory Group, and comments and suggestions from the Donor Evaluation Advisory Group. We are grateful for funding received from United Nations Evaluation Group, Denmark, Norway and Finland. I am pleased to note that all requested documents have been provided in a timely manner by UNCTs, UN entities and the MPTF Secretariat.

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ACRONYMS

AOI	Areas of Investigation
AC	Advisory Committee
BBB	Build Back Better
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CCS	Country Case Study
CF	Coordination Framework
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease-2019
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross domestic product
GE	Gender Equality
GEM	Gender Equity Marker
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency virus and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
HLCP	UN High-Level Committee on Programmes
HOA	Heads of Agency
HR	Human Rights
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approaches
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JWP	Joint Work Programs
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning
LI	Low income
LMI	Lower middle income
LNOB	Leave no one behind
MDT	Multi-Disciplinary Team
MHLSP	Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection
MIC	Middle-income country
MOPAN	Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
NRA	Non-Resident UN Agency
NVR	National Voluntary Review
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
QA	Quality Assurance
QAP	Quality Assurance Panel
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review

RBM	Results based management
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator Office
RR	Resident Representative
RUNO	Recipient United Nations Organizations
S/MSME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEIA	Socio-Economic Impact Assessment
SERF	Socio-economic Response Framework
SERP	Socio-Economic Response Plan
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SWE	System-Wide Evaluation
SWSD	System-wide Strategic Document
ToC	Theory of Change
TWG	Technical Working Groups
UMI	Upper middle income
UN DCO	United Nations Development Coordination Office
UN HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Program
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDIS	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNECE	UN Economic Commission for Europe
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNINFO	UN Information webpage
UNPRDP	UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disability
UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNSDG	UN Sustainable Development Group
WFH	Work from Home
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

Introduction

Over the past 15 months, the world has struggled with a once in a century global pandemic with devastating social and economic impacts. In March 2020, the UN Secretary General issued the appeal: *Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19*. The report called for a global partnership to achieve three major objectives: suppress transmission to stop the pandemic and save lives; address social, economic, and multi-dimensional impacts; and implement sustainable solutions to cope with the impacts of the crisis.

The *Secretary General's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund* (the Fund) was launched on April 3, 2020 as an important financing mechanism for joint programming by UNCT members in line with UN development system reform. Later in April, the *UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19* (the UN framework) established the overarching structure for planning and programming the UN development system response at country level through Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plans (SERP). At this time SERPs have been developed by UN Country Teams in 121 countries with a transparent system in place to monitor and report results at a global and national level.

These actions have been undertaken during the most wide-ranging and significant reform ever undertaken of the UN development system. The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a stress test and, potentially, an accelerant of UNDS reform.

This Lessons Learning and Evaluability Assessment of the Fund is a direct response to the need to support learning and accountability of the COVID-19 MPTF, in the context of UNDS reform, while recognizing the close relationship between the Fund and the SERPs. It represents one of the first efforts to realize the potential of a System-Wide Evaluation (SWE) approach.

The methods used include structured document reviews at global and country level, key informant interviews at global level, and case studies of the operation of the Fund and the SERPs in seven countries (Cambodia, Guatemala, Kosovo (SC Resolution 1244), Malawi, Maldives, Moldova and Sao Tome and Principe). The case study countries were selected to provide an illustrative example of the Fund and SERPs in a variety of national contexts. In all, over 100 interviews were carried out, gathering information from 138 key informants. While recognizing the limitations of an early lessons exercise, the findings and lessons presented in the report are evidence-based. In addition, the results of the country case studies were validated through discussions and feedback with the UNCTs involved.

Findings

The lessons learning component of the exercise found that projects approved and implemented under the fund were relevant to meeting national needs and addressing critical gaps in the socio-economic response to COVID-19. They did so in a timely manner during the most acute early phases of the development emergency. This rapid response was enabled by progress made in the UNDS reform process before the onset of the pandemic. The Fund and the SERPs both contributed to strengthening the ability of the newly independent and empowered RC to coordinate a more coherent UNCT response at country level. The Fund was also a positive factor in strengthening the pursuit of gender equality in the SERPs and in Fund supported projects. The UNCTs noted that the Secretary General's UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 provided a clear and useful framework for planning within its five pillars of intervention. Finally,

experience with the Fund and the SERPs demonstrates the potential of the UN Development System to achieve collective results.

There were, of course, challenges to the rapid development and implementation of the Fund and to the full realization of the SERPs as frameworks for planning and programming the UNDS response to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. One challenge was the task of engaging with national authorities and civil society during the rapid development of proposals under the Fund. Another concerned ensuring full participation in the Fund and SERPs by smaller and non-resident UNCT entities so that they could bring their relevant expertise fully to bear on the development of a more coherent UNDS response. In addition, while the projects were relevant and successfully implemented, the level of funding provided to support the Fund was a limitation to greater collaboration and impact. Finally, there is an ongoing challenge to fully realize the potential of the UNDS to support the environmental aspects of the Build Back Better and Greener agenda. All of these challenges are addressed in the recommendations made by the study.

Key Early Lessons

1. **In a development emergency, speed of response matters.** The Secretary General's Appeal in March 2020 for shared responsibility and global solidarity established the overall architecture of the expected response from the UNDS. The launch of the COVID-19 MPTF on 3 April facilitated a rapid and visible response from UNCTs. By later in April, the UN framework for the socio-economic response to COVID-19 established a clear structure for joint planning and programming by UNCTs around a coherent, structured, and transparent response plan encompassed by the SERPs.
2. **To sustain collaborative action and a coherent UNCT socio-economic response, pre-existing coordinating structures and human resources matter.** Key areas of UNDS reform, especially the independent and empowered RC and fully staffed RCOS with key competencies, proved crucial. The global UNDS architecture in place to coordinate gender and the disability inclusion focal points and human rights experts across the system played a facilitative role for GE/HR/LNOB in the response.
3. **To ensure a coherent programmatic response, inclusiveness, and broad participation by the UNCT matters.** The pandemic and its accompanying development emergency show that an effective socio-economic response at country level must be grounded in experience and expertise drawn from across the spectrum of UNCT entities, including non-resident agencies (NRA). There are many examples of smaller and NRA entities improving the quality of proposals submitted to the Fund. The same effect can be seen in the influence of these entities on the quality and technical content of the SERPs; especially for attention to GE, HR and LNOB.
4. **While speed matters, it brings challenges that must be managed.** The speed required to react to a development emergency brings with it stresses that must be met collectively by the UNCT under the leadership and coordination of the RC. In a rapid response environment, where larger UNCT entities have inherent advantages in staff capacity and operational experience, RCs need to ensure processes such as the identification, preparation, submission, and approval of proposals for support by MPTFs are transparent fair and inclusive so the full complement of UNCT expertise is accessed. Smaller entities are on the playing field, but it is not yet level.
5. **An enabling organizational culture and readiness to be accountable for collective results are necessary when the UNDS system moves to an emergency footing.** The structural and procedural investments in UN reform are not themselves sufficient to ensure a coherent response. They must be complemented by a readiness on the part of UNCT members to act collaboratively and to be collectively accountable for results. The experience of

collaborating on Fund projects and in preparing the SERPs has helped to strengthen a commitment to coordination, coherence, and collective action among UNCT entities, but there is more work to do. There is a need to move beyond structures and processes to a genuinely inclusive culture of cooperation where smaller and NRA UNCT entities inputs are valued and encouraged. Incentives for collaboration and contribution to collective results (including with regard to accountability and performance) need to be clear and strong across all UN entities.

6. **A global response framework and a UNCT plan at country level matter.** In the pandemic's earliest, most acute phase, the Fund, the UN framework with its five pillars, and the SERP process were well structured and responsive to the socio-economic imperatives of the emergency. The UN framework supported by the Secretary General's appeal and the Fund and SERPs served UNCTs well in identifying action and encouraging collaboration on joint work. However, as recovery appears on the horizon (at different times and at different speeds in different countries and regions) this framework is less suited to ensuring a more equitable and sustainable recovery and return to Agenda 2030. UNCTs need more specific guidance on policy engagement, advocacy, and programming to Build Back Better, Greener, and more equitably.
7. **Given effective action, a development emergency can be leveraged to advance core values and commitments.** Experience in planning and implementing Fund projects and in collaborating on SERP development has shown that the guiding values of GE, HR, and LNOB still require active attention to be fully integrated across the UN system. Progress is supported through collective commitment, high level messaging, a strategy of broad coalition building, tailored guidance and by the work of energetic, technically skilled, and agile champions among UNCT entities. Financial incentives in the form of allocation targets play a particularly important role.
8. **In a global development emergency, agility, and technical expertise matter.** The ability of the UNCT to identify opportunities for joint action quickly and to fund gap-filling projects that respond to national imperatives has an important demonstration and confidence-building effect for the UNCT and its partners. The SERP and the Fund provided an important opportunity to elevate the visibility of UNCT comparative advantages to support and shape national responses.
9. **Funding matters.** While the size of the funding pool is not everything, the low level of resources available for the Fund is a constraint that limits the RCs ability to engage national governments and attract investments from development partners. It also reduces the incentive for UNCT entities to work collectively under the coordination of the RC. While re-purposed funding has been a major factor in ensuring resources are committed to the five pillars of the SERP, it cannot fully substitute for the Fund or similar MPTFs. If the Fund and Joint SDG Fund come together, there is an opportunity to re-submit the case for increased support to development partners and non-traditional contributors and to re-energize the Funding Compact.
10. **In a development emergency, credibility, transparency, and accountability matter.** The case for increased investment requires transparency and accountability on the part of the UNDS. Work on open results reporting through UNINFO for the SERPs and the work done on RBM system development by the Fund have helped to improve transparency and accountability. There are opportunities to improve the clarity of the underlying theories of change for both and to better link (in the case of the Fund) project outputs to credible outcomes. Similarly, there is a need to invest in improved gathering and reporting of output data which is disaggregated by vulnerable group membership as well as by sex.
11. **The UNCT response to a development emergency must be tailored to the social and economic context of diverse countries.** The negative socio-economic impacts of COVID-19

were not felt evenly among and within countries. Smaller middle-income countries and SIDS suffered almost instant and very deep declines in national income. Countermeasures to COVID-19 shut down borders, greatly reduced trade, and devastated tourism-dependent economies. Lockdowns were particularly damaging for small MICs where economies depend on remittances from expatriates who returned in large numbers to already damaged economies. While low-income countries faced their own special burdens in the pandemic, the experience of smaller MICs and SIDS shows that the UNDS needs flexible tools to respond to variabilities in country contexts.

12. **In a development emergency, leadership matters.** Key informant interviews at global and country level high-lighted the role played by senior management of the Fund in ensuring open and transparent governance; in communicating Fund priorities and strategies to RCs around the world; and, in strongly advocating for measures to incorporate gender equality, human rights and LNOB values in the work of the Fund. They also noted that this leadership was supported by a responsive Advisory Committee and an engaged Fund Secretariat.

Recommendations

The management response to these recommendations will be coordinated by the Secretary General's Designate COVID-19 Recover Better Fund & Special Advisor to the Secretary General on Reforms.

1. **Prepare a global report that sets out the framework for United Nations support to countries to Recover Better and Greener.**

The purpose of the global recover better and greener report is to set out the collective ambition of the UN development system using a whole of UN system approach for attaining the SDGs. At the country level the report should guide the UNCT to revise their Cooperation Frameworks as per the 'new normal' created by the pandemic. The report should address areas suffering a disproportionate impact from the pandemic which require special attention going forward, such as innovation, digital inclusion, social protection, migration, severe poverty, women's economic empowerment, violence against women and girls, disability inclusion, LNOB, and human rights.

Rationale: An important lesson learned from the exercise has been both the strength of the UN framework in drawing attention to the development emergency aspect of the pandemic and its ability to support practical planning for the immediate socio-economic response at global and country level. However, there is strong sense among that UNCTs and their partners that they lack a similar level of precision on how to Recover Better and Greener, including innovative approaches and action on climate.

Expected Benefits: The report will provide the global strategy for the UNDS to recover better during the decade of action and provide guidance for the preparation of revised or new Cooperation Frameworks. It will help the partners and public understand the collective offer of the UNDS during the decade of action.

2. **Prepare and implement a strategy for deepening the UNDS Reform to realise its full potential.**

The strategy should provide the grounds for more inclusive and better participation of smaller and non-resident agencies. It should include elements for a communication strategy at national level so that key partners fully relate with and reinforce the reforms (including questions of funding and compliance with the Funding Compact and the roles of the RC and of UNDP). The strategy should set out how incentive structures for joint work can be further strengthened across all UN entities (including issues of staff appraisal, reporting, and accountability), and refine measures for elevating

the collective organizational culture. The strategy should encourage a phased increase in joint programmes and improvement in normative leadership, and ownership of collaborative results at country level. The reform should be inclusive with mechanisms for real inter-agency collaboration for Recovering Better to achieving the SDGs. It should have benchmarks, indicators, and clarity of results/benefits so that it can be monitored and evaluated.

Rationale: UNDS reform has made substantial progress in establishing structural and procedural investments, based on guidance and clarity in the collective UNDS offer at the country level. This is a significant achievement that helped the UN Development System act quickly during the pandemic, enabled by the Fund and SERP. However, there have been limits placed on a more coherent UNDS response by continuing issues relating to organizational behavior and mutual accountability, and to non-compliance by donors to the funding compact. These issues cannot be solved at the country-level alone. There is also a continuing loss of potential benefit from the participation of smaller and non-resident agencies for the UNDS system as a whole.

Expected Benefits: The most important expected result would be to maintain the important momentum gained in the past year regarding consolidating and strengthening the UNDS reforms at country level to realise its full potential. Small, NRA and cross cutting agencies will be able to bring their unique expertise to the UN collective offer to the country. Leaders and mid-level managers of UN entities at the country level will be clearer on their accountabilities for joint work. The cultural change will promote and value UN inter-agency initiatives for collective results. Funding incentives for joint programmes and normative work will accelerate a whole of UN approach to supporting national plans for SDGs.

- 3. Conduct a management review and merge the Joint SDG Fund and COVID-19 Fund to create a fund that is operationally agile and effective. Re-engage and resubmit a case to the donors to use the pooled funding mechanisms to Recover Better in line with the agreed commitments of the Funding Compact.**

To reduce transaction costs and facilitate effective resource mobilization during the transition to recovery, the two Funds with similar objectives going forward can and should be merged to become an improved Recover Better Fund. The transition should be facilitated through a management review grounded in lessons learned in the management and governance of the two funds. The new fund should be able to demonstrate inclusive governance, flexibility, transparency, results, and rapid processes for proposal development, approval, and disbursements.

Rationale: A key lesson learned has been that the COVID-19 funds were efficiently and effectively deployed: funding compact commitments for accountability, transparency and results were put in place; gender equality, LNOB, HR and, in some cases, disability inclusion were supported; and development reform was reinforced. Another key lesson was the need for the Fund to achieve a critical mass in terms of financing levels to more effectively realize its potential to influence policy and catalyze action at the UNCT level.

Expected Benefits: Should the donors engage as per the Funding Compact commitments to fully fund a strategic Joint Recover Better Fund at global level with more substantial financial resources, this will greatly improve the UN development system's ability to engage with national governments on normative and programme issues. It will incentivize the UNCT entities for joint planning, joint programming, and better collective results for SDGs. Importantly it will improve collective results for gender, human rights, disability inclusion and LNOB.

- 4. Build on the lessons from UNCT collaboration on Fund projects and SERPs to consolidate and strengthen improvements in gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and LNOB focus across the work of all UN entities at the country level.**

The most important lessons learned in relation to effective operationalization of GE/HR/LNOB in the early lessons study of the Fund should be incorporated in the merged SDG Fund, specifically: ensuring those with cross-cutting expertise are involved at the start; recognizing the need for systematic approaches to quality assurance; valuing the importance of timely facilitative guidance and targets/incentives to focus attention on GE/HR/LNOB; incorporating results-based budgeting and the collection of disaggregated data to allow for effective tracking of vulnerable groups targeting.

Rationale: Socio-economic analysis of the impact of the fund (Annex A) has demonstrated how severe poverty and hunger has increased, human rights have declined, and women are experiencing higher levels of violence and marginalization. Successes achieved in elevating a focus on gender, human rights, disability inclusion, and other vulnerable group targeting (not evenly, but with positive examples in some countries), provide a blueprint to build capacities across the system and offer an effective approach to operationalizing UN commitments to Leaving No One Behind.

Expected Benefits: Embodying core values of the UN and linkages to the SDGs and a means of addressing the disproportionate effect of the pandemic on women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups as well as putting human rights at the center of efforts to recover better.

5. Review and learn lessons from the SERPs prior to transitioning to the new or revised Cooperation Frameworks.

As the SERPs begin their transition toward their planned end date in late 2021, it will be important to ensure that the vulnerabilities, inequalities and priority areas for UNDS action they identify will be adapted and retained as existing CFs are revised and new ones developed. This should include continued progress in clearly defining mutual accountability for results and holding UNCT entities accountable for collective action. There is a clear need for the rapid development of practical guidance to RCs and UNCTs on how to operationalize the transition without losing the development emergency imperative of the SERPs. It may also be useful to incorporate the lessons learned from this study. The new CF should be prepared in an inclusive manner and have the full participation of NRAs and cross cutting agencies. The revised or new CF should phase in joint programmes and inter-agency activities to clearly identify what percentage of the CF budget will be for joint action.

Rationale: While one early lesson has been the apparent flexibility of UNDAF and CFs to accommodate emergency priorities identified in the SERP, another has been the need to focus a more coherent UNDS response under the five pillars of the Framework. In addition, the new generation of CFs need to include mechanisms for greater accountability on the part of UNCT entities to achieving common goals.

Expected Benefits: A more coherent and focused CF that does not reflect a return to normal but rather absorbs the lessons of the development emergency and builds in resilience to other shocks during the transition to recovery. The CF building on SERP lessons will move toward increasingly collaborative UN work at the country level in line with the QCPR.

6. Implement the System-Wide Evaluation of the UNDS Response to COVID-19 with a focus on learning to support a better recovery during the Decade of Action

The evaluation should use the SERPs and their effectiveness at country level as the basis to assess UNDS accountability for results, while looking forward and identifying lessons for effective support to recover better. This study has shown that the SERPs can provide a coherent, cohesive, and transparent plan for UNCT action around an immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. There is still a need, however, to examine this with the rigor, attention to detail and triangulation of evidence that can only come from a focused evaluation. While UN Evaluation Offices have planned

and are implementing programmatic and thematic evaluations of their COVID-19 response, very few of these evaluations use a system-wide lens. Finally, given the relative lack of attention to environmental and build back greener priorities supported by the Fund, there is a need to identify positive examples and good practices that can help to realize the goals of the strategy paper proposed in Recommendation One.

Rationale: For the UN development system the SERPs became the organizing principal and guiding framework for its response to COVID-19 at the country level. As the UN development system shifts its focus to recover better it is important to learn lessons from the SERPs in 121 countries and demonstrate accountability for the current projected resources of \$15.7 billion, of which \$3.0 billion represents funds repurposed from existing projects and programmes of UNCTs.

Expected Benefits: Assessment of the progress in operationalizing the QCPR. Accountability of the UN development system as per the funding compact. Learning and continuous improvements to the UN development system through during the Decade of Action to accelerate results for SDGs.

1. Rationale and Purpose of the Exercise

The Secretary General's April 2020 report on the quadrennial policy review (QCPR) (UN 2020a, p.30) establishes the United Nations' commitment to system-wide evaluations of Multi-Partner Trust Funds (MPTFs), including the COVID-19 MPTF. This early lessons and evaluability assessment of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (hereafter the Fund) is one of the first studies aimed at addressing that commitment.

It also recognizes the Secretary General's March 2020 call to action for shared responsibility and global solidarity, (UN 2020b, p.12) pointing out that COVID-19 is negatively affecting all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The Fund, as noted in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this study, is of "critical importance to the UN cohesive and catalytic response at country level" (UN 2020c, p.3). The Fund represents an important financing mechanism for the system-wide response at country level by providing financing for joint programming by UNCT members in line with UN Development System (UNDS) reform. It works in combination with Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plans (SERPs) to advance the priorities for action contained in the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 (UN, 2020 d).

The Secretary General noted in April (UN 2020 e, p.3) that: "The Fund aligns with the UN Development System (UNDS) Reform Agenda, offering a cohesive UN System response to national governments through a common financing mechanism, led by UN Resident Coordinators.

This exercise represents one of the first efforts to realize the potential of the SWE approach by identifying useful lessons during the operational life of the Fund while planning for an effective and useful evaluation.

1.1. Components and Objectives

There are two main components to the exercise: the early lessons and the evaluability assessment, which both shape the purpose and objectives of the study. The primary objective of the exercise as described in the ToR (UN 2020c p.3) is:

"To support learning and accountability of the UN COVID-19 MPTF by drawing lessons that are significant in the context of the Resident Coordinator (RC) system to improve coherent programming from early lessons; and, to conduct an evaluability assessment of the Fund in order to examine approaches to conduct a final evaluation."

There are four specific objectives:

1. Assess **the relevance of the Fund** from early experience including gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion, and leave no one behind (LNOB) principles, including the efficiency of the Fund in accepting and disbursing funds during the call for proposals and the catalytic relevance of funded proposals;
2. Assess **progress of the country socio-economic response plans (SERP) and Fund supported programs from the system-wide lens of UN development reform** and the RC's new role;
3. Assess the level of alignment between country socio-economic response plans and Fund supported programmes to **the existing UN programme cycle** (UNDAF or UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework-UNSDCF), and,
4. Conduct **an evaluability assessment of the Fund** and develop a plan for the final evaluation that serves the objective of measuring progress, supporting learning, and assuring accountability.

2. Scope, Approach and Methodology

2.1. Scope

The **early lessons** component of the exercise highlights the need and the opportunity for “drawing lessons that are significant in the context of the RC system to improve coherent programming from early lessons” (UN 2020c, p.3). The second component: **evaluability assessment**, addresses the validity of systems for monitoring, measuring and verifying the results of the Fund and SERPs and the availability of evidence to support a successful evaluation (UN 2020c, p.4). The detailed research questions used in the initiative are provided in the Inception Report (UN 2021 a).

Early Lessons

The scope of the early lessons component of this exercise is defined by the first three objectives listed above and a set of key considerations regarding the relevance, responsiveness, and value added of the Fund as well as its role in catalyzing programmatic action and innovations, and in supporting the development of SERPs. The ToR also note: “the exercise does not assess the overall performance of the UNDS system but focuses on the COVID-19 MPTF funded programmes and the systemic issues for the UNCT that arise from the preparation and management of the socio-economic response plans” (UN 2020c, p.4).

The inception phase of the exercise was used to provide more detail and structure to the scope of the early lessons component by organizing key considerations under three key Areas of Investigation (AOI) (UN 2021, p.21).

1. AOI1: The extent that progress in reforms enabled the UNDS to mount a coherent response to the pandemic, including the rapid launch and operation of the Fund and SERPs.
2. AOI2: The extent that the Fund and SERPs were designed to take advantage of the progress made in UNDS reform and to support and strengthen the reform process.
3. AOI3: The extent that progress on UNDS reforms and the design, governance, and management of the Fund and development of national SERPs combined to facilitate an integrated, cross-mandate UNDS response relevant to the needs of programme countries.

The first three objectives and key considerations detailed in the ToR (UN 2020c, pp. 11-13) were then further articulated within the three AOIs. This mapping, in turn, served to identify the detailed questions used to structure the early lessons component. The subsequent process of data collection and analysis made it clear that two important subject matter areas were best viewed as cutting across the three AOIs and deserved their own chapters in this report. They are:

1. The effectiveness and efficiency of the Fund as a financing and programme support instrument for the UN socio-economic response as embodied in the SERPs, including efficiency of operation and effectiveness in mobilizing resources.
2. The extent that the Fund and SERPs systematically incorporate the multilateral values of gender equality, human rights and meeting the needs of the most at risk populations (UN 2020d, p.7) through the commitment to leave no one behind (LNOB).

Evaluability Assessment

The ToR identified six key considerations to be addressed by the evaluability assessment (UN 2020c, pp. 4-5). These can be summarized under two main tasks: a) assess the adequacy and validity of the systems for monitoring, measuring and verifying the results of the Fund and SERPs, and the indicators used to track results as well as the availability of evidence to support a successful evaluation; and b), develop a plan for carrying out the evaluation. For a more complete discussion of scope, see the final Inception Report (UN 2021 a, pp. 9-16).

2.2. Approach and Methodology

Overall approach

The overall approach of the exercise combined a global view of the Fund and the SERPs in the context of UNDS reform with a country-level view developed from case studies in seven participating countries. At both global and country level the exercise relied on a review of key documents, profiling of available data, and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders.

The document reviews, data profiling and stakeholder interviews were not intended to produce evaluation findings capable of generalization across the entire spectrum of Fund supported programs. Rather, they were structured and carried out with the goal of identifying lessons across a wide variety of national contexts and a rapidly evolving pandemic and its associated development crisis, without losing sight of the effect of UNDS reforms.

Data collection methods and results

Document Reviews

At global level, the exercise involved identifying, securing and reviewing a wide range of documents addressing UNDS reform and the evolving UN response to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 as well as documentation specific to the Fund and the SERPs. These included, as examples, the Global Interim Report of the Fund, the Fund Solutions Catalogue (both versions), proposal review assessments for funded projects, results frameworks and indicators used in RBM systems, and guidance provided to UNCT entities on both the Fund and SERPs.

For each country case study, with some variations due to availability, the team examined a similar set of key documents:

- Socio-economic impact assessment (SEIA)
- Socio-economic response and recovery plan (SERP)
- Project proposals submitted and approved for support by the Fund (calls 1 and 2)
- Mid-Term Narrative Report on projects supported by the Fund
- Annual Fund RBM report submitted to the Fund Secretariat
- Project proposals included in the Solutions Catalogue
- Other pertinent documents specific to a given country and identified by the UNCT entities.

Analysis of SERP quality and content was based primarily on evidence from the seven country case studies, supplemented where appropriate with secondary evidence from document reviews (see, for example, Section 6.2).

Key Informant Interviews

Overall, the exercise encompassed 100 semi-structured interviews with 138 key informants with detailed notes uploaded to a central data base and excerpts coded using qualitative analysis software under 44 country level and 13 global level codes for subsequent analysis (Annex F). In total, 38 key informants were interviewed at global level and 100 at country level (Annex E).

At global level key informant interviews included the Secretary General's Designate COVID-19 Recover Better Fund & Special Advisor to the Secretary General on Reforms and senior staff of all the organizations represented in the Fund Advisory Committee including:

- Member UN Agencies, Funds and Programs (UNDP, UNICEF, UNCTAD, UNFPA, WFP and ILO)
- Contributing development partners (Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Denmark)
- Ex-officio members (WHO, OCHA, UN DCO, UN Women, and the MPTF Office).

Global level interviews also included selected members of the UN and Donor Evaluation Advisory Groups for this exercise (Switzerland, ILO, World Food Program), staff of the Fund Secretariat, the Office of the Deputy Secretary General, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights as well as key experts with specialized knowledge of gender equality, human rights and disability inclusion.

With some variation by country, each case study involved structured interviews with on average 14 key informants, including:

- Resident Coordinator
- Staff of the Resident Coordinator's Office
- UNCT entities participating in projects supported by the Fund
- National government staff, often including implementing partner ministries and central authorities
- A non-participating UNCT entity
- An active bilateral development partner
- In some cases, a Non-Resident UN Agency (NRA)¹.

Country case studies, their role and representation

The country case studies for the initiative were designed in accordance with Robert Yin's definition of a case study as "an empirical study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" (Yin, 2009, p18).

Case study countries were selected based on a defined set of criteria:

- All selected countries benefited from at least one project approved under the first call for proposals (Call 1) and some have projects approved from both the first and second call (Call 2).
- The selection is geographically diverse and includes countries in different socio-economic classes.
- The selection covers a broad range of participating UNCT entities.
- Selected countries have been severely impacted by COVID-19 either in terms of disease burden or economic dislocation or both.
- Selected countries are at differing levels of gender parity as indicated by the Gender Development Index (GDI).

¹ The term non-resident agency (NRA) is used to describe UN agencies without a physical presence at national level.

Table 1: Country Case Studies

Country	Region	Country Class	Funded Rounds	Participating UN Agencies	Gender Parity Group (GDI)
Cambodia	Asia and the Pacific	LMI	1 and 2	IOM, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO UNDP, UNCDF	4
Guatemala	Latin America and the Caribbean	UMI	1 and 2	IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO/PAHO	3
Kosovo (S/RES/1244)	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	UMI	1	IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, WHO	Not Ranked
Malawi	East and Southern Africa	LI	1	UNFPA, UN Women, WHO	3
Maldives	South Asia	UMI	1 and 2	UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO	4
Moldova	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	LMI	1	IOM, UNICEF, UN Women	1
Sao Tome and Principe	West and Central Africa	LMI	1 and 2	FAO, ILO, UNDP, UN HABITAT, UNICEF, WFP	5

The country case studies were summarized in a detailed slide deck with supporting cover notes and validated with the UNCT in each case country. These served as the basis for identifying both common and divergent findings that support the identification of early lessons. The country case study results presented in this report are not evaluation findings which can be generalized to the entire Fund. When the report points to common or specific findings in these countries, they are illustrative of lessons applicable to other countries with projects supported by the Fund, but they are representative only of these seven countries.

2.3. Limitations

There are two types of significant limitations to the depth, breadth, and degree of validity of this exercise: those arising from any rapid lessons learning exercise in relation to a complex, multi-country program or plan; and those arising from the rapidly evolving conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inherent limitations to rapid lessons learning in relation to a complex subject

- To be useful and support actions going forward in the evolution of the Fund, the SERPs and the UN socio-economic response to COVID-19, the exercise was compressed into a four-month time frame (December 2020 to March 2021). This limited the time available for detailed planning, reviewing documentation and data and conducting interviews at global and country level.
- To address these constraints, it was necessary to conduct fewer case studies than would have been possible in a less compact time frame in which these case studies could have been supported by a wider set of data collection methods to a greater depth of insight and triangulation. With fewer case studies, some aspects of the Fund and the SERPs did not receive as much coverage as others. However, the careful selection of case countries allowed examination of the Fund in a wide-variety of contexts.
- A rapid early lessons study in a complex program environment (which is itself evolving) presents very real challenges to the analytical process. This, in turn, required exploring emerging issues and questions on an iterative basis within a very short time frame.

Limitations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic

Conducting a reasonably sound, evidence-based and analytical inquiry during a global pandemic presented the exercise with some unique challenges:

- Key informants at global and country level were themselves engaged in combatting a development emergency. Some were recovering from COVID-19 or dealing with family members experiencing the disease. Others were new to their positions as they replaced staff on leave due to illness.
- Not all key informants in the case study countries had easy access to video interview platforms because of network limitations.
- The pandemic itself was impacting the case study countries in very different ways and was evolving rapidly during the study. Assumptions about the duration and extent of the health and the development emergency were being disproved almost weekly. As a result, the frame of reference for effective action (for example, the balance between response and recovery activities) was rapidly changing as well.

In responding to these limitations, the exercise focused on ensuring that the burden on RCs, RCOs, UNCT entities and their partners was limited. Interviews were limited to 45 minutes to an hour with follow up by e-mail or a subsequent interview if needed. Instead of a written report, in each country the UNCT was provided with a de-briefing on the case study with a slide deck shared with the RC and UNCT, accompanied by a brief cover note. These deliverables were designed to offer insights and opportunities for reflection to UNCTs and to respond to their questions and concerns. Draft results were reviewed and validated by the UNCT in each of the case study countries before finalization.

Analysis and Quality Assurance

The study team compiled and coded all the key informant interview results under a common coding system using qualitative analysis software with codes derived from the review matrix. In keeping with accepted case study practices, each country study draws only on those interviews conducted specifically in relation to the case study in question. After the interview and document and data review, and after material for each of the case studies was integrated, preliminary findings and lessons were developed.

Preliminary findings and lessons were then re-examined in relation to the global interviews and document reviews to ensure early lessons recognized the essential linkages between the global and country level. Prior to drafting this report, the study team conducted a series of data consolidation and interpretation workshops in an interactive process to identify, challenge, and reinterpret as necessary the early lessons and evaluability results reported below.

Finally, the draft report has been reviewed by the Quality Assurance Panel who have presented the team with detailed questions, comments, and suggestions to improve the analytical rigour and validity of the identified lessons. The draft was also vetted by the Evaluation Reference Group and discussed in detail with the UN and development partner Evaluation Advisory Groups prior to finalization.

3. Overview: Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 and the UN Response

This chapter presents a very brief portrait of the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic at a global level. For a more extensive analysis prepared for this study see Annex A.

