

Annex 4: Background Note – Theory of Change¹ for Outcome 4

Outcome 4: Faster progress is achieved in reducing gender inequality and promoting women’s empowerment

1. Problem Statement:

Outcome four is dedicated to accelerating the momentum to reduce gender inequality and promote women’s empowerment, and UNDP’s commitment to “*substantially increasing the investment in and focus on outcomes and outputs relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women*” (QCPR). It focuses on faster progress in reducing gender inequality and promoting women’s empowerment, and reinforces and complements the integration of gender equality and women’s empowerment throughout the rest of the outcomes. The Strategic Plan (2014-2017) is based on the recognition that sustainable human development will not be fully achieved unless women and girls are empowered to contribute equally with men and boys to their societies.

Over many decades, the UN has made significant progress in advancing gender equality, including through landmark agreements and most recently the creation of UN Women. The equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Declaration and the Convention on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action recognized the need for concrete measures to be taken to accelerate the achievement of women’s human rights, as did the Millennium Declaration, which recognized that reducing gender inequalities is essential to achieving all the Millennium Development Goals. The International Conference on Population and Development resulted in a Programme of Action that defined goals on reducing infant, child and maternal mortality and ensuring access to reproductive and sexual health services. A range of UN Security Council resolutions also have recognized the rights of women to participate in peace building and to live free of gender-based violence, including Security Council resolutions 1325, 1820 and 1880 and 2106.

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women, to assist countries and the United Nations system itself to progress more effectively and efficiently towards the goal of achieving gender equality, women’s empowerment and upholding women’s rights. Now, the entire UN system is committed to mainstreaming gender as the main strategy for promoting gender equality. The QCPR resolution adopted by the General Assembly in December 2012 calls upon the UN development system to “*acquire sufficient technical expertise for gender mainstreaming in programme planning and implementation to ensure that gender dimensions are systematically addressed...*” Gender mainstreaming is a dual approach that entails integration of gender perspectives across all development policies, programmes and activities.

Over the past decades, the world has made significant progress toward many of its internationally agreed development goals. In particular, we are nearing gender parity in primary school, have expanded access to improved sources of water and have recorded significant progress in reducing infant and child mortality. Preliminary estimates indicate that the global target of cutting in half the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 per day was met in 2010. Millions more women and men are escaping extreme poverty, living healthier lives and pursuing better futures.

¹ **Theories of change** are a planning tool. They describe possible pathways to development change based on experience and evidence. By so doing, theories of change help explain and clarify the logic and assumptions underlying the achievement of results over time. This allows governments, other stakeholders and evaluators to check if the argument makes sense and assess if progress is being made, as planned, or requires a change in approach. Theories of change are, therefore, a practical way of anchoring results-based management in the realities of development.

But a range of persistent challenges remain. These include: women's unequal access to economic resources and assets, including environmental goods and services and environmental finance; discrimination against women in the workforce, manifesting in unequal pay and vulnerable employment; unacceptably low levels of female participation in decision making; high levels of violence against women and girls, including early marriage; high levels of maternal mortality; and a disproportionate impact on women of the effects of climate change, including natural disasters. Together these challenges have implications for the lives of women, but also hold back progress for their families and countries as a whole.

Furthermore, the lack of systematic, regularly updated and comparable information to measure progress in closing the gender gap is in itself a challenge. The scarcity of information on women's participation, inclusion and contributions in economic, social, political and cultural aspects impede understanding of both the problem as well as the effectiveness of a range of solutions.

