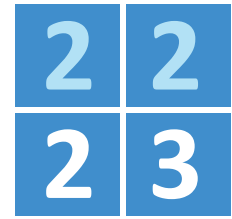


UNDP Saudi Arabia Report 2022 - 2023



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Towards a thriving and sustainable
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia





Foreword

Ms. Nahid Hussein

UNDP Resident Representative
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been witnessing remarkable socio-economic development as confirmed by its deserved ranking amongst the very high human development category in the world, according to the UNDP Human Development Report for 2021-2022. Fortunately, Saudi Arabia has viewed this achievement, though great and unmistakable, as no reason for complacency. In consequence, it currently embraces an ambitious Vision towards the year 2030, a vision that puts further emphasis on sustainable development through diversification of its economy away from the sole reliance on oil and natural gas as major sources of income. Sustainability has been accorded the primary position among the national priorities and considered a strong lever to realize lasting growth and prosperity. Over the years, and in almost all nationally-owned achievements, UNDP has been a development partner of choice for the Government of Saudi Arabia.

This Report, covering the period 2022 to 2023, focuses on the impacts of a

robust partnership forged between the Government of Saudi Arabia and the UNDP Country Office. Such impacts were efficiently achieved due to the fact that the national development priorities, as articulated in the Vision 2030, converge seamlessly with the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is a convergence that warrants UNDP's emphasis on the very core of development as a relentless pursuit to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. It is to be noted that both the Vision 2030 and the SDGs place emphasis on the so-called 5 Ps: People; Planet; Prosperity; Peace,; and Partnerships.

The significance of the Report stems, partly, from the fact that it reviews past achievements without neglecting the future prospects of expansion of the scope of the development partnership, so that it engages all national actors, including more public sectors and institutions, the private sector and the civil society organizations. In parallel to this,

UNDP intends to equally expand the circle of contributions of the UN Agencies, particularly those organizations with proven record of competency to inform the novel economic sectors, enriching them with expertise, professional advisory services and lessons learned elsewhere around the globe.

It is noteworthy that, in reporting the monumental development results, the national policies in almost all sectors of the economy were found to rely profoundly on the accurate and timely production of quality statistics. There was a consensus, among partners, as to approach this issue from the lenses of capacity development with the objective of sustaining, promoting, localizing and expanding a set of context-specific and proactive products to inform decision-making processes.

Moreover, the Report highlights the programmatic interventions that were meticulously designed to ensure national ownership, leadership and transformation. Additionally, the Report goes beyond these interventions to include certain cross-

cutting themes of relevance to the national context of Saudi Arabia, such as youth, gender equality and women's empowerment, and disability-inclusive development.

Finally, the Report comes as a result of an extensive and fruitful collaboration between UNDP Country Office and the Saudi development partners. National officials from the Government provided invaluable inputs to this Report, thereby confirming and validating UNDP's assessment of the work done during 2022-2023. In this respect, I seize the opportunity to express our gratitude to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the main interlocutor for the United Nations Development Programme in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, while looking forward to maintaining the present momentum of substantive cooperation between us. I equally convey sincere thanks to UNDP Country Office Team for their collective efforts to capture programmatic results of a past period whilst keeping their eyes widely open on the future prospects and challenges ahead.

Executive Summary

This present report provides an overview of the key results and impacts of the strong partnership, which has been forged and maintained for nearly five decades, between UNDP Country Office, Saudi Arabia, and the Government of Saudi Arabia. The report is titled, UNDP Saudi Arabia Report 2022-2023: Towards a Thriving and Sustainable Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The period covered (2022-2023) better reflects the strength of this development partnership.

This partnership has witnessed the formulation and effective implementation of numerous national strategies, policies and plans with a wide range of key government ministries and institutions. UNDP programmes and projects - and their close alignment with the key national priorities and international development goals - have consistently contributed to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's remarkable and steady progress in human development which now places it amongst the group of countries with very high human development at position 35 among 191 countries globally.

In this long trajectory of UNDP's partnership with the Kingdom, the UNDP Report 2022-2023 "Towards a thriving and sustainable Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" falls within a defining moment for the country's future. At the midpoint of implementing the ambitious Saudi Vision 2030, the Kingdom has effectively accelerated the transformation and diversification of its economy, implemented fundamental reforms and measures towards increasing the empowerment of women, sparked a remarkable boom in tourism, and positioned Saudi Arabia as a regional and global leader in environmental sustainability and other eminent development themes.

Summarizing progress and achievements of UNDP's programmatic and non-programmatic initiatives during the review period (2022-2023), the report covers the final year of the UNDP Country Programme (2017-2022) and the first year of the ongoing UNDP Country Programme (2023-2027). The report is guided by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's steadfast commitment to the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It adheres to the structure of the "5 Ps" (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships) of the 2030 Agenda to present UNDP's contributions to national development results and shows the close alignment of UNDP's programmes and projects with the pillars and objectives of the Saudi Vision 2030.

The Report 2022-2023 highlights remarkable results under each of the "5 Ps" of the global 2030 Agenda and their contributions to the SDGs under each of the five dimensions. It gives a comprehensive overview of UNDP's long-standing partnerships and collaboration with numerous key ministries and eminent government institutions and provides evidence of the further deepening and expansion of several UNDP flagship programmes, as well as the start of new pro-

grammatic initiatives during the review period.

More specifically, under the Pillar of "People", the report provides insights on achievements and the continued programmatic collaboration with the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA); whereas under the Pillar of "Planet", programmatic partnerships were highlighted in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy (MOE) and the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MEWA); under the Pillar of "Prosperity" the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP), Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Housing (MOM-RAH); in addition to Ministry of Transport and Logistic Services (MOTLS), as well as the Royal Commission for Riyadh City (RCRC), the Royal Commission for Makkah City and Holy Sites (RCMC), and the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information (GASGI).

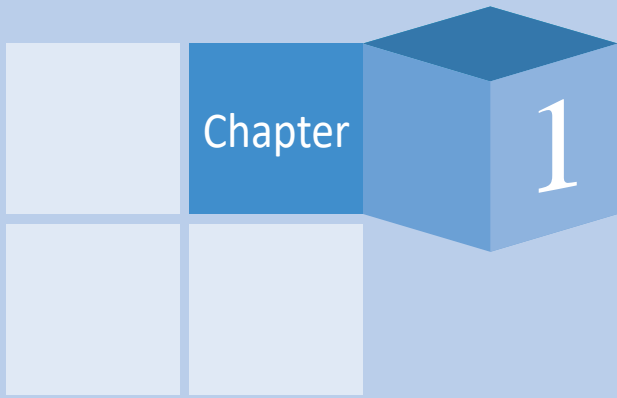
Moreover, in support of "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions", partnerships were forged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT), the Oversight and Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), and the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue (KACND). With regards to the "Partnerships" pillar of the global 2030 Agenda, the report highlights several important initiatives and organizational developments at the level of the UNDP Saudi Arabia Office, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States, as well as corporately, which recognize and respond to the eminent role of Saudi Arabia as a major provider of Official Development Assistance and humanitarian assistance, and the Kingdom's position as a distinguished donor to UNDP and the sole funder of UNDP's operations in Saudi Arabia.

The report also elaborates on major cross-cutting development issues, drawing attention to the Kingdom's compelling progress on gender and women's empowerment (GEWE), youth empowerment, volunteerism, and disability-inclusive development. It summarizes the specific contributions UNDP has made to these priority issues during the 2022-2023 review period, together with mainstreaming such cross-cutting issues into UNDP's programmes and projects, and using tailored approaches with government institutions, non-profit organizations and other UN entities to organize advocacy campaigns, commemorate dedicated UN Days, and promote a rights-based approach linked to the principles of the global 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Building on the overview of numerous achievements and new initiatives during the biennium 2022-2023, the report also highlights UNDP's future direction under the current Country Programme 2023-2027, including overall strategies for the next years, priority actions under the "5 Ps" including a stronger focus on partnerships with the private sector and support to the Kingdom's increasing geopolitical role, and strategies supporting both the cross-cutting issues as well as additional themes such as digitalization.

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INTRODUCTION

1 - 1 UNDP and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

A successful partnership for almost 50 years

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the leading United Nations (UN) organization and global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience, and resources to help people build a better life. Working with a broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries and territories, UNDP helps nations to reach integrated and sustainable solutions for people and the planet.

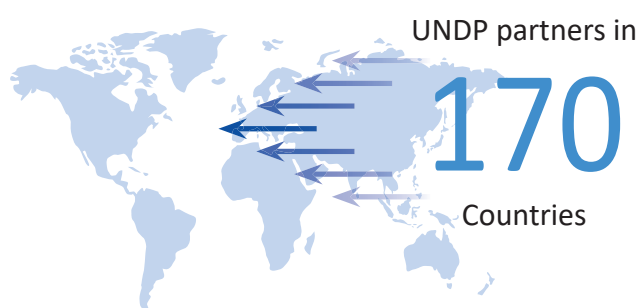
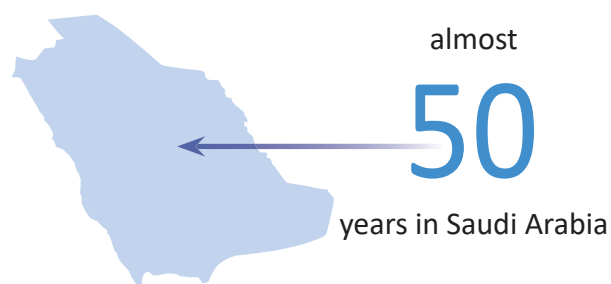
The partnership and collaboration between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and UNDP was forged through the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement concluded between the Government of Saudi Arabia and UNDP on January 4, 1976. Since then, and based on its broad and flexible mandate, UNDP has been providing continuous and wide-ranging support to the government's social, economic, and environmental aspirations and goals. As part of the United Nations Country Team in Saudi Arabia, UNDP has nurtured close and productive partnerships with over 20 key government ministries, agencies and institutions to provide technical assistance and substantive advisory services, as well as to mobilize international knowledge and expertise, including from other parts of the UN system, in order to help achieve national development priorities for the benefit of the King-

dom and its people.