3.1. An Historic Global Event with Profound Impacts

In the past year, the world has undergone a once-in-century event with the COVID-19 crisis. As of March 12, 2021, some 119 million people were infected worldwide and 2.6 million had died (Worldometers.info and World Health Organization, 2021). The range of countries most affected by the number of cases per million inhabitants ranges in size and population from Andorra to the United States. In terms of deaths per million, along with smaller countries like Gibraltar and San Marino, more economically prosperous countries like the United Kingdom, Italy, and the US have suffered at unprecedented levels. Overall, the direct and indirect costs are profound with higher levels of adverse impacts among the most vulnerable countries and people. As just one example, vulnerable economies like Burkina Faso, Yemen, Nigeria's North East, and South Sudan carry a high risk of famine due to the pandemic (World Food Programme, 2020a).

Adverse Social and Economic Effects: A Pattern of Inequality

Overall, estimates suggest that more than 251 million people will be forced into poverty by the pandemic (UNDP, 2020). Public debt is also expected to rise by 17 percent of global GDP (International Monetary Fund, 2020) and 20 countries may face famine or lack access to food (World Food Programme, 2020a). Inequalities in vaccination programs are also arising. Ultimately, we stand at a hinge in history where deep collective action with global solidarity will be required to salvage international socioeconomic security.

Impact on Workers in the Informal Sector

The adverse effects of the pandemic have been especially severe on workers in the informal sector given a priori structural conditions worldwide (International Labour Organization, 2018; Delaney, 2020). Sixty percent of all workers around the world operate in the informal sector: in developing countries this can be as high as 90 percent (ILO, 2018). Informal workers typically lack rights, benefits, and social protection which worsens the burden of the pandemic. Structural problems in this sector will worsen if inequality and poverty increase and mitigation measures are not taken (Delaney, 2020). The ILO noted early in the crisis: "the rate of relative poverty, which is defined as the proportion of workers with monthly earnings that fall below 50 per cent of the median earnings in the population, is expected to increase by almost 34 percentage points globally for informal workers. (ILO 2020, p.2)".

Employment, Work from Home and the Digital Divide

While work from home (WFH) and related entrepreneurial adaptations and innovations have arisen as a response mechanism, the global digital divide has been deep and broad, causing distortions and inequality (World Bank, 2020a, 2020b). For those who cannot work from home, the ability to access health systems is at an all-time low for care (WHO, 2020c). Finally, while governments have tried, there is heterogeneity in providing social security and support (Hanna, 2020) with many nations failing to do much at all. The UN Secretary General has said that we will have to borrow from tomorrow to live out our today, but the levels of rising public debt (IMF, 2020) will mean a sustained period of fiscal imbalance that will not be easy to correct.²

Effects on non-COVID-19 Healthcare, Social Cohesion & Human Rights

A WHO survey on hospital health systems in 105 countries from March to June 2020 shows that almost 90 percent have experienced disruption to their health services, with developing countries being most impacted. The most frequent disruptions were in the areas of outreach and facility-based services for non-communicable disease diagnosis and treatment, family planning and

² Accessed at: <https://mobile.twitter.com/antonioguterres/status/1332444087287312384>

contraception, treatment for mental health disorders, and cancer diagnosis and treatment (WHO, 2020c).

Potentially lifesaving services were disrupted in almost a quarter of the surveyed countries, with the closure of 24-hour emergency rooms in 22 percent of the countries, restrictions on urgent blood transfusions in 23 percent of countries, and emergency surgeries delayed in 19 percent of the countries. Disruptions in malaria diagnosis and treatment and tuberculosis case detection and antiretroviral treatment also occurred (WHO, 2020c).

The pandemic's impact on social cohesion will be particularly hard for countries with a high risk of armed conflict. Iraq is one example, where social cohesion is estimated at critical levels due to lack of trust in the government and between peoples. A similarly alarming situation is arising in Ethiopia. The lockdowns have escalated the tensions between security forces and the population (International Organization for Migration, 2020a, 2020b). With one out of five people living in poverty also living in fragile and conflict-affected situations, COVID-19 could worsen this ratio (World Bank, 2020a, 2020b).

Adverse and Unequal Impact on Travel and Migration

The restrictions in global travel have meant that the movement of people fleeing places of conflict and escaping from human rights abuses is also adversely affected (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020). The risk to refugees in transit and in refugee camps is also greater. Depressed economies will also mean lower demand for migrant workers and this will potentially facilitate technological progress to replace labor (IOM, 2020a). COVID-19 has also impacted on internal migration, as it did in India during its March 2020 lockdown with four hours' notice. As people began to return from the cities to their rural areas, many brought the virus with them, raising the infection rate in places with less economic development. This could also mean fewer domestic remittances, leaving many rural families without an important income source as has occurred in Africa and elsewhere (IOM, 2020 c).

Losses in Education

At the height of the lockdown in 2020, more than 160 countries had mandated some form of school closures, impacting at least 1.5 billion children and youth (World Bank, 2020a 2020b). Researchers find that the aggregate economic output will be diminished due to school closing and intergenerational mobility will be negatively impacted, particularly for older children (Jang & Yum, 2020). This is because education equips people with abilities and skills that improve their productivity, allowing them to apply new ideas and technologies. Closing schools will cause severe long-run learning losses with impacts on the productivity of human capital and the mental development of children (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). While digital education is somewhat of a substitute, research shows that online learning is an imperfect substitute for in-person learning especially for children from low-income families (Agostinelli, Doepke, Sorrenti, & Zilibotti, 2020). Response mechanisms in education need to be designed keeping in mind the most vulnerable.

Unequal Impact on Women

The pandemic has been especially disastrous for women. UNESCO (2020) projects that at the end of the pandemic, 11 million girls might not return to school. COVID-19 may also reverse decades-long gains by women and girls in human capital, economic empowerment, and voice and agency (World Bank, 2020a, 2020b). Female employees are also more likely to lose their jobs (UNCTAD, 2020a, 2020b). Across all regions, women have been more likely than men to drop out of the labour force, during this crisis (ILO 2021, p.9). There is also evidence of women being paid less, particularly after becoming mothers, and spending more time on child-care (Andrew, et al., 2020).

Rising rates of all forms of violence against women and harmful practices have also been documented including child marriage and trafficking, exploitation, sexual violence, and domestic violence (United Nations, 2020g). The demand for access to hotlines related to these challenges has risen dramatically in some places. Almost one in five women have experienced violence during the past year and many are trapped with their abusers (UN, 2020). Moreover, estimates indicate that for every three months that the pandemic ensues, an additional 15 million women are at-risk of experiencing violence. Unintended pregnancies could also increase if lockdowns continue going forward. An additional 13 million child marriages that could have been averted may take place between 2020 and 2030 (UN, 2020g).

Unequal Impacts on Investment in the Sustainable Development Goals

The COVID-19 pandemic has eliminated the progress made in promoting SDG investment since 2015. The considerable decline in investment in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was much larger in developing and transition economies than in OECD countries. SDG-relevant investment fell by 51 percent in Africa, 44 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 33 percent in Asia, and 27 percent in transition economies (UNCTAD, 2020a, 2020b). To combat this decline, the UN has targeted 48 investments in governance, social protection, green economy, and digitalization in a plan named the SDG Push. Under this scenario, the number of people living in extreme poverty can be reduced by 146 million in 2030 relative to the projected scenario due to COVID-19 (1 billion by 2030). This could help to narrow the gender gap, with 74 million women and girls lifted out of poverty (UNDP, 2020).

3.2. The UNDS Response

In March 2020, the UN Secretary General issued the appeal: Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. The report called for a global partnership to achieve three major objectives (UN 2020 b, pp. 16-19):

1. Suppress transmission to stop the pandemic and save lives
2. Address social, economic and multi-dimensional impacts
3. Implement sustainable solutions to cope with the impacts of the crisis.

The Secretary General placed special emphasis on the need for national solidarity, including fostering inclusion and human rights in order to achieve leaving no one behind (LNOB), while insisting that young people and women/girls must have a face and a voice in the response (UN 2020c, p.5). Early in the pandemic, the Secretary General warned that COVID-19 was deepening existing inequalities and having devastating social and economic consequences for women and girls, threatening to reverse progress made toward greater equality.

On 3 April 2020, the Secretary General's UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund was launched with the goal of contributing to the three objectives of the call for solidarity operating through three funding windows:

1. Enable governments and communities to suppress the transmission of the virus
2. Mitigate the socio-economic impact and safeguard their livelihoods
3. Recover better.

Accordingly, the Fund ToR aimed to support programmatic responses to address the disproportionate burden of the pandemic on women and children, stipulating that funded initiatives needed to promote an inclusive and human rights-based approach and address the gender implications of COVID-19 with actions to avoid gender-based discrimination (UN 2020 f, p.5). While the Fund ToR allow for single agency or joint proposals, projects in the case study countries were all Joint. Interviews with RCs and UNCT entities indicate only joint proposals were considered.

The Secretary General's UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19

Later in April, the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 (henceforth the UN framework) established the overarching structure of the UNDS response to be addressed at country level by socio-economic response plans (SERPs). An essential element of the UN framework is the identification of five pillars of the UNDS response (UN 2020 d, pp. 11-31).

Table 2: Pillars of the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19

Pillars	Key Elements of the UNDS Response – What the UN Offers
1. Health First: Protecting health systems and services during the crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support countries to maintain essential health services • Analytical and policy support and rapid technical guidance • Programme implementation and technical support – including procurement and distribution • Support on tracking and reaching vulnerable populations
2. Protecting People: Social protection and basic services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale up and expand resilient and pro-poor social protection systems • Maintain essential food and nutrition services • Ensure continuity and quality of water and sanitation services • Support the continuity of social services and access to shelters • Support victims of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)
3. Economic Response and Recovery: Protecting jobs, small and medium enterprises, and vulnerable workers in the informal economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated, country-specific policy advice and programme support • Scaling-up employment intensive programming • Support to young people and social partners in entrepreneurship and social innovation • Support on strategies to green fiscal stimulus packages • Rapid and gender-responsive socio-economic assessments and labour market and business environment diagnostics • Advice on nature-based solutions for development, including for SMEs • Business linkages support • Investments to improve productivity and working conditions in micro and SMEs • Technical support to women micro and small entrepreneurs • Digital payments support • Assistance to address trade challenges and facilitating trade flows • E-commerce and digital solutions to allow secure access to services needed at the time of crisis, particularly by vulnerable groups
4. Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analytical, advisory, and technical assistance services • Technical support to Member States in improving the evidence base for policy • Advice on social expenditure monitoring and mapping budgets for social development priorities to rebalance public expenditure • Conduct of comprehensive impact assessments at the household level
5. Social Cohesion and Community Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive social dialogue, advocacy and political engagement • Empower community resilience participation and equitable service delivery • Support to governance, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

In addition, the UN framework (p.7) identifies 14 at-risk populations experiencing the highest degree of socio-economic marginalization and requiring specific attention in the UNDS response, including, inter alia, women, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees, and minorities. The framework also emphasizes the UN's central promise to leave no one behind (LNOB) and to gender equality (GE).

A key element of the UN framework is a commitment by the UNDS to support countries to Build Back Better (BBB) and Greener, towards sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda. This involves four specific areas of national and international action to be addressed through the five pillars of the framework (pp. 38-34).

1. Laying the foundation for a fair and sustainable transition to a new social contract in the years ahead.
2. Addressing the current unsustainable economic model and its unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.
3. Addressing the linkages between nature and health.
4. Investing in social and economic interventions today to build a better post-pandemic future (including decarbonization, the protection of natural capital, enhancing gender and social equality and inclusion, and the realization of human rights for everyone).

Section 5.6 examines the extent these elements of BBB and greener were incorporated in Fund projects.

4. COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF Investments

4.1. Commitments to the Fund

Since it was established on April 3, 2020, the Fund has attracted a total of \$75.4 million in contributions, or 7.5 percent of the financial requirement targeted for the first nine months of operations (for a discussion of resource mobilization lessons see Section 5.6). The Fund has relied on quite a small group of core contributors. The ten largest contributors have provided 97.4 percent of all commitments to the Fund and five contributing countries (Norway, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, and Sweden) have provided 75.6 percent of all commitments.³ Four of the five largest contributors to the Fund are also among the six largest contributors to the Joint SDG Fund. From January 2020 to March 2021, Sweden, the Netherlands, Switzerland (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) and Denmark committed a combined 60.5 million USD to the Joint SDG Fund, accounting for 76 percent of total commitments in the same period.

However, the Fund has had some success in diversifying sources of support beyond traditional development partners. It has received modest commitments from Cyprus, Cambodia, the Philippines, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Thailand, as well as from the United Nations Evaluation Group and the Standard Chartered Bank of Zambia.

4.2. Fund Allocations and Budgets

As of April 20, 2021, the Fund had approved projects in 73 countries through two calls for proposals with a total budgeted value of \$73.5 million. This included \$2.32 million allocated through UN bodies to fund: the cost of operating the Fund Secretariat (\$ 1.65 million), communications (\$20,000), and the System-Wide Evaluation (\$.66 million). A further \$2.4 million was allocated from the Fund to support the work of RCs to coordinate development of the SERPs, assist preparation of calls for proposals and build a pipeline of implementable programmes that align with the UN framework.

Regional distribution of the approved budgets was influenced by the fact that Call 1 (April 15, 2020) excluded countries eligible for funding under the Secretary General's Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 (OCHA 2020). This restriction was lifted for Call 2 (August 17, 2020). At first glance, the share of overall funding allocated to Sub-Saharan Africa seems low in comparison to East Asia and the Pacific and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. This is accounted for to some extent by the fact that Call 1 excluded countries eligible for support under the Global Humanitarian Appeal. In addition, the relatively high level of activity in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and in East

³ All data for this section is from the MPTF Office Trust Fund Fact Sheet, March 13, 2021, accessed at: <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/COV00>

Asia and the Pacific reflects the significant social and economic impact of COVID-19 on small states in both regions.

Table 3: Regional Share of Fund Budgets

Region	Share of Fund Budget	Number of Funded Countries
East Asia and Pacific	22.8%	15
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	18.7%	10
South Asia	9.7%	5
Latin America and the Caribbean	18.8%	14
Middle East and North Africa	4.1%	3
Eastern and Southern Africa	9.4%	9
West and Central Africa	16.6%	13

Each Fund supported project is based on a joint proposal from participating UNCT entities. Of the 32 Recipient United Nations Organizations (RUNO) that had signed a memorandum of understanding by August 31, 2020, a total of 24 were participating in one or more funded projects and had corresponding budget allocations. The total budget allocations were not spread evenly across these 24 agencies. The top ten RUNOs accounted for 84 percent of budget allocations, while the top five (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, ILO, and UN Women in that order) were allocated 60 percent of the total. During the immediate emergency response under Call 1, larger UN entities with an operational presence at country level were more readily able to rapidly develop joint projects and have them approved. The reasons for this are explored in Chapter 7. This concentration of funding among relatively few agencies is offset to some extent by the ways in which non-participating entities have been able to influence project designs and to engage in policy development as described in Chapter 5.

5. Efficiency and Relevance of the Fund

This chapter focuses on the Fund and its administration and governance and the lessons learned from the perspective of the Fund itself. The relationship between the Fund, the SERPs and UNDS reform is examined in Chapters 7 to 9.

5.1. Fund Projects in the Case Study Countries

This exercise addressed key areas for consideration regarding the efficiency, valued added and comparative advantage of the Fund through global document reviews and interviews and, most importantly, through the country case studies. Fund projects in each case country are described in detail in the infographic data sheets in Annex B. Table 4 highlights some of the most important data on Fund operations in each of the case countries.

Table 4: COVID-19 Response and Recovery Funded Projects in Case Study Countries

Project Name	Participating UN Entities	Pillar	Target Group(s)
Cambodia			
Strengthened National Preparedness, Response and Resilience to COVID-19 (Call 1)	IOM, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO	2	Returning migrants, pregnant returning migrants, GBV survivors among migrants
Unlocking Cambodian Women’s Potential through Fiscal Space Creation (Call 2)	UNCDF, IOM, UNDP, IFAD	4	Women owned enterprises working in the informal sector
Guatemala			
Protecting Healthcare Workers and Vulnerable Groups and Promoting a Human Rights-Based Quarantine (Call 1)	WHO, UNFPA, IOM, UNICEF	1 and 2	Health care workers in COVID-19 facilities, pregnant women and newborns, returning migrants subject to quarantine
Implementation of a Gender-Sensitive Social Household Registry (Call 2)	UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, OHCHR	2	Social registry to support targeting poorest especially women
Kosovo			
Support Kosovo Institutions with swift and innovative solutions to contain the spread of COVID-19 (Call 1)	UNICEF, UNDP, UN Women UNHCR, IOM	1 and 2	Front line health workers, parliamentarians for digitization through Zoom software
Counter the deepening of existing inequalities (Call1)	UN Women, UNHCR, IOM	2	Mental health support for non-majority communities, domestic violence survivors
Safe and inclusive return to normality in health and education in the wake of COVID-19 (earmarked UK)	UNICEF, UN Women, WHO, UNFPA	1, 2 and 5	Safe and inclusive return to school, health services for vulnerable communities
Malawi			
Emergency response for continuity of maternal and new-born health services in Malawi (Call 1)	UNFPA, UN Women, WHO	1	Pregnant women and new-borns and women accessing national hot-line
Maldives			
Strengthening resilience of most vulnerable to future shocks In Maldives (Call 1)	WHO, UNICEF	2	Mental health of population with special attention to special needs population
Digitization social support on GBV, streamlining social welfare, creating a national care system for GBV (Call 2)	UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA	2	Prevention of GBV and improvement of services to GBV survivors
Moldova			
Strengthening Moldova’s response to the COVID-19 crisis (Call 1)	UNICEF, UN Women, IOM	1 and 2	Vulnerable women including Roma women and women victims of violence, Returning migrants and border police
Sao Tome and Principe			
Ensuring Access of most vulnerable families to food and working conditions during the pandemic (Call 1)	FAO, UN Habitat, WFP, ILO	3	Small scale farmers and food insecure vulnerable people
Women economic empowerment window (Call 2)	UNDP, UNICEF, ILO	3	Small scale women agriculturalists

5.2. Relevance and Suitability of the Fund in a Development Emergency

Rapid Startup, Approval and Launch of Fund Projects

Across all seven case studies and in global interviews, key informants noted that the rapid establishment of the Fund, its governing principles and, especially, streamlined development, submission and approval of funded projects were the key to ensuring relevance. The rapid start-up demonstrated the ability of the UNDS to respond at country level around a joint UNCT initiative. Call 1 was sent to eligible countries on April 15, less than two weeks after the establishment of the Fund. A review of project start-up dates in the case study countries shows that five of the eight projects approved in the first round were started by May 21 and three were started on or before 13 May, some three and a half weeks after the call for proposals.

Table 5: Approval and Start Dates for Call 1 Fund Projects by Case Study Countries

Approved Call 1 Projects	Amount	Start Up Date
Cambodia	\$1,000,000	5 June 2020
Guatemala	\$1,000,000	13 May 2020
Kosovo 1	\$399,998	21 May 2020
Kosovo 2	\$599,997	21 May 2020
Malawi	\$1,000,000	11 May 2020
Maldives	\$300,000	29 May 2020
Moldova	\$1,000,000	11 May 2020
Sao Tome and Principe	\$300,000	26 May 2020

Key informant interviews at global and country level identified a number of factors contributing to the rapid start up of funded projects:⁴

- Use of the existing MPTF model with established Memoranda of Understanding for potential recipient UN organizations.
- Early guidance from the Secretary General’s Designate for COVID-19 to the global community of RCs on the goals of the Fund and the process for proposal development, submission, review and approval.
- Relatively simple and clear proposal requirements and criteria for project approval (UN COVID MPTF 2020 a).
- Rapid review and assessment of proposed projects at UNCT level under coordination of the RC and with support of the RCO.
- Rapid review, assessment and approval of submitted proposals by the Fund Secretariat and working groups of the Advisory Committee.

At the same time, at both global level and in the case study countries, key informants noted some challenges posed by the rapid pace of project proposal development, submission and approval.

⁴ It is important distinguish the different roles and accountabilities of the RC/RCO and UN entities. While RCs/RCOs supported and coordinated the UNCT proposal development process, agencies are responsible and accountable for the implementation and expenditure of funds received through the COVID 19 MPTF.

Advisory Committee members interviewed noted that the fast pace of project review and approval

On-Time Expenditure Rates for Fund Projects

Some key informants noted that, according to the on-line Gateway maintained by the MPTF Office, expenditure rates for the Fund seem very low. On March 22, 2021, the site reported that total annual expenditures were just \$2.8 million, four percent of the amount transferred out of the Fund to participating UN entities. However, this reflects the pace of data flows on Fund expenditures from participating UN entities into the MPTF Office rather than actual expenditures. A review of medium term and annual reports submitted for projects in the case study countries confirmed that, for Call 1 Projects, expenditure rates were much higher than those reported on the portal. For the Call 1 project in Moldova, for example, the Gateway reports an expenditure rate of 13 percent as of March 22, 2021.¹ In contrast, the RCO in Moldova (UN Moldova 2020) reported an expenditure rate of 96 percent as of August 31, 2020, seven months earlier.

placed considerable strain on technical staff working on project approvals during the acute emergency phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in April and early May 2020.

At the UNCT level, there were two important challenges posed by the rapid pace of proposal development and submission for Call 1. It somewhat limited the space available for small and NRA UNCT

members to enter coalitions to develop and submit proposals when larger UNCT entities with more staff and more experience in joint programming had a comparative advantage in forming teams to submit proposals quickly.

The compressed time frames also meant there was limited time to engage national authorities and Civil Society Organization (CSO) partners in the project development process. However, national authorities and CSO staff in the case study countries emphasized that approved projects were in line with national priorities and met urgent needs of targeted groups and communities, while avoiding duplication with efforts funded by other sources.

On balance, and across all seven case study countries, the simplified project proposal criteria and the rapid pace of proposal development, submission and approval developed for the Fund played an essential role in allowing UNCTs to work quickly together under the coordination of the RC. This also allowed the UNCT to demonstrate to national authorities, CSOs and other development partners that the UNDS was able to shift rapidly into an emergency stance. Participating UNCT entities in the case study countries also noted that the Fund was very efficient in disbursing funds to participating organizations once projects were approved.

Relationship and comparison to other MPTFs, Including the Joint SDG Fund

Six of the case study countries (Cambodia, Guatemala, Malawi, Moldova, Maldives, and Sao Tome and Principe) were also accessing the Joint SDG Fund in 2020 and 2021.⁵ Malawi also has access to a country-specific Malawi SDG Acceleration Fund with total commitments for the period 2019 to 2024 of \$144.6 million and a current funded amount of \$43 million net of expenditures already made. In addition, three countries (Cambodia, Guatemala, and Kosovo) were accessing the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNPRPD) Fund.

In all seven case study countries, key informants within the UNCT indicated that the Fund was well suited to a rapid and efficient response in an emergency. Other MPTFs, including the Joint SDG

⁵ UN MPTF Office: Gateway; accessed at: <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet>

Fund, were designed and developed to operate in sync with medium-and longer-term development planning processes including Cooperation Frameworks. As a result, they are less suited to an immediate socio-economic response. The Malawi Joint SDG Acceleration Fund was an exception because it contains an emergency response window allowing it to rapidly re-purpose expenditures. In all the case study countries, key informants from the UNCTs suggested that, if the Fund is merged with the Joint SDG Fund, it will be important to retain some of the features of the Fund that make it more responsive.⁶

5.3. Mobilizing Resources for the Fund

At a global level the Fund's ambitious financial targets of 2 Billion USD overall and 1 Billion in the first nine months of operation (UN 2020e p.2) were not met, with commitments reaching just 7.5 percent of the latter target after eleven months. It is worth noting that while the Fund was established as the means to energize the UNDS for the immediate socio-economic response, much of the financing of that response comes from other sources, notably from the repurposing of resources already committed to social and economic programming by UNCT entities at country level drawing on both UN agency core funds and re-purposed funds from bilateral development partners (estimated at a total of \$3.0 Billion as of March 14 2021).⁷

Among the bilateral development partners, the most common response to the question of why the Fund has not met its targets has been the severe shortage of official development assistance funds during a global emergency with much larger demands on donor countries themselves heavily impacted by COVID-19. In the words of one key informant who has engaged with non-contributing countries in pursuit of commitments to the Fund, *"opposition to supporting the Fund is not ideologically based, it is simply a matter of no resources available for this use at this time"*.

Key informants also pointed to the large number of MPTFs now in operation and possible confusion among potential contributors regarding the specific programmatic niche occupied by the COVID-19 MPTF, in relation to the Joint SDG Fund in particular. They felt that both factors could have contributed to the disappointing response by donors. On the whole, bilateral partners interviewed emphasized the need to clarify the relationship between the Fund and the Joint SDG Fund in order to reduce transaction costs and provide a single financing vehicle for joint work on the recover better and greener agenda. It is striking that, over the 2020/21 time-frame, the COVID-19 MPTF and the Joint SDG Fund have attracted almost the same overall level of commitment (Section 4.1) from essentially the same group of contributing partners.

The Secretary General's Designate, the Fund Secretariat and the Advisory Committee members have spent considerable effort to broaden opportunities for resource mobilization and increase resource commitments to the Fund and SERPs. One of the most prominent initiatives has been the development of the Solutions Catalogue of unfunded priority projects. By September 2020 the Solutions Catalogue consisted of 206 unfunded projects with an estimated funding requirement of \$252 million. It is intended as a tool for resource mobilization to be deployed at global level by the Fund and at country level by RCs and UNCTs. The Deputy Secretary General wrote to all permanent representatives of Member States and all Permanent Observers to the UN on 23 November 2020 to urge them to contribute additional resources to the initiatives in the Solutions Catalogue, either through the Fund or directly to UNCTs.

⁶ At the time of writing, there is no formal record of a final decision to merge the COVID-19 MPTF and the Joint SDG Fund. However, there are strong indications from key informants that such a decision is imminent.

⁷ UNINFO COVID 19 Data Portal: Accessed at: https://data.uninfo.org/Home/_ProcessIndicators

Section 7.2 examines the contributions made to the Fund in relation to the mutual commitments by member states and the UNDS under the Funding Compact as a key area of UNDS reform.

5.4. Fund Relevance to Country Contexts

The study approached the question of Fund relevance at country level through the lens of how well funded projects met the most immediate need for a joint UNDS response by addressing, in particular, gaps that would have otherwise gone unmet, as identified by key stakeholders in each country.

The positive case for the relevance of the Fund and the projects it supported at country level is partly based on the rapid Fund start-up. This meant projects under the Fund became active at a time when many development processes supported by multilateral and bilateral partners were on hold due to the problems of managing and supporting service delivery under emergency orders, international and local travel restrictions, and local lock downs.

Projects supported by the Fund in response to the first call for proposal focused on addressing identified gaps in the socio-economic response for Pillar 1 (Health First Solutions) and Pillar 2 (Protecting People). Projects aimed to address gaps in Pillars 1 and 2 were recognized by all key stakeholders as the highest priority for UNCT support during the first months of the pandemic. As projects were identified and approved under Call 2, the number of countries receiving support under Pillar 3 (Economic Response and Recovery) and Pillar 5 (Social Cohesion and Community Resilience) show a steady increase. Pillar 4 (Macroeconomic and Multilateral Collaboration) also received somewhat more attention under Call 2, though it received the least focus overall. This was a positive change and reflects experience gained and information gathered through the SEIA and SERP processes.

A shift in projects approved for Call 2 toward more strategic interventions of priority for national governments and focused on more medium-term results also contributed to the overall relevance of the Fund. This aspect of relevance was exemplified by, for example: the digitization of social registries in support of social protection systems in Guatemala and the Maldives; support to small scale women agriculturalists to connect with international markets in Sao Tome and Principe; and, financing for women-led enterprises in Cambodia.

Projects approved under Call 1, during the most immediate response to the development emergency, focused on addressing the most readily apparent gaps in services, often with a focus on migrants and other vulnerable populations. In the case study countries (Table 6) projects reported outputs such as migrant screening and referral (Cambodia, Guatemala, Moldova), access to appropriate care for vulnerable populations including pregnant women in COVID-19 treatment

Adapting to the Context for Small Island Developing States

The Maldives UNCT identified the need for global UN initiatives such as the COVID-19 MPTF to develop a flexible approach that accommodates unique country contexts, especially Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Standardized criteria that informed the selection process for the first call for the Fund excluded the Maldives on the basis of GDP without considering the impact of the crisis on the country. The Maldives is one of the hardest-hit countries by the pandemic because of its reliance on tourism and vulnerability to external shocks. Following high level negotiations, the Fund included them and other SIDS on an exceptional basis, highlighting the importance of thinking differently in the future about how selection criteria are defined and applied to global initiatives.

centres, psychological services for vulnerable people and, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention and response.

While the scale of reported results varied across the projects reviewed in each country, there was strong agreement among UN staff and national authorities that the interventions were genuinely relevant to the context at the time each was implemented. In particular, they noted that discussions coordinated by the RC helped to identify gaps in current programmes resulting from the pandemic which could be targeted by proposals submitted to the Fund.

Table 6: Selected Outputs Reported for Call 1 Projects

Project Name Participating UN Entities	Selected Outputs Reported in the Fund RBM System at Project Level: Case Study Countries
Cambodia	
Strengthened National Preparedness, Response and Resilience to COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of returning migrants screened at point of entry • 727 cash grant transfers to returning migrants
Guatemala	
Protecting Healthcare Workers and Vulnerable Groups and Promoting a Human Rights-Based Quarantine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 COVID-19 treatment hospitals scored at least 60% on reorganization standards scoring • 18 health area directorates with operative COVID-19 surveillance systems • 3,002 unaccompanied minors reunited with their families in a safe and dignified manner
Kosovo	
Support Kosovo Institutions with swift and innovative solutions to contain the spread of COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,613 health care workers provided with PPE • Psychosocial digital content created and disseminated
Counter the deepening of existing inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,475 (881 female) receiving health care assistance • 464 vulnerable persons provided with legal aid
Malawi	
Emergency response for continuity of maternal and new-born health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of pregnant women attend scheduled antenatal visits • 75,600 live births attended by skilled personnel during COVID-19 (2020)
Maldives	
Strengthening resilience of most vulnerable to future shocks In the Maldives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16,000 persons accessing mental health prevention services from all providers • 2,649 individuals accessing psychological support
Moldova	
Strengthening Moldova's response to the COVID-19 crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff of 58 medical centres provided with PPE • 200 border police front line staff trained on use of new SOPs for screening and referring returning migrants
Sao Tome and Principe	
Ensuring Access of vulnerable families to food and working conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 600 women-headed families trained on innovative food production techniques • 32 schools benefiting from re-habilitated school gardens

The overall level of Fund relevance differed somewhat depending on the national context in each country. In countries like Kosovo and Moldova with relatively limited access to large scale funding, the funded project budgets, while small, were still significant and helped improve the visibility of the RC and demonstrate that the UNCT could provide focused support to fill gaps in the response. This was also evident in the two Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the sample (Maldives and Sao Tome and Principe). It was less evident in Malawi with much larger investments flowing directly from bilateral development partners to individual UN agencies and the very significant, country

specific, Malawi SDG Acceleration Fund. Nonetheless, even there, funded projects were focused on gaps in the national response such as the need to rapidly upgrade the “Health Centre by Phone” health hotline and to support the National Planning Commission in preparing the plan for the national response.

Critical gaps addressed by the Fund were identified in discussions with partners at national level and confirmed in consultations across the UNCT coordinated by the RC, with support from RCO staff.

Another strength in the relevance of the Fund has been its ability to address the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic in small, formerly growing, economies that have been especially damaged. This is true of countries in Eastern Europe like Moldova with reliance on remittances from expatriates working in Western Europe. These countries experienced a decline in unofficial transfers to families compounded by a wave of returning migrants needing careful screening and treatment for COVID-19. The Fund was also more important in SIDS like the Maldives and Sao Tome and Principe where the economic effect of travel restrictions was as devastating as the disease itself. In all these smaller MICs, the Fund was especially effective at enhancing the independent and empowered role of the RC.

5.5. Catalytic Effects of the Fund at Country Level

This study examined three different ways the Fund could have a catalytic effect at country level:

- a) By exerting a positive influence on the efficiency and effectiveness of national policies and programmes with the effect of multiplying programme results, in a manner similar to the concept Andersen, Hansen and Rand (2021) have called development additionality;
- b) By further enabling and energizing the process of UNDS reform as it contributes to a more coherent socio-economic response at country level (addressed in detail in Chapter 8); and,
- c) By catalyzing or enabling resource mobilization of new funds in support of the SERPs at country level (addressed in section 7.2 on resource mobilization).