2. **Lessons learnt:** It is now well recognized, and supported by ample evidence, that gender equality and women's empowerment are central to the achievement of all development outcomes:
 - **Sustainable human development will not be fully achieved unless women and girls are able to contribute to their societies on an equal basis with men and boys.** A growing body of evidence shows that empowering women and reducing gender gaps in health, education, labor markets, and other areas is associated with lower poverty, higher economic growth, greater agricultural productivity, better nutrition and education of children, and a variety of other outcomes. Achieving development goals and results requires accelerated progress on gender equality and women's empowerment.
 - **Gender equality, in addition to being a human right, has been shown to have significant multiplier benefits for women, their families and communities.** When gender inequalities are reduced, communities are healthier, more children go to school, agricultural productivity improves and incomes increase. In short, communities become more resilient and development results are more sustainable. For example, increased women's labor force participation has a direct impact on economic productivity and growth. Ensuring women's equal access to agricultural resources not only benefits women and their families, but has overall benefits for agricultural productivity. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, if rural women had the same access to productive resources – such as fertilizer, seeds and tools - as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 percent. This could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 percent to 4 percent.
 - **Achieving gender equality and empowering women is not merely a technical challenge.** A transformational approach is required to address the underlying structures of power that exist across all societies. Change needs to be affected at the level of an individual, as well as through systemic structural changes to eliminate discriminatory laws and practices. UNDP believes that gender equality will only be achieved once the following underlying and interlinked changes occur:
 - a) The norms and culturally discriminatory practices at all levels that maintain inequality and exclusion are reformed towards gender equality.
 - b) At the overall formal, legal, regulatory and institutional levels, the rules, constitutions, laws and policies that govern societies enshrine and promote gender equality in law and practice, are developed, implemented and monitored.

- c) Women are economically empowered and do not face discrimination in the economic sphere. This includes having equal access to secure, decent jobs and the ability to earn income and participate equitably in labor markets. It also includes elimination of economic disparities with the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work.
- d) Women are politically empowered, through strong civil society networks to support advocacy and change by channeling collective voice and through their equal participation in politics and in decision making structures at all levels.
- e) Women have access to and control over critical economic and environmental resources, including credit, land, other natural resources such as water, fuel and forestry and technological innovations.
- f) Women have access to essential services, such as health and education, justice, and can live free from the fear of violence.

3. **UNDP's Role:** For UNDP, the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is an intrinsic goal on its own as well as a driver of development overall. The specific areas of work and gender approaches are being developed based on UNDP's comparative advantage and years of experiences and evidences of gender equality and empowerment of women.

UNDP's comparative advantages include:

- An ability to leverage our partnerships with governments to work at the formal, institutional level to promote legal and policy reforms that eliminate structural barriers to gender equalities and put in place policies to empower women;
- An ability to leverage our convening power and diverse partnerships to bring together civil society advocates, academics and government to address gender equality and women's empowerment through policy and legal reform;
- Our recognition as a thought leader, through our Human Development Reports, MDG Reports and other evidence-based publications, which enables us to advocate for policy reforms and changes in social norms and behaviors; and,
- Our ability to draw upon our extensive presence around the world to bring best practices from one region to another.

UNDP experiences and evaluative evidence show:

- **Aligning UNDP's work with national priorities for advancing gender equality is essential.** When the work is guided by *national ownership and* countries make decisions on how best to meet the aspirations of women and men, results can be sustained over time. In this regard, the lesson learned is that developing leadership skills of national central ministries increases the possibility of bringing gender considerations to national policy frameworks and ensures ownership as well as future sustainability. The scope of UNDP's relationships places us in a strong position to support comprehensive cross-sectoral action for gender equality.
- **Interdisciplinary and multisectoral approaches** facilitate holistic responses to the complex social and cultural dynamics that perpetuate gender inequality. We have learned that coordinated and well-planned multisectoral initiatives increase the potential for transformation of gendered power relations toward equality between men and women.

- **Insufficient production of knowledge of gender disparities and gender analysis is a barrier** to connecting key development issues (e.g. linkages between gender equality, sustainable consumption and green economy) and addressing gender inequalities in emerging development challenges. Sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis should be consistently used at all times to gain in depth understanding and identify gender differences and inequalities, and improve the quality of our development interventions.
- **Gender equality and women's empowerment cuts across all areas of work.** The Mid-Term Review of the Gender Equality Strategy 2008-2013 provided clear recommendations about how to move towards more systematic integration through better prioritization and support in the application of policy tools and methodologies; deepening work in the areas of public administration, local governance, human rights, justice and security sector reform, anti-corruption and environmental sustainability (including climate policy and funds); and better linkages across practices, for instance, connecting work on GBV with poverty eradication.
- **Gender mainstreaming is a combined organizational change and programming approach** by which the UN and inter-governmental systems seek to achieve gender equality and the advancement of women. Evidence and UNDP experience show that leadership, a predictable provision of adequate resources, accountability and incentives are pre-requisites to move gender mainstreaming away from the 'margins' of the development agenda to the mainstream of policies that can lead to sustainable results.
- **Programme planning is stronger when it links cogent qualitative and quantitative gender analysis** of key issues with clear programme outcomes, outputs and progress- and results-tracking indicators. Concrete and dependable gender-equality results are more likely to be achieved when planning documents include gender equality as at least one of the key outcome areas and provide indicators to measure progress. Additionally, sector- and issue specific gender-equality results can be achieved when gender-equality outputs and indicators are clearly articulated within the respective outcome areas of the programme plan.