For almost 50 years, the stable and productive partnerships with a range of key government counterparts have allowed UNDP to provide expert advisory services and to assist in formulation of numerous national strategies, policies and plans on a wide range of key development themes, including economic diversification, transport management, energy efficiency and environmental sustainability, urban planning and housing management, national data and statistics, water resources management, good governance, capacity strengthening of local governments, empowerment of women and youth, as well as social cohesion.

The results and successful track record of UNDP's support in implementing pivotal national priorities have contributed to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's remarkable and steady progress on human development which now places it amongst the group of countries with very high human development at position 35 among 191 countries globally.

As a long-standing trusted partner of the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, UNDP is strongly committed to the goals of Vision 2030 and the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



1 - 2 UNDP Strategic Plan and Saudi Vision 2030

UNDP's global policy document, the Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025, lies beneath all UNDP activities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It supports three directions of change:

- **Structural transformation**, particularly green, inclusive and digital transitions
- **Leaving-no-one-behind**, a rights-based approach centered on human agency and human development
- Resilience to respond to systemic uncertainty and risk

Overall, the Strategic Plan aims to achieve:

- (a) **Three directions of change:** structural transformation, leaving-no-one-behind and resilience, through
- (b) **Six signature solutions:** poverty and inequality, governance, resilience, environment, energy and gender equality, enhanced by
- (c) **Three enablers:** strategic innovation, digitalization and development financing.

Figure 1 : Approach of global UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025 :



Source:

UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025

The UNDP Strategic Plan and corresponding UNDP priorities for Saudi Arabia are closely aligned with the three Pillars of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 – A Vibrant Society; A Thriving Economy; And an Ambitious Nation.

1 - 3 Purpose, context, and structure of the report

The UNDP Saudi Arabia report 2022-2023 focuses on programmatic results of all UNDP projects that were ongoing or completed during the review period, and on some non-programmatic initiatives and events, in support of the objectives of the Saudi Vision 2030 and the global 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. It covers the final year of the 2017–2022 UNDP Country Programme and the first year of the current Country Programme 2023-2027.

The structure of the report is attributable to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's steadfast commitment to sustainability as a driving force for growth and prosperity, and its persistent emphasis on integrating economic, social, and environmental considerations into all development initiatives. This commitment is reflected in the extensive institutional and policy framework that underpins the SDGs in Saudi Arabia, culminating in the establishment of a Sustainable Development Steering Committee in September 2021. Sustainability has become central to policy development, with key measures taken by the Government to foster policy coherence for sustainable development. To this end, the Government has adopted a whole-of-society and a whole-of-government approach to policymaking. This commitment is further reflected in the strong emphasis Saudi Arabia has placed on the implementation of the sustainable development agenda during its G20 Presidency in 2020, which focused on three main goals: 'Empowering People, by creating the conditions in which

all people – especially women and youth – can live, work and thrive'; 'Safeguarding the Planet, by fostering collective efforts to protect our global commons'; and 'Shaping New Frontiers, by adopting long-term and bold strategies to share benefits of innovation and technological advancement'.

In view of the above, the report uses the structure of the "5 Ps" (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to present UNDP's contributions during the period 2022-2023.

The report also provides information about important UNDP contributions to cross-cutting themes during the review period and concludes with forward-looking perspectives for UNDP's engagement in the coming years.

Figure 2 :

The five dimensions (5 Ps) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



Who We Are?



1 - 4 UNDP as Part of the UN System

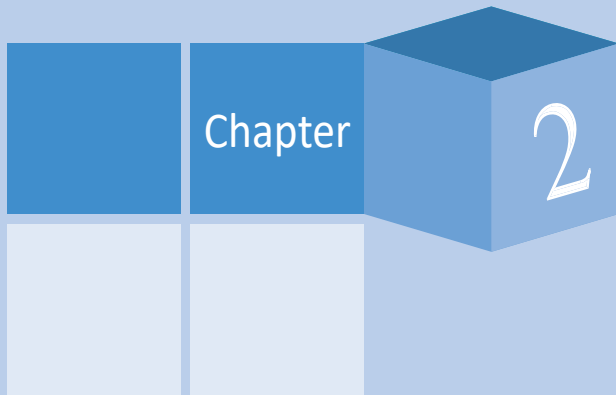
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) works in more than 170 countries and territories, helping to achieve the eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequalities and exclusion. We help countries develop policies, leadership skills, partnering abilities, institutional capabilities and build resilience to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

All UNDP programme activities supporting Saudi Arabia are rooted in the United Na-

tions Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026 which contains the planned key results for all UN entities in the Kingdom (for more information on UNDP's engagement with the UN system in Saudi Arabia visit the "Partnerships" section).

This UN system-wide framework for Saudi Arabia responds directly to the three pillars and strategic objectives of the Saudi Vision 2030, and to the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.





UNDP CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE “ 5 Ps ”

2 - 1 People

The “People” pillar focuses on key human development issues under the SDGs 1-5 and their linkages with SDGs in other pillars of the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Guided by Vision 2030 and the SDGs, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia remains dedicated to working towards a future where all people can live in prosperity and security while, at the same time, respecting the planetary boundaries that enable the country’s sustainable future.

Saudi Arabia has made significant progress in the eradication of poverty. National poverty headcount rates measured against the international poverty lines of \$2.15 and \$3.65 per day per capita (based on 2017 purchasing power parities) are each estimated at 0.0 percent of population using household-level expenditures per capita as a welfare aggregate in the survey year 2012/13.

According to the Kingdom’s Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2023, government spending on essential services which are

closely related to SDGs 1-5, namely for social protection, health and education, has increased between 2017 and 2021 (see figure below). This demonstrates Saudi Arabia’s commitment to addressing poverty, improving health, and ensuring quality education.

1 NO POVERTY

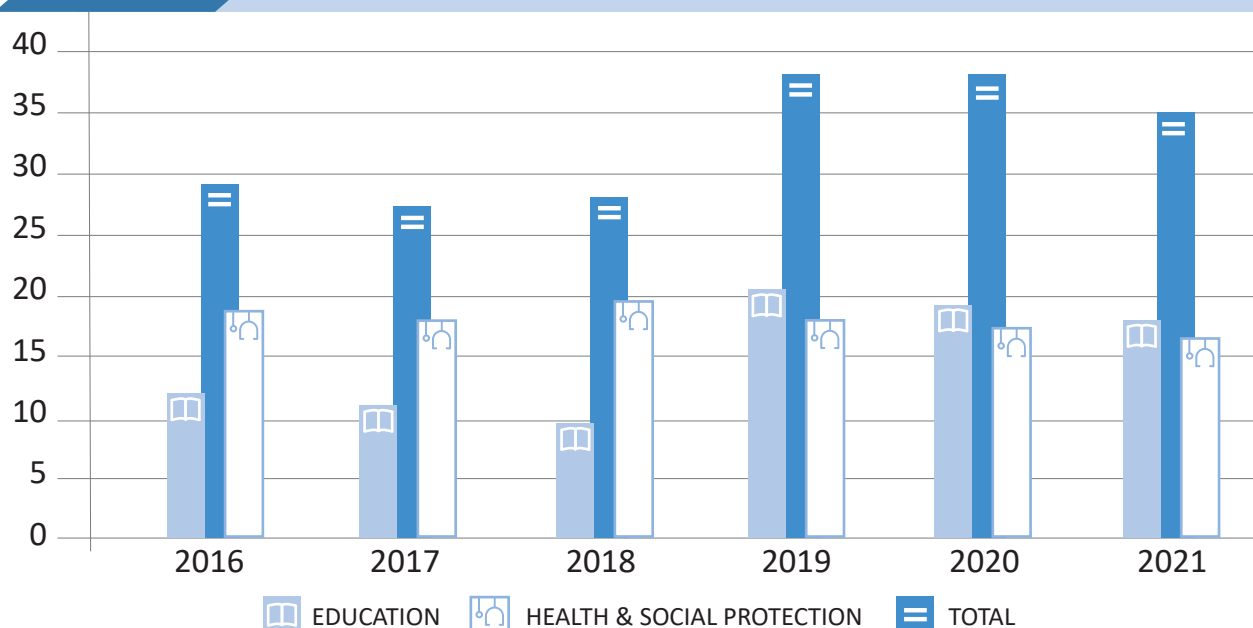


5 GENDER EQUALITY



Regarding key targets of SDG 2 “zero hunger”, data show a decreasing trend in recent years for stunting and malnutrition among children under 5 years of age. In the face of rising global food prices, the government has prioritized food security by increasing agricultural production, particularly in fruits, vegetables, and dairy products; improving the productivity of existing agricultural land; developing new farmland; reducing food waste; and promoting more efficient and sustainable food systems.

Figure 3 : Government spending on essential services as a percentage of GDP:



Source: Voluntary National Review of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2023

<p>2.1.1 Advancing public health and the health industry</p>	<p>Supports Vision 2030 Pillar A Vibrant Society</p> 
<p>Main SDG addressed</p> <p>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p> 	<p>Government implementing partner</p>  <p>الهيئة العامة للغذاء والدواء Saudi Food & Drug Authority</p>

Moreover, with the conflict in Ukraine affecting the supply of cereals (in particular, wheat) and the increase of global commodity prices, the Saudi government has developed a food security action plan to ensure adequate food supply throughout the country.

The government’s strong focus on people and human development reflects very positive results with regards to SDG 5 “gender equality”. Based on Vision 2030, the government actively promotes women’s rights through a range of initiatives which facilitate the participation in the labor force, entrepreneurship, and decision-making (see also section “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment” under chapter “Achievements on Cross-cutting Issues”).