The evidence described in Chapter 8 indicates that the Fund has, indeed, helped to energize the process of UNDS reform. However, evidence for the Fund as a force for securing new financial

Catalytic Support to Social Protection in Guatemala

In Guatemala the Fund supported the design and implementation of a gender responsive integrated National Household Social Registry in five vulnerable municipalities. The registry will identify the most vulnerable populations, including people living with disabilities and women living in poverty. The registry is catalytic for it will strengthen the capacity of the State to include these vulnerable populations in the National Social Protection System. The registry will also facilitate the inclusion of these vulnerable populations in active social programs offered within the country, one of them being *Creceer Sano*- a social program that received a \$100 million dollar loan from the World Bank. This program seeks to improve the health and nutrition of the most vulnerable populations, as well as improving the effectiveness of the accompanying and conditional cash transfer.

resources for a UN socio-economic response at country level is mixed. At the same time, there is evidence to indicate that Fund projects are, at least potentially, catalytic through their influence on national programmes and policies and a form of development additionality. One example of this type

of catalytic effect from a Fund initiative can be found in its support of a gender sensitive national citizens registry in Guatemala. This support has helped to re-energize the national government’s commitment to a revitalized social protection system. Another example is provided through the Call

2 project in Sao Tome and Principe to connect women agricultural producers with international markets; and a third by the project in Cambodia to position women-owned enterprises as a driver to accelerate the country's recovery. In general, in the case study countries, projects approved in Call 2 were more likely to show stronger signs of this form of catalytic effect.

For most of these initiatives in Call 2, it is too early to determine the extent that the Fund support will lead to improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of national programmes over time. Fully exploring the potential and realized catalytic effects of Fund projects and of national SERPs is an important task which could be carried out in a subsequent evaluation.

5.6. Build Back Better and Greener

Key informants at global and country level felt that the Fund was, from its beginning, oriented to supporting a more equitable and sustainable recovery. Table 7 provides an overview of the extent that projects in the case study countries addressed the four key action areas of Build Back Better and Greener as described in the UN framework (UN 2020 d pp. 34-38).

Projects in the case study countries mainly focused on addressing issues of gender equality and social protection (Area 1 and part of Area 4 below). Much lower levels of attention were paid to environmental aspects of BBB and Greener including decarbonization and the protection of natural capital. Call 1 projects were focused addressing the most immediate health, social and economic impacts of COVID-19. Attention to gender equality, social protection and human rights increased under Call 2 projects.

Table 7: Addressing Build Back Better and Greener

Areas of Action to Build Back Better and Greener	Coverage by Fund Projects in Case Countries
1. Transition to a fair and sustainable social contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressed through social protection efforts, mainly in Call 2
2. Addressing unsustainable consumption and production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little direct evidence
3. Addressing linkages between nature and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little direct evidence
4. Decarbonization, protect natural capital , enhance gender and social equity and inclusion and realization of human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongest attention to gender equality, aspects of social equity and LNOB, especially for Call 2 • Improved attention to Human Rights in Call 2 • No direct action on decarbonization or protecting natural capital

UNCT entities have struggled somewhat to identify and secure funding for projects addressing the environmental aspects of Build Back Better and Greener, especially around decarbonization and protection of national capital.

5.7. Innovation

The Secretary General’s announcement of the Fund included a commitment to promote digital innovations that boost employment, support livelihoods, and improve the provision of social services (UN 2020f, p.2). The Fund Terms of Reference also states that the COVID-19 MPTF would ensure innovation and rapid data driven solutions with a whole-of-government approach (UN 2020 d. p.4). The same document (p.5) states that the Fund will invest in effective and innovative delivery of public services to achieve sustainable and inclusive economies that leave no one behind. Thus, from the beginning, the form of innovation the Fund was intended to support has included both digitalization and the use of technology on one hand and innovative programme implementation models and partnerships to be supported on the other.

Global and country case study interviews and document reviews have identified a range of innovative actions and investments. At the level of the governance and operation of the Fund itself, some global stakeholders feel that the Fund was innovative in:

- Structuring its governance around an inclusive Advisory Committee with very high-level representation from UN participating agencies as well as ex officio members and contributing development partners
- Operating in a transparent and collegial way so that, in particular, development partners took part in crucial operational and policy decisions
- Adhering to clear criteria for project review and approval relying on the technical expertise of the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee and their technical staff although the review process was extensive and in Call 2 involved 71 different participants across the UN system.

The country case studies identified some digital and operational innovations supported by the Fund.

Table 8: Innovations Supported by the Fund in Case Study Countries

Country	Supported Innovations
Cambodia	Call 2: A credit guarantee facility with new partnerships (Government, International Financial Institutions, the private sector) and led by a NRA.
Guatemala	Call 2: Support for a digitized gender aware national social registry to enable a more targeted and equitable social protection scheme
Kosovo	Call 2: Development of an e-learning passport for students to access to distance learning
Malawi	Call 1: Support to national health hotline “Health Center by Phone” to improve reach, strengthen gender aware programming and counter disinformation on COVID-19
Maldives	Calls 1 and 2: Digitization support to social sector programming
Moldova	Development of a public web portal on progress under the SERP
Sao Tome and Principe	Call 2: Sponsoring an on-line “hackathon” to identify innovative solutions to respond to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 with grants available as seed money.

There is a pattern across the seven case study countries of a rise in attention to innovation, either through digital methods or innovative service delivery and partnership arrangements among projects approved for funding in Call 2. UNCT staff noted that the rapid onset of the emergency and the very tight timelines for project approval during Call 1 made it difficult to scan for opportunities for innovation. This was offset to some degree by the nature of the pandemic as it forced work by

Addressing Pillar 4 Through Women's Fiscal Space Creation in an Innovative NRA-Led Project in Cambodia

The Cambodia UNCT submitted one of the only two concept notes in Call 2 that aligned to Pillar 4 Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration, receiving monies to conduct the program "Unlocking Women's Potential through Fiscal Space Creation". The RC played a facilitative role to work together with resident and non-resident agencies to develop an innovative program that positions women-owned enterprises as a driver to accelerate the country's recovery. The program draws on the complementary strengths and expertise of four entities with further support to strengthen the design provided by other UNCT entities and the Fund quality assurance processes. Led by UNCDF as an NRA with UNDP, IOM and IFAD, the program is designed to support predominantly informal sector women-owned S/MSMEs to recover from COVID-19 setbacks by: 1) supporting design and roll-out of a credit facility; 2) providing relevant research; 3) piloting schemes with selected women-owned enterprises.

the UN, government partners and CSOs to move on-line. In a sense, the greatest accelerant of digital innovation by the UN and its partners was the COVID-19 emergency itself.

Another potential vector for innovation can be found in the SERPs. At a global level, there is some evidence that the SERPs have generally included specific reference to the UNCT role in supporting innovations, especially digital methods. A recent DCO review of SERPs (UNDCO b, p.11) found that the majority of plans do well in data driven analysis and disaggregated data and targeting innovation around digitalization, data collection, addressing data gaps or data capacity building.

Among the case study countries, one example of how innovation is embedded in the SERPs is found in Moldova. Under Pillar 1, Health First, the SERP (United Nations Moldova, 2020 p. 12) identifies opportunities to invest in digitalizing health care, including telemedicine (e-solutions) for essential health services, as well as for those affected by COVID-19. Under Pillar 3 Economic Response and Recovery (p.19), the Moldova SERP prioritizes:

- Support for the digitalization of industrial and production process, stimulating innovation in local enterprises to improve productivity and trade readiness
- Digital payments support, e-commerce, and digital solutions to enable secure access to services needed at a time of crisis, particularly by vulnerable groups.

Overall, the Fund and SERPs have gone to some lengths to promote digitalization and innovation, but projects approved under Call 1 were faced with the difficulty of identifying likely innovations within a compressed time frame and under the pressure of an emergency. Innovation was more prominent in projects funded under Call 2.

Findings: Efficiency and Relevance of the Fund

This Chapter, and the four which follow, concludes with a summarized set of review findings. All of these findings were then used to inform the Key Early Lessons detailed on Chapter 11.

Efficiency

- The early guidance provided to RCs, clear criteria for proposal development, and a condensed timeline for proposal preparation and approval, allowed the Fund to support action to address recognized critical gaps in the national socio-economic response to COVID-19. Although the proposal development process involved intensive demands on staff time during a crisis, the rapid turnaround time for project approvals helped keep transaction costs to a reasonable level.
- Disbursements to participating UNCT entities were efficient and timely, enabling approved projects to be implemented and resources expended remarkably quickly. The Fund is viewed at UNCT level as a more flexible, simple and rapid tool for responding to the development emergency in its most acute phase than other MPTFs that are available. The alternatives, including the Joint SDG Fund, were developed to operate in sync with medium and longer-term development planning processes such as the Cooperation Frameworks and Joint Work Plans.

Transparency

- The governance structure of the Fund with an Advisory Committee encompassing UN agencies, funds and programmes, contributing bilateral partners, and ex officio members, provides a high level of transparency consistent with UNDS commitments under the Funding Compact. Members of the AC report that it operates openly, with broad consultation and respect for multiple viewpoints while remaining focused on the rapid decision making required in a crisis.

Relevance

- Key stakeholders at country level, including CSOs, national government authorities and bilateral development partners confirmed that Fund supported projects were relevant to addressing critical gaps in the national socio-economic response during the most acute, early phase of the emergency. For Call 1 projects this most often meant focusing on maintaining essential health services (Pillar 1) and elements of social protection (Pillar 2). Under Call 2, the number of countries receiving support under Pillar 3 (Economic Response and Recovery) and Pillar 5 (Social Cohesion and Community Resilience) show a steady increase.
- In many smaller countries, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the relatively small amounts of funding provided by the Fund did not limit its relevance. The strength of the Fund was in allowing a rapid response and bringing the UNCT together to engage governments, civil society, and development partners with a funded solution to some of the socio-economic challenges of COVID-19.
- While Fund supported projects have addressed some of the social dimensions of the Build Back Better and Greener agenda, they have been less active in addressing environmental aspects of a more equitable recovery, especially decarbonization and protection of natural capital.

The Fund's Catalytic Effects and Support of Innovation

- Fund supported projects have shown evidence of at least the potential to have a catalytic effect mainly by influencing the efficiency and effectiveness of larger programmes or by influencing national policies and strategies to focus on vulnerable and marginalized populations.
- The Fund emphasized innovation and digitalization as criteria for approving projects under both Call 1 and 2. Funded projects in each of the case study countries made use of

innovative methods and digitalization for project implementation and, in some cases, in the services being delivered (such as distance education). However, UNCTs report that the short proposal turn-around time and pressures of programming during the acute period of the COVID-19 Pandemic limited their ability to identify opportunities to support innovation for Call 1. Innovation was more prevalent in projects approved under Call 2.

6. Gender Equality, Human Rights and LNOB

This chapter examines how the overall UNDS system commitments on gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and leaving no one behind (LNOB) were addressed by the Fund and the SERPs. The analysis identifies the roles of key actors from global level to country level, and further examines the forms and quality of guidance provided to UNCTs in support of these core values.

6.1. Systemwide Commitment to GE/HR/LNOB

The UNDS commitment to gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and leaving no one behind (LNOB) was evidenced in engagement around the SERPs and Fund at the highest levels supported by clear early messaging from the Secretary General.⁸ Strong advocates for gender equality and targeting of the most vulnerable were present amongst key players involved including Member States, the Secretariat, and the Advisory Committee. The focus on gender equality, in particular, took center stage at the highest levels, as expressed by one member of the AC, *'The gender discussions were heavy and consistent. Human rights and disability inclusion were less prominent, not part of the original priority. Gender was the strongest.'*

The Advisory Committee was established to provide necessary guidance and representation during the emergency response. The Committee included several agencies with specific mandates and expertise regarding key vulnerable groups including UN Women, UNFPA and UNICEF. Advisory Committee membership offered an important avenue for lead agencies to work with strategic partners across the system to influence processes and provide technical expertise to operationalize GE/HR/LNOB principles, including in the design of the frameworks and guidance as well as in the quality assurance reviews. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), with a mandate to promote and protect human rights for all, was consulted, but was not included on the Advisory Committee, which may have limited the extent to which a human rights focus was effectively operationalized in the SERPs/MPTFs.⁹ Agencies with cross-cutting mandates like the OHCHR can play a lead role to reinforce and operationalize commitments to LNOB and HR if included in governing bodies for MPTFs going forward.

The commitment across the system to gender equality and leaving no one behind was further supported by systemwide frameworks and architecture in place at the start of the pandemic in line with UNDS reform that allowed for rapid global mobilization across a complex system. Networks of focal points have been established for gender and disability¹⁰ along with systemwide Gender Equality Markers and accountability frameworks for monitoring UNCT collaboration on gender and disability inclusion that aided in preparing the field settings as well as supporting a LNOB focus in

⁸ See for example, *Policy Brief: Human Rights and Covid (2020)*, *Policy Brief: The Impact of Covid-19 on Women (2020)*, *Policy Brief: A Disability-Inclusive Response to Covid-19 (2020)*.

⁹ For example, the QA review template included a screening criterion for whether the proposal considers OHCHR Covid-19 Guidance, but OHCHR was not part of the review raising some concerns that the technical expertise to respond to the criteria in depth may have been limited or inconsistent. However, the Fund Secretariat noted that one reviewer was the DCO technical focal point dealing with HR/LNOB issues.

¹⁰ The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) consists of approximately 60 gender focal points from 25 UN entities. Disability inclusion focal points have been established in 65 UN entities and over 50 UNCTs, as part of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy.

the SERP/MPTF response.¹¹ OHCHR's field presence of over 70 advisory personnel as well as a surge team of economists with human rights expertise also provided support to UNCTs globally.

Understanding of and commitment to GE/HR/LNOB was also evidenced at the country level based on case study indications. UNCTs demonstrated some degree of cohesiveness in their ability to work as one to prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable, supported by interagency processes around UNDAF/UNSDCF design and elaboration. Case study evidence revealed instances of agencies with cross-cutting mandates (or specialized expertise) around vulnerable groups (for example, IOM, OHCHR, and UN Women) worked together with other members of UNCTs to support effective analysis and targeting in Fund projects. Partner agencies, including CSOs and government partners, often had previous experience working with UN agencies to target vulnerable groups and were able to respond positively to targeting aspects of project designs. However, partner capacities for targeting and tracking results among those most vulnerable proved challenging in some of the case study countries.

6.2. Role of the SERPs and Fund in Prioritizing GE, HR and LNOB

The level of attention paid to gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and LNOB in SERPs varies across the case study countries. The Moldova SERP for example, (UN Moldova 2020a, pp.64-68) includes a detailed analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the vulnerable populations identified in the UN framework, including persons with disabilities. It also incorporates Human Rights indicators into the results framework. The Malawi SERP on the other hand, is much less extensive in its coverage of vulnerable groups. This pattern was also found in the review of the SERPs carried out for DCO in 2020. In that review, SERPs were consistent in identifying vulnerable groups with a strong focus on women, youth and children as well as migrants, internally displaced people, refugees or the stateless. To a much lesser degree, some SERPs identified the plight of indigenous groups, minorities, people living with HIV/AIDS and LGBTIQ (DCO/UNDP 2020) and persons with disabilities.

A review of 107 Socio-Economic Response Plans conducted by UN Women found that gender equality was identified as a guiding and/or cross-cutting principle in more than 85 percent of the plans. Gender-targeted responses focused on addressing gender-based violence, maintaining access to sexual and reproductive health and maternal, newborn, and child health services, and gender-targeted responses to the economic consequences of COVID-19. However, less than 5 percent of SERPs incorporated visible gender mainstreaming across all five pillars, few used disaggregated data systematically, and 'women' were often identified as a vulnerable group without further elaboration (DCO/UNDP 2020).

The Fund saw an important improvement in the extent projects focused on measures to improve gender equality in the transition from Call 1 to Call 2. In the response to Call 1, nine (16 percent) of the 57 submitted proposals in the first call were self-assessed as the GEM3 equivalent (gender equality is the principal contribution). This number was reduced to three proposals that qualified as GEM3 upon review (UN Women October 2020).

¹¹ See UNCT Gender Equality Marker Guidance Note (2019), UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard (2018), UNDIS UN Country Team Accountability Scorecard on Disability Inclusion (2020).

Call 2 saw marked improvement in the focus on gender equality whereby self-applied gender markers in the 104 submitted concept notes were as follows:

- GEM1 – limited contribution to GEWE – 4 concept notes
- GEM2 – significant contribution to GEWE – 37 concept notes
- GEM3 – principal contribution to GEWE – 63 concept notes

The final 19 proposals selected under the second call included 13 (68 percent) that were classified as GEM3 for a total US\$12,900,000 or 65 percent of the total disbursement. Another 5 proposals were coded as GEM2, and only one as GEM1 (UN Women, September 2020).

6.3. Guidance and Requirements to Support GE/HR/LNOB in Fund Programmes

Technical guidance and the requirements to support targeting of the most vulnerable in Fund-supported programs were strengthened and expanded between the first and second calls for proposals. This was an important factor in the improvements seen in attention to these values between Call 1 and Call 2. Explicit ‘reminders’ around gender and human rights inclusion were embedded in a limited way in the template directions for Call 1 proposals and Call 2 concept notes as shown below.

Table 9: Gender and Human Rights Directions in Fund Project Proposal Templates

Template Elements	Gender/HR/LNOB Directions in Templates	
	Call 1 Proposal	Call 2 Concept Note
Immediate Socio-Economic Response to Covid-19	-	N/A
Solutions proposed	-	N/A
What is the specific need/problem the intervention seeks to address?	Apply a gender lens to the analysis and description of the problem	Apply a gender lens to the analysis and description of the problem
How does this collaborative program solve the challenge? Please describe your theory of change.	Please highlight if it applies a human rights-based approach (refer to OHCHR Covid Guidance – link)	N/A
Results expected to be received and a clear explanation of tangible results or changes that will be achieved through this collaborative program	N/A	- if and how it applies a human rights-based approach (OHCHR Covid Guidance – link) - if and how the theory of change reflects the GEM (link) score selected in this solution
Documentation	-	N/A
Target population	-	N/A
Catalytic impact and nexus	N/A	-
Who will deliver this solution	N/A	-

The quality assurance assessments for the first and second call included five specific screening elements around GE/HR/LNOB under the section on methodological approach:

- Includes a gender marker score
- Clearly lists intended beneficiaries, including most vulnerable and marginalized

- Considers OHCHR COVID-19 Guidance in proposal development
- Tags at least one SDG and target related to ending inequality
- Demonstrates a solution that prevents SDG regression and focuses on LNOB.

The premise of the Fund’s approach to screening proposals was that agencies who serve on the Advisory Committee should provide technical support in evaluating and scoring proposals (a key criteria for having a well-functioning inter-agency fund using specialized expertise of the UN system family at the assessment stage). The process was supported by UN Women through Gender Marker webinars for all Secretariat members. This has increased the capacity of the Secretariat to better understand the gender markers and apply consistent assessments. Nonetheless, complex screening criteria, combined with the volume of proposals and concept notes under review, placed a considerable burden on reviewers.¹² In turn, this raised concerns amongst some stakeholders that the large number of reviewers involved led to variations in the depth of understanding and gaps in technical knowledge across criteria. Alternative models that may be considered in the future include using dedicated in-house secretariat experts with clearer requirements to respond to feedback.

Facilitative guidance for GE/HR/LNOB integration in the UN responses included checklists and guidance notes as follows, which were generally deemed useful by case study stakeholders.

- *Checklist for a Human Rights Based Approach to Socio-Economic Country Responses to COVID-19* (OHCHR, UNDP and UNSDG 2020)
- *Minimum Requirements Checklist for Integrating Gender Equality in the Implementation of the UN Framework for the Socio-Economic Response to Covid-19* (IANGWE 2020).
- *Checklist for Planning a Disability Inclusive Covid-19 Socio-Economic Response and Recovery*. (Inter-Agency Working Group on Disability Inclusive Covid-19 Response and Recovery 2020)
- *UN Covid-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund – April 2020 Call for Proposals – Guidance Note on Gender Markers* (UN Women 2020).
- *Guidance Note: UN Covid-19 Response and Recovery Fund Gender Equality Marker* (United Nations 2020).

Gender Equality

The difference in attention to gender equality observed across Calls 1 and 2 reflects in part the speed with which the Fund operational frameworks and supporting systems were put into place. For Call 1, technical guidance on gender marker application was disseminated separately after the first call for proposals, and there was no uptake on the offer to contact the global helpdesk that supports gender equality markers.¹³ The GEM coding rubric used in Call 1 followed UN SDG practice for coding GEM, a three-level code which was the authorized version available at the time. For Call 2 the UNCT-GEM, which serves as the UNDS standard was adopted by the Fund.¹⁴ Further challenges were identified within the Fund framework with the use of a budget template that is not results-based and therefore not supportive of gender-specific financial tracking. Results-based budgeting would support more accurate GEM coding by allowing for greater specificity and accuracy of targeting and tracking within programs of the extent to which activities support gender equality.

¹² UN Women (September 2020) reports that the review of 104 Concept Notes was handled by a total of 71 different reviewers (66 from UN entities and 5 from the Fund Secretariat).

¹³ Interviews key stakeholders UN entities.

¹⁴ The Call 1 GEM used as a, b, c coding. The Call 2 GEM used a 0, 1, 2, 3 coding consistent with the UNCT-GEM.

Informed by the above analysis and growing evidence that women stood to lose critical gains during the pandemic, UN Women and other advocates within the system worked through the AC and the Fund Secretariat to provide critical analysis and to ensure the second call took a much more targeted and coordinated approach to gender integration, establishing a target for at least 30 percent of funded proposals to have gender equality as a principal objective. Moreover, proposals that made no contribution to gender equality (GEM 0) were excluded from consideration. Proposals required mandatory application of a revised GEM aligned to the UNCT-GEM coding scale, and messaging around the importance of gender equality was highlighted by key communications to RCs from the Deputy Secretary General (DSG).¹⁵ The use of the Gender Equality Marker and the 30 percent target led to increased demand for gender experts from UN Women and other agencies at the country level to be involved in program design processes, impacting positively on gender integration in designs.

RCOs and UNCTs were further offered comprehensive technical guidance on gender markers as well as gender-responsive programming webinars to support meaningful application of the GEM and better gender targeting in program design. The webinars, delivered in August by gender experts from ILO, WHO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women, were attended by over 400 participants from around 40 UNCTs and at least 17 UN entities (UN Women 2020). Additional support was offered via a helpdesk for UNCTs on Gender Markers as well as a dedicated support network of at least nine UN entities to provide guidance to UNCTs gender related work.

In summary, supported by champions, the Fund was able to respond quickly to put in place the necessary rules and technical guidance to considerably strengthen attention to gender equality prior to issuing Call 2. This strategy to elevate gender equality in Fund-supported programs demonstrated the efficacy of a comprehensive, coordinated approach that included high level priority messaging, interagency engagement, technical guidance, capacity development support and (arguably most importantly) financial targets to incentivize UNCTs. Results exceeded targets, as reported above, with more than two-thirds of approved proposals in the second call citing gender equality as a principal program objective.

Human Rights

Annex 1 of *A UN Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19* (UN 2020 e) outlines indicators for monitoring the human rights implications of COVID-19 around key issues for, *inter alia*, rights to participation, information, social protection, and freedom of movement as well as addressing xenophobia, racism, and discrimination. However, limited results were evidenced across UNCTs in demonstrating a meaningful focus on human rights in the SERPs as noted above, highlighting the importance of ensuring that the structures elevate operationalizing the focus on human rights and other cross-cutting principles from the start to ensure results. In 2020, a review of 109 SERPs found that only 32 percent of plans offered evidence of Human Rights Based Approaches (HRBA) across the five pillars, and almost one-third (30 percent) failed to include a human rights analysis or identify how human rights will guide the process (Task Team for LNOB and HR 2020). Key factors that facilitated stronger HRBA approaches in some countries were identified as: 1) prioritizing HR in COVID-19 responses; 2) RC leadership 3) previous investment in

¹⁵ The second call letter to RCs amplified the GEM3 target messaging, noting: Consistent with the view that only programmes with a strong gender lens can be effective in addressing COVID19-related socio-economic needs, the Interim Call will aim to assure that 30% of funding will be allocated to programmes that have gender equality and the empowerment of women (Gender Marker 3) as a principal objective. Further to this target, the proposals that rank as GEM0 will not be funded.

HR analysis and capacities; 4) deeper impact analysis and application of tailored tools (Task Team for LNOB and HR 2020).

For projects supported by the Fund, the existence of supporting guidance including the HRBA checklist and other resources on COVID-19 and human rights still left a gap in the attention paid to this approach.¹⁶ While frameworks offered a structure to foster human rights focus,¹⁷ there was a need for incentives and benchmarks to help guide UNCTs to prioritize human rights in Fund supported projects.

Disability Inclusion

Disability inclusion in Fund-supported programs was coordinated by a small team under the SG that oversees the implementation of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy. In direct response to the crisis, an Inter-Agency Working Group on Disability Inclusive COVID-19 Response and Recovery was formed. The disability inclusion team worked closely with DCO to provide guidance on inclusion as part of a dedicated slot in DCO webinars during SERP development, though marginal focus on disability inclusion in SEIAs was identified as a limiting factor.

While Call 1 proposals were not properly screened for disability inclusion due to the speed of the call out, efforts were made in Call 2 to work through the existing disability inclusion focal point architecture to ensure the proposal review included disability. Simple, practical tools were also developed to support operationalizing disability inclusion.¹⁸ *A Review of Disability-Inclusiveness of National Socio-Economic Impact Assessments of Covid-19 Crisis (2020)* conducted under a joint ILO-UNICEF project (supported by the UNPRPD) identified key factors facilitating stronger disability inclusion in responses include: 1) UNCT capacities; 2) established links to national organizations specializing on persons with disabilities; 3) UNCT disability inclusion focal point; 4) leadership.

The Solutions Catalog (v. 1 2020) includes 52 out of 206 programs with a disability inclusion focus. Despite evidence of some progress made across the system to elevate the focus on disability inclusion, data on targeting of persons with disabilities was lacking in most projects reviewed in the case study countries. This suggests some risk that the UN system may miss a critical entry point for disability inclusion as part of the recovery effort. Disaggregation is critical to measure the extent to which mainstream programs are taking advantage of emerging opportunities to integrate disability inclusion as part of BBB strategies.

¹⁶ See, for example, *Compilation of statements by human rights treaty bodies in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and Toolkit of treaty law perspectives and jurisprudence in the context of COVID-19*.
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/Pages/COVID-19-and-TreatyBodies.aspx>

¹⁷ A reminder with links to OHCHR Covid-19 guidance were provided in the proposal templates and a screening query in the QA process checked on reference to same guidance.

¹⁸ For example, *Checklist for Planning a Disability Inclusive Covid-19 Response and Recovery (2020)*.

Overall Commitment at a Systems Level

- UNDS commitment to gender equality, human rights and LNOB in the SERPs/Fund was enabled by systemwide architecture and frameworks that were already in place at the start of the pandemic, and further supported by clear messaging from the highest levels of the relevance of GE/HR/LNOB to socio-economic responses.
- Inclusion of agencies with cross-cutting mandates in governing bodies offers a critical opportunity for each to play a lead role to reinforce and more fully operationalize systemwide commitments to GE, LNOB and HR.

An Evolving Approach to Gender Equality and LNOB in the Fund and SERPs

- In the context of an immediate emergency responses, projects funded under Call 1 did include limited efforts to address gender equality and to mobilize support for vulnerable groups as identified in the UN framework, but results showed limitations. Project proposals responding to Call 2 were more systematic in operationalizing a focus on gender equality due in part to the 30 percent GEM 3 target and improved guidance. At global and country level, UN Women, working closely with key partner agencies across the system, was a strong positive force in ensuring attention to gender equality. These efforts were supported by RCs and UNCT members. In addition, timely, facilitative guidance and QA reviews supported operationalizing GE/HR/LNOB especially for Call 2, although impact of QA reviews was variable due to a lack of feedback structure.
- HRBA and disability inclusion was insufficiently operationalized as demonstrated by variabilities across the SERPs developed in the seven case study countries. In one, the SERP specifically included Human Rights indicators as mandatory indicators in its results monitoring framework. In others, HR indicators were not included and there was variability in the attention given to identifying and addressing the needs of persons with disability and other vulnerable groups. This posed challenges with broadly operationalizing a HR/disability inclusion focus across programs despite the availability of relevant guidance and QA support.
- The approach taken by the Fund to elevate gender equality in programs demonstrated the efficacy of a comprehensive, coordinated approach that included high level priority messaging, interagency engagement, technical guidance, capacity development support and (most critically) financial targets to incentivize UNCTs. It will need to be emulated in processes and requirements for other core values if the UN is to fully deliver on its GE/HR/LNOB commitments.

7. Area of Investigation 1: UNDS Reform Enabling the Fund and the SERP

Key Areas of Reform

Seven key areas for transformation in the UNDS reform process were approved in 2018 by the General Assembly in UN in Resolution A/RES/72/279 (UN 2018). However, key informant interviews indicated that three of those were not yet significantly influential or visible at UNCT level: a restructured regional approach; partnership for the 2030 Agenda; and the System-Wide Strategy Document.

In response, the study focused on four of the seven:

1. **An impartial, independent and empowered Resident Coordinator (RC):** Development focused, with stronger capacity, leadership, accountability and impartiality
2. **New generation of UN Country Teams (UNCTs):** Demand driven and tailored to meet the specific development priorities and needs of countries
3. **Direction, oversight and accountability:** Strengthening horizontal governance and system-wide transparency and evaluation
4. **Funding Compact:** Proposed mutual commitments to foster investments in the UN System and stronger funding mechanism for the 2030 Agenda.

This chapter examines lessons learned under Area of Investigation One by assessing the extent that pre-pandemic progress in four key areas of UNDS reform helped to set the stage for a more coherent and rapid UNDS socio-economic response.

7.1. UNDS Reform as an Enabler of the Fund and SERP

The COVID-19 Pandemic struck many countries with full force in March, April and May 2020. This followed closely on significant changes in the role of the RC and the capacity of RCOs in 2019. In the words of one key informant: *“The COVID-19 Pandemic was a stress test for UNDS reform in this country and it passed the test but now we need to build on the progress we have made”*.

An impartial, independent, and empowered RC

In all seven case study countries key informants pointed to the newly empowered and independent RC as an essential factor in enabling the successful launch of the Fund at national level and, equally important, encouraging collaboration among UNCT entities in a common effort to engage in development of the SERP. This view was not only held within the UNCT; it was reinforced in interviews with staff of ministries and departments implementing Fund projects and by CSOs engaged as implementing partners. Finally, staff of bilateral development partners also noted that the RCs were effective in enhancing coordination among UNCT entities in support of the Fund and the SERP. A common observation among some of the smaller UNCT entities was a particular appreciation for the **independence** of the RC.

The level of confidence in the RC expressed by UNCT entities is also a reflection of consistent efforts to recruit and put in place experienced RCs capable of consensus-building leadership. However, experience in more than one country shows that continuity and stability in the staffing of RC positions is also essential; when an RC departs at a critical time and is replaced by an interim RC from a UNCT entity, this challenges the capacity of the system to respond coherently. In Moldova, national authorities and bilateral development partners noted that the RC is now the senior UN representative at country level. This helped to account for his appointment, along with the WHO Representative, as one of two UN staff asked to attend as a regular member of the national COVID-19 Response Committee.

Fully Staffed Resident Coordinators Offices

In all the case study countries, the RCO had been staffed to its full complement of five staff persons by the beginning of 2020 and the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This complement of staff is one of the most important means of empowering the RCs to act on their new-found independence and responsibility to coordinate the UNCT.

All five designated positions for the RCO were deemed important by stakeholders interviewed: Strategic Planning/Team Leader; Programme Communication and Advocacy; Partnership and

Development Finance; Economist and Data Management and Results Monitoring. In supporting collaboration on the Fund supported projects and in coordinating work on the SERPs, the Economist and Data Management and Results Monitoring specialist had a particularly important role in some of the case study countries.

In Malawi, for example, the RCO economist has been an important factor in collaboration with counterparts in UNDP and in the National Planning Commission for the transition of the SERP into a national COVID-19 socio economic response plan. With the RCO and UNDP sharing responsibilities in the preparation and coordination of the SERP (where the UNDP has technical lead and the RC is responsible for coordinating and ensuring a common UNCT view with inputs from across the team) the RCO economist has a critical role to play.