How to advance gender equality and women's empowerment will be further articulated explicitly in UNDP's Gender Equality Strategy that will be prepared within the framework of the Strategic Plan. Gender mainstreaming is the methodology that has evolved to support this increasingly complex agenda. It entails integration of gender perspectives into all development policies, programmes and activities so that they deliberately contribute to progress towards gender equality. It also means addressing historical imbalances and empowering women to take full advantage of growing opportunities. For this reason, UNDP is committed to mainstreaming gender equality throughout all of its work as expressed in all outcomes of the strategic plan.

Outcome 4 of the strategic plan is focused on addressing historical imbalances and specific bottlenecks to gender equality and women's advancement. It will reinforce the rest of the Strategic Plan outcomes, and each gender-specific output will act as a driver of change and complement the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the rest of the outcomes.

The concrete pathways of outcome 4 can be specified as the following:

1) Supporting the adoption of policies, legal reforms or programmes to advance women's economic empowerment. Individual lives are improved, communities are strengthened and food security is strengthened when women have greater access to land, credit and other productive assets including natural resources and technology. Since 2008, UNDP has expanded the scope of its work on women's economic empowerment, moving beyond small-scale initiatives and investing considerably in building national and regional capacities to ensure gender equality is addressed in economic policy making and poverty reduction work.

UNDP will work with national partners who are responsible for economic policy making, including ministries of finance, planning, rural and urban development and parliaments, to contribute to policy reforms that recognize the barriers, often invisible and undifferentiated, to women's empowerment. This work will include supporting the development and implementation of gender-responsive economic reforms, policies and budgets. UNDP will support the development of capacities in gender-sensitive economic policy and planning methodologies as well as the development and use of gender-disaggregated data. UNDP will work closely with governments and partners within the UN system, including UN Women, World Bank and ILO, to support the planning and implementation of gender-responsive economic initiatives that empower and benefit women economically.

2) Supporting governments to implement multi-sectoral approaches to prevent and respond to sexual and gender based violence. Eliminating sexual and gender-based violence not only enables women to live healthy and productive lives but reduces costs to society, including the costs of healthcare, judicial and social services for survivors. Sexual and gender-based violence, which occurs in every region and country of the world, has also been shown to have negative inter-generational impacts. Eliminating sexual and gender-based violence is an important step toward accelerating progress for women, families, communities and nations.

Since 2008, nearly a third of UNDP country programmes include on-going initiatives on sexual and gender-based violence. UNDP's sexual and gender based violence work is centered on supporting women's legal rights, strengthening women's access to justice and utilizing a range of integrated strategies focusing on property, inheritance, family and gender equality in laws and constitutions to combat sexual and gender-based violence. UNDP will leverage these advantages to better respond to SGBV by supporting national and local partners to develop, strengthen and implement the required legislative frameworks to combat SGBV and build more gender-sensitive legal and judicial institutions. This will include enhancing the capacities of police, judges, and prosecutors to combat impunity and ensure women's access to justice both through formal and informal processes. UNDP will assist partners in building capacities to collect, analyze, disseminate and apply national and sub-national data and evidence on the factors influencing men's perpetration of SGBV and on the prevalence, causes and consequences of violence against women and girls including in contexts of stability, transition and crisis and post crisis. Working in partnership with UNFPA, UNW and UNICEF, women's groups, male champions and civil societies, UNDP will work to raise awareness of the entry points to prevent and address sexual and gender based violence.