Under the Saudi Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Program, Saudi Arabia has made health a priority. This is reflected in increased budgetary allocations and improved health indicators. The goals and plans of the Government are closely aligned with SDG 3 and its targets. They also match the 2030 Agenda’s aspiration of creating better linkages between health

technology research and development, and access and delivery of quality health care services. With the Health in All Policies (HiAP) initiative launched in 2017 to prioritize the population’s health across all policies and regulations, and the Health Sector Transformation Program issued in 2021, the Government aims at restructuring the health sector into a comprehensive, effective, and integrated health system.

The prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Saudi Arabia - including cancers, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases - is expected to rise, increasing the demand for healthcare services. NCDs currently account for 73.2% of deaths in the country, with cardiovascular disease being the leading cause. The Government is committed to addressing the rising issue of unhealthy lifestyles and has initiated several prevention activities targeting tobacco consumption, unhealthy diets, and physical inactivity. In 2018, the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) developed a strategy to enhance healthy lifestyles and reduce the intake of salt, sugar, saturated and trans fatty acids. This strategy, along with other nutrition policies, aims to empower consumers’ choices and create a healthier food environment to combat NCDs. Overall, the government’s efforts in reducing the prevalence of NCDs have contributed to raising life expectancy of Saudi citizens from 70 years in 2000 to 74.3 in 2021.

As the main regulatory authority for food, medicines, and medical devices in the Kingdom, the SFDA plays a vital role in achieving the objectives of the 2021 Health Transformation Program. Since its establishment in 2007, SFDA has built an excellent track record of services that contribute to the pro-

tection of public health and acquisition of advanced health technologies, products, and services for the population of Saudi Arabia. SFDA also supports specific policies to boost economic growth through scaling up health industry development, in particular manufacturing of medicines and vaccines. In addition, SFDA has a crucial role in expanding biotechnology in the food, medicines and medical devices sector. Through implementing three subsequent multi-year strategic plans, SFDA has built its regulatory framework, related capacities and systems, and focused on achieving relevant results and impact.

UNDP’s partnership and collaboration with SFDA started with supporting the implementation of the second SFDA strategic plan (2012-2016). This included technical assistance to develop SFDA capacities to carry out its mandate and functions. In 2019, UNDP and SFDA renewed the partnership to support the implementation of the third strategic plan (2018-2022), focusing on improving the quality of SFDA services. Specifically, the third strategic plan

further contributed to SFDA’s overall performance and effectiveness through

- 1 developing broad and deep skills, and
- 2 ensuring thoroughness, transparency, and consistency in enforcement and communication.

The UNDP project “Support SFDA Third Strategic Plan” from 2019-2023 has made effective contributions to strengthening the capacities of SFDA’s employees and systems, including in the Food Sector and the Drug Sector. The latter increased the number of scientists with competence in biologics and emerging innovative drug categories. Members of the biologics team have been appointed to international committees. Several pharmaceutical guidelines have been updated. New registration, variation, and renewal files were reviewed. In addition, SFDA’s international positioning and presence was enhanced by supporting its active participation in international conferences. Staff received ongoing training, both in-house and outside the organization. The method of receiving and processing samples delivered for analysis was enhanced.

The SFDA fourth strategic plan (2023-2026) emphasizes:



The innovative and ambitious approach of the fourth strategic plan (2023-2026) has elevated the partnership between SFDA and UNDP to a more substantive level. Specifically, it has led to the formulation of a new project which focuses on adopt-

ing advanced and modern biotechnology in the drug, food, and medical device sectors, as well as sharing and transferring SFDA knowledge and regulatory excellence to other countries.



SFDA Team and UNDP Team join SFDA CEO H.E Dr. Hisham Aljadhey and UNDP Resident Representative Ms. Nahid Hussein at the signing ceremony of the 2024-2026 project “Support SFDA Fourth Strategic Plan Implementation”

The three-year project “Support SFDA Fourth Strategic Plan Implementation” from 2024-2026 closely matches the new UNDP Country Programme’s (2023 - 2027) goal of boosting innovation and digital transitions with the following objectives :

- Support SFDA to embrace and adopt biotechnology in the drugs, food, and medical device sectors;
- Scale up the use of artificial intelligence and big data across SFDA areas of work;
- Align the work of SFDA with the National Strategy for Industry and the Saudi Initiative for Global supply chains;
- Develop and implement a comprehensive, multi-channel and multi-audience communication plan that will help communicate the work of SFDA internally and externally.

2 - 2 Planet

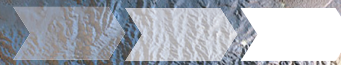
Saudi Arabia and its Vision 2030 are attaching great importance on environmental protection and the preservation of natural resources, in close alignment with the “Planet” Pillar of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With direct linkages to SDG 7 and SDG 13, the Kingdom has set out to increase the share of renewable energy to 50% of its power generation by 2030 and boosted transformative measures including electric vehicle adoption, hydrogen production, energy efficiency initiatives and carbon capture, together with utilization, and storage. Working towards targets of SDG 6, improvements in clean water and sanitation have been achieved.




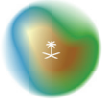
In line with SDG 13, the Kingdom participates actively in climate negotiations, has ratified the Paris Agreement, and aims for net-zero emissions by 2060 through the circular carbon economy approach. The Government has also established ambitious afforestation efforts and protection of marine and land areas, in direct support of SDGs 14 and 15.

UNDP has a long track record of supporting the Kingdom in fulfilling its ambitions towards environmental sustainability in line with Vision 2030 and the “Planet” dimension of the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION 	7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 	13 CLIMATE ACTION 	14 LIFE BELOW WATER 	15 LIFE ON LAND 
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

PLANET



<p>2.2.1 Ensuring safe, efficient and sus- tainable electricity services</p>	<p>Supports Vision 2030 Pillar: A Thriving Economy</p> 
<p>Main SDG addressed:</p> <p>7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY</p>  <p>13 CLIMATE ACTION</p> 	<p>Government implementing partner:</p> <p>وزارة الطاقة MINISTRY OF ENERGY</p> 

Vision 2030 prioritizes the reduction of the country’s reliance on oil and aims to increase the use of renewable energy to move towards a more efficient and sustainable energy system in the Kingdom. To achieve the energy objectives within the scope of Vision 2030 and the NTP 2020, the Ministry of Energy (MOE) aims to provide a comprehensive and efficient electricity service in line with global best practices, and to create the required policies for ensuring a high standard of electrical safety in the Kingdom.

As the lead authority for managing the energy ecosystem in the Kingdom, MOE works on various programmes through an integrated strategy which has mainstreamed the concepts of innovation, technology, and artificial intelligence in the energy sector. UNDP supports these efforts in close collaboration with MOE through the project “Advisory Support to the Deputyship of Electricity Affairs at

the Ministry of Energy” which has been extended to the end of 2024. The project provides comprehensive technical and advisory support to the Ministry to improve its operational efficiency and achieve its strategic objectives.

Through investments in targeted research, the project greatly enhanced the understanding of the potential and the impact of Saudi Arabia’s shift towards a greater share of renewable energy sources and energy storage technologies in the Kingdom’s energy mix. With six studies on the impact of renewable energy and storage technologies, and two studies on the integration of electrical capacities produced from renewable sources into the grid, the project also helped the development of policies and strategies to accelerate the transition to renewable energy. During the review period of this report, the project has also contributed to adjusting the electricity distribution voltage from 127/220 volts to the international standard of 230/400 volts, developing studies for efficient and environmental friendly delivery of electricity services to remote villages, updating the Saudi Grid Code.

In addition to developing MOE’s own capacities, the project supported the establishment of the Deputyship’s Technology and Innovation Department and its foundational strategy, including through organizing a study tours to the United Kingdom, France and Spain, to learn from existing best practices, technologies and policies.

Overall, the project has provided MOE with a solid and research-based foundation to take informed decisions on the Kingdom's way forward in deploying and expanding renewable energy and storage solutions in Saudi Arabia's energy industry. More specifically, the project has demonstrated that the costs of renewable energy technologies are decreasing over time and can be further reduced through upgrading existing infrastructure, simultaneous expansion of transmission and distribution networks, and by combining intermittent renewable energy sources with non-renewable sources. This success has been a key step in

the MOE's efforts to meet its Vision 2030 goals, the SDGs, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. It has also helped to position Saudi Arabia as a leader in the transition to a low-carbon sustainable future. Based on its tangible and promising results, the ongoing MOE-UNDP partnership has potential for scale-up. Potential areas of engagement include replicating the support UNDP has provided to the Deputyship of Electricity Affairs' Technology and Innovation Department to other departments, expanding support to MOE's international cooperation on renewable energy solutions, supporting the development of an SDG impact report, and advancing digitalization.