In addition, in all the case study countries, the RC, with support of the RCO, has responsibility to ensure that the results frameworks for both the Fund and the SERP are populated with data to support the indicators for both. Data are gathered from the UNCT entities and either (in the case of the Fund) provided to the Fund Secretariat for regular reporting or (in the case of the SERP) uploaded to UNINFO as per technical guidance from the DCO and relevant UN agencies. The RCO Data Management and Results Monitoring specialist plays a central role in meeting this responsibility.

UNCT entities participating in Fund supported projects indicated that the newly strengthened capacity of the RCO gave them confidence in engaging in the proposal process because they could rely on RCO staff to support project development, submission and implementation, although it was also noted in some countries that there was a 'growth' process underway through the SERP/Fund development whereby the role of the RCO vis a vis the UNCT Heads of Agencies (HOAs) and technical staff became clearer.

Important Factors in Empowering the RC and RCO and Enabling a Coherent UNDS Response

Evidence from the country case studies indicates there are important factors which are needed to allow the RC and RCO to fully realize the independent and empowered role assigned to them under UNDS reform:

1. Continuity and learning over time by the RC and the RCO staff. It is also important that RCO staff are in place long enough to gain confidence in themselves and with their peers in UNCT entities.
2. The correct balance of staff within the RCO, especially with respect to the balance between national and international staff is important but there is no formula that can be applied in all contexts. International staff bring with them experience of confronting challenges across different national contexts while national staff have essential knowledge of the national context, including the priorities and capacities of UNCT entities and partners.
3. A role in coordinating significant resource flows through pooled funds, either global or country specific. There is no denying that the role played by the RCs in coordinating the UNCT to prepare proposal, vet and rank proposals at national level, and forward them for consideration by the appropriate decision-making process (depending on the Fund) plays an important role in strengthening the convening and coordinating power of the RC. As one RC noted: *"If I have no money to make decisions about, it is hard to get the attention of the UNCT members"*.

On balance, these three conditions were met in each of the case study countries. In every case study country, key informants reported that the central role of the RC in coordinating the UNCT helped to improve the coherence of the response.

UNCT Readiness and Responsiveness: A New Generation of UNCTs?

UNCTs in five of the seven case countries were able to build on a strong foundation of experience in working jointly, while teams in two countries reported some difficulty with the necessary adjustments to the level of collaboration required with the onset of the pandemic. As the world and the UN went into emergency mode, UNCTs were required and propelled to use different methods, including but not limited to virtual conferences and meetings. They were also compelled to act quickly in response to opportunities for mobilizing resources such as those provided by the Fund and often to do so jointly.

A positive factor in the preparedness of UNCTs to work collaboratively during the pandemic was the pre-existence in each country of a network of Technical Working Groups (TWG) and Results/Outcome Groups with a history of working together on programme and policy issues. During the first half of 2020, many of these groups increased the tempo of meetings to ensure a common perspective, and in some cases new groups were formed around specific aspects of the COVID-19 response.

However, there are examples in some of the case study countries of UNCT entities that either did not understand or were unable or unwilling to fully engage in their role in the Fund and SERP process. While the architecture and structures of an empowered and independent RC are in place in all seven countries there is evidence that it will take time and continuing efforts to realize the potential of both.

As the focus of this chapter is the extent that UNDS reform enabled the Fund and SERP, it is important to note those limitations in the progress of the reform that reduce their contribution to what is, overall, a positive effect. Most importantly:

- There is still a degree of competition for resources among UNCT entities and this is influenced by specific preferences held by bilateral development partners to either include or exclude a given UN agency from support. Sometimes the latter is based on the administrative ease of extending new financing under existing agency-specific programmes.
- Although most heads of agencies at the UNCT level are accepting and ready to engage with the newly empowered RC, they are still directly accountable for results and the performance of a specific agency. There seems to be a lack of incentives for them to work jointly and they are held accountable at the entity level first and foremost for individual, rather than collective results.
- There is still a lack of clarity among some staff of UNCT entities on the purpose and direction of UNDS reform. This is evident in two important ways: a) a misunderstanding of the relative roles of the RC and the UNDP Resident Representative (RR) and b) the level of joint commitment to and accountability for joint results expected of the UNCT.
- The lack of a clear understanding of the content and direction of UNDS reform is also a concern for development partners, national governments and CSOs. There is a need for much clearer communication to these groups so they understand what UNDS reform is for and how they should expect it to change the operations of the UNCT. This could broaden accountability for collective results beyond the UN system to partners of all kinds.

Section 7.2 provides an overview of the different measures taken to enhance the direction, oversight, and system-wide transparency of operation and, meet UNDS commitments under the Funding Compact.

7.2. Resource Mobilization and the Funding Compact

The study approached the question of resource mobilization for the Fund at a global and national level through the lens of the Funding Compact endorsed by Member States and the UNDS in 2019 which established commitments from both groups (UN General Assembly 2019). In the QCPR report of April 2020, the Secretary General wrote (UN 2020 a):

“The funding compact aims to address high levels of earmarking and fragmentation in fund – patterns that are proven to increase transaction costs and competition within the system, ultimately compromising the multilateral nature of the United Nations development system. In turn, the compact includes a set of commitments to ensure a more transparent and accountable deployment of resources.”

Under the Funding Compact, as a core element of UNDS Reform, UNDS agencies made 14 specific commitments to provide a supporting context for increases in non-earmarked funding from Member States. Table 10 provides an overview of how the Fund has responded to those commitments.

Table 10: Elements of Fund Governance and Operation Responding to UNDS Commitments of the Funding Compact

Funding Compact: UNDS Commitments	Responsive Aspects of the COVID-19 MPTF
1. Enhance cooperation for results at country level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires joint proposals from a range of UNCT members • At UNCT level processes encourage participation of small, non-traditional and NRA entities (with limitations)¹⁹
2. Increase collaboration on joint and system-wide evaluation (SWE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early lesson and evaluability assessment of the Fund (2020/2021) • Planned SWEs of Fund, and Joint SDG Fund (2021/2022)
7. To strengthen entity and system wide-transparency and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent and participatory Advisory Committee and Overall governance structure of the Fund • Interim and Final Reports supported by RBM System at Country Level • Fund piloting the MPTF Office Fund Management Platform • Solutions Catalogue
10. Increase visibility of results from contributors of voluntary core resource, pooled and thematic funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 MPTF Data on the MPTF Trust Fund Fact Sheet • Interim and Final Fund Reports
14. To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of development related inter-agency pooled funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation supported in Fund projects • RBM System established • Effective secretariat • United Nations norms and values (Gender Equality, Human Rights, LNOB) feature strongly in Fund approval criteria and guidance (see Chapter 6)

Interviews at global level and a review of Fund guidelines and reporting documents indicate that the Fund has been governed in an open and transparent manner with Advisory Committee members representing participating UN agencies, ex-officio members, and contributing development partners all noting that their participation was welcome, that the discussions were frank and open and that their views were considered and, when backed with evidence, were able to influence decisions. This

¹⁹ Small agency and NRA participation was encouraged through open consultations on proposals development and transparent rating and ranking of UNCT proposals prior to submission to the Advisory Committee.

was particularly important for contributing bilateral partners and was noted in contrast to their experience in some other MPTFs.

Despite efforts by the Fund Advisory Committee and the Secretariat to engage with potential contributors while moving forward on the Funding Compact commitments, the Fund has been unable to attract what one key informant at global level called “*the critical mass of financing necessary to move global and national policy on the socio-economic response which is around \$250 million*”.

Resource Mobilization at Country Level

The extent that the Fund was a useful lever for mobilizing resources from bilateral or multilateral development partners either directly for the Fund or for the national SERP varied significantly among the case study countries. Countries with positive examples advanced by the RC and the UNCT include:

- Cambodia, where UNICEF reported leveraging the Call 1 project on returning migrants to attract additional resources from Australia and Japan
- Kosovo, where the UK provided \$2.45 million in earmarked support to the project in health and education.

In Moldova, the RCO and UNCT entities pointed to successes in leveraging the Fund to re-purpose contributions from bilateral partners to serve selected pillars of the SERP. In Guatemala, Malawi, and Sao Tome and Principe there was little evidence of the Fund being successful in leveraging new or repurposed resources. In all three of these countries UNCT entities noted the very difficult national situation for resource mobilization. In Malawi, the Fund was viewed as too small in comparison to the Malawi SDG Acceleration Fund to have an impact on resource mobilization.

In summary, the Fund represents an important effort by the UNDS to meet commitments under the Funding Compact. In contrast, Member States have not responded with increases in un-earmarked, higher quality financing commitments agreed by them.

Findings: Area of Investigation One: Progress in UNDS reforms enabled a more coherent response to the pandemic, including the rapid launch and operation of the Fund and development of SERPs.

An Independent and Empowered RC

- The increased authority of the independent RCs was a critical factor in organizing a coherent and rapid response to calls for proposal by the Fund and in the development of SERPs in the case study countries. UNCT entities place considerable emphasis on the independence of the RC and the RCO and the transparency of decision making evident in both these processes. This has been supported by the systematic effort to recruit experienced and capable RCs with technical experience and policy and leadership skills which contributed to strengthened confidence in joint programming among UNCT entities, national authorities and bilateral development partners in the seven case countries.
- The establishment of RCOs, with a full complement of five specialized staff, has been a crucial factor in empowering the RC in part by increasing the confidence of UNCT entities that efforts at joint programming under the Fund and other initiatives will be back up by technical and administrative support. However, it is important to maintain an appropriate balance between international and national staff within the RCO to achieve the best mix of technical skills, inter-country experience and knowledge and skill in dealing with the national context.

A New Generation of UNCTs

- UNCT entities have shown themselves generally willing and able to participate in joint proposal development and implementation and in collaborating on a coherent strategic planning and programming process through the SERPs/Fund. However, it is often more difficult for smaller and NRA members of the UNCT to take part in these processes.
- While the structures of UNDS reform were in place in the case study countries, there remains an evident need to continue the process of cultural and behavioural change within and across the UNCT entities, especially regarding the relative ability of smaller and NRAs to participate in joint programming and in policy and strategy development. This point is explored under AOI 2.

Transparency, Accountability, and the Funding Compact

- While remaining a challenge, the implementation of results monitoring systems for both the Fund and SERPs is strengthened by the staffing of the data managing and results monitoring position within the RCO. Similarly, in some countries, the position of economist within the RCO has strengthened the partnership between the RCO and UNCT entities.
- Through the Fund, the UNDS leadership has made a clear and sustained effort to meet commitments to ensure a more transparent and accountable deployment of resources as required by the Funding Compact. This has not been met with the response agreed by the Member States under the compact to reduce the level of earmarking and fragmentation in the system through increased commitments to core funding and MPTFs. At a global level, the response of potential contributing partners to the Secretary General's call for support to the Fund has not approached the targeted resource requirements.

8. Area of Investigation Two: The Fund and SERPs as Reform Enablers

In this chapter, the report focuses on whether the planning, set up and implementation of the Fund and the development of the SERPs, contributed to advancing UNDS reform and enabling a more cohesive UNDS socio-economic response to the pandemic.

8.1. COVID-19 MPTF as an Accelerator of UNDS Reform

The Fund and its effect on the independent empowered role of the RC

In Chapter 7, this report points out that the key reform area of an empowered and independent RC able to draw on a fully staffed RCO was an important condition for the rapid start up and roll out of the Fund. Similarly, in all seven case study countries (with some variation in impact) the Fund has provided an important “proof of concept” illustrating to the UNCT and to national authorities and development partners that the system can respond rapidly to changing conditions of the development emergency. The Fund has also demonstrated the importance of the RC role in coordinating the response and ensuring an open and transparent system of project development, proposal, approval and implementation.

This positive effect of the Fund on strengthening the capacity of the RC to coordinated action on the UNDS response to the pandemic was somewhat variable in strength across the seven case countries but was present in all. Aspects of the Fund and its design and operation which tended to strengthen the RC and enhance their convening and coordinating power include:

- Early communication by the Secretary General’s designate to all RCs of their roles and responsibilities in launch and effective implementation of the Fund
- Clear and simple criteria for design and approval of projects which supported the RC in engaging with UNCT entities in a transparent way – especially in the selection at UNCT level of the strongest proposals for submission to the Secretariat for review and approval by the AC
- Rapid project approval and disbursement of funds to participating agencies enabled rapid project start-up and enhanced the standing and reputation of the RC with the UNCT, national authorities and development partners.

These effects were enhanced in countries where the RC and RCO were working in a close and collegial manner with the UNDP RR and their team. The substantive capacity of UNDP in areas of socio-economic development makes them an essential partner of the RC while the RCs power to convene and coordinate the UNCT brings the cross-cutting experience of other specialized agencies into play including, for example, the OHCHR and UNEP.

In Moldova, the strong partnership between the RC and the WHO Representative was particularly important in ensuring that the Fund was coordinated with the WHO Emergency Appeal. The partnership with WHO also provided both WHO and the RC with greater access to senior government officials for policy engagement and advocacy.

The Fund’s influence on a new generation of UNCTs

The lessons learning exercise found that the Fund was able to strengthen and encourage a coordinated and cohesive approach to programming in all seven case study countries with some variations in the strength of this effect based on different aspects of its design.

Where RCs were particularly agile in putting in place a structured and transparent process of proposal development, selection and submission to the Secretariat and the AC for both calls, UNCTs responded in a collaborative way. Some of this collaboration can be attributed to an “emergency mind-set” with all UNCT entity staff energized to work quickly and arrive at collective responses as much as possible. However, in all seven case study countries, UNCT entity staff indicated that the experience of working together on the Fund under the coordination of the RC had strengthened their commitment to and understanding of collaborative and joint programming approaches. They also noted that they expected this to continue after the Fund ceases operations in April 2022; and that the lessons learned will be applied to other aspects of joint operations including UNSDCF annual reporting and joint work planning.

However, while RCs worked to broaden the scope of interaction and to bring NRAs and smaller and cross-cutting UNCT entities (for example, IOM, OHCHR, UNEP, and UN Women) onto the playing field, it was still not entirely even.²⁰ The larger, resident UNCT entities with their ongoing funded programmes and, in some cases, history of working together on joint programmes whether funded through MPTFs or directly by bilateral development partners have an inherent advantage in identifying opportunities and collaborating on proposals to the Fund. This was especially true during Call 1 with its emphasis on rapid responses in the acute emergency phase of the pandemic.

The Fund and its effect on the SERPs

²⁰ Of course, there are distinctions among these groups of agencies, not all small agencies are non-resident and some with cross cutting mandates have offices in programme countries (UN Women for example). Whenever referring to cross-cutting agencies this report has provided examples relevant to the situation being referenced.

The Fund was established and operating very early in the development crisis, before the publication of the Secretary General’s UN Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19, and before the SERPs were developed. Thus, projects approved under Call 1 served mainly as a demonstration of UNDS capacity to work together in response to the development emergency. They had little direct effect on preparation of the SERPs.

This changed with the advent of Call 2 which included completion of a national SERP as a condition of eligibility and provided enhanced guidance/requirements on addressing GE and LNOB principles. Staff of DCO confirmed that Call 2 of the Fund had the effect of accelerating progress toward SERP completion. They also noted that positive interventions by UN Women and the refinement and targeted use of Gender Equality Markers in the Fund had served to “professionalize” and “incentivize” the treatment of GE in SERPs.

Finally, the Fund allocated a standard \$50,000 dollars to each RC to with the purpose of advancing the development, dissemination, and utilization of the SERP. In most of the case study countries this allocation was not available during the SEIA phase or the actual development of the SERP. It was most often used, as in Moldova, to assist in improving transparency through preparation of a public web-portal to provide information on the UNDS response. However, in Malawi, where SERP development took longer, the Fund was used to finance hiring of national consultants to work with the National Planning Commission and the RCO and UNDP economists in the development of a national SERP. In Cambodia, the fund was used to offer agencies seed money to develop strategies to build an evidence base and develop partnerships to work in underfunded pillars of the SERP.

Interviews with UNCT staff in the case study countries indicate that the demonstration effect of Fund supported projects, including those funded under Call 1, helped to energize the SERP process. This was confirmed by national authorities and development partners who stressed that the rapid start up of Fund projects provided credibility to the UNDS in the efforts to develop the SERPs.

There are now 121 countries with completed SERPs with a total estimated financing requirement of \$28.7 billion and an estimated \$15.7 billion in committed funding, including \$3.0 billion in re-purposed funds. As noted in more than one global key informant interview, it is hard to argue that the Fund with projects in 73 countries and a total committed financing level of \$75.4 million could be “driving” the SERP process. However, the SERPs do provide an overall direction and purpose to the re-purposed funds and, in turn, the SERP process has been energized to some degree by the Fund. In the seven case study countries, the Secretary General’s UN framework on its publication in April 2020, with its five pillars for action and defined target groups, became the recognized organizing principal for projects approved under the Fund. Especially for Call 2, Fund projects are valued not only for their direct outputs and outcomes but for the extent they support the national SERP.

8.2. SERPs and UNDS Reform

This section examines the ways in which the structure of the SERPs, based on the UN framework, and the process of developing and rolling out the SERPs influenced the process of UNDS reform at country level, with the ultimate goal of a more coherent and cohesive UNDS response that meets national needs and priorities.

Structure of the SERPS

The key structural element of the SERPs is the organization of the UNDS response under the five pillars:

1. Health First: Protecting health systems and services during the crisis
2. Protecting People: Social protection and basic services
3. Economic Response and Recovery
4. Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration
5. Social Cohesion and Community Resilience.²¹

This structure is also supported by commitments to GE, HR and LNOB and by the call to BBB and Greener to enable sustainable development and achieve the 2030 Agenda.

From a UNCT perspective in most of the seven case study countries, there was a consensus view that the five pillars of the SERP were clearly delineated and provided a useful structure for planning. Most importantly, with their cross-mandate structure, the pillars encouraged UNCT entities to collaborate on identifying programmes which could be repurposed, allocating newly funded projects (including those financed by the Fund) and estimating the detailed financial requirements for the overall UNDS response. In this way, the structure of the UN framework, and the SERPs designed to conform with, it helps to reinforce the intent of the UNDS reform to strengthen the overall coherence of the response. In one case study country, however, some UNCT members indicated that the Cooperation Framework was the only guiding document needed by both the UNCT and the national government in order to respond to COVID-19.

The SERPS and the Build Back Better and Greener Agenda

There has been a considerable effort to promote the Build Back Better and Greener agenda through the UN framework and subsequent guidance, including, for example:

- Socialization of the concept with RCs and UNCTs in bi-weekly global webinars hosted by DCO.
- Guidance provided by DCO on how SERPs are to be integrated in their longer-term CFs and updated as per the joint workplans of the UNDAFs/Cooperation Frameworks.
- The High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) guide on COVID-19, Inequalities and Building Back Better.²²
- Secretary General's policy briefs as compiled by UN DESA.²³
- Individual agency policy briefs including for example, UNEP on BBB and fiscal policy.²⁴
- Monthly discussions on specific subjects linked to recover better by the UNSDG COVID-19 Task Team which are then discussed with RCs and UN country teams in the biweekly webinars.

However, the UNCT entities repeatedly emphasized that the UN framework and the SERPs are much clearer in addressing the content of the immediate socio-economic response than in setting out the operational requirements for developing and supporting projects and programmes for a more equitable and sustainable recovery. During the immediate emergency period (which has extended to a longer time frame than originally expected) the SERP provided a clear structure for organizing the response. UNCT entities find it less clear as a guide to supporting the environmental aspects of BBB and Greener for accelerating equitable and sustainable progress to the 2030 Agenda.

The Process of SERP Development Rollout and Monitoring

The coordination of the overall UN response to COVID 19 at country level (including the Humanitarian response, the health response, and the social and economic response) is the

²¹ For a more detailed overview see Table 2 in Section 3.3

²² Accessible at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/10/HLCP-policy-brief-on-COVID-19-inequalities-and-building-back-better-1.pdf>

²³ Accessible at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/PB-Compilation-final.pdf>

²⁴ Accessible at: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/32923/BBB.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

responsibility of the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator operating under the authority of the Secretary General (UN 2020 e, p.33). Support to RCs and UNCTs in the rollout of the SERPS is provided by the DCO with engagement by the UNSDG Task Team on the implementation of the UN framework.

In providing guidance to RCs and UNCTs on the development and implementation of the SERPs, the DCO has elaborated on the responsibilities of the RC and the UNDP Resident Representative (RR) (UN DCO, 2020 a)

Among other responsibilities the RC: *“Provides overall leadership of the UN Development system COVID-19 response, ensuring coherence between the socio-economic response (led by UNDP), the health response (led by WHO) and humanitarian interventions (led by OCHA).”* The RC is also responsible for *“ensuring that the UNCT responds in a coordinated and coherent way while making use of the full range of their expertise and in alignment with the specific priorities and needs of the country”*.

The same guidance note, indicates that the UNDP RR: *“with the support of the RC, elaborates the UN response and enables the wider UNDS to contribute to the socio-economic response.”* They also provide technical leadership on the socio-economic response including through the provision of capacity for the design, drafting and scope of the response.

In general terms, the process of rolling out the SERP in most of the case study countries advanced UNDS reform by encouraging a more transparent, collaborative form of planning for the socio-economic response. As with the Fund, the process of SERP development often encouraged greater involvement and influence by smaller, more specialized agencies and NRAs. This depended, however, on the presence of an experienced RC capable of managing an open and transparent process which encouraged participation.

The RCs achieved a more inclusive process by insisting that smaller entities and NRAs have the opportunity to review draft SERPS and to strengthen, for example, identification of vulnerable groups and their needs. As another example, the OHCHR was active in some case study countries in strengthening HR and LNOB aspects of the SERP. This inclusive process also depended on a spirit of partnership and cooperation between the RC and the UNDP RR so that issues did not arise regarding authorities and responsibilities in the SERP development process, regardless of the guidance provided on their respective roles.

The case studies provide a varied picture of how the process of SERP development intersected with some of the important principles of transparency, participation, and national government alignment and buy-in. Some important aspects include:

- Varying degrees of understanding in different countries and at different points in time of the respective roles of the RC and RCO on one hand and the UNDP RR and their team on the other. In Cambodia for example, the UNCT reported that there was real clarity of the RC/RCO role and the UNDP as technical lead agency which was an advantage for both accelerating the SERP process and providing needed technical support. In contrast, in the Maldives there was a lack of clarity/ownership on the responsibilities for key roles in drafting the SERP that resulted in delays. In Moldova, the SEIA was prepared under UNDP leadership by an outside consulting firm and was seen by the UNCT entities as lacking in necessary input from across the team. This was corrected to a large degree during the drafting of the SERP itself.
- Somewhat differing viewpoints on the nature and scope of the SERP. In most of the case study countries the SERP is seen as the plan for the UN socio-economic response with a

requirement to address national needs and priorities and to be aligned with national plans in order to secure support and commitment from development partners and national authorities. In Malawi, however, the SERP was being developed as the Government of Malawi’s plan for the socio-economic response to COVID-19. This increase in national ownership comes at a cost because the SERP no longer represents the UNCT plan to support the socio-economic response with the same level of transparency and accountability.

- Differing levels of engagement and endorsement by national governments. In four of the seven case study countries the level of national government engagement in the SERP process was appropriately high. This meant that the national government concurred with the structure of the five pillars and their contents and agreed that the priority actions and budgets outline in the SERP would allow the UNCT to make a strong contribution to meeting national needs. In two countries, the national authorities reported that the rapid pace of the SERP development process limited the possibility of their engagement in the process. Finally, in one country, national government engagement was hampered by the severity of the lock down during the first months of the pandemic.

The SERPs and Cooperation Frameworks

The extent that SERPs have informed or influenced Cooperation Frameworks (CF) in the case study countries is somewhat dependent on where the cycle of CF development stood in each country during 2020.

Table 11: Case Study Countries and the Cooperation Framework Cycle

Country	Status of the Cooperation Framework
Cambodia	UNDAF 2019 to 2023
Guatemala	UNSDCF Cycle began 1, January 2021
Kosovo (S/RES/1244)	UNSDCF Cycle began 1, January 2021
Malawi	UNSDCF Implemented: 2019 to 2023
Maldives	UNSDCF Cycle begins 01 January 2022
Moldova	UNDAF 2018 to 2022: Next Cycle 2023
Sao Tome and Principe	UNDAF 2017 to 2023: Next Cycle 2024

In Guatemala and Kosovo, with newly developed UNSDCFs that commenced on January 1, 2021, there was an opportunity for the SERPs to inform the new CF. In Guatemala the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considers the CF as the governing document, consistent with national priorities. From the perspective of the Government of Guatemala, the CF continued to be the guiding force for organizing the UNCT regardless of the content of the SERP.

In Kosovo the SERP was developed to be broadly consistent with both national priorities and the newly developed UNSCDF. In Cambodia there was a lack of certainty across the UNCT in terms of how the Socio-Economic Response Framework (SERF) and the UNDAF will coalesce in the future, recognizing that the scope of the SERF is narrower than the UNDAF and the UNDAF (2019-2023) cannot be reverted to without adjustment in the post-COVID era. In the Maldives, the SERF acts as the sole guiding framework for 2020-2021, bridging the period before the new CF commences in 2022.

In Malawi, with the National Planning Commission coordinating SERP finalization, the newly developed SERP is well positioned to inform the longer-term perspective of the CF. The SERP in Moldova built on the National Voluntary Review (NVR) of progress toward the SDGs completed in

2019 and influences the current UNDAF directly through the updated CCA. Finally, in Sao Tome and Principe, lack of engagement by and with the national government during the development of the SERP has limited its influence on the current CF which will not be finished until the end of 2023.

In each of the case study countries the UNCT is working toward integration of key elements of the SERP into the CF using different strategies and approaches depending on where the country is located within the CF development cycle. However, UNCT members in some of the case study countries indicated that they lacked guidance on how the transition from the SERP to the Cooperation Framework should take place and what elements of the SERP could and should be used to inform the latter.

The question of how the SERPs and CFs were to be integrated in the planning process for UNCTs in 2021 and 2022 was discussed in a recent background note on country planning tools for 2021 presented to the Fund Advisory Committee (UN 2020 g). The note indicates that all SERPs will be completed by late 2021 and will be integrated back into the main Joint Work Plans (JWP) under the UNSCDFs. In 2021 approximately 40 UNSCDFs will be upgraded and, according to the note, will use the SERPs as their baselines rather than past UNSCDFs. The note does not provide any specific guidance on how the Cooperation Frameworks will incorporate the priorities and strategies defined in the SERP into development planning going forward.

The overview of how the SERPs have, or have not, influenced UNDAFs and UNSCDFs in the seven case study countries suggests that UNCTs will require more specific guidance on how the priorities and cross-mandate areas of action identified in the SERP should inform and influence Joint Work Plans under the new generation of CFs.

Findings: Area of Investigation Two: Funds and SERPs were designed and operated to take advantage of the progress made in UNDS reform and to support and strengthen the reform process

An important Guiding Framework and a Comprehensive Country Plan

- The Secretary General's UN Framework with its five distinct pillars for action and focus on defined vulnerable groups and multilateral values of GE, Human Rights and LNOB has been an effective and supportive structure for planning, programming and policy engagement by UNCT entities, especially in guiding the immediate socio-economic response. In addition, in most case countries they represent the first comprehensive plan of action for a response to the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. As one bilateral development partner noted: *"It's not just the UN's plan to respond to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 in this country, it's the only plan"*.

A Strengthened Platform for Policy and Advocacy Through Broader Engagement Across the UNCT

- RCs worked to maintain open processes for participating in Fund proposals and influencing the content of the SERPs among UNCT members. This gave smaller UNCT entities and some NRAs the opportunity to either participate in new coalitions or to influence the policies and priorities of the SERPs. There was a clear effort to open the playing field to more actors from the UNCT in the operation of the Fund and the development of the SERPs. Examples of smaller UNCT entities and NRAs influencing the design of Fund supported projects and the priorities expressed in the SERPs include UNEP, IOM, OHCHR. The Fund also encouraged collaboration between smaller entities such as the OHCHR and UNEP and larger ones with a shared normative mandate (UNFPA, UN Women).

- While the playing field for participating in Fund supported projects and developing the SERP has been opened somewhat to enable broader participation, Funds and Programmes with strong national counterpart relationships, and large operational, projects and programs (sometimes including joint programming outside of pooled funds) had an inherent advantage in competing for support by the Fund in the context of an emergency response with compressed time frames for proposal development. This also applied to SERP development processes.

Enhancing Legitimacy and Engaging with National Governments

- The rapid establishment of the Fund, efficient turnaround and approval of project proposals and prompt transfer of funds to participating UNCT entities demonstrated the capacity of the UNDS to respond effectively to address national priorities during a development emergency. This enhanced the legitimacy of the UNDS as a cohesive force for a rapid response in the eyes of bilateral development partners and governments alike.
- National engagement in the Fund and SERP processes varied across the case study countries. While the Fund's short time frame for proposal development limited national government engagement in the process, the approved projects (including for Call 1) aligned with national priorities and were viewed by key informants from governments as highly relevant. In four of the seven country case studies national government engagement in the SERP process was high and SERP and national plans were well aligned. National government engagement in the remaining three countries was limited to varying degrees. Even in those countries, however, the SERPs provided a guiding document for policy engagement and a common basis for advocacy by the UNCT.

SERPs as Potential Baseline and Guiding Principles for a New Generation of Cooperation Frameworks

- The CF instruments (and country programme documents) have accommodated re-purposing of activities and budgets within the pillars of the UN framework as expressed in the SERPs. There is, however, some confusion about how, and to what extent the SERPs can influence the content of CFs as the SERPs come to an end in late 2021. The key issue for the CFs as they address issues of a more equitable and sustainable recovery will be how they can incorporate the lessons learned in the development of the SERPs given the general agreement among key stakeholders that a "return to normal" will not be fit for purpose.

9. Area of Investigation 3: Coordination and Coherence Through the Fund/SERP

This chapter examines how the Fund, working in the context of UNDS reform and supported by the SERP process, has contributed to a more coherent, cohesive and relevant UNDS socio-economic response to the pandemic. It does so by addressing coordination and coherence as the key dimensions of an effective response.

9.1. Coordination

Operational coordination at the level of UNCT programmes and projects has been strengthened by the experience of the Fund projects and the development of SERPs in the case study countries. Only in one country did the study encounter a mixed evidence on coordination. Coordination has also improved in the policy areas and priorities engaged by the SERP with efforts, for example, to provide a coherent message on the role of the UNDS through mechanisms such as the Development Partners Group. Table 12 highlights some examples of mechanisms and approaches that helped the Fund to contribute to increased coordination of action by the UNCT.

Table 12: Coordinating the Fund and SERP

Case Study Country	Observations on Coordination
Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearer coordination systems in place in support of the Fund improved understanding of role and value added on the part of UNCT
Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCO/UNDP partnership for the Fund strengthened overall coordination • Inter-agency results groups play an important role in coordination of the Fund
Kosovo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCO a positive factor in coordinating action and guiding participating UN entities, demonstrated by work on the Fund • Weekly/bi-weekly UNCT meetings aided coordination and transparency
Malawi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCO staff active in quality assurance and coordination on Fund projects gained confidence of UNCT • Joint thematic working groups co-led by appropriate Ministry and UNCT entities are important for enhancing coordination
Maldives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RC leadership key to successful coordination demonstrated through experience of the Fund • RCO became fully staffed and capacitated to play a coordination role, though understanding is not complete across the UNCT
Moldova	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development partners meetings co-chaired by World Bank and the RC assist in coordination and information sharing with development partners and government • SERP Task Force weekly meetings led by UNDP help publicize joint UNCT action
Sao Tome and Principe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly coordination meetings among participating UN entities and implementing partners provided example for strengthened coordination

Factors and mechanisms with a positive influence on coordination include:

- Efforts by the RC to ensure SERP development processes incorporated and reflected expertise from across the UNCT, including from NRAs

- The capacity of the RCO staff to engage in coordinating quality assurance for Fund projects and to provide operational support to UNCT entities around coordination
- Reliance on existing coordination and information sharing mechanisms at country level including inter-agency results groups and thematic working groups
- An increase in the tempo of UNCT meetings and meetings of all the different coordination mechanisms available to the UNCT during the crisis phase of the pandemic
- Use of virtual meetings to coordinate and discuss Fund projects and to engage in the development of the SERP which allowed greater access by small UNCT entities with limited staff and, essentially, by NRAs.

However, against this background of improved coordination at country level during the COVID-19 Pandemic, there are still factors which limit its extent. One factor is lingering misunderstanding of the role of the RC or Humanitarian Coordinator in coordinating all three elements of the overall UN response (Health, Humanitarian and Socio-economic). Another is the continuing lack of a clear understanding among some UNCT entities of the shared roles of the RC and the UNDP RR as overall coordinator (the RC) and technical lead (UNDP RR) for the socio-economic response.

