

**The Setting**

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda is gathering momentum and UNDP is energized by the vision of sustainable development it embodies. Member States have created a comprehensive agenda – and UNDP, along with its sister agencies in the UN Development System (UNDS), will need to rise to the challenges it poses - because of its ambition to leave no one behind, and its universal, integrated and indivisible nature.

The context in which the 2030 Agenda will be implemented is changing rapidly. The next 15 years will see more Low Income Countries (LICs) graduate to Middle Income Country (MIC) status, while existing MICs try to reach the status of high income economies. At the same time, several factors – ranging from food insecurity or water scarcity to protracted conflict or gender inequality – threaten to erode hard-won development gains, making it imperative to undertake risk-informed and resilient development.

This backdrop means that there will be a transition in UNDP’s work moving forward that will be as consequential as any experienced by the organisation over the past fifty years. The current Strategic Plan (2014-2017) and the recent internal change process have been a first response to a changing context. UNDP’s structural review has substantially changed how the organisation does business and is making it fit for purpose. Embracing the challenge of implementing the 2030 Agenda means that more will need to be done, whether in the quality and scope of advisory and implementation services, improved budgeting and planning processes, partnerships or financing.

Taking these considerations into account, UNDP’s offer on the SDGs is guided by the vision of the current Strategic Plan which continues to remains central to the 2030 Agenda, namely to support countries to simultaneously achieve the eradication of poverty and the significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion. The offer is based on the understanding that only a model of sustained co-operation, not occasional or episodic advisory work, will assist countries effectively with the task ahead of them.

Given its unique role in the UNDS, UNDP’s contributions will be in the context of a more coordinated approach by the entire system. UNDP has been an early and active supporter to help the UN Development Group (UNDG) formulate a coordinated approach to support Member States in SDGs implementation. Known as MAPS -- Mainstreaming, Acceleration, and Policy Support – this approach has been endorsed by the UNDG as a whole as its framework for support to programme countries. It focuses on helping: Mainstream the SDGs, that is, land the Agenda at the country level; Accelerate progress, through investments to identify and remove critical bottlenecks to progress; and provide Policy Support from across the UN in a coherent and cost-effective way.

In order to implement MAPS and make headway on the SDGs, the UNDS will need to be a more strategic partner of countries in their efforts to secure big, structural, shifts; be more flexible and adaptable in the face of volatility; reduce institutional fragmentation; deepen its culture of collaboration in a way that taps fully into the strengths of resident and non-resident agencies and entities to deliver results; and further raise efficiency, minimize duplication, and offer greater value for money, to demonstrate the best use of scarce resources. While each agency has different strengths, UNDP’s particular contributions through MAPS will leverage its role within the UNDS as well as its policy and programming expertise in specific areas.

**The UNDP ‘Offer’**

Implementing Agenda 2030 and achieving the SDGs will not be easy, nor will it be insurmountable. The first years of implementation will be crucial in establishing the framework and generating good results. UNDP’s experience and analysis suggest there are effective pathways to success through **three ‘transformational effects’** that work best when pursued together:

* **Integration effects:** achieving more by connecting work on related issues. This is about investments that unlock their full development potential when planned, sequenced, and delivered together rather than separately. For example, experience shows that decentralisation on its own does not necessarily improve local level service delivery to the extent desired without other, complementary, measures. Thus prospects improve when decentralisation is accompanied by a broadening and simplification of the tax base to raise domestic revenues; reform of the fiscal framework to increase transfers to local governments; building of viable planning, budgeting, and management systems at local level that are transparent and open to public scrutiny; and openness to experimentation with service delivery models that bring together capacities in the public, private, and non-governmental sectors.

Similarly, combining efforts to increase access to off-grid renewable energy; expand and improve agricultural research, extension, and marketing; and build a network of main, feeder and rural roads can help maximise the productivity, output, and incomes of small farmers, and boost off-farm economic returns, reduce occurrence of seasonal hunger, and improve social indicators in the wider population.

* **Multiplier effects:** targeting areas of work which influence other conditions, triggering improvements across a broader range of goals and across generations, even without explicit or deliberate planning. In short, they generate substantial positive externalities. A powerful case is investment in women’s and girls’ education. This could be seen only as an education sector investment that boosts attendance and learning. But that would understate the development value of the investment, as the improved position of women and girls has broad, positive effects for inclusive growth, the health, nutritional, and educational status of families, and the responsiveness and inclusiveness of political systems.

Another example is land surveying, titling, and registration. This can be seen as a technical matter, but the implications are wide-ranging: providing the poor with a secure asset base that can be tapped to access credit and raise incomes; laying a foundation to broaden the tax base and increase revenue; decreasing uncertainty over land ownership and accompanying property disputes that drive away investment; enabling emergence of a transparent land market; and lowering crime and corruption.

* **Acceleration effects:** identifying areas of work to help countries move more quickly across goals. This is about tackling structural conditions which limit the level and pace of development progress, such as long-term and entrenched inequalities. Increased investment in such circumstances will run into diminishing returns without sustained efforts to tackle constraints often deeply embedded in economic, social, and political structures and processes.