The Regional Director Dr. Abdullah Aldardari on his inaugural visit to the Kingdom visiting the Assistant Minister of Energy his Excellency Engineer Nasser Alqahtani along with the UNDP country office team

<p>2.2.2 Contributing to sustainable and integrated water management</p>	<p>Supports Vision 2030 Pillar: A Vibrant Society</p> 	
<p>Main SDG addressed:</p> <p>6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION</p> 	<p>Government implementing partner:</p>  <p>وزارة البيئة والمياه والزراعة Ministry of Environment Water & Agriculture</p>	

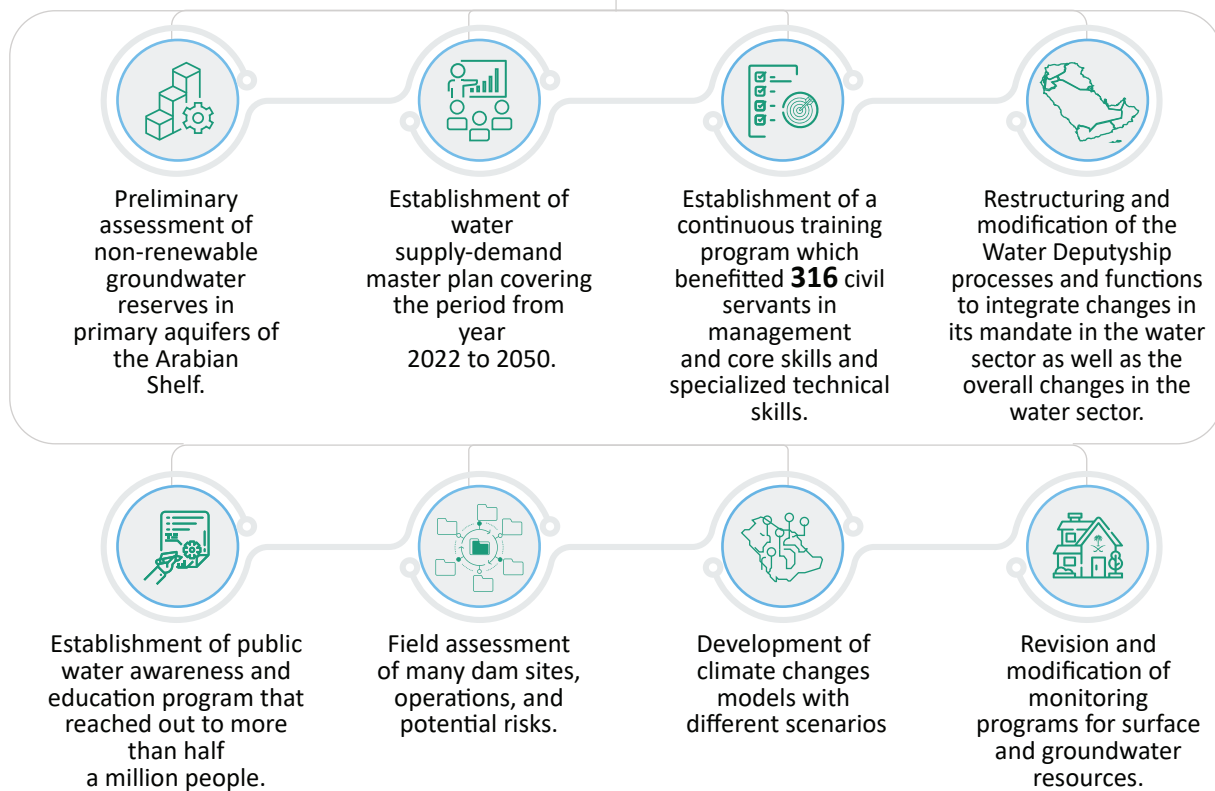
One of the most prominent challenges for the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is to continue to ensure a sustainable water supply to all urban, agricultural, and industrial sectors in the coming decades while addressing other challenges such as aging water and wastewater infrastructure, aquifer depletions, climate change, increasing torrential flood risks and associated environmental risks.

Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Program (NTP) aim to address these challenges through ensuring availability of the necessary infrastructure and achieving operational excellence in the efficient use of available water resources. In recent years, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made enormous efforts to protect its water resources and ensure a reliable and lasting supply of high-quality water for its population. In implementing the goals of Vision 2030 and the NTP, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MEWA) developed the National Water Strategy 2030 which was published in January 2018. It aims to reform the wa-

ter and wastewater sectors, thus ensuring sustainable development of the Kingdom's water resources while providing affordable high-quality services.

Building on its productive partnership with MEWA over many years, which included several projects and culminated in 2017 in the development of the National Water Strategy 2030, UNDP continued to collaborate with MEWA to ensure the strategy's effective implementation. Under a project from 2018-2023 which focused on capacity development and services provision for integrated and sustainable management of the water sector, UNDP support both, the Water Deputyship within MEWA, as well as the Kingdom's broader social, economic and environmental goals. The project has been successful in strengthening the technical, organizational and human capacities of the Water Deputyship, allowing staff to effectively implement Integrated Water Resources Management principles with a focus on three main project outcomes and ten objectives, as outlined below:

In 2022, the project's achievements were as follows:



Based on the achievements of the project in the past five years, the final project evaluation has recommended a continuation of the productive partnership and collaboration between MEWA and UNDP to ensure water and food security in the Kingdom by addressing the persistent challenges and considering paradigm shifts. On this basis, MEWA and UNDP signed a new project for the period 2023-2028 which aims to take additional

steps towards the Government's goal of integrated and sustainable development and management of the water sector. In line with Vision 2030, the new project supports sustainable economic, social, and cultural development in Saudi Arabia through unlocking new water resources and advancing efficient water management practices, while also promoting evidence-based decision-making and strengthening capacities in MEWA.



UN
2023 WATER
CONFERENCE

NEW YORK
22-24
MARCH
2023

In 2022, UNDP successfully supported MEWA's application to participate in the **United Nations 2023 Water Conference** side event on "Identifying and bridging the capacity gaps to achieve water-related SDGs" which took place at UN Head-

quarters in New York on March 23, 2023. The side event focused on enhancing awareness and sharing experiences and lessons on capacity building for timely achievement of SDG 6.

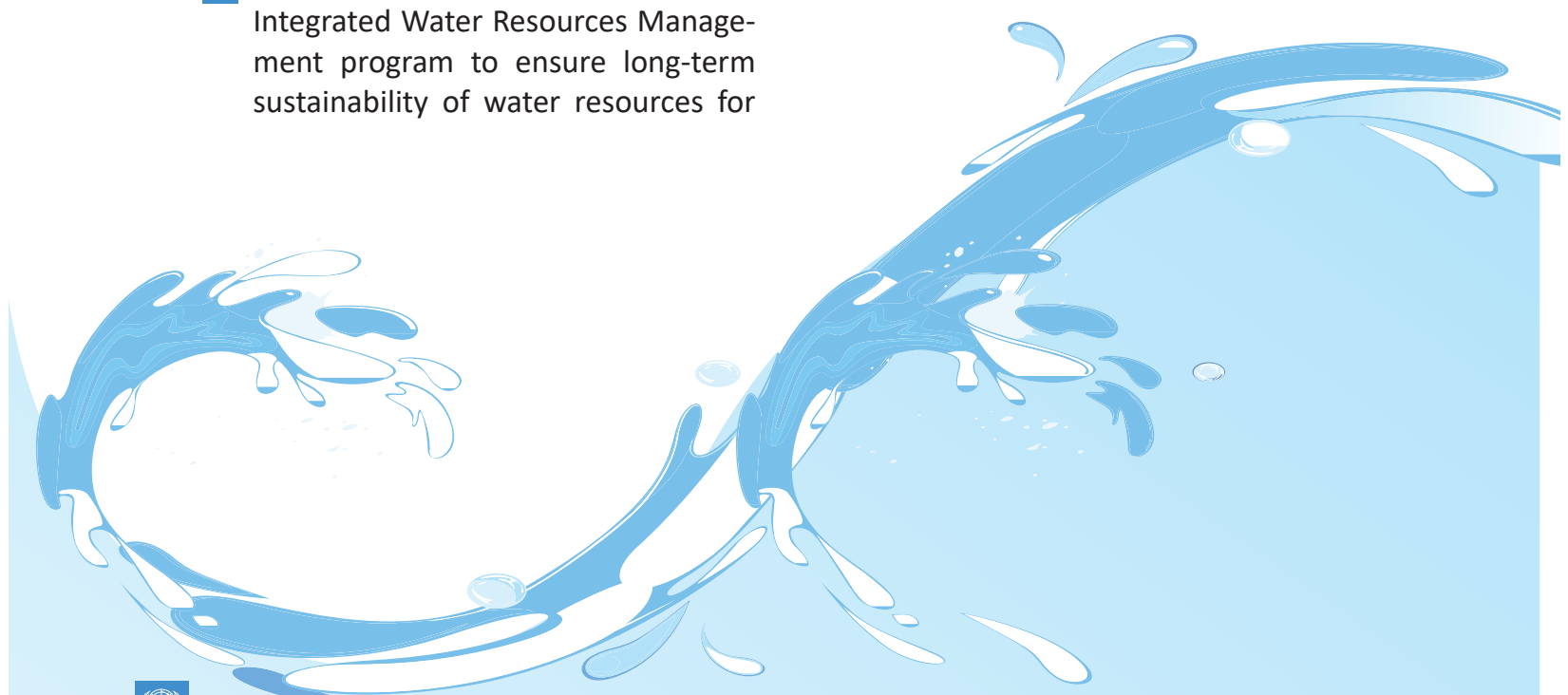
The first year of implementation of the new project has witnessed progress and results on each of the four planned project outputs, including

- 1 the collation of critical hydrological data for Kingdom-wide studies and the use of GIS technology for creating layers of available water resources and related infrastructure,
- 2 support to a Kingdom-wide water resources assessment with a focus on sustainable food production, as well as assessment of treated sewage effluent for reuse, mainly in the agricultural sector to support the sustainability of water resources,
- 3 high-level policy support to the Deputy Minister including on global water initiatives and partnerships, as well as comprehensive technical and advisory support through UNDP experts in different MEWA General Directorates, including on hydrology, hydrogeology, GIS, geophysics, remote sensing, water governance and planning, etc., and
- 4 progress towards developing a holistic Integrated Water Resources Management program to ensure long-term sustainability of water resources for

Saudi Arabia's socio-economic transformation through

- a continuing to examine all components of Saudi Arabia's integrated water resources management, and
- b drafting the Saudi Code for Water Resources and their Uses by using the codification legislative tool and tailoring it to the requirements of providing integrated water resources management in the Kingdom.