9.2. Coherence in the UNDS Response

The question of whether and to what extent the Fund and the SERP helped to enable a more coherent UNDS socio-economic response to the COVID-19 Pandemic would normally be the subject of a full evaluation which would spend more time, apply more methodological rigour and, at a minimum, engage in field-based country case studies where more extensive triangulation of evidence would be possible. However, based on the findings reported in Chapters 5 through 8, this exercise can report an overall lesson that the Fund and, especially, the SERP have contributed to a more coherent UNDS response; a response that is relevant to the needs and priorities of program countries. It seems clear that the planning architecture provided by the UN framework, combined with the design features of the Fund and an effort by RCs to ensure an open, inclusive and transparent process for proposing and implementing Fund projects and preparing the SERPs all combined to contribute to a more coherent response.

Where the Fund and SERP are limited in their capacity to influence the coherence of the UNDS response at country level this is often related to the need for the UNDS development process to continue, mature and deepen. Some of the most important limiting factors identified in the case study countries would be addressed by continued progress in reform including reduced competition for resources, broader access to policy influence across the UNCT and, explicit incentives and accountability for collective results by each UNCT as a whole.

Findings: Area of Investigation Three: UNDS reforms and the design, governance, and management of the Fund and SERPs combined to facilitate an integrated, cross mandate UNDS response relevant to the needs of programme countries.

A Structured Platform for a Coordinated, Coherent Immediate Response

- There is a high degree of consensus among UNCT entities that the Secretary General's UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 provides clear guidance for planning and programming during the response phase of the pandemic.
- RCs were strategic in ensuring that existing thematic and technical working groups were encouraged to take an important role in coordinating joint action on the socio-economic response rather than constructing new platforms and mechanisms. The tempo of meetings by all or some of the UNCT members to plan and coordinate actions in technical and thematic areas was accelerated during the pandemic with consequent increases in coordinated actions.

- The Fund and the SERP have encouraged and facilitated re-purposing of existing UNCT entity funding toward the priorities and the five pillars of the SERPs. The strength of this influence is unclear because UN funds and programmes and specialized agencies began re-purposing programming to meet the effect of COVID-19 in early 2020 at both global and country level. However, the UN framework and the SERPs provided a focus and direction for planning this realignment as well as a transparent method for communicating its extent to the key stakeholders at country level.

A More Cohesive and Informed Policy Engagement by the UNCT

- By providing more opportunity for input by a more diverse group of UNCT entities, the SERP process has allowed for development of a more coherent policy and advocacy offer around a common set of priorities for action – especially in areas such as gender equality, targeting (some) vulnerable groups and the importance of social protection.

Clearer Definition and Operational Guidance for a More Equitable and Sustainable Recovery

- While the UN Framework and associated guidance for the development of the SERP have provided the structure for planning and programming during the response phase of the pandemic, there is a gap in guidance on strategic and practical approaches to programming and policy advocacy to build back better and greener. Gaps include:
 - Guidance to operationalize programme proposals and policy engagement on building back greener and more environmentally sustainable solutions to access MPTFs.
 - Guidance on effective programmatic action and policy engagement around climate-change.
 - Guidance on effectively supporting innovation during the recovery phase of the pandemic.

10. Evaluation of the UNDS Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19

This chapter investigates the evaluability of a system-wide evaluation of the UNDS socio-economic response to COVID-19. The proposed evaluation will focus on the SERPs as the central plan for the UNDS socio-economic response at country level. Issues to be addressed include the relevance and coherence of the SERPs and the contribution to results made by funding instruments for the SERPs, including the COVID-19 MPTF and the Joint SDG Fund.

Rationale

The evidence presented in this report shows that the COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF has demonstrated the importance of UN working as a system for better development gains and strengthening gender equality, disability inclusion, human rights and LNOB. Previous chapters also show that the UN development system was able to make significant progress on transparency, accountability, and results. The report also finds that, for the UN system, the SERP is the organizing principle and the plan/framework for a socio-economic response to COVID-19 at country level. Furthermore, it is the single plan/framework that is in line with the QCPR in relation to the socio-economic response to COVID-19.

As the UN development system shifts its focus to recover better, it is important to demonstrate results and learn lessons from the SERPs prepared for 121 countries and to demonstrate accountability for the current projected resources of \$15.7 billion, of which \$3.0 billion represents funds repurposed from existing projects and programmes of UNCTs. Therefore, a system-wide evaluation of the UN Response to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 for learning, accountability and results can best be achieved through the evaluation of the SERPs. To this end, the design of the evaluation should focus on the collective results of the UN system from an integrated support approach, including policy advice and programmatic support to national plans to Recover Better and Greener to achieve the SDGs.

System-Wide Evaluation

The Secretary-General in his 2020 QCPR report (A/75/79) proposed steps to strengthen independent system-wide evaluations (SWE). The proposal clarified that for evaluations at the global level "the focus will be on the planning, conducting, reporting and resourcing of system-wide evaluations, and sharing knowledge across them. Multi-Partner Trust Funds such as the Joint SDG Fund, the Spotlight Initiative Fund, and the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund - where a large number of UN entities are working towards a common objective - will be evaluated. System-wide evaluations at the three levels [country, region and global] will be mutually reinforcing."

In September 2020, the Deputy Secretary-General presented for discussion a roadmap and interim measures for progressive strengthening of the system-wide evaluation function to the UNSDG principals. The UNSDG principals endorsed the road map that included (a) early lessons and evaluability of UN COVID-19 MPTF using the country socio-economic response plan as the frame of reference in 2020 and (b) a major SWE of COVID-19 in 2021. With the finalization of the early lessons and evaluability of UN COVID-19 MPTF report, the SWE of COVID-19 in 2021 can move forward.

Objectives

The primary objective of the evaluation would be to assess progress and results and demonstrate accountability of the UN development system's contribution to the socio-economic response to COVID-19 and to learn lessons to accelerate progress towards recovering better and greener and achieving the SDGs. The specific objectives should focus on the following four areas:

1. Provide an assessment of progress and results in the implementation of the UN Framework on the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 as operationalized through the SERPs.
2. Provide accountability for the results of the COVID-19 MPTF and the Joint SDG Fund through a specific, module or component of the evaluation.
3. Present an assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness and coherence of the UNCT in the management of socio-economic response to COVID-19 as per the QCPR in the context of UNDS reform.
4. Learn lessons on how the new generation of UN Country Teams can better accompany national governments and partners to progress towards recovering better and greener during the decade of action to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goal.

The evaluation would cover the period from March 2020 to December 2021 when most SERPs will have transitioned to the adapted UNDAF/Cooperation Frameworks (given the disruptions caused by the pandemic, it is expected that all country level planning frameworks will have to be adapted to the new normal).

The Evaluation will examine the contribution made by the SERPS to addressing and alleviating the immediate impacts of COVID-19 at country level. It will also examine the coherence of the SERPS with special attention to the role played by the COVID-19 MPTF and the Joint SDG Fund. It will take note of re-purposed funds channeled through UNCT entities at country level to fund pillars of the SERP. However, the evaluation will not extend to assessing the performance of the programmes supported by re-purposed funds. Similarly, the evaluation is not to serve as an assessment of the performance of UNCT country office programmes, which are the evaluative responsibility of their respective evaluation offices.

It will be important for the proposed SWE to engage more fully with key stakeholders outside the UN family than was possible during the early lesson component of this exercise. This will require interviews and other forms of participation by other multilateral organizations, bilateral development partners, national authorities, CSOs and, where possible, with targeted vulnerable groups served by the Funds involved. The evaluation will also need to situate the SERPs and the UNCT projects and programmes they encompass within the broader set of actions taken by bilateral development partners and International Financial Institutions to support the national socio-economic response to COVID-19.

The design of the evaluation will be within the guidance of the QCPR and its implication for the UN development system at the country level. The evaluation should therefore cover the following areas: UNDS continued focus on SDG during Recover Better through a whole of system approach; SDG financing strategies at country level; progress on new focus areas of the QCPR such as digital inclusion, climate change, social protection, human rights, LNOB, gender and sustainable and inclusive COVID-19 recovery; operational modalities such as policy advice to mainstreaming SDGs to national plans; convening power and partnerships, joint work and results and collective reporting; and operational efficiency and results from the SERP at the country level.

It is essential that the evaluation should be designed and carried out in an ethical way during the current COVID-19 pandemic. UNEG member evaluation offices have produced guidelines for conducting evaluations during COVID-19 (UNFPA Evaluation Office 2020 and UNDP Evaluation Office 2020) and these guidelines will be reflected in the evaluation design. Principles applied will include do no harm, the use of UNEG capacities, and exploring hybrid models of international and national consultants for field-based country case studies in a time when international travel is constrained. In addition, the evaluation will adhere to principles of independence and credibility, not least through management in accordance with the draft policy on SWE.

The primary audiences for this evaluation are United Nations member states, the UN Sustainable Development Group, Resident Coordinators, and UNCT entities.

10.1. A Theory of Change for the UNDS Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19

Identification of the evaluation scope, objectives and key areas of investigation are essential prerequisites to the development of a Theory of Change for use as an evaluation tool. As a result, following the development of a Terms of Reference for the evaluation, a full ToC for the UNDS response to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 can be developed during the inception phase of the subsequent evaluation.

A Theory of Change for the UNDS Response as Realized through the SERPs

A pre-requisite for a successful, theory-based evaluation of the UNDS response at country level is a well articulated ToC for the UN framework for the socio-economic response to COVID-19, as realized through the SERPs. The ToC should be capable of illustrating potential key causal linkages

at each level of the chain of effects and identifying the most critical causal assumptions. Assumptions which need to be realized if the initiative under evaluation can credibly claim to contribute to observed results (Mayne 2015, p.127). In addition, for evaluation use, the causal linkages connecting each level in the chain of effects of the ToC (most often from activities to outputs, outcomes, and impacts) need to be credible in terms of scale and internal logic. The activities, outputs and outcomes need not necessarily be comprehensive or “sufficient” to achieve the expected outcomes. However, the ToC must recognize the necessary actions of other interventions and programmes through identification of the most salient assumptions (Mayne 2015, p.122).

Theory of Change for the SERPs

As already noted, the guiding and structuring document for the SERPs is the Secretary General’s UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 (UN 2020 e). There is no formal ToC for the framework document or a generic ToC for use with all SERPs.

To be effective, a generic ToC for the SERP would need to encompass the main sources of financing (and associated programme activities and outputs) that support UNCT entities under the umbrella of the SERP. This would include three main sources:

1. Funds from the COVID-19 MPTF, the Joint-SDG Fund and other MPTFs, but with a special focus on the first two.
2. Re-purposed Fund allocated to different pillars of the SERP and flowing through UNCT entities from other sources including core funds, funds from joint programs that are not MPTFs and agency-specific and earmarked funds from bilateral development partners or other sources.
3. New Funds from any source allocated to UNCT entities to undertake actions in the different pillars of the SERP.

While there is no overall or generic ToC for the SERPs at a global level there are examples at a national level. For example, among the case study countries, the Moldova SERP includes a detailed and comprehensive ToC with a chain of effects from activities to impacts for all five pillars of the SERP and accompanying key assumptions.

The SERPs in the other six countries mainly provided a mapping of planned activities, projects, and estimated budgets for each of the Pillars of the SERP. Only in Cambodia did the SERP include key performance indicators for each activity.

Table 13: Theories of Change Elements in SERPs in Case Study Countries

Country	Theory of Change or ToC Elements in the SERP
Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity mapping by Pillar with budgets, delivery dates and key performance indicators
Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed project mapping by Pillar with activity descriptions and budgets
Kosovo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping of immediate response activities/projects with associated budgets by Pillar
Malawi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities mapped by Pillar with estimated budgets
Maldives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes of the SERP mapped by Pillar with coordinating UNCT entities • UNCT deliverables mapped by outcome by Pillar with corresponding schedules and budgets

Moldova	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal and explicit ToC mapping the chain of effects from activities to outputs for all Pillars and identifying key assumptions • For each Pillar and Outcome, a mapping of proposed projects with defined outputs, budgets, national partners and supporting UNCT entities as well as an estimated time frame for results
Sao Tome and Principe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping of activities by Pillar with associated UNCT support responsibilities and identified budgets.

Developing a generic or general ToC for the SERP or for the UNDS socio-economic response to COVID-19 would start with the UN framework document supplemented by ToC elements noted in table 13. It can also be informed by guidance provided to the RCs and UNCT entities by the DCO as well as guidance on Gender Equality, disability inclusion, HR and LNOB as described in Chapter 6.

Finally, the monitoring framework for the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 encompasses 18 separate indicators (Annex G). These indicators provide an important window on the intended results of the SERPs at output and outcome level.

Working from these sources and in consultation with key staff of DCO and with the Secretary General's Designate for COVID-19, an evaluation of the SERP would reconstruct the necessary, generic ToC for the SERPs as an important task during the inception phase.

Incorporating the Fund and Joint SDG Fund in the SERP Theory of Change

As this study has indicated, the Fund has helped to enable the more coordinated and coherent UNCT response that is the objective of UNDS reform. The Fund and the Joint SDG Fund can be incorporated into the overall ToC for the UNDS response by drawing on material relevant to each. The resulting ToC would aid in identifying accountability issues for the Fund and the Joint SDG Fund. It would also support the design of a specific evaluation module on the COVID-19 MPTF and the Joint SDG Fund. This module could be linked to the overall SERP ToC as either a specific causal pathway or a significant activity/output grouping.

10.2. Results Frameworks, Indicators and Data Availability

An evaluation of the UNDS socio-economic response at country level will be able to take advantage of existing results frameworks and indicators used to measure the results of the SERPs. This depends on the extent that indicators have been supported by the necessary data. The evaluation can also draw on results frameworks and supporting data from some of the main MPTFs used to provide pooled financing to the UNCT in the implementation of the SERP. The Fund provides one example of an important MPTF that could provide information on results to an evaluation of the SERPs at country level.

Results Frameworks and Indicator Availability for the SERPs

The monitoring framework for the SERPs was first published in June 2020, with technical updates on the indicators provided on 14, September (UN DCO, 2020). It contains a total of 18 separate indicators covering all five pillars of the UN framework (Annex G). In total, UNCTs need to report on 79 specific data points to ensure coverage of all 18 indicators.

The indicators in the Monitoring Framework are not organized by level in the chain of results but by Pillar of the UN framework. Seven indicators track the number of beneficiaries accessing services supported by the SERP (1.1, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 3.2 and 3.4). Six track the number of countries making policy changes supported by the SERP (1.3, 2.4, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1 and 4.2). The remaining five indicators

focus on service providers, organizations delivering services, businesses, and civil society organizations (1.2, 3.2, 5.1, and 5.3).

Of 131 Countries rated in the UNINFO COVID-19 portal on 8 March 2021, 39 are rated high in coverage (66% or more of the 79 data points in the results framework reported), while 42 are rated medium in coverage (between 34 and 65% of data points covered). A further 23 countries rated low in coverage (less than 34% of data points covered) and 27 countries reported no data points at all.²⁵

Of the seven case study countries, Cambodia and Moldova have attained a high level of reporting across all five pillars and have either covered all the data points (Moldova) or missed just one (Cambodia). For the remaining seven countries the coverage pattern is mixed. UNINFO on March 8, 2021 indicated that Guatemala had reported either missing data or not applicable for all 79 data points. However, when this was raised with the RCO in Guatemala, they responded that the required data had been submitted to UNINFO, but had not been uploaded at the time of writing. The Maldives and Kosovo were rated medium in coverage of the results indicators for the SERP.

Table 14: SERP Results Indicator Coverage in Case Study Countries

Country	Pillar 1 Health First	Pillar 2 Protecting People	Pillar 3 Economic Response	Pillar 4 Macro Economic Response	Pillar 5 Social Cohesion	Overall	Data Points Covered 79 Total	Percent
Cambodia	High	High	High	High	High	High	78	98.7
Guatemala	NR/NA	NR/NA	NR/NA	NR/NA	NR/NA	NR/NA	0	0.0
Kosovo	NR/NA	Medium	NR/NA	NR/NA	Medium	Medium	27	34.2
Malawi	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Not Rep	Low	23	29.5
Maldives	Medium	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	38	48.1
Moldova	High	High	High	High	High	High	79	100
Sao Tome and Principe	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	31	39

Source: UNINFO COVID-19 Data Portal: March 16, 2021, accessed at: <https://data.uninfo.org/Home/ReportingStatus>

Results Indicators and Data Availability for the COVID-19 MPTF and the Joint SDG Fund

The evaluation will also draw on available results data used to populate and report on indicators for the COVID-19 MPTF and, where available, the Joint SDG Fund. This study undertook an analysis of the results framework for the Fund as per the ToR. Further analysis of the results framework and supporting indicators and data availability for the Joint SDG Fund is envisioned during the inception phase of the evaluation.

The Fund is supported by a monitoring framework, updated in September 2020, which includes 3 impact indicators and 12 outcome level indicators. Impact indicators are specified at a very high level including: the number of countries with COVID-19 cases; countries where GDP contracted in 2020; and, the percentage of countries with Gini coefficients increasing or decreasing in 2020.

The 12 outcome indicators in the Framework are specified at different levels of potential Fund influence depending on the outcome. For outcome 1 (increased responsiveness of the fund to socio-economic impacts) all indicators are reflective of fund allocations and resource flows. For

²⁵ Source: UNINFO COVID-19 Data Portal: March 8, 2021

outcome 2 (increased access to health and socio-economic support) the four indicators are a mix of counts of countries supported by the Fund, proposals supporting digitalization and numbers of people accessing services. For outcome 3 (enabling countries to provide a timely and sustainable response) there are five indicators relating to portfolio level performance, including the rapid disbursement and expenditure of Funds and adherence to the Funding Compact commitment number 14.

For evaluation purposes, the Fund monitoring framework does not bridge the gap from the actual projects funded to the higher-level outcome and impact results specified. To address that gap, the Funds' RBM reporting system is a useful tool.

Under the Fund RBM system, each project provides regular reporting at the outcome and output including the applicable project outcome, defined outputs, targets for each, and supporting data and data sources. Annex C provides examples of outcome and output level indicators and supporting data from the end-of-year RBM reports for Call 1 projects in the seven case study countries.

For evaluation purposes, the results reporting and supporting data in the RBM system for the Fund have both strengths and challenges. This is understandable given the system is designed for management and overall results reporting.

Strengths include:

- The fairly complete reporting of quantitative data at the output level which is compared directly to targets with reasons specified for variation;
- Some disaggregation of data by either vulnerable group membership or sex (but rarely disaggregated by both).

Challenges include:

- The gap between country-level RBM data reported at the output and outcome level and the outcome indicators for the Fund as a whole;
- The variability in definition of both outcomes and outputs across the projects as reported. This makes sense to allow the UNCT entities in each project to manage toward outputs and outcomes specific to their project, but it makes aggregating reported results across outputs and outcomes very difficult.

10.3. Evaluability of Human Rights/GE dimensions

Based on the UNEG framework for determining the evaluability of HR/GE dimensions of interventions, the SERP and Fund-supported programmes may be classified as 'medium' for HR/GE evaluability based on a review of UNEG standardized criteria bearing in mind that GE evaluability scores higher than HR evaluability.²⁶ Challenges to HR/GE evaluability can be mitigated in the evaluation by drawing on relevant data outside of interventions, strengthening existing HR/GE analysis, ensuring inclusive stakeholder engagement, and assessing how lack of information affects overall findings.

²⁶ Criteria include theory, design, stakeholders, analysis, reporting, participation, monitoring and context. See Table 1.1 'Determining the Evaluability of the HR&GE Dimensions of an Intervention in an Evaluation', *UNEG Guidance on Integrating Gender Equality and Human Rights in Evaluation* (2011:17-20).

Lack of disaggregated data remains a challenge. Generally, sex disaggregated data is easier to generate than other levels of disaggregation including age, ethnicity and disability – all of which are critical to track targeting and integration of LNOB principles.

The evaluation should seek to assess the extent to which the identification of vulnerable groups as detailed in the SERPs and targeted in the Fund-supported programs was accurate. The UN framework identified 14 categories of at-risk populations. A breakdown of targeting within the programs included in the Solutions Catalogue (2020) revealed that women, adolescents/children/youth, and migrants/refugees/IDPs garnered heavy focus while persons with disabilities and farmers/fishers/workers in small markets received moderate attention. Other potentially vulnerable groups including the elderly, indigenous, food insecure, people living with HIV/AIDS and people in extreme poverty received much less focus.²⁷

10.4. Management and the Role of UNEG

The evaluation will be managed by the System-Wide Evaluation Office in line with the Secretary-General's proposal in the QCPR. To ensure the independence of the evaluation it will be guided by an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) nominated from member states by the SWE office, in consultation with the GA president. The ERG will also include representatives of UNDS members nominated from the UNSDG Task Team.

There is a considerable amount of evaluation activity either ongoing or being launched by UNEG members with a direct focus on the impacts of COVID-19 and the effectiveness of the UN response under all three pillars of the overall response (Health, Humanitarian and Socio-Economic). UNEG members are active in the OECD DAC COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition. The coalition website identifies 61 different analytical studies or evaluations by UN entities, bilateral development organizations, and multilateral financial institutions either under consideration, being planned, or already underway. However, very few of these evaluations take a system-wide approach. Collectively, they do not constitute an evaluation of the overall UNDS response to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, although they may provide important supporting evidence. UNEG evaluation activities tracked in the coalition web-site will be further examined during the inception phase of the evaluation to identify emerging evaluation findings relevant to a system-wide approach.

UNEG membership will also be encouraged to form coalitions on SDG areas in terms of identifying evaluation gaps and bringing evaluative knowledge. The evaluation will use the UNEG members evaluation reports as they become available.

The findings of this report will help to identify the focus and direction of the SWE for COVID-19 as elaborated above. If the proposal and the accompanying recommendation are acted on, the Terms of Reference will be developed by the newly established SWE function.

²⁷ Covid-19 Response and Recovery Secretariat. n.d

11. Key Early Lessons

1. **In a development emergency, speed of response matters.** The Secretary General's Appeal in March 2020 for shared responsibility and global solidarity established the overall architecture of the expected response from the UNDS. The launch of the COVID-19 MPTF on 3 April facilitated a rapid and visible response from UNCTs. By later in April, the UN framework for the socio-economic response to COVID-19 established a clear structure for joint planning and programming by UNCTs around a coherent, structured, and transparent response plan encompassed by the SERPs.
2. **To sustain collaborative action and a coherent UNCT socio-economic response, pre-existing coordinating structures and human resources matter.** Key areas of UNDS reform, especially the independent and empowered RC and fully staffed RCOS with key competencies, proved crucial. The global UNDS architecture in place to coordinate gender and disability inclusion focal points and human rights experts across the system played a facilitative role for GE/HR/LNOB in the response.
3. **To ensure a coherent programmatic response, inclusiveness, and broad participation by the UNCT matters.** The pandemic and its accompanying development emergency show that an effective socio-economic response at country level must be grounded in experience and expertise drawn from across the spectrum of UNCT entities, including non-resident agencies (NRA). There are many examples of smaller and NRA entities improving the quality of proposals submitted to the Fund. The same effect can be seen in the influence of these entities on the quality and technical content of the SERPs; especially for attention to GE, HR and LNOB.
4. **While speed matters, it brings challenges that must be managed.** The speed required to react to a development emergency brings with it stresses that must be met collectively by the UNCT under the leadership and coordination of the RC. In a rapid response environment, where larger UNCT entities have inherent advantages in staff capacity and operational experience, RCs need to ensure processes such as the identification, preparation, submission, and approval of proposals for support by MPTFs are transparent fair and inclusive so the full complement of UNCT expertise is accessed. Smaller entities are on the playing field, but it is not yet level.
5. **An enabling organizational culture and readiness to be accountable for collective results are necessary when the UNDS system moves to an emergency footing.** The structural and procedural investments in UN reform are not themselves sufficient to ensure a coherent response. They must be complemented by a readiness on the part of UNCT members to act collaboratively and to be collectively accountable for results. The experience of collaborating on Fund projects and in preparing the SERPs has helped to strengthen a commitment to coordination, coherence, and collective action among UNCT entities, but there is more work to do. There is a need to move beyond structures and processes to a genuinely inclusive culture of cooperation where smaller and NRA UNCT entities inputs are valued and encouraged. Incentives for collaboration and contributions to collective results (including with regard to accountability and performance) need to be clear and strong across all UN entities.
6. **A global response framework and a UNCT plan at country level matter.** In the pandemic's earliest, most acute phase, the Fund, the UN framework with its five pillars, and the SERP process were well structured and responsive to the socio-economic imperatives of the emergency. The UN framework supported by the Secretary General's appeal and the Fund and SERPs served UNCTs well in identifying action and encouraging collaboration on joint work. However, as recovery appears on the horizon (at different times and at different speeds in different countries and regions) this framework is less suited to ensuring a more

equitable and sustainable recovery and return to Agenda 2030. UNCTs need more specific guidance on policy engagement, advocacy, and programming to Build Back Better, Greener, and more equitably.

7. **Given effective action, a development emergency can be leveraged to advance core values and commitments.** Experience in planning and implementing Fund projects and in collaborating on SERP development has shown that the guiding values of GE, HR, and LNOB still require active attention to be fully integrated across the UN system. Progress is supported through collective commitment, high level messaging, a strategy of broad coalition building, tailored guidance and by the work of energetic, technically skilled, and agile champions among UNCT entities. Financial incentives in the form of allocation targets play a particularly important role.
8. **In a global development emergency, agility, and technical expertise matter.** The ability of the UNCT to identify opportunities for joint action quickly and to fund gap-filling projects that respond to national imperatives has an important demonstration and confidence-building effect for the UNCT and its partners. The SERP and the Fund provided an important opportunity to elevate the visibility of UNCT comparative advantage to support and shape national responses.
9. **Funding matters.** While the size of the funding pool is not everything, the low level of resources available for the Fund is a constraint that limits the RCs ability to engage national governments and attract investments from development partners. It also reduces the incentive for UNCT entities to work collectively under the coordination of the RC. While re-purposed funding has been a major factor in ensuring resources are committed to the five pillars of the SERP it cannot fully substitute for the Fund or similar MPTFs. If the Fund and Joint SDG Fund come together, there is an opportunity to re-submit the case for increased support to development partners and non-traditional contributors and to re-energize the Funding Compact.
10. **In a development emergency, credibility, transparency, and accountability matter.** The case for increased investment requires transparency and accountability on the part of the UNDS. Work on open results reporting through UNINFO for the SERPs and the work done on RBM system development by the Fund have helped to improve transparency and accountability. There are opportunities to improve the clarity of the underlying theories of change for both and to better link (in the case of the Fund) project outputs to credible outcomes. Similarly, there is a need to invest in improved gathering and reporting of output data which is disaggregated by vulnerable group membership as well as by sex.
11. **The UNCT response to a development emergency must be tailored to the social and economic context of diverse countries.** The negative socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 were not felt evenly among and within countries. Smaller middle-income countries and SIDS suffered almost instant and very deep declines in national income. Countermeasures to COVID-19 shut down borders, greatly reduced trade, and devastated tourism-dependent economies. Lockdowns were particularly damaging for small MICs where economies depend on remittances from expatriates who returned in large numbers to already damaged economies. While low-income countries faced their own special burdens in the pandemic, the experience of smaller MICs and SIDS shows that the UNDS needs flexible tools to respond to variabilities in country contexts.
12. **In a development emergency, leadership at a global level matters.** Key informant interviews at global and country level high-lighted the role played by senior management of the Fund in ensuring open and transparent governance; in communicating Fund priorities and strategies to RCs around the world; and, in strongly advocating for measures to incorporate gender equality, human rights and LNOB values in the work of the Fund. They

also noted that this leadership was supported by a responsive Advisory Committee and an engaged Fund Secretariat.

12. Recommendations

The management response to these recommendations will be coordinated by the Secretary General's Designate COVID-19 Recover Better Fund & Special Advisor to the Secretary General on Reforms.

1. **Prepare a global report that sets out the framework for United Nations support to countries to Recover Better and Greener.**

The purpose of the global recover better and greener report is to set out the collective ambition of the UN development system using a whole of UN system approach for attaining the SDGs. At the country level the report should guide the UNCT to revise their Cooperation Frameworks as per the 'new normal' created by the pandemic. The report should address areas suffering a disproportionate impact from the pandemic which require special attention going forward, such as innovation, digital inclusion, social protection, migration, severe poverty, women's economic empowerment, violence against women and girls, disability inclusion, LNOB, and human rights.

Rationale: An important lesson learned from the exercise has been both the strength of the UN framework in drawing attention to the development emergency aspect of the pandemic and its ability to support practical planning for the immediate socio-economic response at global and country level. However, there is strong sense among that UNCTs and their partners that they lack a similar level of precision on how to Recover Better and Greener, including innovative approaches and action on climate.

Expected Benefits: The report will provide the global strategy for the UNDS to recover better during the decade of action and provide guidance for the preparation of revised or new Cooperation Frameworks. It will help the partners and public understand the collective offer of the UNDS during the decade of action.

2. **Prepare and implement a strategy for deepening the UNDS Reform to realise its full potential.**

The strategy should provide the grounds for more inclusive and better participation of smaller and non-resident agencies. It should include elements for a communication strategy at national level so that key partners fully relate with and reinforce the reforms (including questions of funding and compliance with the Funding Compact and the roles of the RC and of UNDP). The strategy should set out how incentive structures for joint work can be further strengthened across all UN entities (including issues of staff appraisal, reporting, and accountability), and refine measures for elevating the collective organizational culture. The strategy should encourage a phased increase in joint programmes and improvement in normative leadership, and ownership of collaborative results at country level. The reform should be inclusive with mechanisms for real inter-agency collaboration for Recovering Better to achieving the SDGs. It should have benchmarks, indicators, and clarity of results/benefits so that it can be monitored and evaluated.

Rationale: UNDS reform has made substantial progress in establishing structural and procedural investments, based on guidance and clarity in the collective UNDS offer at the country level. This is a significant achievement that helped the UN Development System act quickly during the pandemic, enabled by the Fund and SERP. However, there have been limits placed on a more coherent UNDS response by continuing issues relating to organizational behavior and mutual accountability, and to non-compliance by donors to the funding compact. These issues cannot be solved at the country-

level alone. There is also a continuing loss of potential benefit from the participation of smaller and non-resident agencies for the UNDS system as a whole.

Expected Benefits: The most important expected result would be to maintain the important momentum gained in the past year regarding consolidating and strengthening the UNDS reforms at country level to realise its full potential. Small, NRA and cross cutting agencies will be able to bring their unique expertise to the UN collective offer to the country. Leaders and mid-level managers of UN entities at the country level will be clearer on their accountabilities for joint work. The cultural change will promote and value UN inter-agency initiatives for collective results. Funding incentives for joint programmes and normative work will accelerate a whole of UN approach to supporting national plans for SDGs.

- 3. Conduct a management review and merge the Joint SDG Fund and COVID-19 Fund to create a fund that is operationally agile and effective. Re-engage and resubmit a case to the donors to use the pooled funding mechanisms to Recover Better in line with the agreed commitments of the Funding Compact.**

To reduce transaction costs and facilitate effective resource mobilization during the transition to recovery, the two Funds with similar objectives going forward can and should be merged to become an improved Recover Better Fund. The transition should be facilitated through a management review grounded in lessons learned in the management and governance of the two funds. The new fund should be able to demonstrate inclusive governance, flexibility, transparency, results, and rapid processes for proposal development, approval, and disbursements.

Rationale: A key lesson learned has been that the COVID-19 funds were efficiently and effectively deployed: funding compact commitments for accountability, transparency and results were put in place; gender equality, LNOB, HR and, in some cases, disability inclusion were supported; and development reform was reinforced. Another key lesson was the need for the Fund to achieve a critical mass in terms of financing levels to more effectively realize its potential to influence policy and catalyze action at the UNCT level.

Expected Benefits: Should the donors engage as per the Funding Compact commitments to fully fund a strategic Joint Recover Better Fund at global level with more substantial financial resources, this will greatly improve the UN development system's ability to engage with national governments on normative and programme issues. It will incentivize the UNCT entities for joint planning, joint programming, and better collective results for SDGs. Importantly it will improve collective results for gender, human rights, disability inclusion and LNOB.

- 4. Build on the lessons from UNCT collaboration on Fund projects and SERPs to consolidate and strengthen improvements in gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and LNOB focus across the work of all UN entities at the country level.**

The most important lessons learned in relation to effective operationalization of GE/HR/LNOB in the early lessons study of the Fund should be incorporated in the merged SDG Fund, specifically: ensuring those with cross-cutting expertise are involved at the start; recognizing the need for systematic approaches to quality assurance; valuing the importance of timely facilitative guidance and targets/incentives to focus attention on GE/HR/LNOB; incorporating results-based budgeting and the collection of disaggregated data to allow for effective tracking of vulnerable groups targeting.