3) Strengthening the evidence base to inform strategies to advance women's empowerment and gender equality. The evidence base linking gender equality and development outcomes needs to be more clearly enunciated to support and inform laws, policies, plans and strategies address gender inequalities. While policies that reduce gender gaps affect all other development goals, these linkages are not widely known and not translated sufficiently into concrete decision-making. Therefore, there is a need to bring this evidence to the fore.

Leveraging its position as the UN's lead development agency, UNDP will provide evidence and advocacy for the linkages between gender equality and development outcomes through its flagship Human Development Reports, MDG Reports and its contributions to global debate on inclusive and equitable growth. Measures such as the Gender Inequality Index (GII), which shows the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements across three dimensions (reproductive health, empowerment and labor market), will be used for policy analysis and as an advocacy tool to help governments and other partners understand the ramifications of gaps between men and women. The empirical evidence gathered through these measures will lay the groundwork for evidence-based policy and decision-making that will drive development progress by addressing gender inequalities and empowering women. UNDP will work closely with partners such as the World Bank and sister UN agencies (UN WOMEN, ILO, WFP and UNFPA) in strengthening the evidence based advocacy for eliminating gender gaps.

4) Supporting national capacities to promote and increase the participation and leadership of women in decision-making. Evidence demonstrates that when there is a critical mass of women participating in decision-making, the contributions and needs of women are more likely to be recognized and addressed. While women's political participation, especially in parliaments, has been growing steadily in most regions, the pace of acceleration is far short of agreed commitments and some regions and countries have made no progress at all. Moreover, while attention has largely focused on women's leadership and participation in national parliaments, there is a pressing need to realize women's leadership in the judiciary, the executive, local governance, sectorial institutions and other vital institutions of decision making such the media, corporate boards and peace making institutions.

Over the past decade, UNDP has proven to be a leader in the promotion of women in politics. This includes: its hosting of the IKNOW Politics web portal devoted to women in parliaments (in collaboration with UN Women, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the National Democratic Institute); promoting women's participation as voters and candidates in its electoral cycle support; advocating for affirmative measures through technical assistance to transitional governance institutions and constitutional committees; and through support for women parliamentarians, gender caucuses and political parties and by leveraging its convening power to engage women's civil society in policy making processes. UNDP will continue to build on this experience, investing in applied policy research to examine best practices, promoting those practices and using its convening power to ensure inclusive policy making processes and advocate for the adoption of measures to accelerate women's participation in all decision making fora. Targeted initiatives will also be undertaken to ensure women can organize and articulate their views.

5) Supporting country efforts to empower women through increased access, ownership and management of environmental goods and services (including environmental finance). The combination of the socio-cultural barriers faced by women, their lack of access to resources and decision making power, and their heavy reliance on natural resources, puts women on the front line of social-economic, environmental and climate risks. Nonetheless, women are also on the front line to defend against the effects of climate change. They have valuable knowledge and experience to contribute to strategies for natural resource management, climate change adaptation and mitigation.

UNDP will work in close collaboration with governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to integrate gender considerations into global policy debates and national work on environment and energy policies, strategies and programmes. UNDP will promote the full inclusion of women's voices and participation in managing and protecting natural resources. Technical support, capacity development, research, and generation of new knowledge will be provided to a range of sectors including natural resource management, climate change adaptation and mitigation, bio-diversity and eco-system, sustainable energy access, sustainable agriculture, water governance and dry land development.

Building on the COP-18 in Doha and to further increase women's access to climate finance, UNDP will also support the implementation of gender-responsive national climate finance initiatives. UNDP will work with national partners to create equal economic opportunities for women in green business and will build the capacity of female entrepreneurs, workers and workers' organizations to start businesses and scale-up micro businesses into small and medium green enterprises.