For instance, improving girls’ and women’s access to secondary and higher education will not yield full benefits for them, their families, and society if there are deeply rooted gender barriers to asset ownership and participation in job markets or systematic discrimination in earnings, including wages. Similarly, significant investment in irrigation, roads and research and extension will lead to ‘elite capture’ by large farmers in places where land ownership is highly concentrated, and smallholders and farm labourers are disenfranchised politically, with limited access to land, credit, technology and local government services. Where these structural constraints can be overcome, it is likely the return-on-investment will be higher and the speed at which development results can be achieved faster.

To unlock the full potential of these three effects, experience suggests countries need to address **three ‘fundamentals’** that constitute the bedrock or foundations of a society, determining the success and sustainability of any transformational process: its governance, economy, and resilience.

* **The quality of governance**, especially in response to new realities and demands. It needs to be universal in the reach of services, including justice and the rule of law, more effective and efficient, able to tap successfully into collaboration with social partners, more open to evidence of what works and to participation, and more flexible in response to volatile conditions. The significance of these considerations will increase substantially with the 2030 Agenda, for several reasons: the ambitious nature of the Agenda itself; sustained turbulence facing the world which is straining governance institutions, including the multilateral system; delivery shortfalls and/or contested legitimacy affecting governance institutions and broader political systems in several cases; the effects of fast-moving technological innovation; and economic, social and demographic trends such as the emergence of megacities with populations, economies, and CO2 emissions exceeding those of many countries, a significant number of them located on coastlines vulnerable to the effects of climate change or in areas of seismic risk.
* **Transformation of development models** to be fairer, more inclusive, productive, resilient, and far less destructive of nature. Five possible dimensions stand out with particular clarity and significance:
* First, moving towards use of cleaner and renewable energy sources whilst meeting expectations for growth and development.
* Second, generating decent work, for a still rapidly growing working age population in many developing economies –most acutely in Sub-Saharan Africa – by improving health , education, and nutrition, and conditions that boost productivity and enable broad -based, labour-intensive growth.
* Third, rapid aging in a growing number of developing economies, and increased vulnerability to shocks, requires close attention to building and sustaining social protection systems.
* Fourth, fundamentally reshaping the role of women in the economy and society, tearing down explicit and implicit barriers to their full participation and full appropriation of the gains from participation.
* Finally, a step change in international co-operation to accomplish two major tasks: predictably and sufficiently supporting the transition that developing countries need to make in technology, institutions, and economic structures; and building a solid foundation to address common and/or shared concerns that impinge directly and substantially on national development prospects.
* **Management of risk, uncertainty and volatility and resilience-building**, in other words, avoid assuming that development is a steady-state process. Experience shows that countries failing to make development progress are affected by one or more of a number of factors: persistent policy and institutional uncertainty; breakdown in social cohesion; conflict, violence and/or instability; pandemics; and environmental degradation, including the effects of climate change. These can sometimes come together in a ‘perfect storm’. Even after clear achievement against the odds, internal or external shocks can roll back years of gains. Greater risk, volatility and uncertainty all point to the importance of strengthening resilience to shock –a transformative process to strengthen the capacities of people, communities, institutions, and countries to anticipate, prevent, recover from, and transform after shocks, stresses, and change. This will bear directly on the possibility of implementing the 2030 Agenda and achieving the SDGs.

With these factors and its UN character and values in mind, UNDP partnerships with programme countries, donors, sister agencies and entities and other actors will be driven by the following considerations:

* **engaged and present for the long** haul - fifty years of country-level presence and activity, now in 168 countries and territories, speaks of UNDP’s relationship and commitment to developing countries;
* **work with others** - forge and contribute to broad issues-based coalitions, and broker partnerships, to connect financing and expertise to match the ambition of the 2030 Agenda, applying what UNDP has learned from playing a key role in helping to advance the MDGs agenda;
* **take a pragmatic approach** - learn along the way, recognising successes and acknowledging shortfalls, adjusting to challenges and opportunities, taking into account UNDP’s capacities, setup and footprint;
* **adapt to the specific needs of countries and regions** – capitalise on local presence and deep relationships to help countries tailor the 2030 Agenda to their specific circumstances, needs and priorities.

Consistent with its mandate, approach and analysis, UNDP offers support for implementation of the 2030 Agenda around issues of Coherence; Linkages; Expertise; Access; and Reporting (CLEAR). This offer sits well within the MAPS approach that has been endorsed by the UNDG as its framework for support to programme countries.