Rationale: Socio-economic analysis of the impact of the fund (Annex A) has demonstrated how severe poverty and hunger has increased, human rights have declined, and women are experiencing higher levels of violence and marginalization. Successes achieved in elevating a focus on gender,

human rights, disability inclusion, and other vulnerable group targeting (not evenly, but with positive examples in some countries), provide a blueprint to build capacities across the system and offer an effective approach to operationalizing UN commitments to Leaving No One Behind.

Expected Benefits: Embodying core values of the UN and linkages to the SDGs and a means of addressing the disproportionate effect of the pandemic on women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups as well as putting human rights at the center of efforts to recover better.

5. Review and learn lessons from the SERPs prior to transitioning to the new or revised Cooperation Frameworks.

As the SERPs begin their transition toward their planned end date in late 2021, it will be important to ensure that the vulnerabilities, inequalities and priority areas for UNDS action they identify will be adapted and retained as existing CFs are revised and new ones developed. This should include continued progress in clearly defining mutual accountability for results and holding UNCT entities accountable for collective action. There is a clear need for the rapid development of practical guidance to RCs and UNCTs on how to operationalize the transition without losing the development emergency imperative of the SERPs. It may also be useful to incorporate the lessons learned from this study. The new CF should be prepared in an inclusive manner and have the full participation of NRAs and cross cutting agencies. The revised or new CF should phase in joint programmes and inter-agency activities to clearly identify what percentage of the CF budget will be for joint action.

Rationale: While one early lesson has been the apparent flexibility of UNDAF and CFs to accommodate emergency priorities identified in the SERP, another has been the need to focus a more coherent UNDS response under the five pillars of the Framework. In addition, the new generation of CFs need to include mechanisms for greater accountability on the part of UNCT entities to achieving common goals.

Expected Benefits: A more coherent and focused CF that does not reflect a return to normal but rather absorbs the lessons of the development emergency and builds in resilience to other shocks during the transition to recovery. The CF building on SERP lessons will move toward increasingly collaborative UN work at the country level in line with the QCPR.

6. Implement the System-Wide Evaluation of the UNDS Response to COVID-19 with a focus on learning to support a better recovery during the Decade of Action

The evaluation should use the SERPs and their effectiveness at country level as the basis to assess UNDS accountability for results, while looking forward and identifying lessons for effective support to recover better. This study has shown that the SERPs can provide a coherent, cohesive, and transparent plan for UNCT action around an immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. There is still a need, however, to examine this with the rigor, attention to detail and triangulation of evidence that can only come from a focused evaluation. While UN Evaluation Offices have planned and are implementing programmatic and thematic evaluations of their COVID-19 response, few of these evaluations use a system-wide lens. Finally, given the relative lack of attention to environmental and build back greener priorities supported by the Fund, there is a need to identify positive examples and good practices that can help to realize the goals of the strategy paper proposed in Recommendation One.

Rationale: For the UN development system the SERPs became the organizing principal and guiding framework for its response to COVID-19 at the country level. As the UN development system shifts its focus to recover better it is important to learn lessons from the SERPs in 121 countries and demonstrate accountability for the current projected resources of \$15.7 billion, of which \$3.0 billion represents funds repurposed from existing projects and programmes of UNCTs.

Expected Benefits: Assessment of the progress in operationalizing the QCPR. Accountability of the UN development system as per the funding compact. Learning and continuous improvements to the UN development system through during the Decade of Action to accelerate results for SDGs.

Annex A: Covid-19 – A Hinge in 21st Century Socio-Economic History

I. Introduction

This past year, the world has undergone a once-in-century event with the Covid-19 crisis. As of March 12, 2021, some 119 million are infected worldwide and 2.6 million are dead (Worldometers.info and World Health Organization, 2021). The range of countries by size most affected by the number of cases per million inhabitants ranges from Andorra to the US. In terms of deaths per million, along with smaller countries like Gibraltar and San Marino, more economically prosperous countries like the United Kingdom, Italy, and the US have suffered at unprecedented levels. Testing capacities per million are still catching up in some of these prosperous economies. Overall, the direct and indirect costs are profound with vulnerable economies like Burkina Faso, Yemen, Nigeria's North East, and South Sudan carrying a high risk of famines (World Food Programme, 2020a). Some estimates point that 690 million people may not have enough to eat with the pandemic while 270 million additional people face the risk of being pushed to starvation (World Food Programme, 2020b), with out-of-season foods becoming scarce because of the disruption in labor in the world. (Nugent, 2020).

In April 2020, recognizing the broader adverse global welfare effects of the pandemic, the United Nations issued the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to Covid-19 (UN 2020) to respond to the crisis. The plan emphasized the health response first as a first pillar, also adding 4 subsequent pillars focused on protecting people with social protection and basic services, economic jobs and recovery, macroeconomic response with multilateral collaboration alongside stressing on social cohesion and community resilience. As of February 23, 2021, UNINFO data shows that SERP is increasingly having a wide-reaching impact across the pillars. 59 million beneficiaries are supported in maternal health services, 67 million for vaccination, and 44 million for nutrition programmes as part of Pillar 1. Pillar 2 beneficiaries include some 553 million receiving distance learning benefits, 15 million receiving meals, and some 58 million receiving WASH supplies. 3 million have been beneficiaries of cash transfer programs, 9.4 million for human rights protection and legal aids. Work on Pillar 3 has also been picking up in the second half of 2020 with 8.7 million beneficiaries of food supply protection regimes, and 3.7 million beneficiaries for formal and informal sector workers. Noteworthy here is the emphasis across the first 3 pillars on leaving no one behind principles. Pillar 4 work in macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration is still evolving though with only about 67 countries reporting more than 3 SEIAs (Socio-Economic Impact Assessment) and some 27 countries reporting more than 3 SEIA informed policies. Also, most of Pillar 5 work thus far has focused on supporting employers and trade unions, along with active advocacy and social engagement with national and sub-national spaces.

An additional dimension emerges when one glances at the UNINFO data for within pillar heterogeneity in the geographic impact of the work. For example in Pillar 1 countries protecting health systems and healthcare workers seem to be the central emphasis for a response till thus far in terms of countries reached. In Pillar 2, a similar emphasis can be seen on WASH and on children supported with distance learning. In Pillar 3 there seems to be an emphasis on UN-supported employment policies thus far in terms of countries reached. It is worth acknowledging here that these are dynamic days in UN response and its ability to catalyze the quality of national public policy, so a lot is going to emerge in the rest of 2021 going forward.

The UN SERP 2020 framework and country-level coping strategies with the pandemic have again brought to central attention a classic debate in economic policy. Are wealthier countries healthier or are healthier countries wealthier (Pritchett & Summers 1993)? The world has also witnessed a split between policymakers and scientists advocating an economy-first approach and signing the [Great Barrington Declaration](#) while other thought leaders counter it with a health-first approach with the [John Snow Memorandum](#). At the heart of this debate remains a statistical pre-pandemic reality in how the world lies on a distribution of how economies have spent on public health as a percentage of GDP. Some countries

here have been leaders and others laggards and the social costs of sacrificing health for the economy and vice versa has been accordingly heterogeneous.

It started with a discussion on *lives versus livelihood*, where a large proportion of the world was subject to global lockdowns of varying severity (Koh, 2020) resulting in global short-run economic costs. The narrative soon shifted to *lives versus lives*, given the pandemic's impact on non-pandemic costs, beginning with losses in jobs and stunting of economic activity, also learning losses in the short and long run with virtual education (Hughes 2020; Hanushek & Woessmann 2020) along with lack of social security or fiscal stimulus. There has also been a profound heterogeneous impact on internal and cross-country migration impacting remittances, especially if they were a key source of earning for an economy (International Organization for Migration, 2020b). Also, there are profound effects on non-covid healthcare (World Health Organization, 2020a) with market power and antitrust discussions rising given the closure of businesses (Clemens, McNichols, & Sabia, 2020). Finally, a hidden pandemic in the form of mental wellness issues is sweeping across the world.

While work from home (WFH) and related entrepreneurial adaptation and innovation have arisen as a response mechanism, the global digital divide has been deep and worldwide here causing distortions and inequality (World Bank, 2020a, 2020b). These effects have been most profound in continuing primary, secondary, and tertiary education on global university campuses (Hughes, 2020). There is also now increasing homelessness with loss in incomes worldwide (United Nations, 2020c), fear of famines (World Food Programme, 2020a), and the effects of all of this on social cohesion and economic stability (International Organization for Migration, 2020d). Vulnerable groups have been particularly affected (United Nations, 2020c) and violence against women are on the rise (United Nations, 2020c). This is apart from the potential mental health costs of prolonged lockdown or WFH for those who can work from home (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020a, 2020b, 2020d). The World Health Organization survey on mental health indicates that in 93% of countries the demand for mental health is increasing (World Health Organization, 2020b). Also, many disruptions in mental health services are rising. More than a third of the countries reported interruption of emergency health services, 30% report stopping access to medication for mental health, and around 75% reported disruption of school and workplace mental health services (World Health Organization, 2020b).

For those who cannot do WFH, the ability to access health systems is at an all-time low for care (World Health Organization, 2020c). Finally, while governments have tried, there is heterogeneity in giving (International Labour Organization, 2020) and in providing social security and support (Hanna, 2020) with many nations failing to do much at all. UN SG António Guterres has said that we will have to borrow from tomorrow to live out our today but the levels of rising public debt (International Monetary Fund, 2020) will mean a sustained period of fiscal imbalance that will not be easy to correct.

Besides, there has also been the rising role of economic protectionism by nations (Antràs, 2020) that will hit the global gains from trade and globalization going forward (Antràs, 2020). All of this has also been further muddied with a lack of faith in science, misinformation and its spread (Adam M., Uscinski, Klofstad, & Stoler, 2020), and a general global decline in the quality of leadership during the pandemic (Ajzenman, Cavalcanti, & Da Mata, 2020).

Overall, some estimates suggest that more than 251 million will go into poverty (United Nations Development Programme, 2020) going forward due to the pandemic. Public debt is also expected to rise by 17% of global GDP (International Monetary Fund, 2020) and 20 countries may be running into famines or lack access to food (World Food Programme, 2020a). Inequalities in vaccination programs to reach herd immunity are also arising, to summarize, we stand at a hinge in the history of mankind in the 21st century and deep collective action with global solidarity will be required to salvage international socioeconomic sanity.

II. Adverse Global Economic Effects of the Pandemic

a) Demand and Supply Effects

The pandemic is expected to have a large impact on global demand and supply activity. These changes will cause adverse effects on companies' people work for, reducing their income source, changing the lives of many. The government needs to recognize them to support the right sectors and avoid maintaining artificially changing sectors (Hodobod, Hommes, Huber, & Salle, 2020). Consumption is expected to be reduced significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, but is this change permanent? According to evidence from a survey in summer 2020 carried out in 5 European countries, the self-reported reduction in consumption is, for the most part, due to the infection risk. As a far second, this behavior change is due to a change in preferences (Hodobod, Hommes, Huber, & Salle, 2020). The long-term change in behavior may be associated with these specific sectors: retail, hospitality, and services (per new information emerging from Northern Europe). But, the arrival of vaccines in 2021 can help with mitigating fear and sticky consumption in the rest of the sectors (Hodobod, Hommes, Huber, & Salle, 2020).

On the supply side, COVID-19 has impacted firms and workers. Part of this has been because of the closing of borders and international tensions, which has caused the pandemic to dramatically impact long-term global supply chains. The firms that have been affected by the pandemic are those from sectors in which a higher fraction of workers are not able to do their job remotely. They have experienced the biggest setbacks in terms of reduced employment, lower revenue growth, worse stock market performance, and a higher expected likelihood of default (Papanikolaou & Schmidt, 2020). Also, from the sectors where fewer workers can work remotely, the lower-paid employees and female workers are the ones that have had the most difficulties (Papanikolaou & Schmidt, 2020). The global supply chain is also under stress with the pandemic and the adverse effects on supply chains are expected to deepen further globally (Antràs, 2020).

Overall, historically at an aggregate level, in a study of 14 major pandemics with death counts of more than 10,000 people, past work shows that a measure of the interaction between supply and demand, the real rate of return of safe European assets, after each pandemic were depressed for decades. This finding is consistent with neoclassical growth models, pandemics cause labor to be relatively scarce and it generates greater precautionary savings and this is expected to happen with Covid-19 as well (Jordà, Singh, & Taylor, 2020).

b) Migration, Travel, Tourism & Entertainment

The pandemic has hit the airline industry with a total estimated loss of \$118 billion and demand down by 61% (International Air Transport Association, 2020a, 2020b). While the availability of vaccines is somewhat mitigating the effects as of early 2021, industry-wide recovery is mainly led by domestic markets (International Air Transport Association, 2020a, 2020b). The International Air Transport Association (IATA) forecasts for recovery to be gradual and patchy until the second half of 2021 (International Air Transport Association, 2020a, 2020b). It is expected that in 2021, as a percentage of GDP, the industry will reach half of the percentage during pre-crisis levels (International Air Transport Association, 2020a, 2020b).

Furthermore, two parts of the demand for the travel industry have also been in crises: immigrant demand and tourism. In tourism, between 100 to 120 million jobs are expected to be lost due to the pandemic which represented a \$910 billion to \$1.2 trillion loss in export revenues. Tourism arrivals have fallen by 70% according to the most recent estimates (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). The emergence of discussions around vaccination passports will only ensure that global tourism will face a stuttered recovery due to the high cost of travel and also due to WFH showing a way forward for the world during the pandemic.

Besides, legal migration has been reduced due to travel restrictions, as well as many legal working visas have been temporarily banned (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; International Organization for Migrants, 2020b, 2020c). However, destination countries have started to

open their borders towards the late half of 2020 (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

The restrictions in global travel have also meant that the movement of people fleeing places of conflict, to escape from human rights abuses is also adversely affected (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020). The risk of refugees en route and in refugee camps is greater than before (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020). Depressed economies will also mean lower demand for migrant workers and this will also potentially facilitate technological progress to replace labor (International Organization for Migration, 2020b).

COVID-19 has also impacted internal migration, similarly as it did in India during its harsh March 2020 lockdown with 4 hours' notice from the government. At the time, many people began to return from the urban cities to their rural areas, many brought the virus with them raising the infection in cities with less economic development. This could also mean fewer domestic remittances, leaving many rural families without an important income source as it occurred also in Africa (International Organization for Migration, 2020c).

Finally, the pandemic has severely disrupted the entertainment industry. Entertainment activities outdoors such as restaurants, hotels, and drinking establishments faced the most significant impact from social distancing measures (Baker, Farrokhnia, Meyer, Pagel, & Yannelis, 2020; Clemens, McNichols, & Sabia, 2020). Online entertainment meanwhile has been rising, consumption on websites like Facebook, Netflix, and YouTube has been rising (Koeze & Popper, 2020). This could ultimately have a positive unintended consequence given what happened during the SARS outbreak of 2003 in China and the increased adoption of e-learning and online shopping in more countries (Carlsson-Szlezak, Reeves, & Swartz, 2020).

c) Strains on National Budgets, Health, And Economic Well-Being

The fiscal response and the decline in government revenue have caused public debt to GDP ratios to spike with large adverse effects both in advanced and less advanced economies causing fiscal risk at never-before seen levels (International Monetary Fund, 2020). Given these national accounts challenges, costs of healthcare will be an important issue going forward both for the rich and poor world. Developing countries face the most severe of challenges herein and should ideally aim at expanding the scope of social protection: cash transfers, health insurance, food distributions, active labor market protections (Hanna, 2020).

On the recovery trajectory, different measures are recommended on the phase of the specific country, the three phases being outbreak with lockdowns, gradual reopening under uncertainty, and the pandemic under control (International Monetary Fund, 2020). The national budgets for 2021 will be particularly difficult to create for economies around the world due to the uncertainties of the year (Curristine et al. 2020). Following the first stage, outbreaks with lockdowns, the fiscal policy should be focused on accommodating additional health and emergency services to fight the pandemic as second and subsequent waves economies. There should also be a focus on mitigating measures to reduce the impact of the lockdown for the most affected firms and individuals (International Monetary Fund, 2020). In the second stage, during gradual reopening under uncertainty, the focus should be on supporting safety nets and reopening the economy. To achieve the former, economies should focus on creating a safe work environment, helping workers find a new job, and helping viable but still-vulnerable firms reopen (International Monetary Fund, 2020). As for the last stage, once vaccines and therapies become widely available, perhaps well beyond 2021 and spilling into 2022, the focus on expenditure should be on promoting inclusive and green recovery and transformation taking into consideration debt sustainability. Countries will therefore need to rebuild fiscal buffers over the medium term. However, reducing the fiscal response too fast could undermine the recovery some have predicted (International Monetary Fund, 2020).

Economies meanwhile with fiscal space should on the other hand take expansionary measures. Increasing the fiscal deficit and debt in the short term will generate, in the long run, balance pro-growth and debt sustainability. Countries with tighter fiscal space will have a more difficult recovery but should focus on the most cost-effective projects and all the investments made should have a special positive impact on those with the most needs (International Monetary Fund, 2020). On the positive side, the new investments in healthcare, digitalization, social housing, and environmental protections will lay the foundations for a more reliant and inclusive economy in the long run. This is going to be especially important for countries to recover any losses made to gains made in the last decade on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and following the Secretary General's call for SDG priorities in 2021 (IISD 2021).

Even with the high fiscal expenditure, there are many different arguments to support raising public investment: low-interest rates, high precautionary savings, weak private investment, a gradual erosion of the public capital stock over time, and uncertainty. Investment multipliers are especially effective when uncertainty is large. The uncertainty is shown because of high savings levels among high-income households and low private investment given the uncertain outlook combined with the expected low-interest levels (Bounie, et al., 2020; International Monetary Fund, 2020).

Interest rates are expected to remain low in 2021 (Bloomberg, 2020; International Monetary Fund, 2020). This sets a lower debt cost. However, the verdict is still not out when public debt may reach unsustainable levels for economies (Blanchard, 2019). Some economists argue that fiscal deficit is sustainable with low-interest rates such as in the current circumstances with the conditions of real debt service below 2% of GDP (Furman & Summers, 2020). The future of inflation is the one that may trigger a less sustainable debt. Some economists believe that inflation will stay low (Ferguson, 2020a), others are expecting a rise in inflation (Goodhart & Pradhan, 2020; Ilzetzki, Reinhart, & Ro, 2020). The arguments for this rise in inflation results from an expectation to speed recovery, an injection of liquidity, and also a change in China's role from an exporter of deflation to a more neutral one (Goodhart & Pradhan, 2020).

Consequently, governments globally should be concerned about the sustainability of their debts. On the net, the fiscal deficit would be something to worry about after the pandemic with precautions taken for sustainability particularly in developing economies (Dyan, 2020; International Monetary Fund, 2020; Spence & Leipziger, 2020). Some alternatives for sustainable debts come from increasing targeted assistance for vulnerable populations, extending the duration of International Monetary Fund (IMF) lending, and combined IMF and World Bank programs that include fiscal-performance measures (Spence & Leipziger, 2020). A related worrying factor is private debt as speculated by China with non-performing loans, increased insolvency, and default by state-owned companies (Spence & Leipziger, 2020).

d) Schooling, Learning Losses & Gender Vulnerabilities

At the height of the lockdown in 2020, more than 160 countries had mandated some form of school closures impacting at least 1.5 billion children and youth (World Bank, 2020a 2020b). Researchers find that the aggregate economic output will be diminished due to school closing and intergenerational mobility will be negatively impacted particularly for older children (Jang & Yum, 2020). This is because education equips people with abilities and skills that improve their productivity, allowing them to apply new ideas and technologies. Closing schools will therefore cause severe long-run learning losses with impacts on the productivity of human capital and the mental development of children (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). While digital education is somewhat of a substitute, research recently shows that online learning is an imperfect substitute for in-person learning especially for children from low-income families (Agostinelli, Doepke, Sorrenti, & Zilibotti, 2020) and response mechanisms here need to be designed keeping in mind the most vulnerable.

The pandemic has been especially harder for women. UNESCO projects that at the end of the pandemic, 11 million girls might not return to school. COVID-19 can also reverse the work on women and girls on decades-long gains in human capital, economic empowerment, and voice and agency (World Bank,

2020a, 2020b). Even if old men have died the most from COVID-19, female employees are the ones more likely to lose their jobs (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2020a, 2020b). Women have also been historically more likely not to be paid for jobs. There is also evidence of women being paid less particularly after becoming mothers and they also spend more time taking care of the children (Andrew, et al., 2020). The pandemic has added to these inequalities.

The informal sector is one where additionally the adverse effects of the pandemic have been severe given apriori structural conditions herein worldwide (International Labour Organization, 2018; Delaney, 2020). 60 % of all workers around the world operate in the informal sector, in developing countries this can be as high as 90% (International Labour Organization, 2018). All these workers lack rights, benefits, and social protection which makes the burden of the pandemic harder on them. The problem with this sector is structural and it will worsen if inequality and poverty continue and mitigation measures are not taken (Delaney, 2020).

There is also an increase in all forms of women's violence and harmful practices: child marriage and trafficking, exploitation, sexual violence, and domestic violence (United Nations, 2020). The provision of hotlines to receive calls related to these challenges has risen manifold in some places. Almost one in five women have experienced violence during the past year and many are trapped with their abusers (United Nations, 2020). Moreover, estimates indicate that for every 3 months of the pandemic an additional 15 million women are expected to be the victims of violence. Unintended pregnancies could increase if lockdown continues going forward and an additional 13 million child marriages may take place between 2020 and 2030 that could have been averted (United Nations, 2020c).

e) *Effects on non-Covid Healthcare, Social Cohesion & Human Rights*

WHO's survey on hospital health systems in 105 countries from March to June 2020 shows that almost 90% of the countries have experienced disruption to their health services, developing countries being most impacted. The most frequent disruptions were in the areas of outreach & facility-based services, for non-communicable disease diagnosis and treatment, family planning and contraception, treatment for mental health disorders, and cancer diagnosis and treatment (World Health Organization, 2020c).

Potentially lifesaving services were disrupted in almost a quarter of the surveyed countries, with the closure of 24-hour emergency rooms in 22% of the countries, urgent blood transfusions in 23% of countries, and emergency surgeries delayed in 19% of the countries. Disruptions in malaria diagnosis and treatment occurred along with tuberculosis case detection and antiretroviral treatment (World Health Organization, 2020c).

Also, hospitals faced unprecedented financial pressures due to Covid-19 (American Hospital Association, 2020). Health care providers have also been attacked with incidents related to COVID-19, some of which include physical assault, psychological threats, individual weapons, heavy weapons, and cyber-attacks (World Health Organization, 2020a). COVID-19 misinformation plays an important role in these mentioned attacks. Many countries are following the WHO recommendations against health service disruption using telemedicine to replace in-person consultants (World Health Organization, 2020a) but the verdict on long-run patient outcomes with telemedicine is still not out.

Social cohesion is important for the good performance of governments in the pandemic recovery path as outlined in the SERP. Using data from 2006-2018 Gallup World Polls and the EMDAT International Disasters Database, researchers have shown that pandemics have a strong effect on political systems. They show particularly that if an individual is exposed to an epidemic in its impressionable years, the individual's trust and confidence in the government would be lower than otherwise especially in lower-income countries with pre-existing levels of corruption (Giray Aksoy, Eichengreen, & Saka, 2020; Gol Mez, Ivchenko, Reutskaja, & Soto-Mota, 2020; Chuah, Loayza, & Myers, 2020; Khemani, 2020).

Prior work also shows that residents in democracies show declining confidence in the face of a pandemic than those of autocratic governments (Giray Aksoy, Eichengreen, & Saka, 2020). However,

autocrats are not immune to the destabilization caused by COVID-19, even with their efforts to use the pandemic to gain more power (Houtz, 2020). They have also taken advantage of the pandemic exigencies, using the track, trace, and quarantine programs to invade personal privacy and diffusing misinformation causing more infections and deaths (D'Urbino, 2020; Ajzenman, Cavalcanti, & Da Mata, 2020; Bursztyn, Rao, P. Roth, & Yanagizawa-Drott, 2020).

The pandemic's impact on social cohesion will be particularly hard for countries with a high risk of armed conflict. Iraq is one example, the social cohesion is under critical levels due to problems for both, lack of trust in the government and between their people, and increasingly a related alarming situation is arising in Ethiopia. The lockdowns have escalated the tensions between security forces and the population (International Organization for Migration, 2020b, 2020d). Overall, in 2000, while 1 out of 5 people living in poverty also lived in fragile and conflict-affected situations, Covid-19 could change this ratio (World Bank, 2020a, 2020b).

III. What Next? What Did We Learn? How Can We Recover Better & Greener?

Overall, Covid-19 is a once-in-a-century hinge point in the history of the modern world. With a year gone by recently since March 2020 when global lockdowns started happening, it is time to reflect on what next, what did we learn and how can global economies recover better in their 2030 push towards the UN SDGs. Here are some key observations as we envision:

- a) A rapid scaling up and scoping out of global public health investments & population health monitoring technologies would be required of nations in their recovery path going forward not just to deal with the ongoing current pandemic but also to prepare for tomorrow's pandemics, given the higher likelihood of zoonotic diseases and pandemics worldwide going forward in the Anthropocene (UNDP Human Development Report 2020).
- b) Continued investments in science, innovation, and R&D will enable this recovery path post the pandemic as was evidenced in the past year through the rapid deployment of mRNA vaccines, use of WFH technologies like Zoom to work virtually, be that for health systems with telemedicine, virtual schooling or for industrial work. Special attention here needs to be given here to inequalities that may be induced through innovation, digital divides, and internet coverage (Papanikolaou & Schmidt, 2020; Barrero, Bloom, & Davis, 2020).
- c) The pandemic has also necessitated a relook at sustaining global entrepreneurship and creative destruction (Cuyper, Kucukkeless, & Reuben, 2020). Financial systems may have responded to COVID-19 with digital currencies gaining primacy but concerns remain on their robustness and financial surveillance (Ferguson, 2020b). There should be learnings here that can be consolidated into a new digital global economy going forward.
- d) Global poverty levels will rise with the pandemic above 9% worldwide with projections indicating that the extreme poverty rate could again fall back to 7% only around 2030 (World Bank, 2020a, 2020b). Coupled with estimates of the deepening of global inequality to levels of 2008 (Cugat & Narita, 2020), governments around the world need to ponder social support mechanisms and plan strategies for wealth redistribution.
- e) The pandemic's impact on global food security will be severe and the time has come to ponder more sustainable and green sources of enhancing food security (Nugent, 2020).
- f) In the medium term, developing countries will also have to manage their public debt conundrums (Vera, 2020). This creates an important scope to discuss fiscal stimulus, particularly in poorer countries. More so, since estimates indicate that an increase in the fiscal stimulus of 1 percent of annual GDP could reduce working-hour losses by 0.8 percentage points in the second quarter of 2020 (International Labour Organization, 2020).
- g) Finally, on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there has been a considerable decline in terms of investment, which was much larger in developing and transition economies than in developed countries. SDG-relevant investment fell by 51% in Africa, 44% in Latin America and the

Caribbean, 33% in Asia, and 27% in transition economies. The COVID-19 pandemic has eliminated the progress made in promoting SDG investment since 2015 (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2020a, 2020b) and a multilateral global post-pandemic world order is required to reduce the losses and sketch out a recovery path. The UN has targeted 48 investments in governance, social protection, green economy, and digitalization in a plan named the SDG Push. Under this scenario, they can reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty by 146 million in 2030 relative to the projected scenario due to Covid-19 (1 billion by 2030) – and this could narrow the gender gap, with 74 million women and girls that can be lifted out of poverty (United Nations Development Programme, 2020).

References to Annex A

Note: Where references from this Annex are referred to in the main report (Section 3.1) they are included in Annex D below.

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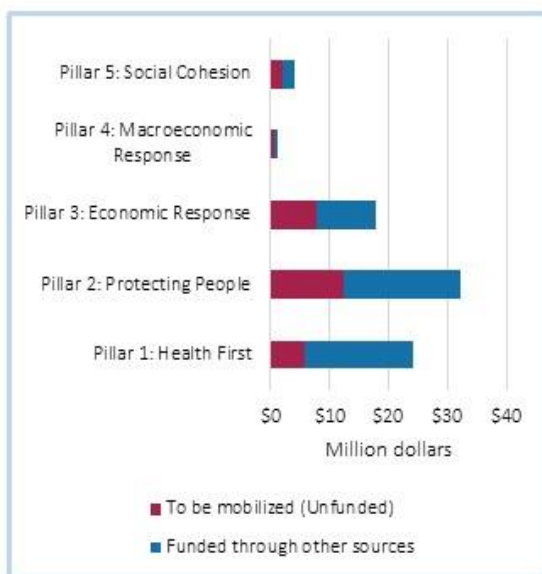
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Annex B: Country Case Study Data Profiles



Cambodia

Resource Allocation for the Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan



Total SERP required funding: \$79.4 M
Funded: \$50.9 M (64.1%)

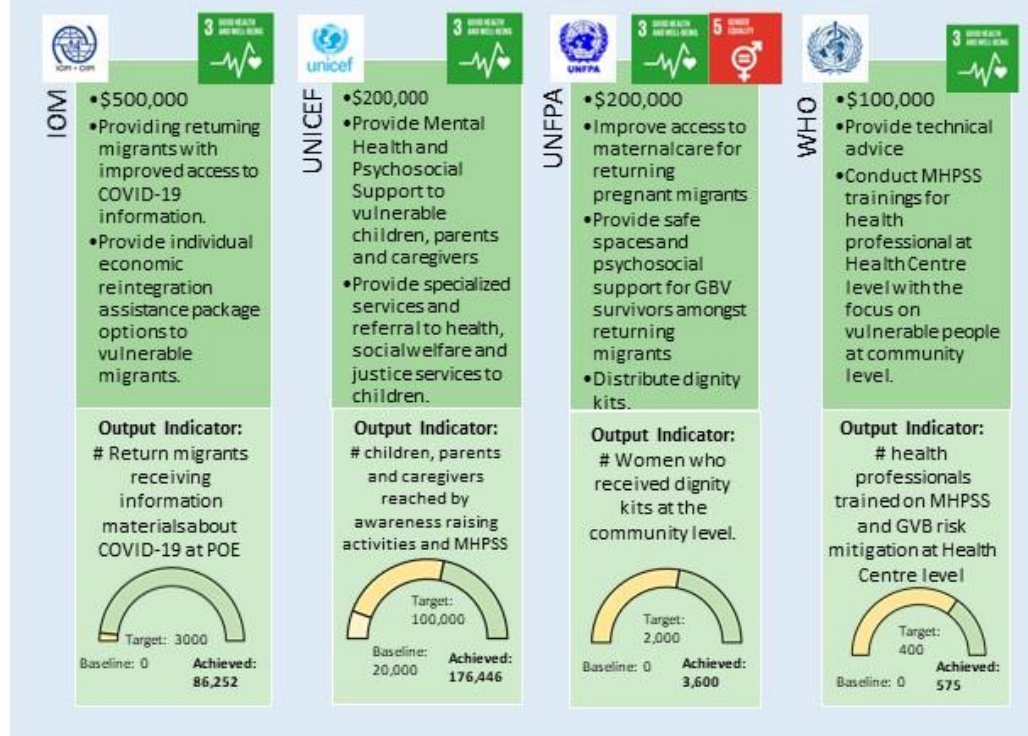
Funds received through the **COVID-19 MPTF (not included in SERP):** \$1.8 M

Call 1/Pillar 1: \$1,000,000

Call 2/Pillar 4: \$846,325

COVID-19 MPTF: CALL 1

Cambodia got **\$1M** in funding from the **COVID-19 MPTF** for the program titled: **“Strengthened National Preparedness, Response and Resilience to COVID19 in Cambodia”**. The program is led by **IOM, UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO** and attends to **Pillar 1** of the UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-economic Response to COVID-19.





Cambodia

COVID-19 MPTF: CALL 2

Cambodia got \$846,325 in funding from Call 2 of the COVID-19 MPTF for the program titled: “Unlocking Cambodian Women’s Potential through Fiscal Space Creation”. The program is led by UNCDF (\$369,991), IOM (\$246,338) and UNDP (\$229,996) and attends to Pillar 4 of the UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-economic Response to COVID-19. It relates to SDGs 1, 5 and 10.

The objective of the program is to support women owned enterprises, predominantly operating in the informal sector, for their recovery from COVID-19. It will do so by:

- 1) Supporting policy design and the operational roll-out of the credit guarantee facility;
- 2) Providing research on women’s economic empowerment, employment, poverty alleviation and reducing inequality aspects of the credit guarantee scheme; and,
- 3) Piloting the credit guarantee schemes with selected women owned enterprises.