The final evaluation of the preceding project, that was completed in February 2023, and the results to date of the new project, have confirmed that the MEWA/UNDP partnership serves as a model for participatory collaboration which encompasses both policy formulation and its subsequent implementation. As such, it should be considered not only for the water sector, but for potential replication in other collaborative endeavors between UNDP and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and as a best practice example for other countries looking to undertake a similar process.



<p>2.2.3 Advancing a greener Saudi Arabia</p>	<p>Supports Vision 2030 Pillar: A Vibrant Society</p> 	
<p>Main SDG addressed:</p> <p>13 CLIMATE ACTION </p> <p>15 LIFE ON LAND </p>	<p>Government implementing partner:</p>  <p>المركز الوطني لتنمية الغطاء النباتي ومكافحة التصحر National Center for Vegetation Cover Development & Combating Desertification</p>	

About 2 million hectares of Saudi Arabia are covered by forests which represent 1.1% of the total land area. In view of rising temperatures and other pressures on the Kingdom’s diverse ecosystems, Saudi Arabia has identified desertification as a major environmental challenge and is working to address it through a range of measures, such as improving land use practices, using of water-saving technologies, promoting sustainable agriculture, and supporting the development of sustainable land management systems. In addition, the Government has taken measures to protect and restore degraded forests and woodlands, and to promote sustainable forest management practices. Sustainable wildlife management and conservation of threatened and endangered species are also prioritized by conserving critical habitats and preventing illegal hunting and trade in wildlife and wildlife products.

These and other measures have already resulted in significant progress in the protection of the Kingdom’s biodiversity. For this purpose, 15 sanctuaries have been built to protect critically endangered spe-

cies and promote biodiversity managed by the National Center for Wildlife. Between 2017 and 2020, the proportion of land under protected natural areas has increased from 4.56 to 16.21%. As a leader in sustainable development solutions, Riyadh has set out to plant more than 7.5 million trees across the city and increase its green space from 1.7 to 28 m² per capita.

These achievements, as well as further acceleration of holistic progress across all national environmental sustainability goals and the global SDGs, are guided by the ambitious and mutually reinforcing Saudi Arabia and Middle East Green initiatives under Vision 2030. To support the implementation of these initiatives and the realization of the Kingdom’s vision aimed at strengthening and protecting its precious ecosystems, the National Center for Vegetation Cover and Combating Desertification (NCVC) has been established in 2019 under MEWA to combat desertification, develop and rehabilitate forest vegetation cover, protect local endangered plant species, and develop and manage national parks.

To ensure that the newly established NCVC can effectively fulfill its mandate and responsibilities, UNDP has signed a project with NCVC for the period 2022-2024 to strengthen its institutional and technical capacities with a strong focus on building the Center's IT and digital infrastructure, as well as its policy, legislative and regulatory tools. In addition, the project aims to promote forest conservation practices, develop a roadmap for achieving the Kingdom's ambitious afforestation goals, and increase environmental awareness at policy and local levels to ensure the long-term sustainability of NCVC activities.



MEWA Minister H.E. Eng. Abdulrahman Al-Fadli and UNDP Resident Representative Ms. Nahid Hussein signing the 2023-2028 project “Integrated Water Resource Management” into effect

2.2.4 Reducing the UNDP Country Office's carbon footprint

As a global leader in the fight against climate change, UNDP has been climate neutral in its global operations by procuring carbon credits since 2015. But offsetting is not enough: To stay within a 1.5°C increase in global warming – which is needed to avoid catastrophic impact of climate change – greenhouse gas emissions must get halved by 2030 and be reduced to net-zero by 2050. In August 2019, UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner therefore launched the ‘Greening Moonshot’, committing the entire organization to reduce its operational carbon footprint by 50% by 2030.

Rendering of suggested location of PV panels on UNDP Saudi Arabia Office premises

To contribute to the organization's global goal, UNDP Saudi Arabia's Information & Technology Management team successfully submitted a project for funding from the global 2023 UNDP Moonshot Facility. The approved project serves to install a 39.6 kilowatt-peak (kWp) Photo-Voltaic (PV) system in the UNDP parking lot which can cover 17.1% of the UNDP Office's energy needs by producing a total of 73,791 kWh/year. As such, the PV-system helps to significantly reduce UNDP's CO2 emissions as well as the costs of purchasing electrical power from the national grid.

2 - 3 Prosperity

“A thriving economy” pillar of Vision 2030 provides the strategic foundation for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to create a dynamic and transformative environment that supports economic growth and inclusive and sustainable job creation. It also provides the basis for achieving key economic goals under the “Prosperity” Pillar of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including SDG 8, 9 and 11. In recent years, Saudi

Arabia has reduced its dependency on oil and natural to expand sectors such as tourism, technology, and diversified energy. The Kingdom has also made significant progress in creating jobs, with a particular focus on female labor force participation, which rose from 19.4% in 2015 to 36% in 2022. Multiple large-scale urban development programs are expanding green spaces, pedestrian walkways, and recreational areas.



PROSPERITY



Over many years, and with several ongoing projects which support both, “A thriving economy” and “A vibrant society” pillars of Vision 2030, UNDP has been a reliable and effective partner in contributing to the Government’s vision for inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development and its aspiration to achieve the required transformative changes towards a dynamic and diverse world-class economy. The following gives an overview of key initiatives as well as progress and key results achieved during 2022-2023.

In assisting the Government to achieve its Vision 2030 goals and promote socio-economic development with a holistic approach instead of the conventional sector-by-sector paradigm, UNDP embarked on an umbrella program with the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP) in 2019 to mainstream social and economic development across all sectors and policies, and to establish a strong foundation for efficient, evidence-based decision-making.

In light of the good and promising results the program had shown between 2019 and 2021 – ranging from effective assistance in producing strategic analyses and reports to identifying and nurturing regional and international partnerships, including through

Saudi Arabia’s participation in global high-level economic conferences and fora - the extension of the program to the end of 2024 has so far resulted in supporting MEP in

- 1 leading an evidence-based and participatory process to complete the Kingdom’s Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2023 for presentation at the High Level Political Forum of Sustainable Development in July 2023,
- 2 strengthening MEP’s macroeconomic policy and planning function, including establishment of a Medium-Term Macroeconomic Framework,
- 3 conducting a comprehensive data-gap analysis,
- 4 supporting key institutions incl. the General Authority for Statistics (GA-STAT), Saudi Authority for Data and Artificial Intelligence (SDAIA), and The National Center for Performance Management (ADAA), and
- 5 carrying out on-the-job trainings for national staff on macroeconomic modelling, impact analysis and measurements, financial programming and policy, as well as statistical needs and requirements.

Mainstreaming and localizing the SDGs

The results and progress on points 1 and 4 above – that pertain to support mainstreaming of the SDGs in Saudi Arabia - are grounded in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s supreme commitment to the global 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The Kingdom has been among the first countries worldwide to pledge its commitment to the SDGs when they were endorsed in September 2015. MEP has been mandated by Royal Order to follow up on this im-

portant dossier by aligning national planning and implementation at all levels and in all sectors with the global SDGs, their indicators and targets.

To ensure an effective process of mainstreaming and localizing the SDGs in Saudi Arabia, the MEP led the development of a National Sustainability Roadmap. UNDP supported MEP in the formulation and the implementation of the roadmap by



1 providing socio-economic and environmental policy advisory services,



2 contributing to the formulation and publication of the 2023 Voluntary National Review (VNR), the 2nd VNR for Saudi Arabia, and



3 strengthening reporting through a comprehensive data gap analysis.



MEP’s HE Vice Minister of Economy and Planning and Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Mr. Abdullah Aldardari, discuss enhancing cooperation and recent developments

In this respect, UNDP's contributions during 2022-2023 have been instrumental in establishing the Kingdom's institutional structure to facilitate cooperation on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. The components of this structure include:

CEDA: Council of Economic and Development Affairs, headed by the Crown Prince, oversees economic and development policy, including Vision 2030 and SDGs.

SDSC: Sustainable Development Steering Committee Chaired by H.E. Minister of Economy and Planning and comprised of 20 government entities, which include Ministries of (Human Resources and Social Development, Health, Education, Environment Water and Agriculture, Energy, Finance, Justice, Industry and Mineral Resources, Municipal Rural Affairs and Housing, Interior, Commerce, Transport and Logistics Services, Foreign Affairs, Communications and Information Technology, Investment, and Media), the Development Authorities Support Center, Human Rights Commission, and Strategic Management Office (SMO). SDSC has the mandate to manage and monitor the SDG implementation and reports progress to CEDA.

Executive Committee: Oversees implementation of SDSC's decisions, ensures coordination and integration, reports on the country's SDG progress.

Advisory Board: Provides advice and recommendations to SDSC and Executive Committee, includes experts from various stakeholder groups.

Secretariat: The role of the Secretariat is played by the Ministry of Economy and Planning, which is responsible for administrative and technical support for SDSC and monitoring SDG progress.

Working Groups: Three groups (Policy Development, Data and Reporting, Strategic Enablers) support SDG implementation, provide collaboration and coordination platform among stakeholders. They are composed of representatives from key government agencies and stakeholders, including the private sector, academia, civil society organizations, and international organizations.

In addition to the structures listed above, the following government agencies undertake particularly important role in the coordination and tracking of the achievement of SDGs in Saudi Arabia:

Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP): Coordinates SDG implementation and monitoring, oversees development of national strategies and plans, collaborates with other agencies.

General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT): Produces data and information for SDG indicators, ensures availability of reliable data, designs new surveys, and enhances existing ones.

National Center for Performance Measurement (Aadaa): Assesses and monitors government entities' performance, improves efficiency and accountability, assists in planning stage, and promotes performance focused culture. Tracks 22 SDSN KPIs through Vision 2030.