4. Assumptions

- Sustained reduction in gender inequalities (e.g. violence against women and girls) is a long term process that only occurs through processes of significant social change, including in power relations between women and men, and in the values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and practices (social norms) at all levels from individuals to communities to institutions.
- Holistic and multi-sectorial approaches are more likely to have impact: coordinated interventions operating at multiple levels, across sectors and over multiple time-frames are more likely to address the various aspects of a development challenge and therefore have greater impact on achieving gender equality.
- Leadership, a predictable provision of adequate resources, accountability and incentives are present in the organization to achieve the mainstreaming of gender equality.
- The international community and UNDP's national partners have the political will to turn international commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women (economic empowerment, women's leadership and participation; access to environmental goods and services, etc.) into reality.
- The international community and national governments will make the necessary investments (financial and human) in addressing gender inequalities and empowering women.

5. Stakeholders and Partners

Outcome 4 and mainstreaming of gender equality and empowerment of women across the other outcomes cannot be achieved without close collaboration with other UN agencies – in particular UN Women. UNDP will build on the effective partnerships we already have with UN agencies, bi-lateral and regional development actors and civil society networks and build new partnerships. In doing so we will apply lessons learned in the previous Strategic Plan period and the implementation of the 2008-2013 Gender Equality Strategy, to further enhance our cooperation with our partners and key stakeholders; these lessons include the need to further policy dialogue and context-driven prioritization and to increase our flexibility in response to dynamic development and post-crisis/recovery situations. Indicative areas of collaboration with partners are listed below.

Partner	Indicative area of collaboration
UN Women	<p>Building on our effective collaboration in many country offices since the creation of UN Women, we will focus on working with UN Women on: a) scaling up of gender equality programming and joint gender equality advisory services based on a strong partnership and field presence; b) complementing each other and focusing efforts on strengthening different national stakeholders; and c) Sharing UNDP cooperation infrastructure with UNW, in the areas such as,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - advancing women’s leadership in decision making (in particular through constitutional reform, parliamentary support and elections assistance); - supporting gender-responsive economic budgets and legal reforms work; the implementation of CEDAW through legislative reform activities with parliaments; and - prevention of, and response to, sexual and gender based violence, in coordination with UNFPA.
DPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Electoral assistance and support for constitutional reforms
ILO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaboration in supporting countries in the adoption of policies, legal reforms or programs to advance women’s economic empowerment and social protection.
OHCHR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for the implementation of women’s rights and access to justice, also in collaboration with UN Women.
UNICEF, UNFPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for implementation of relevant women and girls rights and their full participation in the political, social and economic development of their communities.
Inter-Parliamentary Union and the National Democratic Institute; IKNOW Politics, International IDEA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaboration in promoting women’s political participation, particularly in national political institutions, through electoral assistance, parliamentary support and support for constitutional reforms.
GGCA (Global Gender and Climate Alliance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jointly integrate gender considerations into global policy debates, national work in environment and energy policies, strategies and programmes, and climate finance mechanisms.
GEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaboration in supporting countries in the integration of gender into climate change adaptation national plans.
World Bank, FAO and IFAD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with the World Bank on strengthening evidence-informed strategies to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment. - Support gender-responsive initiatives that empower women economically.
Women’s movements, academia, NGOs/CSOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support their advocacy efforts and learn from their best practices on advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women.

6. Key Risks:

Risks	Management
Weak recognition of the need to close gender gaps in certain environments of the world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UNDP will continue to work closely with national partners to build and reinforce their commitment towards bridging the gender gap - UNDP will illustrate - in particular to the partners at national level- how closing the gender gap benefits overall developmental results.
Insufficient translation of commitments towards gender equality and women’s empowerment into practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UNDP will continue to use and improve its accountability tools and indicators to measure gender results
The 2008 financial and economic crises, which have disproportionately affected women, persist and there may be insufficient resources and budgets available to address gender inequality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UNDP will continue to use the gender marker to track and monitor a potential decrease of investments on gender equality, and plan accordingly. - UNDP will select potential countries which might be exposed to gender equality backlashes because of shocks to monitor them and plan accordingly.
Lack of leadership, a predictable provision of adequate resources, accountability and incentives are present in the organization to achieve the mainstreaming of gender equality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UNDP has made significant improvements in its organizational systems and practices to mainstream gender equality. - Its accountability mechanisms for gender mainstreaming have being robust (MOPAN).