The program will focus on delivering the following outcome and outputs (amongst others).



Outcome and outputs

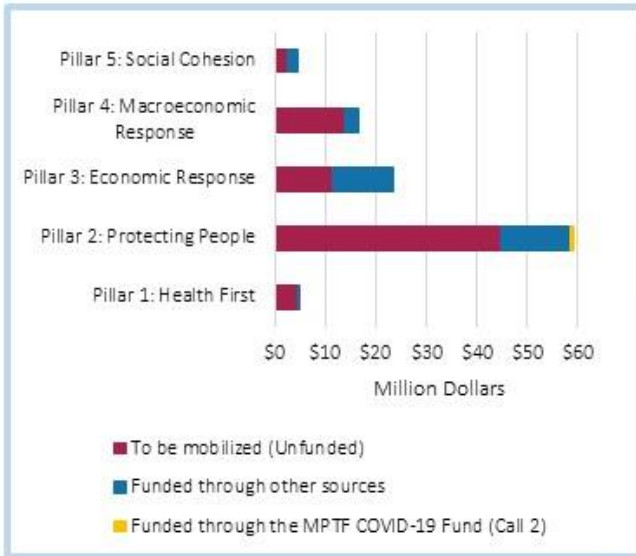
- **Outcome 1:** Underpinned by the LNOB principle, women owned small and medium size enterprises (S/MSME), predominantly operating in the informal sector, are supported for their recovery from the COVID-19 and their turning into the driving force for accelerating Cambodia’s recovery from COVID-19 and the SDG achievement
- **Output 1.1:** Innovative fiscal policy and finance instrument designed to create new fiscal space
- **Output 1.2:** S/MSMEs (esp. women led) using labor intensive low skilled manufacturing processes have access to sustainable and affordable domestic finance through easy access part guaranteed credit that minimizes personal collateral requirements for debt

The program is ongoing and expected to conclude by January 2022.



Guatemala

Resource Allocation for the Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan



Total SERP required funding: \$108.9 M

Funded: \$32 M (29.4%)

Funded through the COVID-19 MPTF:

Call 1: \$1,000,000 (Approved projects are not explicitly mentioned in the SERP)

Call 2: \$850,000 (Pillar 2)

COVID-19 MPTF: CALL 1

Guatemala got \$1 M in funding from the first call for the COVID-19 MPTF. The approved program is titled: "Support to the Guatemalan Humanitarian Response Plan to COVID-19: Protecting Healthcare Workers and Vulnerable Groups and Promoting a Human Rights-based Quarantine". The program has 2 components.

Component 1: Provision of Health Services

Component 2: Dignified Quarantine

Organization	Component	Amount	Key Activities	Output Indicator	Target	Baseline	Achieved
WHO	Component 1: Provision of Health Services	\$450,000	Protecting and training healthcare workers working in prioritized COVID-19 hospitals in the use of PPE and improving capacity for surveillance and laboratory analyses.	# Healthcare workers trained in use of PPE and other supportive activities.	700	0	904
				UNFPA	\$50,000	Strengthen maternal and neonatal health services for pregnant women and their new-borns and for women who are victims or survivors of sexual violence, applying norms and protocols designed to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these services.	# Traditional birth attendants equipped to provide safe and quality services.
IOM	Component 2: Dignified Quarantine	\$250,000	Provide returned migrants with dignified quarantine conditions in line with national guidelines and return to their communities of origin with certification of their health condition.	# Returned migrants who complete a dignified quarantine	7,000	0	7,305
				UNICEF	\$250,000	Reintegrating unaccompanied minors with their families safely and with dignity, following health and child protection guidelines established by the Government.	# Unaccompanied minors who were reintegrated with their families



Guatemala

COVID-19 MPTF: CALL 2

Guatemala received \$850K in funding from Call 2 of the COVID-19 MPTF titled: “Implementation of a gender-sensitive Social Household Registry in Guatemala”. The program is led by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and OHCHR, and attends to Pillar 2 on Protecting People: Social Protection and Basic Services of the UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-economic Response to COVID-19. The program relates to SDGs 1, 5 and 10. It is considered a long-term recovery and stabilization project.

The objective of the Social Registry of Households is to provide information to characterize populations living in poverty, prioritizing women. The program will target 20,000 household registries in the pilot phase.

The program is ongoing and expected to conclude in December 2021.



UNDP

- \$389,793
- Provide technical support through specialized personnel, including a gender analyst and social protection consultants.



UNFPA

- \$245,565
- Provide technical support through specialized personnel, particularly in pre-census, census and post-census phases



UNICEF

- \$125,511
- Provide technical support through specialized personnel, particularly for the development of the computer platform



OHCHR

- \$89,131
- Provide technical support through specialized personnel, guaranteeing efficient management in the implementation of the program and a human rights approach

Kosovo₁

Resource Allocation for the Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan



Total SERP required funding: \$75.1 M

Funded: \$44 M (52.0%)

Funded through **COVID-19 MPTF:**
\$3.5 M

Call 1/Programme 1 (Pillar 1&2): \$399,998

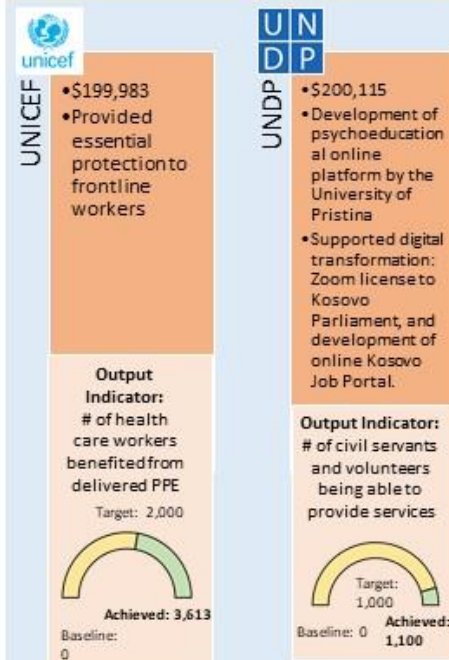
Call 1/Programme 2 (Pillar 2): \$599,997

Earmarked Funding (UK): \$2,454,374

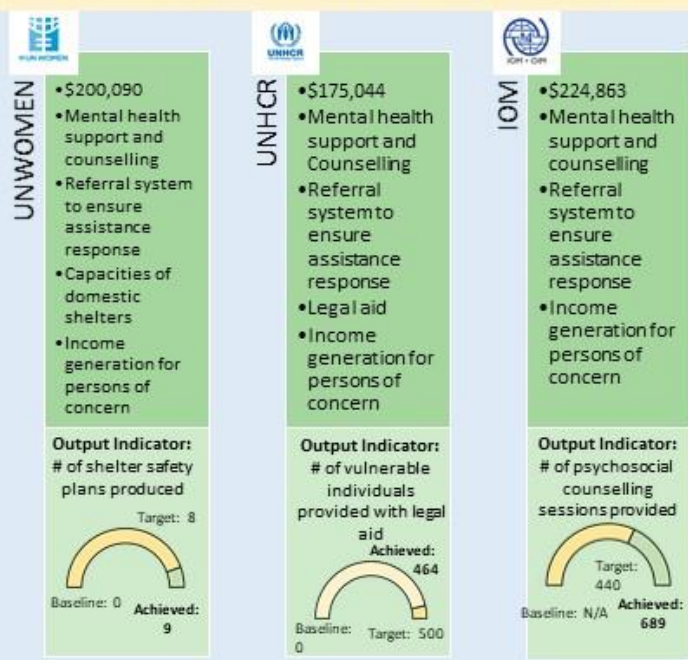
COVID-19 MPTF: CALL 1

Kosovo received \$1M in funding from the COVID-19 MPTF during the first call for proposals for 2 different programmes: (1) "Support Kosovo Institutions with swift and innovative solutions to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic" (\$400k); (2) "Countering the deepening of pre-existing inequalities in Kosovo through COVID19 by assisting Kosovo's non-majority communities and domestic violence survivors" (\$600k)

Programme 1: Contain the spread of COVID-19



Programme 2: Counter the deepening of pre-existing inequalities



Kosovo¹

COVID-19 MPTF: EARMARKED FUNDING

Kosovo received \$2.45M in earmarked funding from the UK under the COVID-19 MPTF for the programme titled: "Return to (New) Normal: Strengthening resilience through a safe and inclusive return to normality in health and education in Kosovo in the wake of COVID-19". The programme is implemented by UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and World Health Organization and attends to Pillars 1, 2 and 5 of the UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-economic Response to COVID-19. The programme will see that children can safely return to school and strengthen healthcare delivery and access, through a system that meets the needs of vulnerable groups.



UNICEF

- \$960,387
- Support safe and inclusive return to school
- Advice and support on school policies, procedures, and protocols
- Support hygiene and daily practices
- Support for children at risk of dropping out
- Support maintenance of essential health services
- Reinforce immunisation programme of boys and girls and adolescents



UNWOMEN

- \$393,152
- Support safe and inclusive return to school
- Support prevention of drop-out from school of young women and girls
- Support young women and girls-not to fall further behind



WHO

- \$631,414
- Strengthen decentralized COVID-19 detection capacities
- Support the establishment of two regional microbiology laboratories
- Provision of mobile x-ray machine in non-majority community
- Train-the-trainers of health staff at municipal level
- Support safe and inclusive return to school
- Advice and support on school policies, procedures, and protocols



UNFPA

- \$469,421
- Support the maintenance of essential health services with a focus on the most vulnerable
- Support provision of e-health services
- Support coordination between centre and municipalities
- Promote reliable COVID-19 messaging and preventative measures

¹ All references to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of UNSCR 1244 (1999)



Malawi

The Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan has yet to be finalized

The Malawi UNCT, is currently contributing to the **National COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan**.

Total required funding for the National Plan: \$300 M
Funded: \$102.5 M (34.2%)

Funds received through **COVID-19 MPTF:**
Pillar 1: \$1,000,000

COVID-19 MPTF: CALL 1

Malawi received **\$1M** in funding from the **COVID-19 MPTF** for the program titled: **"COVID-19 Emergency Response for Continuity of Maternal and New-born Health Services in Malawi"**. The program is led by **UNFPA, UNWOMEN and WHO** and attends to **Pillar 1** of the UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-economic Response to COVID-19.

The program has **three main outputs:**

1. Establish protocols and guidelines for the treatment of pregnant women amidst COVID-19
2. Strengthen continuity of maternal and new-born care services
3. Increase access to information, support and referral systems for pregnant women



UNFPA

- \$700,400
- Procured PPE delivered through the Ministry of Health to Comprehensive and Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Services
- Procured laptops for monitoring

Output Indicator:
Women who utilized MNH services during Covid-19



Baseline: 0 Target: 300,000



UNWOMEN

- \$214,000
- Partnered with National Help Line to increase access to information, support and referral systems for women of childbearing age.
- Provided on-going psychosocial counselling for women.

Output Indicator:
Women of childbearing age accessing advice and counselling from a hotline service.



Baseline: 0



WHO

- \$85,600
- Established protocols and guidelines to review and ensure compliance of facilities for the treatment of pregnant women during COVID-19.
- Ensured laptops to enable continuity of service monitoring

Output Indicator:
Copies of guidelines and protocols distributed to health centres nationwide



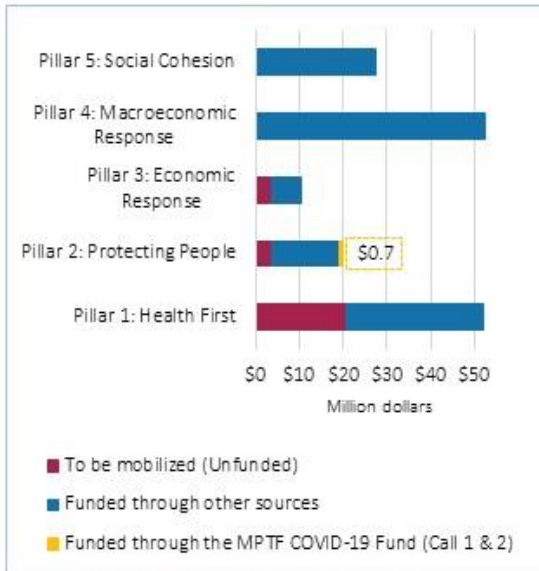
Baseline: 0





Maldives

Resource Allocation for the Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan



Total SERP required funding: \$162.4 M
Funded as of 30 Nov 2020: \$133.2 M (82.0%)
 Funded through **COVID-19 MPTF:**
 \$682,500 (0.4%)
Call 1 (Pillar 2): \$300,000
Call 2 (Pillar 2): \$382,500

COVID-19 MPTF: CALL 1

For **Call 1**, Maldives received \$300 K for the program titled: “Strengthening resilience of the most vulnerable to future shocks in the Maldives”. The program was led by **WHO** and **UNICEF** and attends to **Pillar 2** of the UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-economic Response to COVID-19. The project seeks to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the **mental health** of the general population with special attention to the most vulnerable segments of the population

COVID-19 MPTF: CALL 2

For **Call 2**, Maldives received \$382.5 K for the program titled: “Protecting women: digitalization of social from GBV support, streamlining the social welfare system and creating a unified platform of National Care System.” The program attends to **Pillar 2**.

The project is **ongoing** (end date: 1 Nov 2021) and hence has no output data.

UNICEF, UNDP, and UNFPA have each received \$127.5 K, which will be mainly used to strengthen capacity of national stakeholders to take action in changing social norms to prevent GBV, as well as developing a digital platform for managing reported cases of GBV.



WHO

- \$192,465
- Pillar 2
- WHO strengthened the **COVID-19 preparedness of the Home for People with Special Needs (HPSN)**, located on the island of Guraidhoo, 32 km away from Male, WHO provided medical equipment for setting up ICU capability, provided medical essentials and trained staff

Output Indicator:
 # People in the HPSN visiting the health care clinic in the centre.

Baseline: 0
 Target: 194



UNICEF

- \$107,535
- Pillar 2
- UNICEF led the overall coordination for the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) component. The agency **developed prevention messages, created a specialized virtual team of professional psychologists and psychiatrists, established protocols for handling calls, and recruited volunteers for counselling**, amongst other activities.

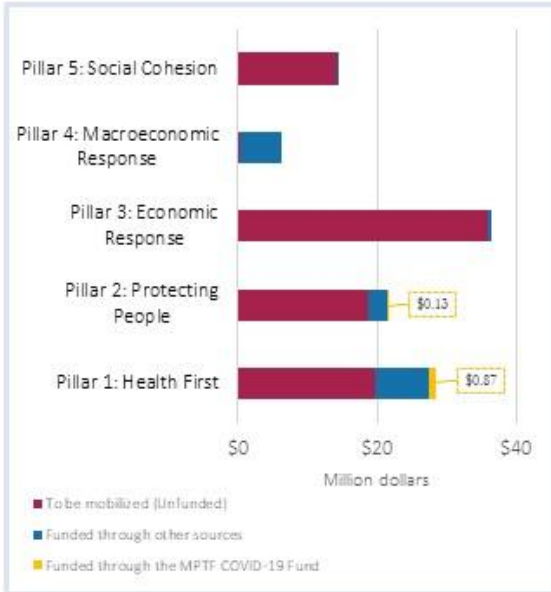
Output Indicator:
 % of persons calling in to seek MHPSS services who received timely and quality assistance from a trained PSS worker or counsellor within 24 hrs

Achievement: 91.5%
 Target: 100%



Moldova

Resource Allocation for the Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan



Total SERP required funding: \$106.7 M

Funded: \$12.2 M (11.4%)

Funded through **MPTF COVID-19 Fund**: \$1 M (0.94%)

Pillar 1: \$870,000

Pillar 2: \$130,000

COVID-19 MPTF: CALL 1

Moldova got **\$1M** in funding from the **COVID-19 MPTF** for the program titled: “Strengthening the Republic of Moldova’s National Response to the COVID-19 Crisis”. The program is led by **UNICEF, UNWOMEN, and IOM** and attends to **Pillar 1 and Pillar 2** of the UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-economic Response to COVID-19.

UNICEF

- \$750,000
- Pillar 1
- Procurement and delivery of **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** for the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection (MoHLSP), border police and penitentiaries.

Output Indicator:
PPE for infection control and prevention

Target: 250,000
Baseline: 40,320
Achieved: 933,098

UNWOMEN

- \$130,000
- Pillar 2
- Provision of **immediate and preventive supplies** that will be delivered to targeting affected **groups of vulnerable women, including women affected by violence; women living in shelters, HIV and AIDS positive women, disabled women, and the Roma women.**

Output Indicator:
Vulnerable women, girls including dependents receiving immediate and preventive supplies

Target: 3,500
Baseline: 250
Achieved: 7,939

IOM

- \$120,000
- Pillar 1
- Strengthening the infection control system and **prevention measures** assisting the Ministry of Interior to deliver on procedures and infrastructure at **points of entry.**

Output Indicator:
front-line border police staff trained on the use of updated Standard Operating Procedures for COVID-19 response

Target: 200
Baseline: 0
Achieved: 200



Sao Tome & Principe

The Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan has yet to be finalized

Total amount of plan: \$8.54 M

Funded: \$7.06 M (82.7%)

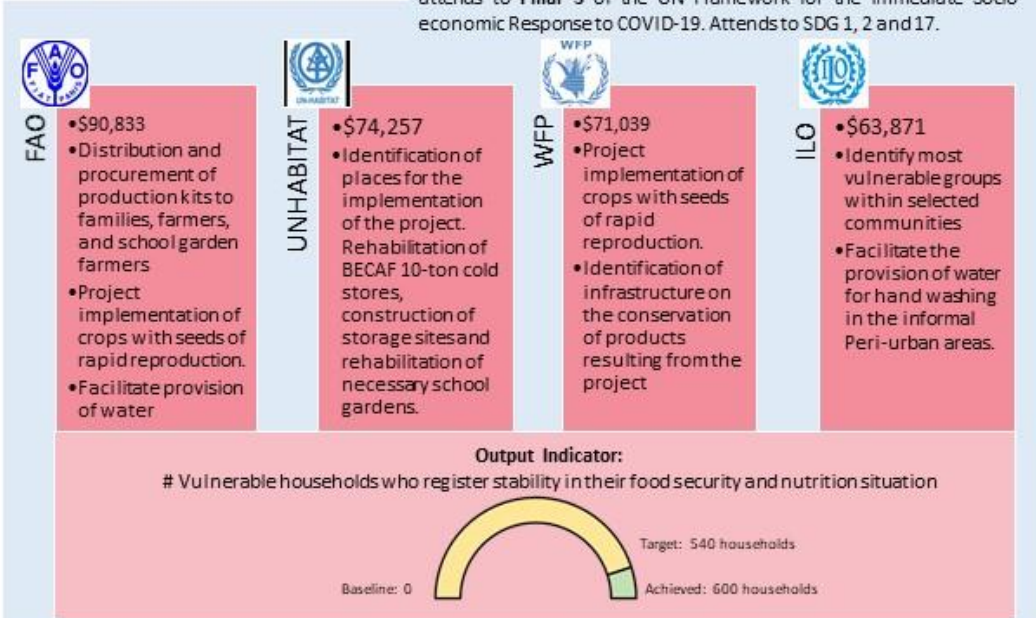
Funded through COVID-19 MPTF: \$682,500

Call 1 (Pillar 3): \$300,000

Call 2 (Pillar 3): \$382,500

COVID-19 MPTF: CALL 1

Sao Tome and Principe got \$300 K in funding from the first call for proposals from the COVID-19 MPTF for the program titled: "Ensuring the access of most vulnerable families to food and working conditions facilities during COVID-19 Pandemic in Sao Tome and Principe". The program is led by FAO, UNHABITAT, WFP and ILO and attends to Pillar 3 of the UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-economic Response to COVID-19. Attends to SDG 1, 2 and 17.



COVID-19 MPTF: CALL 2

Sao Tome & Principe got \$382.5 K in funding from Call 2 of the COVID-19 MPTF for the program titled: "Women Economic Empowerment Window (WEEW) - Sao Tome and Principe". The program is led by UNDP, UNICEF and ILO and attends to Pillar 3 of the UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-economic Response to COVID-19. It addresses SDGs 1, 5 and 8. The program is currently **ongoing**.



Annex C: Selected RBM Reported Results of the COVID-19 MPTF in Case Study Countries

Selected Outcome and Output Indicators Reported for Case Study Countries in the COVID-19 MPTF RBM System, March 2021			
Cambodia	Call 1: Strengthened National Preparedness, Response and Resilience to COVID-19 in Cambodia		
	<i>Outcome 1 Returning migrants and host communities are protected from the risk of a large-scale transmission of COVID-19 and benefit from the continuous provision of essential socio-economic services in target provinces.</i>	3/3 indicators exceeded targets	Quantitative Output Indicator Highlights
	Output 1.1 Returning migrants have improved access to COVID-19 information and prevention measures at POEs	5/5 indicators exceeded targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 86,252 returning migrants received COVID-19 information materials. 100% of returning migrants screened at points of entry.
	Output 1.2 Returning migrants and host communities have improved access to MHPSS, GBV and maternal care support	5/6 indicators exceeded targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3,600 women received dignity kits
	Output 1.3 Most vulnerable returning migrants, especially women/female-headed households benefit from the Individual Economic Reintegration Package to re-settle in host communities	2/4 indicators met or exceeded targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 727 cash grant transfers to most vulnerable returning migrants for income generating activities.
Guatemala	Call 1: Support to the Guatemalan Humanitarian Response Plan to COVID -19: protecting healthcare workers and vulnerable groups and promoting a human rights-based quarantine		
	<i>Outcome 1.1 Save lives and protect the most vulnerable, including healthcare workers, and reduce transmission</i>	2/2 indicators met or exceed targets	Quantitative Output Indicator Highlights
	Output 1.1.1 Reorganization of health facilities for COVID-19 treatment.	1/1 indicator met target	22 COVID-19 treatment hospitals scored at least 60% in reorganization standards
	Output 1.2.1. Strengthened infection prevention and control in all COVID-19 prioritized hospitals	1/1 indicator met target	22 COVID-19 treatment hospitals scored at least 60% in infection prevention and control standards

Selected Outcome and Output Indicators Reported for Case Study Countries in the COVID-19 MPTF RBM System, March 2021			
	Output 1.3.1. Reinforced active case finding and enhanced existing surveillance systems to enable monitoring of COVID-19 transmission.	1/1 indicators exceeded target	18 prioritized health area directorates with operative COVID-19 surveillance systems.
	Output 1.4.1. Strengthened maternal and neonatal health services for pregnant women and their newborns and for women who are victims or survivors of sexual violence, through the provision of safe, secure and quality spaces, reinforcing the work of traditional birth attendants, and applying norms and protocols designed or adapted to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these services.	3/3 indicators met or exceeded target	30 health services with safe, secure and quality areas where assistance can be provided to pregnant women and their newborns 1000 traditional birth attendants equipped to provide safe and quality services.
	<i>Outcome 2.1 Returned migrants complete quarantine processes in line with national guidelines and their health condition and are reintegrated with their families and communities.</i>	1/1 indicator met target	Quantitative Output Indicator Highlights
	Output 2.1.1 Unaccompanied minors deported by air and ground transportation are reintegrated with their families and communities safely and with dignity, following health and child protection guidelines established by the Government.	1/1 indicators exceeded target	3,002 unaccompanied minors reintegrated with their families in a safe and dignified manner.
	Output 2.2.1. Family units – normally comprising mothers and their children – are reintegrated with their families and communities safely and with dignity, following health and child protection guidelines established by the Government.	1/1 indicators exceeded target	674 family units reintegrated to their communities in a safe and dignified manner.

Selected Outcome and Output Indicators Reported for Case Study Countries in the COVID-19 MPTF RBM System, March 2021			
	Output 2.3.1. Returned migrants who cannot return to their homes or communities for reasons related to violence (including GBV, gang violence, violence against children, and violence against LGTBQ+, among others), are identified and assisted to complete a safe and dignified quarantine.	1/1 indicators exceeded target	258 persons (73 female) who cannot return to their home complete a safe and dignified quarantine.
	Output 2.4.1. Returned migrants received humanitarian and dignified psychosocial assistance in Monitoring Centers and are reintegrated with their communities having completed established procedures and requirements.	1/1 indicators exceeded target	7,305 returned migrants (1,285 female) received dignified humanitarian and psychosocial assistance in Monitoring Centers.
Kosovo	Call 1: Support Kosovo Institutions with swift and innovative solutions to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic		
	<i>Outcome 1 Kosovo institutions, CSOs and communities are enabled to effectively suppress the transmission of virus and increase people's coping mechanisms through accessing online resources & services.</i>	1/1 indicator exceeded target	Quantitative Output Indicator Highlights
	Output 1.1 Improved and innovative services offered to prevent the spread of virus and support people to cope with the situation	5/6 indicators met or exceed targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A zoom license was provided for the Parliament of Kosovo for one year Psychoeducational digital content was created and shared
	Output 1.2 Improved Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) of COVID-19	1/1 indicator exceeded target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3,613 health care workers benefited from delivered PPE.
	Call 1: Countering the deepening of pre-existing inequalities in Kosovo through COVID19 by assisting Kosovo's non-majority communities and domestic violence survivors		
	<i>Outcome 1 Most vulnerable people in targeted areas (particularly women, children, minorities and other</i>	NA indicator results	Quantitative Output Indicator Highlights

Selected Outcome and Output Indicators Reported for Case Study Countries in the COVID-19 MPTF RBM System, March 2021			
	<i>persons of concern) have access to social and economic protection mechanisms.</i>		
	Output 1.1 Persons of concern have their emergency needs covered in terms of health care covered and benefited from mental health support and counseling.	2/2 indicators exceeded targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,475 (881 female) persons received health care assistance, medicine, and supplementary food 689 persons benefited from counselling sessions
	Output 1.2 A referral system is established, and persons of concern have better information and awareness on COVID-19 and key prevention measures	3/4 indicators met or exceeded targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 621,003 (181,102 female) individuals reached through information and awareness rising campaign
	Output 1.3 Legal aid is provided to all vulnerable persons of concern and women are empowered through participation and economic inclusion	1/2 indicators exceeded targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 464 vulnerable individuals (147 female) provided with legal aid
	Output 1.4 Capacities of service providers' on GBV/DV are strengthened on providing better multi-stakeholder response	1/2 indicators exceeded targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85 service providers were trained online 9 shelters designed tailor-made safety guidelines
	Output 1.5 Persons of concern have access to income generation in post-COVID 19 situations through on-the-job and vocational training and counseling and small grants provision	3/3 indicators exceeded targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 shelters received small grants for productive investments
Malawi	Call 1: COVID-19 Emergency Response for Continuity of Maternal and New-born Health Services in Malawi		
	<i>Outcome 1 Pregnant women have continuity in utilization of Maternal and Newborn health services throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.</i>	NA indicator results	Quantitative Output Indicator Highlights
	Output 1.1 (Undefined)	0/4 indicators met or exceeded targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% of pregnant women attend all their scheduled visits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Selected Outcome and Output Indicators Reported for Case Study Countries in the COVID-19 MPTF RBM System, March 2021			
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75,600 live births attended by skilled personnel during COVID-19 (2020)
	<i>Outcome 2 Protocols and guidelines established to review guidelines and ensure compliance of facilities for the treatment of pregnant women during Covid-19</i>	1/2 indicators met targets	
	<i>Outcome 3 Strengthened continuity of maternal and newborn health services including provision of comprehensive obstetric care services operations during covid-19.</i>	2/5 indicators exceeded targets	
Maldives	Call 1: Strengthening resilience of the most vulnerable to future shocks in the Maldives		
	<i>Outcome 1 The resilience of most at-risk persons affected by the collateral impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Maldives is improved as a result of the expanded capacity of service providers to deliver timely and quality mental health and psychosocial support services.</i>	NA indicator results	Quantitative Output Indicator Highlights
	Output 1.1 At-risk women, elderly persons, children (girls/boys) and young people (girls/boys), migrant community, persons with disabilities and persons at risk access quality community-based mental health and psychosocial support services in a gender and age sensitive manner	2/3 indicators met or exceeded targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16,000 persons accessing mental health prevention services from all providers 2,649 individuals have called the psychological support helpline

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Annex E: Persons Interviewed

Global Level

Name	Organization	Position
Aleshina, Olga	COVI-19 MPTF Secretariat	Head of the MPTF Secretariat
Alvarez, Priya	UN Women	Evaluation Specialist, Gender Equality Markers
Bhatia, Anita	UN Women	Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management
Christaens, Bavo	UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office	Fund Portfolio Manager
Dahlström, Anette	Permanent Mission of Sweden to the UN	Counsellor
Durant, Isabelle	UNCTAD	Acting Secretary General
Ellison, Jane	WHO	Executive Director, External Relations & Governance
Erken, Arthur	UNFPA	Director, Policy and Strategy
Favretto, Marcella	OHCHR	Human Rights Officer
Gornitzka, Charlotte Petri	UNICEF	Assistant Secretary-General and UNICEF Deputy Executive Director
Grogan, Brian	OCHA	Senior Advisor
Gyles-McDonnough, Michelle	Office of the Deputy Secretary General	Director for Sustainable Development Goals
Hendra, John	Private Consultant	Former UN Assistant Secretary General (ASG) for UN Reform
Hermann, Martin Bille	Permanent Mission of Denmark to the UN	Ambassador, Permanent Representative
Kalapurakal, Rosemary	UN Development Coordination Office	Acting Deputy
Kurbeil, Lisa	Joint SDG Fund	Head of the Secretariat
Lennartsson, Magnus	Permanent Mission of Sweden to the UN	Deputy Permanent Representative
Luzot, Anne-Claire	World Food Program	Deputy Director for Evaluation
Martinez Schmickrath, Susana	WHO	Lead, Inter Agency Collaboration
Matthys, Frederik	UN Development Coordination Office	Chief, Policy and Innovation
Modeer, Ulrika	UNDP	Assistant Secretary General, Director for the Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy
Moretta, Louise	UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office	Chief of Finance
Olsen, Jonas Manley	Permanent Mission of Denmark to the UN	Counsellor
O'Malley, Steve	OCHA	COVID Coordinator
Piper, Robert	UN Development Coordination Office	Assistant Secretary General for Development Cooperation
Poretti, Mattia	Swiss Development Cooperation	Senior Advisor, Global Institutions Division, SDC

Name	Organization	Position
Pullen, Katy	UN Women	GEM Specialist
Rajasingham, Ramesh	OCHA	Deputy Emergency Response Coordinator
Sætre, Halvor	Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Norway	Director, Section for UN Policy
Sonneveld, Shafferan	OHCHR	Associate Human Rights Officer
Soland, Bernhard	Swiss Development Cooperation	Program Manager, ECOSOC and Multi-Lateral Dev. Institutions
Tarp, Kristoffer	COVID-19 MPTF Secretariat	Senior Technical Advisor
Thijs, Guy	International Labour Organization	Director, Office of Evaluation
Topping, Jennifer	UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office	Executive Coordinator
Ushiyama, Coco	World Food Program	Director UN System and Multilateral Engagement Division
Vines, Greg	International Labour Organization	Deputy Director General for Management and Reform
Vogels, Mieke	Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Netherlands	Senior Policy Officer
Wandel, Jens Christian	UN Secretariat	Secretary General Designate for the COVID-19 MPTF

Cambodia

Name	Organization	Position
Abdurazakova, Ifoda	RCO	Strategic Partnerships and Financing
Alemu, Daniel	UNFPA Cambodia	Representative
Barua, Kaushik	IFAD Cambodia	Country Director
Beresford, Nick	UNDP Cambodia	Representative
Bunna, Oudum	Ministry of Economy and Finance	Economist
Khodjaeva, Nargiza	WHO Cambodia	Project Manager
Laing, Lan	RCO	M&E Specialist
Lim, Tith	UNFPA Cambodia	M&E Specialist
Martin, Paul	UNCDF	Regional Advisor
Parco, Kristin	IOM Cambodia	Chief of Mission
Soth, Nimol	RCO	UN System Coordination
Tamesis, Pauline	RCO	Resident Coordinator
Tek, Sopheak	Caritas Cambodia	AHT Manager
Wagle, Pradeep	OHCHR Cambodia	Representative

Guatemala

Name	Organization	Position
Arias Flores, Rebeca	UN Guatemala	Resident Coordinator
Carrera, Carlos	UNICEF Guatemala	Representative
Díaz, Ana María	UNDP Guatemala	Representative
Flores, Claudia	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	International Cooperation Subdirector
Garron, Jaime	RCO	Economist
González, Carmen	RCO	Data Management and Results Monitoring and Reporting Officer
Morris, Paola	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Deputy Director of Multilateral Policy for United Nations
Quan, Silvia	El Colecitvo (CSO)	Co-Founder
Salazar, Pablo	UNFPA Guatemala	Representative
Schaeffer, Maria	RCO	Partnership and Development Finance Officer
Scuriatti, Marco	World Bank	Resident Representative
Tundo, Davide	OHCHR Guatemala	Human Rights Officer
Velia, Olivia	IOM Guatemala	National Project Coordinator- VACS