1. **COHERENCE and LINKAGES** that maintain the integrity of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs

* **Help ensure substantive coherence by highlighting connections across different elements of Agenda 2030.** UNDP can help advance a ‘whole of agenda’ + ‘whole of society’ approach to maintain the substantive integrity of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. UNDP’s work is intrinsically about ‘connecting the dots’ between economic, social, political, and environmental issues, born out of its cross-sectoral mandate and its mission to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities and exclusion.
* **Link partners, tapping UNDP’s experience as a knowledgeable and impartial facilitator of complex planning and consensus-building processes**. UNDP can help countries bring together the knowledge, expertise, and resources of partners, including across the UNDS, to form broad coalitions to explore options, identify priorities, and determine pathways towards SDGs implementation. UNDP can facilitate these processes, linking them to existing national plans; co-ordinate work across multiple policy areas; and enable engagement with citizens–for example, as requested by the UN Secretary-General, by managing the SDGs Action Campaign to mobilize public support for the 2030 Agenda.

1. **EXPERTISE** and programme support for transformational change in specific areas

Countries will ask for the latest insights into ‘what works in what circumstances and with what investments’ to make the right policy and financing decisions for sustainable development. UNDP has an extensive base of expertise in analysing the root causes of poverty, drivers that can propel households above the poverty line, and risks that can lead to reversals in human development. UNDP has identified lessons and policy options that can be helpful to policy- and decision-makers in a wide variety of settings.

To this end, based on national priorities and demand, UNDP can offer specialised programming and advisory expertise, including on poverty eradication, reduction of inequalities, governance, the environment and climate change, the social determinants of health, risk governance and management, and the effects of urbanization. UNDP’s support can cover the full spectrum of assistance according to national request and need, from analysis and advisory work to preparation of proposals for policy, legal, and regulatory reform, capacity development, partnership-building, and monitoring and assessment of progress. UNDP’s capabilities extend to implementation of public programmes and projects as well, where requested to do so by governments, to accelerate delivery while building-up the capacity of public institutions. UNDP can also help set up, or strengthen and offer technical support to intra-governmental and aid co-ordination mechanisms.

1. **ACCESS** that delivers on the 2030 Agenda and SDGs

Access to global and regional institutions, funds and mechanisms will be critical for countries to make tangible progress on the SDGs. This will mean finding the right mix of financial resources (domestic and international), smart technology, and targeted assistance for capacity development. It will demand the ability to contribute effectively to and benefit from global and regional integration and agenda-setting processes.

As an inter-governmental body, UNDP is **a natural partner for countries to strengthen their access to and facilitate engagement in sub-regional, regional and global processes and institutions**, for example to:

* Improve awareness about and successfully navigate often complex requirements, procedures and processes related to international financing mechanisms;
* Build or expand country capacity to plan, analyse, and negotiate;
* Develop analytical, planning, and technical documentation skills;
* Connect with peers around the world to exchange knowledge, experience, technology, and resources;
* Assist with implementation.

Some examples of what UNDP can do include:

* supporting countries’ participation and engagement in regional and global processes bearing on their implementation of the SDGs, including voluntary reporting to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF);
* helping countries meet regional and global obligations, as UNDP has done on preparation of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) crucial in the fight against climate change, or in domesticating international agreements, treaties, charters, standards, and rules; and
* strengthening countries’ capacities to access finance and technology, public and private, domestic and international, not least existing and new streams of funding on energy and climate change such as the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility, and a wide array of public-private initiatives (for instance, the International Solar Alliance or the Breakthrough Energy Coalition).

With a global operational presence and coordinating role in the UNDG, and as host of the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), UNDP can also help realise the full potential of South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSC and TrC), to complement ODA to accelerate progress on the SDGs. As the 2030 Agenda has come into being, UNDP is substantially overhauling the purpose, ambition, scope, and management of its work on SSC and TrC, building on its unique historical engagement on these modalities. UNDP proposes to work with partners to forge a global development solutions exchange for end-to-end support for countries and others to find, share, agree upon, source knowledge and expertise, and secure funding to get things done in priority areas within the 2030 Agenda. UNDP will also prioritise development of national and regional capacities to plan, manage, monitor, and assess SSC and TrC, and to carry out policy, legal and regulatory reforms to substantially increase opportunities to use these modalities for better results.

1. **Monitoring and REPORTING** to gauge performance and accelerate progress

Countries – decision makers and citizens alike – will want to know whether they are on or off-track against national milestones, whether the pace of progress is sufficient, and whether they are reaching those citizens previously left behind. At the same time, countries will be asked to share their experiences – successes and shortfalls –with peers at the regional and international level.

**UNDP is in a strong position to help countries monitor, learn, report, and apply lessons learned.** UNDP was the lead global entity to support monitoring of and reporting on the MDGs at country level, and one of the main contributors to monitoring at regional and global levels.

Given UNDP’s cross-thematic mission and expertise, experience with the MDGs, and involvement in activities related to the ‘data revolution’, it can provide an original contribution to the development, testing and application of metrics that monitor implementation of the 2030 Agenda. UNDP can work with a broad range of partners to help countries monitor and report on the SDGs, as well as funnel feedback on progress, shortfalls and lessons back into the policy and investment loop. UNDP is already leading an effort with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) to provide reporting guidelines on the SDGs at the national level, and will work to prepare regional and global reports with Regional Economic Commissions and UNDESA, respectively.