In October 2022, UNDP signed a memorandum of understanding with the Balad Al Khair Endowment Fund (KSA Khair), an organization devoted to bringing communities together to tackle local development challenges. This partnership has worked to realize the 'Green Circle' initiative, which will raise awareness about developmental issues and offer a forum for diverse local stakeholders in Saudi Arabia to come together to cross-pollinate their sustainability efforts and plans.

2.3.2

Supporting quality of life for all and sustainable cities

Supports Vision 2030 Pillar:
A Vibrant Society



Main SDG addressed:

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



UN system partner:

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Government implementing partner:

وزارة الشؤون البلدية والقروية
Ministry of Municipal & Rural Affairs



Vision 2030 - in its Quality of Life Program 2020 – fosters developing “three cities to be recognized in the top-ranked 100 cities in the world”. As about 85 percent of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s population is living in urban areas, Vision 2030 emphasizes urban planning and management as fundamental for the country’s prosperity. Whereas the Kingdom has made great progress in developing advanced infrastructure to respond to rapid urban growth over the last decades, the continued provision of quality services to a fast-growing population across the 13 regions is posing significant challenges.

For many years, UNDP, together with UN-Habitat, contributed to realizing the Kingdom’s urban planning goals with the Future Saudi Cities Program. At the

time, the program supported the former Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs in strengthening the Saudi planning system. In addition to producing detailed studies on urban institutions, governance, municipal finance and spatial planning in close consultations with public and private stakeholders including youth and women, the program helped in developing the National Spatial Strategy 2030 which seeks to establish better urban and rural linkages and to overcome regional disparities in the Kingdom through improved regional coordination, including creation of development corridors and targeted investment in less developed regions, as well as designating small and medium sized cities as regional growth centers.

From 2020 to the end of 2022, a follow-up project allowed UNDP to support the NSS Implementation Office inside the Deputyship of Urban Planning and Lands with specific focus on three outcomes:

Improved capacity for implementing the National Spatial Strategy 2030



الاستراتيجية العمرانية الوطنية
National Spatial Strategy

Better access to urban data between line ministries in the NSS2030 platform



Improved localization of sustainable urban development at national, regional and local authorities



“Our cities have grown significantly in recent decades. To ensure we can continue to enhance the quality of life for all and meet the needs and requirements of our citizens, we will continue to ensure high quality services such as water, electricity, public transport, and roads are properly provided. Open and landscaped areas will also be developed further, to meet the recreational needs of individuals and families.”

Vision 2030’s Quality of Life Program 2020



Aiming at improving the capacities of the Ministry of Municipal Rural Affairs and Housing (MOMRAH) to effectively implement the National Spatial Strategy 2030, the project achieved multiple milestones in 2022, such as developing the organizational and procedural guide for the strategy, as well as supporting integration of its policies into MOMRAH initiatives and sectoral policies.

In addition, accessibility of urban data between line ministries on the NSS2030 platform has been strengthened. Although contributions to municipal finance were still limited, the government's commitment to support a gradual move towards decentralization should allow UNDP and UN-Habitat to increase their efforts towards local level support.



From July to August 2022, the project served to organize a capacity development for 30 staff members from different Amanahs (municipalities), Royal Commissions and development authorities, to strengthen their capacities in support of increasing urban efficiency and productivity in different regions of Saudi Arabia. The training focused on urban management, as well as urban economy and finance mechanisms. It also allowed to focus on cutting-edge transdisciplinary topics including financial tools for sustainability, circular economy, smart urban management, and adaptive urban planning to mobilize private and public investments.

Lecturers and participants of the first part of the MOMRAH employee training program which took place in Riyadh from July 17 – August 4, 2022

The second phase of the capacity-building programme, from September – November

2022, included a study tour for 25 Government officials to Barcelona, Spain, to engage with best practices in sustainable urban planning to complement the knowledge that participants received during the first phase. The study tour proved beneficiary for forging partnerships and joint work programmes between city authorities and their counterparts regional authorities in Saudi Arabia.

Admittedly, the project has been successful in strengthening MOMRAH's implementation capacities. It also contributed to transforming the role of MOMRAH and related ministries and authorities in the medium- to long-term. Project components were aligned with national development priorities and sector strategies such as the MOMRAH sector strategy, the National Spatial Strategy 2030, and Vision 2030 on enhancing the quality of life for all and meeting the needs and requirements of citizens.



Lecturers and participants of the first part of the MOMRAH employee training program which took place in Riyadh from July 17 – August 4, 2022



H.E. Mr. Majid Al-Hogail, Minister of MOMRAH, and UNDP Resident Representative Ms. Nahid Hussein, at the signing of the new project. (L-R) Abdulrahman Alghamdi (Programme Analyst at UNDP), Dr. Ayman Elhefnawi (Team Leader at UN-Habitat), Ms. Nahid Hussein (Resident Representative of UNDP), H.E. Mr. Majid Al-Hogail (Minister of MOMRAH), Fahad Almutlaq (Deputy Minister of Spatial Planning), Hatem Alkathlan (Assistant Deputy Minister of Spatial Planning), Abdulaziz bin Mohammad Al-Saman (General Supervisor of the General Administration for Partnerships and International Cooperation at MOMRAH).

With this new project from 2023-2026, MOMRAH aims to achieve the following outcomes to further enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of urban planning and development in the Kingdom, in line with Vision 2030 and the SDGs:

1 Delivering International Best Practices:

The project aims to ensure that regional plans, local plans, and urban codes adhere to international best practices, setting a high standard for Saudi Arabia’s urban development.

2 Activating the Public Realm: By igniting the Public Realm Program, this project lays the foundation for effective public realm developments, enriching the quality of life for Saudi citizens.

3 Empowering Local Planning Departments: Through a new Operating Model for Planning Departments, the initiative empowers and enables local planning departments to better serve their communities.

4 Enhancing the Municipal System:

The project seeks to improve and restructure the municipal system, updating settlement boundaries, revising classification, and optimizing service delivery for greater efficiency and sustainability.

5 Restructuring the Planning Framework:

The Saudi planning framework will undergo a significant overhaul, with planning tools redefined, updated, and improved in alignment with new classification and categorization standards. Additionally, new tools will be introduced to support implementation and capacity-building efforts.

6 Upscaling the MOMRAH Urban Design Studio: The existing MOMRAH Urban Design Studio will evolve into a fully-fledged Urban Lab, equipped to spearhead innovative projects and serve as a hub for satellite labs supporting MOMRAH’s mission.

2.3.3
Enabling access to adequate and affordable housing

Supports Vision 2030 Pillar:
 A Vibrant Society



Main SDG addressed:



UN system partner:



Government implementing partner:



“UNDP’s advanced and rigorous selection process greatly helps to identify suitable high-caliber experts for MOMRAH. We match these experts up with our own staff from the first day, so they can apply their practical experiences directly to MOMRAH’s ongoing activities and plans.”

Eng. Hatem Alkhatlan,
 Assistant Deputy Minister for Spatial Planning,
 MOMRAH



The training team visited the urban design studio

The new project represents another milestone in the well-established and successful collaboration and partnership between MOMRAH, UNDP and UN-Habitat in Saudi Arabia. Drawing on the proven strengths of both UNDP and UN-Habitat as topnotch knowledge providers, capacity builders, and facilitators of partnerships at local, regional, and global levels, the project serves as a catalyst for making the Kingdom’s cit-

ies more compact, integrated, sustainable and resilient. In addition, it serves to make management and service delivery at municipal level more efficient, thus improving the quality of life for Saudi citizens. Rapid population growth and high levels of urbanization, as well as a widening gap between housing supply and demand have contributed to the high cost of housing and made it difficult for many low- and middle-



The training team during the special tour of Diriyah

income households to attain home ownership. In view of this, access to adequate and affordable housing for all citizens has become a top priority for the government. Due to the government's strong efforts and several successful initiatives in recent years, the percentage of the Saudi population that own housing units has started to rise from 59.9 percent in 2017 to 62 percent in 2019 and is likely to achieve the government's target of 70 percent home ownership by 2030.

At the core of this positive development lies the Vision 2030's Housing Program, launched in 2018 as one of eleven Vision Realization Programs. It provides housing solutions that meet the needs of Saudi families and contributes to urban transformation across the country since housing has direct implications for land use, population density, economic growth, employment, service provision and related issues.



Amongst other goals, the Housing Program aims to increase the financial affordability of housing for low-income populations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by complementing the traditional private and public housing sectors with innovative housing solutions, at the lowest cost possible, and financing of projects for the poorest.

Following this vision, UNDP deepened its partnership with MOMRAH to support implementation of the "Technical Support Project for Effective Implementation of Developmental Housing Initiatives" from 2020-2022. The project which concluded in April 2022 was rated highly relevant and successful in strengthening participation of the non-profit sector in

housing provision as part of the national Development Housing Program. With a focus on female single headed households and low income families, the project has been highly effective in:

- 1 strengthening knowledge and understanding of development housing initiatives and the wider urban development agenda through familiarization with best practices from four countries (Austria, England, Netherland, South Africa),
- 2 developing guidelines, templates and tools to facilitate broad engagement of the non-profit sector and help accelerate housing delivery in the longer term,
- 3 identifying bottlenecks in existing laws, regulations, and policies towards housing provision,
- 4 advising on the implementation of a comprehensive development housing strategy, and
- 5 recommending new beneficiary selection criteria and approaches for improved beneficiary support.

The project provided the required benchmarks and clearer perspectives for further deepening the partnership and collaboration between MOMRAH and UNDP on expanding the social housing stock in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with strong regional and international linkages, increased participation of beneficiary groups and Saudi experts, and targeted investments in contextual studies for current and future delivery of housing supply.

<p>2.3.4 Promoting urban planning through data and women's empowerment</p>	<p>Supports Vision 2030 Pillar A Vibrant Society:</p> 
<p>Main SDG addressed:</p>  	<p>Government implementing partner:</p>  <p>الهيئة الملكية لمدينة الرياض ROYAL COMMISSION FOR RIYADH CITY</p>

According to estimates from the latest revision of the UN World Urbanization Prospects, the population of Riyadh City has grown almost seventy-fold from 111,123 in 1950 to 7,682,430 in 2023, and may probably exceed 8 million in 2025.