Kosovo

Name	Organization	Position
Pustina, Lorik	RCO	Focal Point/Head of the RCO
Arduc, Erol & Gorcaj, Drita & Ahma, Merita	UNHCR	Head of UNHCR; Senior Program Associate, UNCHR; Protection Officer at UNHCR
Rostocka, Anna	IOM	Head of IOM
Richardson, Ulrika	RCO	Resident Coordinator
Bina, Sihana & Azizi, Blerim	UNDP/UNV	Project Officer for Rule of Law and Access to Justice; Head of United Nations Volunteers
Kelmendi, Zamire	UN Women	Project coordinator
Rexha, Dren & Halimi, Teuta	UNICEF	Social Policy Specialist; Childs Right Monitoring Specialist
Sagonjeva, Vedat	Office of the Prime Minister	Director of Strategic Planning Office
Krasniqi, Shqipe	Assembly of Kosovo	Officer for Strategic Coordination and Planification
Dabic, Milan	Small Development Business Center of Kosovo	Director
Dinarama, Erblina	Gjakova Shelter	Director
Pllana, Yllka	RCO	M&E Officer
Qavdarbasha, Arsim	Ministry of Health	Director of HCCA at Ministry of Health

Gexha-Bunjaku, Dafina	Department of Epidemiology, National Institute of Public Health	Epidemiologist
Schneider, Cornelia	RCO	Senior Development Coordination Officer/Economist
Webber, Jacob	Embassy of UK	Deputy Ambassador
Mujko Nimani, Visare	UNFPA	Head of Office

Malawi

Name	Organization	Position
Bilesi, Rosemary M.	Reproductive Health Directorate, MoH	MPDSR/Gender Program Officer
Chauya, Ivy	National Planning Commission	Specialist in Sector Coordination
Chipeta, Tazirwa	Family Planning Association of Malawi	Director of Programs
Komatsubara, Shigeki	UNDP Malawi	Resident Representative
Kumchulesi, Grace	National Planning Commission	Director for Development Planning
Lunguzi, Juliana	UNFPA Malawi	SRHR Coordinator
Makwakwa, Donald	Family Planning Association of Malawi	Executive Director
Mkamba, Pamela	UN Women, Malawi	Programme Officer
Mtonga, Elvis	RCO	Economist
Quinones, Santiago	RCO	Coordinator Malawi SDG Acceleration Fund
Sakunda, Chimwemwe	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace	National Gender Coordinator
Sayidi, Abdullah	Ministry of Health	Supervisor, Health Centre by Phone
Strøm, Ørnul	Royal Norwegian Embassy	Deputy Head of Mission, Head of Cooperation
Torres Macho, Maria	RCO	Resident Coordinator

Maldives

Name	Organization	Position
Ahmed, Aishath Shahula	UNICEF Maldives	Programme Specialist
Dash, Sarat	IOM Sri Lanka and Maldives	Chief of Mission
Hakim, Vera	UNDP Maldives	Deputy Resident Representative
Haswell, Catherine	RCO	Resident Coordinator
Ibrahim, Shadiya	UNFPA Maldives	Head of Office
Rohsler, Caron	British High Commission to Maldives	High Commissioner
Shakeeb, Shaha	RCO	M&E Specialist
Shaliny, Aminath	RCO	Asst. Development Coordination Officer, Partnerships and Financing

Name	Organization	Position
Yumna, Fathimath	Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services	Deputy Minister

Moldova

Name	Organization	Position
Andries, Svetlana	UN Women Moldova	Programme Specialist
Capcelea, Angela	UNICEF Moldova	Health Officer
Ciorici, Patricia	RCO	Data Management and Results Monitoring and Reporting Officer
Daoud, Hana	UN Economic Commission for Europe	Economic Affairs Officer
Ermurachi, Adrian	Gov. of the Republic of Moldova	Deputy Secretary General, State Chancellery
Ferenci, Beatrix	OHCHR Moldova	Head of Moldova Office
Fiorotto, María Laura	RCO	Team Leader and Head of the Resident Coordinator Office
Lonnback, Lars	IOM Moldova	Representative
Lopatina, Svetlana	Bender (CSO)	Director
Nazaria, Violina	IOM Moldova	Project Coordinator, Immigration and Health
Sanbu, Simeon	Artemida (CSO)	Director
Springett, Simon	UN Moldova	Resident Coordinator
Stojanoska, Dominika	UN Women Moldova	Representative
Talev , Ilija	UNICEF Moldova	Deputy Representative
Tarshis, Polina	UN Economic Commission for Europe	Programme Management Officer
Tissot, Caroline	Embassy of Switzerland to Moldova	Director of Cooperation, Swiss Cooperation Office
Vazaric, Vitali	IOM Moldova	Project Assistant, Migration

Sao Tome and Principe

Name	Organization	Position
Wawiernia, Katarzyna	RCO	Resident coordinator
Fernandes, Cesaltino	UN Habitat	National coordinator
Moncada, Alejandra	UNICEF	UNCT Focal point
Mendizabal, Maite	UNDP	Portfolio Manager
Ferro, Osmar	RCO	UNCT focal point and RCO economist
Juergensen, Olaf	UNDP	Deputy Resident Representative
Peres, Edna	WFP	Office in Charge
Ancia, Anne	WHO	Resident Representative

Damiana Varela, Joana	Ministry of Finance	National Director of Planning
Madai, Ali	ILO, Central Africa	Regional Specialist
Trigueiros, Sandro	World Bank	Liaison Officer
Ballotta, Mariavittoria	UNICEF	Deputy Representative

Annex F: Qualitative Analysis Codes

Id	Global	Title	Description
1		Advantages of the COVID MPTF	Evidence of value added and comparative advantage (vis-a-vis other funds) of the COVID MPTF
2		Bilateral Priorities SERP	Evidence on how the SERP aligns to the bilateral agency's priorities
3		Build Back Better/Recover Better/Green	Evidence that the SERP includes elements of BBB or Recover Better and/or that the Fund is funding recover better activities
4		Catalytic Effects of the Fund	Non-Resource mobilization catalytic effects cited by the interviewee
5		Challenges Fund	Evidence of problems in the administration and governance of the Fund including appeals, proposal preparation, approval criteria, reporting and feedback.
6		Challenges SERP	Evidence for challenges in the SERP development process
7		Disjoint programme	Evidence the programme is disjoint (each UNCT agency doing its share, no collaboration)
8		Gender in Programmes	
9		Global Codes	Codes for global interviews.
10	9	G- Advantages of the COVID-19 MPTF	Evidence for advantages of the COVID-19 MPTF
11	9	G- Advisory Committee Guidance	Evidence on the AC guidance/inputs shaping the fund
12	9	G- Evaluation input	Ideas on the focus of the eventual evaluation of the Fund
13	9	G- Fund-LNOB	Evidence of the fund effectively ensuring principles of LNOB
14	9	G- Resource Mobilization	Evidence on resource mobilization around the Fund
15	9	G- Response Fund	Evidence of the Fund responding to the development emergency.

Id	Global	Title	Description
16	9	G- SDG FUND- COVID-19 MPTF	Evidence on how the SDG Fund relates with the COVID-19 MPTF
17	9	G- SERP and UN Framework	Evidence on the relationship between the SERP and the SG UN Framework
18	9	G- SERP-LNOB	Evidence for the SERP effectively including LNOB/Gender/Dissability
19	9	G- SERP-UNSDCF	Evidence on the relationship between the SERP and the UNSDCF
20	9	G- UNDS Reform challenge	Evidence on the Reform impeding a more rapid response
21	9	G- UNDS Reform strength	Evidence on the Reform enabling a more rapid response
22	9	G- Weakness Fund	Evidence of a weakness in the Fund
23		Gov't Engagement SERP	Evidence on how the government participated in the process of developing the SERP
24		Gov't National Priorities	Evidence on how the SERP incorporates national government priorities
25		Gov't Ownership	Evidence of the government owning the SERP
26		Guidance HQ MPTF	Guidance from HQ on the MPTF itself.
27		Guidance HQ SERP	Evidence for guidance from HQ in SERP development process
28		Indicators	Evidence on whether reporting indicators are relevant and readily disaggregated by sex and marginalized groups.
29		Innovation	Evidence for innovative programmes/partnerships/ways of working or using digital technologies
30		Joint programme	Evidence the programme is genuinely joint and cross-mandated in its scope.
31		Link SERP-SDG	Evidence on how the SERP links to the SDGs
32		Link SERP-UNDAF	Evidence on how the SERP is intended to link in the future to the UNSDCF/UNDAF
33		LNOB Targeting in Fund Programmes	Evidence that the Fund supported programmes took action to tarvet specific vulnerable groups.

Id	Global	Title	Description
34		Mobilizing resources	Evidence that resources have been mobilized around the fund
35		MPTF-SDG Fund/Other Funds	Evidence on how the COVID-19 MPTF is linked particularly to the SDG fund.
36		Non Resident Agencies	
37		Non-Participating UNCT- Factors	Evidence regarding factors/why the UNCT agency did not participate in the proposals and programming for the Fund
38		Non-participating UNCT- SERP Use	Evidence on how the SERP has been useful for the non-participating UNCT agency (especially regarding policy and advocacy)
39		Non-Participating UNCT-SERP	Evidence for the involvement/engagement of the non-participation UNCT in the SERP development process.
40		Programme Advocacy	Description on how the NGO/CSO advocates/what does it advocate for.
41		Programme Guidance LNOB	Evidence on how the NGO/CSO was guided to address LNOB, gender equality, human rights, persons with disability, youth
42		Programme Indicators	Description of programme result indicators & reporting.
43		Programme Policy	Description on the type of policy engagement the NGO/CSO promoted
44		Programme- Proposal	Evidence on how the NGO/CSO got involved in the proposal for funding under the COVID-19 MPTF.
45		Programme- SERP	Evidence on how the NGO/CSO participated in the development of the SERP
46		Programme Service Delivery	Description of the type of service delivery the NGO/CSO carried out
47		Programme Support UN Agency	Description of how the UN Agency involved supported the NGO/CSO
48		Progress UNDS Reform	Evidence on how the progress in UNDS reform enabled the socioeconomic response
49		RC Coordination	Evidence on how the RCs coordinated the UNCT entities around the fund.

Id	Global	Title	Description
50		RC Empowerment	Evidence for RC empowerment due to the COVID-19 MPTF
51		SERP Gender	Evidence on how the SERP addresses gender equality
52		SERP LNOB	Evidence on how the SERP addresses LNOB
53		SIDS	Evidence on the SIDS context
54		Significance MPTF	Evidence on how significant the support of the Fund is to the development emergency response
55		Strengths SERP	Evidence for strengths in the SERP development process
56		UNCT Challenge	Evidence for challenges in UNCT collaboration.
57		UNCT effective collaboration	Evidence for the UNCT collaborating effectively

Annex G: Monitoring Indicators for the UN framework

Pillar	Indicator
1. Health First	1.1 Number of people accessing essential (Non-Covid-19 related) health services , disaggregated by sex, age group and at-risk population
	1.2 Number of health facilities that received UN support to maintain essential immunization services since COVI-19 disruptions disaggregated by type of health worker and type of support (2 classes of health worker and 8 forms of support specified)
	1.3 Number of countries protecting health services and systems: a) with a set of core essential services to be maintained during the pandemic; b) multisectoral mental health and psychosocial support technical working group; and, c) health sector policies informed by socio-economic impact assessment focused on at-risk populations being implemented
	1.4 Number of community health workers receiving UN support to maintain essential services since COVID 19 disruptions, disaggregated by type of support
2: Protecting People	2.1 Number of people reached with critical WASH supplies (including hygiene items) and services , disaggregated by sex, age group and at-risk population
	2.2 Number of children supported with distance/home-based learning , disaggregated by sex
	2.3 Number of primary school children receiving meals or alternatives to meals , such as take-home rations, disaggregated by sex and transfer modalities
	2.4 Number of countries with measures in place to address gender-based violence (GBV) during the Pandemic which: a) integrate violence prevention and response into COVID-19 response plans; b) raise awareness through advocacy and campaigns with measures targeted to both women and men; c) provide options for women to report abuse and seek help without alerting perpetrators; d) ensure continued functioning of shelters for victims of violence and expand their capacity; e) ensure women's access to justice through police and justice response to address impunity of perpetrators and protect women and children.
	2.5 Number of beneficiaries of social protection schemes and services related to the COVID-19 Pandemic disaggregated by type of programme, territory (urban/rural), sex, age group and at-risk population (7 programs/services specified)
3. Economic Response and Recovery	3.1 Number of countries that reinforce UN supported employment policies and a regulatory environment conducive to economic recovery and decent work , especially in high risk covid sectors for: a) women, b) youth (15-29), c) own account workers, d) migrant workers and e) workers with disabilities.
	3.2 Number of private sector companies and formal and informal workers supported during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic including: a) micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME); b) private sector companies excluding MSMEs; c) formal sector workers; d) informal sector workers.
	3.3 Number of countries adopting fiscal, monetary and legislative stimulus packages for COVID-19 economic recovery that are: a) climate and environmentally sensitive; and, b) Gender responsive.
	3.4 Number of direct beneficiaries of food supply protection regimes that are designed to: a) protect livelihoods by addressing food supply bottlenecks; and, b) improve protective measures for food supply workers.

Pillar	Indicator
4. Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration	4.1 Number of countries that undertook socio-economic impact assessments in response to the COVID-19 crisis with a focus on at-risk populations (6 types of assessment specified)
	4.2 Number of countries implementing policies informed by socio-economic impact assessments focused on at-risk populations: employment policy; labour market policy including food security; fiscal policy; social protection policy and women's empowerment policy.
5. Social Cohesion and Community Resilience	5.1 Number of organizations benefiting from institutional capacity building so that governments, employers and worker' organizations can work together to shape socio-economic policy responses: a) employers and business organizations; b) trade unions.
	5.2 Number of community-based organisations capacitated to respond to and mitigate the Pandemic, fight against COVID-29 related domestic violence, racism, xenophobia, stigma, and other forms of discrimination, prevent and remedy human rights abuses and ensure longer-term recovery disaggregated by type of community. Eight types of community-based organizations specified.
	5.3 Number of social dialogue, advocacy and political engagement spaces facilitated with participation of at-risk populations and groups at national and sub-national level (social dialogue spaces and advocacy and political engagement spaces)

Annex H: Final Terms of Reference

FINAL TOR (23 October 2020)

Early Lessons and Evaluability of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund

This TOR is framed to capture early lessons and do an evaluability study of UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund. The early lessons and evaluability exercise is expected to provide the scope and plan for the final evaluation.

Background and Introductions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all countries of the world in unprecedented ways. Across the world, COVID-19 has disrupted daily lives, overwhelmed health systems, created economic shocks, and sparked crises that are rupturing our economic and social well-being. As a consequence, COVID-19 is reversing the gains made during the last decade on Sustainable Development Goals. While the pandemic has created crises across the world, the pain is uneven. Developing countries are most affected because they do not have the means or resources to deal with such a crisis. Various UN country team assessments are showing that the pandemic has created more inequality, increased vulnerability, and caused a protection crisis for women and vulnerable groups. As the surge in COVID-19 cases continues, so does the pain and suffering it brings to individuals, families, societies, and humanity.

The Secretary-General used his convening power to mobilize world leaders on critical issues such as cooperation on a vaccine, financing, and debt relief, including the 28th May largest gathering of world leaders. To support programme countries UN country teams have undertaken rapid socio-economic impact assessments, prepared socio-economic response plans, and repurposed their budgets towards COVID-19. As per the UNINFO COVID-19 Data Portal (https://data.uninfo.org/Home/_WorldMap – accessed 30-September, 2020), 104 countries have prepared COVID-19 socio-economic response plans, 88 socio-economic impact assessments were completed by UN country teams, and 2.7 billion dollars have been repurposed by 119 UN country teams.

The Secretary-General launched the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (COVID-19 MPTF) as a UN inter-agency finance mechanism to support low-and middle-income programme countries in overcoming the health and development crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As per the TOR of the COVID-19 MPTF, it supports finance towards the three objectives of the UN Secretary-General's Call for Solidarity, a plea for global action to stop the COVID-19 pandemic and the suffering it has caused. The three objectives are:

Tackle the health emergency;

Focus on the social impact, and the economic response and recovery; and

Help countries recover better.

The Report titled *United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19: Saving Lives, Protecting Societies, Recovering Better* (<https://unsdg.un.org/resources/united-nations-comprehensive-response-covid-19-saving-lives-protecting-societies>) states that the COVID-19 MPTF is designed to enable rapid action across the five pillars of the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic

response to COVID-19, and to generate practical solutions that can inform larger flows from other actors. The five pillars in which the COVID-19 MPTF invests include:

1. Ensuring that essential health services are still available and protecting health systems
2. Helping people cope with adversity, through social protection and basic services
3. Protecting jobs, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, and informal sector workers through economic response and recovery programmes
4. Guiding the necessary surge in fiscal and financial stimulus to make macro-economic policies work for the most vulnerable and strengthening multilateral and regional responses; and
5. Promoting social cohesion and investing in community-led resilience and response systems.

These five pillars are connected by a strong imperative to ensure environmental sustainability and foster gender equality and protect the rights of women/girls in responses and recovery schemes. The monitoring framework for the UN Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 includes 48 indicators to measure various aspects of country responses tagged to each of the five pillars above.

The COVID-19 MPTF was established in April 2020 for a period of two years. The Fund's coverage extends to all low- and middle- income programme countries and, in particular, those populations not included in the Global Humanitarian Appeal, helping to safeguard their progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. It serves as an instrument UN Country Teams can leverage to support national governments and communities in meeting priorities and defining programming responses that assure their recovery and reach the poor and the vulnerable.

The Fund aligns with the UN development system repositioning, offering a cohesive UN response to national governments through a common funding mechanism led by UN Resident Coordinators at the country level. It leverages the critical expertise and delivery capacities of UN entities, harnesses the resources of the public and private sectors, and offers whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to help close gaps in National Plans for Combating COVID-19. Thirty UN entities have signed agreements with the MPTF Secretariat for receiving funds. The latest information on the COVID-19 MPTF can be found at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/COV00>, including receipts of funding and dispersal.

The Fund operates under the overall leadership of the UN Secretary-General through his Designate for the COVID-19 MPTF. The Secretary-General's designate serves as the Chair of the Advisory Committee and works under the direct guidance of the Deputy Secretary-General/UNSDG Chair. An Advisory Committee supports the Designate of the Secretary-General for the COVID-19 MPTF in the timely allocation and disbursement of donor resources. The Advisory Committee also serves as a forum for discussing strategic issues and sharing information on funding coverage. The Advisory Committee includes UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes selected based on the substantive focus of the Fund, up to five representatives of contributing partners, representatives of selected affected countries, and the ex-officio members WHO, OCHA, UNWOMEN, UN Development Coordination Office (DCO), and the MPTF Office. The UN COVID-19 MPTF is administered by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF Office), acting as the Administrative Agent.

Rationale.

The COVID-19 recovery and response MPTF is of critical global importance to the UN cohesive and catalytical response at country level. Therefore, it requires a robust and dynamic learning and accountability-oriented evaluation agenda. The Fund is also the one of the important financing mechanisms for COVID-19, providing support to system-wide and joint programmes at the country level, in line with the UN development reform.

The early lessons and evaluability exercise is in line with the Secretary General's 2020 report on the implementation of the QCPR (<https://undocs.org/a/75/79>), which states that Multi-Partner Trust Funds such as the Joint SDG Fund, the Spotlight Initiative Fund, and the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, where a large number of UN entities are working towards a common objective, will be assessed and evaluated from a system-wide perspective. This is also aligned with the TOR of the COVID-19 MPTF that states the evaluation will be carried out in line with the System-Wide Evaluation proposal made by the SG to assure adequate learning and accountability across the UN development system. The early lessons and evaluability exercise takes action on the proposal of the UNSDG Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Reform (Chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General) for conducting: COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF evaluability and early lessons learnt evaluation, using the country socio-economic response plan as the frame of reference

This exercise has two components: early lessons and evaluability. Early lessons from implementation experience would be important to ensure that the Fund delivers better in the future. As an unprecedented and evolving crisis, it is important to learn lessons as early as possible through assessment of implementation experience and to capture good practices and ways to improve how the UN entities can work together as a system in implementing the COVID-19 socio-economic response plans. A system-wide approach allows for a system wide perspective on these early lessons learnt. The reason to conduct the evaluability is to look at ways to conduct a final evaluation of the COVID-19 MPTF. It is envisaged that the final evaluation will be initiated in the second half of 2021.

Objectives.

The primary objective is to support learning and accountability of the UN COVID-19 MPTF by drawing lessons that are significant in context of the RC system to improve coherent programming from early lessons. A further objective is to make an evaluability assessment of the MPTF.

The specific objectives of the exercise are four fold: (a) assess the relevance of the fund from early experience including gender, human rights, disability and leave no one behind principles, including the efficiency of MPTF in accepting and disbursement of funds during the call for proposals and catalytical relevance of funded proposals, (b) assess progress of the country socio-economic response plans and MPTF-funded programmes from the system-wide lens of UN development reform and RC's new role, (c) assess the level of alignment between country socio-economic response plans and MPTF-funded programmes to the existing UN programme cycle (UNDAF or Cooperation Framework), and (d) conduct an evaluability assessment of the MPTF and a plan for the final evaluation that serves the objective of measuring progress, supporting learning, and assuring accountability.

Scope.

The exercise does not assess the overall performance of the UN development system but focuses on the COVID-19 MPTF-funded programmes and systemic issues for the UNCT that arise from the preparation and management of the socio-economic response plans.

Specifically, for the early lessons the following are key considerations:

Review how the COVID-19 MPTF-funded programme and socio-economic response plans have been relevant and responsive in time and context to evolving COVID-19 situation in the countries.

Review ways to remove constraints and improve programme implementation of COVID-19 MPTF-funded programmes from early implementation experience.

Reflections on the Fund's value added, as compared to other mechanisms.

Capture information on challenges identified, like the mobilization of resources, allocation, and implementation. Assess ways to improve management effectiveness and dispersal of the COVID-19 MPTF funds.

Capture lessons and innovation emerging from early programme implementation experience in areas such as digitization and supports building forward better and greener.

Assess the effectiveness of coordination and participation of non-resident UN agencies as well as external partners.

Capture perceptions of changes and progress catalysed by the COVID-19 MPTF-funded programmes and socio-economic response plans.

Capture perceptions on how national stakeholders were participating in the programme implementation.

Distill from early lessons the systemic issues for the UNCT in the context of management of the socio-economic response plans.

For the evaluability assessment the following are key considerations:

Based on a review of the socio-economic plans and COVID-19 MPTF funded proposals make suggestions for how these could be assessed in the final evaluation, including relevant sampling strategies.

Assessment of the adequacy and validity of the theory of change, indicators, tools and systems for monitoring, measuring and verifying results (i.e. the extent to which there are credible monitoring and reporting systems); and whether systems are put in place to support adequate monitoring and reporting of progress and results.

Review the 48 indicators and check if the early data collection is showing the potential for a meaningful picture to emerge on progress and results and what adjustments must be made to get a clearer picture.

Guidance on approaches and a plan for the final evaluation. This includes a scope of the final evaluation and presents a number of options delineating the purpose, outlining the key objectives, framing the scope of the evaluation and key evaluation questions, indicating a potential methodological approach, and specifying its focus in terms of geographic coverage.

Provide guidance and options for consideration on the feasibility and value of undertaking additional evaluative work within the context of Cooperation Framework Evaluations.

Provide options for engagement and participation of UNEG and UN development system during the final evaluation.

Methods and Approach.

The approach takes note that this is a complicated and complex exercise that has multiple actors and an evolving response. Despite the complexities of the exercise and the constraints of one-to-one meetings and travel for country studies, the process will innovate and try out new methods of engagement ensuring that the following aspects are included:

The findings respond to the needs of UN Country Teams;

The integrates gender, human rights, disability and leave no one behind principles throughout the process, including participation and consultation of key stakeholders to the greatest extent possible;

The exercise provides an opportunity for the UNCT to provide comments and discuss the analysis and findings.

The exercise will follow the guidance on the integration of gender equality and human rights principles in its focus and process, as established in the UN handbook *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation - Towards UNEG Guidance*. It will follow UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN system and abide by UNEG Ethical Guidelines.

The analysis will be conducted in three phases: inception, data collection and analysis, and reporting.

The inception phase. A series of analytical tools and matrices will be developed during the inception phase to clarify the scope and focus of the lessons learnt and evaluability assessment. This includes stakeholder mapping and overview of key documents and selected interviews to construct key questions based on the objectives and scope of the exercise;; elaborating on the online interview tools for country case study method for data collection and analysis of country efforts, criteria and number of countries selected for case studies; developing a strategy for collecting data for global and country level; and clarifying analysis framework, validation methods, and a plan for the exercise. During this phase the team will produce an inception report (maximum 20 pages).

Data collection and analysis phase. This phase will involve an extensive desk review and analysis. Based on the stakeholder mapping during the inception phase, a list of people and groups to be interviewed online will be prepared. The team will conduct structured online interviews with individuals at global and country levels. This will include HQ and Advisory Committee members. Relevant documents, including project documentation, will also be reviewed and analysed in this phase.

For the country level case studies (the number of countries and selection criteria will be determined during the inception phase), the team will spend four working days per country to review the programme aspects at the country level, with regard to the constraints, opportunities, and contextual and substantive issues in operationalizing the socio-economic framework and COVID-19 MPTF-supported programmes. The Case Study Method involves the following steps:

Collect and review of key list of five priority documents in consultation with UNCT

Prepare preliminary brief, taking into account the socio-economic response plan and COVID-19 MPTF fund projects

Hold online consultation with individuals and UNCT as a collective, based on key questions and preliminary brief

Prepare preliminary analysis of national context and emerging issues, based on the consultation

Conduct online stakeholder feedback and verification session

Finalise the country case study to feed into broader assessment of lessons learnt and share with UNCT.

Self-evaluation of the Socio-Economic Response Plans is being planned and results from the self-evaluations that are finalized and available will be included as part of the data collection.

The overall analysis will be built on country case studies and examination of the issues at the global level, including the MPTF Secretariat. The team will carefully review the sources and reliability of information, determine what gaps there may be in the information required, and suggest methods needed to fill the gaps. At the end of each country case study, the team will present the preliminary findings to the UNCT. The purpose of presenting this will be to solicit feedback on preliminary findings and to engage the UNCT on the utility of the findings.

Reporting. The exercise will culminate with the completion of the report that includes both the lessons learnt and the evaluability assessment and provides findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the exercise. The report should not exceed 50 pages, including the executive summary but excluding annexes. The final report will be formally approved by the Senior Coordinator – System-Wide Evaluation.

Governance and management of the exercise

The main advisory body for the evaluation is the Evaluation Reference Group, bringing together two UNEG members nominated by UNEG Chair, two donor representatives to the MPTF, and two representatives from programme countries. The ERG will be chaired by the Senior Coordinator–System-Wide Evaluation. The ERG will have the following roles: a) comment on the draft terms of reference, b) provide substantive comments on the inception report; and b) provide comments and substantive feedback to the draft evaluation report and recommend the final report for approval. The ERG will provide technical support when requested to the evaluation team and share information of evaluative work that is useful to the evaluation team as agreed to at the ERG.

A two-person Quality Assurance Panel, composed of experts in evaluation, will provide advice to the evaluation team on evaluation methodology, logic of analysis, and UN development reform aspects. The Quality Assurance Panel acts as a continuous advisor for the evaluation team and the Senior Coordinator–System-Wide Evaluation. All the evaluation products and case studies are appraised and commented on by the Quality Assurance Panel. The quality assurance panel joins the meetings of the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) and evaluation team.

The exercise will be conducted by an external team of consultants. Direct supervision to the team is provided by a Senior Coordinator–System-Wide Evaluation. The Senior Coordinator will assure the

quality and independence of the exercise and guarantee its alignment with UNEG Norms and Standards and Ethical Guidelines, provide quality assurance, checking that the findings and conclusions are relevant and recommendations are implementable, contribute to the dissemination of the findings and follow-up on the management response. As such, the Senior Coordinator will be fully involved in the process throughout the exercise.

Timeframe.

September/October 2020: Finalization of the Terms of Reference and identification of independent team of consultants.

October 2020: Inception phase.

November 2020 to January 2021: Data collection and case studies from approximately 10 countries.

February 2021: Draft report

March 2021: Report finalization.

Expected deliverables.

An inception report (max 20 pages): following an initial desk review, which outlines the scope, analytical approach and methods to be applied, and a chapter plan for the final report .

For case study countries, a brief of 2-4 pages and power point presentation will be prepared to facilitate presentation to UNCT.

A draft report (max 50 pages, including the executive summary and excluding annexes).

Final report based on comments received on the draft report during the validation phase. The lead Leader will finalize the report as required and submit the final report.

The inception report and draft report will be shared with ERG. The final report will be shared for comment with country offices participating in the case study for feedback.

The Senior Coordinator–System-Wide Evaluation reserves the right to ensure the quality of products submitted by the team and will request revisions until the product meets the quality standards as expressed by the QAP and substantive inputs from the ERG.

The Team.

The proposed team consists of 4 consultants (one team leader and three technical experts) who will have complementary expertise in the areas of country programme evaluation, equity and literature review. The team will be supported by a socio-economic researcher to do the literature review and background work. The ideal consultants will have previously conducted comprehensive multi-sectoral evaluations and have previous experience of conducting evaluability assessments. The team is expected to be balanced in terms of gender and geographic origin. The team members or their institutions will not have been involved in the design, implementation, or monitoring of the UN COVID Recovery and Response MPTF during the period under review, nor will they have other conflict of interest or bias on the subject.

Team Leader (70 days)

Demonstrated experience of socio-economic programming and knowledge of UN development reform processes;

Strong team leadership and management track record and commitment to delivering timely and high-quality evaluation reports;

Extensive evaluation expertise (at least 10-15 years) including knowledge of human rights- and gender-responsive methods;

Familiarity with UN programming, policy and advocacy work, and experience in evaluating multi-sectoral initiatives would be an asset;

Good interpersonal and communication skills; ability to interact with various stakeholders and to concisely express ideas and concepts in written and oral form;

Language proficiency: Fluency in English is mandatory; good command of French is desirable.

His/her primary responsibilities will be:

Conducting and leading the exercise in all its phases and managing the inputs of the other team members throughout the exercise;

Setting out the methodological approach;

Managing the country case studies;

Reviewing and consolidating the team members' inputs to the deliverables;

Representing the team in meetings with stakeholders;

Delivering the inception report, the report and country case studies in line with the requested quality standard.

Two Team Members (50 days)

Significant experience in evaluation and/or policy research, with background in country programme evaluation, health economics, and UN reform, and experience in evaluating multi-sectoral programmes or initiatives;

Strong conceptualization, analytical, and writing skills and ability to work effectively in a team;

Hands-on experience in collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data;

Knowledge of the UN's human rights, gender equality and equity agendas and application in evaluation;

Good communication and people skills; ability to communicate with various stakeholders and to express ideas and concepts concisely and clearly in written and oral form;

Language proficiency: Fluency in English is mandatory; good command over other UN official language(s) is desirable.

One Researcher (50 days)

At least 8 years of progressively responsible experience in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis; knowledge management for evaluation, information technology and data management;

Experience in working with a team to produce research material.

Familiarity with socio-economic issues and related sectors an advantage;

Expertise in handling collaborate teamwork software, online surveys, document repositories, bibliography software and databases;

The researcher will support the team leader and team members in data collection, undertaking an in- depth documentary review and preparing inputs to the various deliverables.

In close cooperation, and under the supervision of the team leader, the researcher is expected to:

Conduct the data collection and assemble relevant data and information;

Conduct interviews as required;

Undertake desk-review of data sources and materials relevant to the exercise and undertake analysis;

Draft literature review report;

Contribute to the inception report, draft report and country briefs.

References:

Terms of Reference for the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 (March 2020)

A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID -19 (April 2020)

Policy Brief: A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19 (May 2020)

Guidance Note: UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund Gender Equality Marker (August 2020)

United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19: Saving Lives, Protecting Societies, Recovering Better. June 2020.

United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19: Saving Lives, Protecting Societies, Recovering Better. September 2020

Information on UN country level socio-economic plans can be assessed at <https://data.uninfo.org/>

Information on the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF can be found at (<http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/COV00>).