This dynamic population growth has led the Arriyadh Development Authority (ADA) - which preceded the Royal Commission for Riyadh City (RCRC) until 2019 - to promote comprehensive urban planning in the Saudi capital. The RCRC does this by working with both the public and private sectors in collecting a wide spectrum of socio-economic data from across the city and analyzing them for strategic planning.

An early milestone in these efforts has been the agreement between ADA and UNDP in 2009 to establish the Riyadh Urban Observatory (RUO). Since then, UNDP has been engaged in a continuous partnership with the RUO in developing effective monitoring systems for sustainable urban development. Vision 2030 - with its goal to ensure rapid population growth

goes hand in hand with quality of life for all, including the provision of high quality services such as water, electricity, public transport and roads, as well as balanced use of urban space to meet environmental sustainability objectives and the recreational needs of individuals and families – has further contributed to the relevance of urban planning and confirmed the need for UNDP's support through facilitating capacity development, knowledge transfer, access and use of international best practices, and a global perspective and linkages to the SDGs.

Since 2009, subsequent phases of the project have enabled RUO to formulated a robust Urban Database aligned with the UN Habitat Global Urban Indicators. Mainly, RUO has become competent in provision of first-class urban services, including through the development of a comprehensive database combining 80 national and global indicators, and collating data from 75 sectors in Riyadh City. In 2022, UNDP has further contributed to assessments of RUO's capacities and its indicators, as well as trainings on how the indicators are linked to the objectives of the Riyadh Strategy, national Vision 2030 objectives and the SDGs. As part of its support, UNDP provided training to 2,218 Saudi nationals on local urban indicators.

As among the fastest growing cities in the world, Riyadh represents the largest urban agglomeration in the Gulf region and about 50% of Saudi Arabia's non-oil economy. In view of Riyadh's growing importance as a major regional and global economic hub, the new Riyadh Strategy 2030

seeks to transform the capital city into one of the world's top ten city economies, doubling its population from the current 7.5 million to 15–20 million people, while increasing the number of visitors to more than 40 million by 2030. The Strategy will be implemented through 26 sectoral programmes, including more than 100 initiatives, and over 700 pioneer projects across the various sectors and in different parts of the city. The RCRC will supervise the implementation of the Strategy by monitoring and measuring more than 50 performance indicators based on benchmarks against the world's leading cities.

As part of supporting the ambitious goals for Riyadh's transformation, the RCRC and UNDP agreed to implement the umbrella programme "Support to the Implementation and Delivery of Riyadh City Programme". With a timeframe from 2022-2025, the programme not only aims to maintain and expand support to RUO, but also envisages to increase women's par-

ticipation in the workforce in Riyadh City.

The programme's continued support to the RUO seeks to consolidate RUO's capacities and its comprehensive urban monitoring and reporting system. It also uses lessons learned that can be considered in the development and strengthening of urban observatories and royal commissions in other Saudi cities, and of other government agencies and institutions in the Kingdom. The programme's second project – which is yet to be signed – focuses on increasing women's participation in the workforce, including in leadership roles. Once officially agreed, it would be implemented by the RCRC's Human Capital Program and will contribute to the goal of realizing the potential of the female workforce in Riyadh city. It is based on the Vision 2030 premise of women's economic empowerment as a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development, in alignment with the global Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.



Group photo during an event of the UNDP team with RCRC trainees

<p>2.3.5 Transforming Riyadh into a world-class city economy</p>	<p>Supports Vision 2030 Pillar: A Vibrant Society</p> 
<p>Main SDG addressed:</p> 	<p>Government implementing partner:</p>  <p>أمانة منطقة الرياض RIYADH REGION MUNICIPALITY</p>



The Kingdom’s financial and administrative capital, Riyadh City, is at the heart of the country’s major economic and social transformation led by the goals and targets of Vision 2030.

Recent years have seen Riyadh evolve into the largest economy in the Middle East and North Africa region, having benefited from urban planning expertise, infrastructure investment, inward migration of workers, and local and foreign direct investment. To support this substantial growth with a clear vision and plan, the Royal Commission for Riyadh City drafted the Riyadh Strategy 2030 (not yet approved) which aims to transform the capital city into one of the world’s top ten city economies.

To support these ambitious goals, UNDP signed the “Technical Assistance to Riyadh Amanah” (TARA) project with the Riyadh Municipality in September 2022 for a two-year period. The project draws on UNDP’s extensive international expertise in urban legislation and policy-development, data use, mu-

nicipal-level planning and capacity development, as well as community-level engagement of women and youth. Specifically, Riyadh Municipality and UNDP cooperation will focus on the following four key results:

- 1 Riyadh Municipality Mayor’s Office will tap into international best practices to use cutting-edge expert advice in decision-making.
- 2 Riyadh Amanah can effectively use big data and evidence-based decision-making in areas of policy, strategy, infrastructure, and service delivery.
- 3 Public-private Partnerships (PPPs) to be mobilized for active involvement in infrastructure development and service delivery.
- 4 Successful community and voluntary engagement and participation across value chain of municipal services.




The second output on effective use of big data and evidence-based decision-making will involve developing the digital capacity of Riyadh Region Municipality by enabling it to adopt and apply new digital technologies and platforms in its core and service delivery functions. The focus will be on digital solutions for efficient data collection, analysis, harmonization, management, exchange, sharing, communication and publications.

The fourth key result on successful community and voluntary engagement promotes equal participation and engagement of women and youth, as well as

other vulnerable groups (including the elderly, people with disabilities and migrants) in stakeholder forums, participatory events, and other relevant project activities. It also seeks to engage both male and female Riyadh Region Municipality staff in project activities. Equal participation of female staff will be promoted in line with the Vision 2030 objectives of providing equal opportunities and developing women's talents, investing in their productive capabilities, and enabling them to contribute to the development of the Saudi economy and society.



His Highness Prince Faisal bin Abdulaziz bin Ayyaf, Mayor of Riyadh Region, meeting with the Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States, Abdallah Al Dardari, the Resident Representative of UNDP Saudi Arabia, Ms. Nahid Hussein, and the Head of the Urban and Local Development Portfolio at UNDP Saudi Arabia, Abdulrahman Alghamdi

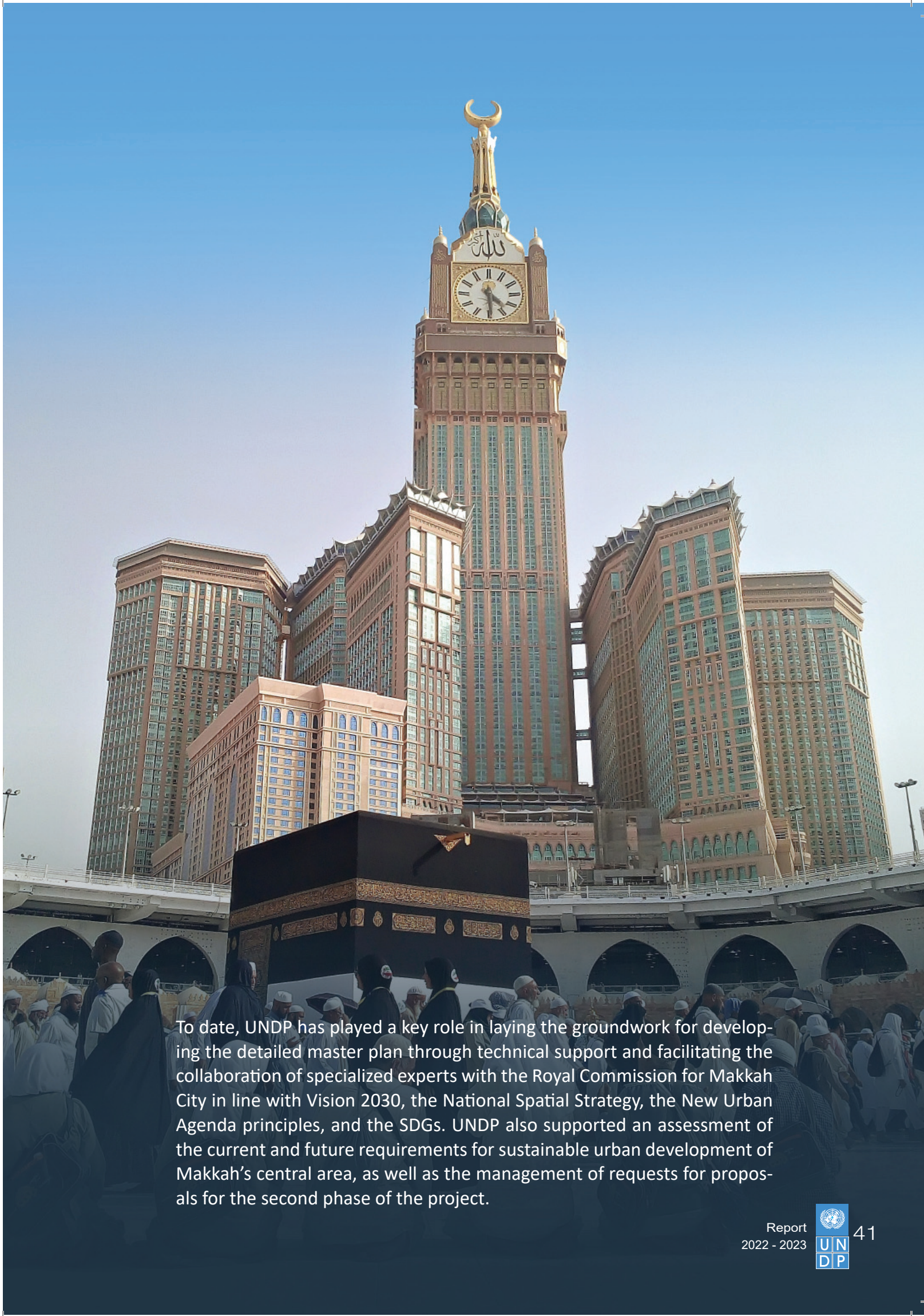
<p>2.3.6 Providing high-quality infrastructure and services for sustainable tourism</p>	<p>Supports Vision 2030 Pillar: A Vibrant Society</p> 
<p>Main SDG addressed:</p> <p>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p> <p>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p> <p>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION</p> 	<p>Government implementing partner:</p>  <p>الهيئة الملكية لمدينة مكة المكرمة والمشاعر المقدسة ROYAL COMMISSION FOR MAKKAH CITY AND HOLY SITES</p>



Makkah City, one of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s two holy cities, alongside Madinah City Makkah encompasses Holy Shrines of great global significance and accommodates millions of Haj and Umrah pilgrims every year. These religious pilgrimages are central to Makkah’s economy. At the same time, the great number of visitors puts a substantial strain on the city’s infrastructure and services. In line with the Vision 2030 goal to boost sustainable tourism as part of diversifying the economy, the Kingdom seeks to provide high-quality services to 30 million Umrah visitors annually by 2030. To realize this vision, the Royal Commission for Makkah City and Holy Sites (RCMC) was established by Royal Decree. Its mission is to enhance services in Makkah City and the Holy Sites which correspond to their religious significance and support the ultimate objective of transforming Makkah into a polycentric, livable, culturally rich, resilient, and sustainable city by 2070.

The RCMC aims to contribute significantly to achieving Vision 2030’s specific objectives, particularly by addressing the

challenges associated with infrastructure and service delivery during the pilgrimage seasons. Building on the Government’s long-standing partnership and collaboration with UNDP and UN-Habitat in the areas of urban planning, land management, and enhancement of public utilities, services and facilities, the Royal Commission for Makkah City and Holy Sites (RCMC), UNDP and UN-Habitat jointly agreed and signed the project “Support to the Royal Commission for Makkah City and the Holy Sites” from 2023-2025 to support the development of a detailed master plan and urban design of the City of Makkah, and to bolster RCMC’s capacities and performance through technical assistance, quality control, advisory services, and capacity development support.



To date, UNDP has played a key role in laying the groundwork for developing the detailed master plan through technical support and facilitating the collaboration of specialized experts with the Royal Commission for Makkah City in line with Vision 2030, the National Spatial Strategy, the New Urban Agenda principles, and the SDGs. UNDP also supported an assessment of the current and future requirements for sustainable urban development of Makkah's central area, as well as the management of requests for proposals for the second phase of the project.



Transport and logistics are considered key priorities in Vision 2030. They are important catalysts for achieving sustainable development across the Kingdom. In 2021, Saudi Arabia unveiled a new National Transport and Logistics Strategy to boost economic diversification and turn the Kingdom into a global logistics hub connecting three continents. The Strategy aims to increase the transport and logistics sector’s contribution to the Kingdom’s GDP from 6% in 2021 to 10% by 2030.

The partnership between the Ministry of Transport and Logistic Services (MOTLS) and UNDP spans more than 40 years, with the latter providing support to capacity development; the formulation of policies, programmes and action plans towards the development and maintenance of the Kingdom’s road network; strengthening road safety; transport efficiency; as well as coordination with other government entities including MOMRAH to ensure an efficient and effective national transport network.

Since UNDP has signed the initial Sustainable Road and Transport Management project with the Ministry in 2011, it has been supporting subsequent stages of the project between 2011 and 2022 to help strengthen the Ministry’s capacities and governance for road and transport safety. A final evaluation has confirmed the project’s success in fully integrating transport infrastructure planning and in establishing a medium-and long-term National Transport Infrastructure Plan to achieve

better countrywide connectivity for multi-modal transportation systems.

The last stage of the project, ending in December 2022, contributed to reducing traffic inside major cities, with corresponding reductions in CO2 emissions and air pollution while, at the same time, increasing the number of transit roads outside cities to facilitate the delivery of goods. In 2022, the project also succeeded in further improving the efficiency and sustainability of transport infrastructure and deepening effective coordination between MOTLS and MOMRAH to develop the Kingdom’s road and transport network.

The signing of a new “Sustainable Road and Transport Management Project II” between MOTLS and UNDP from 2023-2027 seeks to directly support the new National Transport and Logistics Strategy and its three core objectives are to

- 1 transform the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia into a global logistics hub,
- 2 improve the quality of life in Saudi Arabia’s cities, and
- 3 balance the state budget, in close alignment with several SDGs and SDG targets related to road safety, infrastructure development, air pollution, climate action and public revenue control.

Three main project outputs focus on institutional capacity development, provision of advisory services to MOTLS, and strengthening transit roads outside major cities. Since its inception at the beginning of 2023, the project has made effective progress towards these outputs by completing a training needs assessment for the Ministry, engaging with the Australian Road Research Board to share experiences in organizing a study tour, contributing to the transformation of the National Road Safety Center into the National Transport Safety Center to encompass all components of the transport industry, and finishing a study on transportation and women empowerment to promote a safer and more gender-responsive transport ecosystem in accordance with Vision 2030, the SDGs, and the programmatic priorities of UNDP and the UN System in Saudi Arabia.

<p>2.3.8 Achieving sustainable development through geospatial information</p>	<p>Supports Vision 2030 Pillar: A Vibrant Society</p> 
<p>Main SDG addressed:</p> 	<p>Government implementing partner:</p> 

In the context of Saudi Arabia, reliable and detailed geospatial information is essential to achieve Vision 2030 since part of its objectives are to expand geospatial and geographic information systems as an enabling e-government initiative which contributes to making better location-based decisions, thereby improving the efficiency and effectiveness of a range of services and economic initiatives.

Geospatial information refers to all data that are directly linked to specific geographical locations. By using geographic imagery, mapping technology or geospatial surveys, it describes natural and artificial locations and their characteristics, such as mountains, valleys, coastlines, islands, roads, buildings, pipelines, and so forth. This information is vital to a nation's planning and management, and for achieving its economic, social, and environmental goals.

UNDP's support to geospatial information in

“Transport is a major focus of the Kingdom’s Vision 2030 and a vital enabling factor for economic sectors toward sustainable development.”

Statement from senior MOTLS official
(Source: Final project evaluation report, 2022)

the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on its extensive global experience in designing and implementing flexible and custom-built projects which are closely aligned with specific national context and technical requirements. Since 2014, UNDP has been assisting the Kingdom in the operation and maintenance of the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information (GASGI) as the national lead entity in providing and analyzing surveys, data and maps on geological structures, different land-surface areas as well as water and man-made features.

Vision 2030 has prompted GASGI to analyze and revise its functions so that the survey and geospatial information sector can contribute more effectively to economic growth and social development, including by helping to reduce Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil. Consequently, GASGI's recent new Statute (2021) expanded its conventional areas of involvement and its scope of activities. In response, GASGI and UNDP further deepened their partnership under the project “Advisory Services to the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information” from 2022-2025. The project not only continues to enhance national capacities for the generation, compilation, processing, and efficient usage of geospatial data systems in Saudi Arabia, but also provides the Government, represented by GASGI, with an international platform to tap best practices in relation to state-of-the-art survey methods, geospatial variables and mapping capabilities. Through targeted advocacy activities and marketing, the project enhances public awareness about survey products and their significance for evidence-based decision-making in all sectors, as well as GASGI's financial sustainability.

Since its inception in May 2022, the project has already achieved significant results in remote sensing, including through advanced AI techniques, the inspection and completion of quality assessments of satellite imagery, and the preparation of a range of technical reports.

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



2 - 4 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

The ultimate goal of Vision 2030 is a strong, thriving and stable Saudi Arabia that provides opportunity for all. Since 2016, the Kingdom has not only made impressive transformational progress on its social and economic pillars, but also undertaken groundbreaking and innovative steps towards realizing the goals of the Vision 2030 “An Ambitious Nation” pillar. The pillar – which is closely linked to the “Peace, Governance and Justice” dimension of the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - aims at building a country that is efficiently and effectively governed, transparent and accountable, and where everyone is empowered to play an active role in shaping the nation’s future.

The VNR 2023, which tracks Saudi Arabia’s progress on achieving the SDGs, confirms that the Kingdom has taken important steps to promote peace and stability under SDG 16, including efforts to strengthen its adherence to global human rights standards and norms, as well as improving access to justice. To increase transparency and accountability in the public sector, the government has introduced new policies and initiatives to strengthen availability of quality data and statistics, and promoted social dialogue, particularly civic engagement.

Saudi Arabia has introduced several reforms in the public sector, such as the implementation of a new system of government procurement, the introduction of a new payroll system, and the modernization of the public services sector. These reforms have improved the efficiency and transparency of the public sector and have enhanced the delivery of public services to citizens.

In support of SDG 16 and linked to the innovation and infrastructure targets of SDG 9, Saudi Arabia has prioritized investments in information and communication technologies (ICT), with a focus on increasing internet accessibility and the use of digital technologies and platforms. These efforts have been combined with fostering digital literacy and skills as key competencies for citizen empowerment and with the implementation of the Smart Government Strategy (2020-2024) which aims at strengthening the Kingdom’s institutional performance through digital transformation and building world-class “smart government” capacities.

Based on its mandate and global expertise, UNDP has a strong track record and partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in developing and strengthening the government’s institutional capacities, policies, legislation and systems, as well as collaborating closely to boost excellence of public sector’s performance and advancing good governance with a focus on accountability, preventing corruption, and enhancing public participation and institutional responsiveness to citizens’ needs.



2.4.1
Building
transparent and
accountable
institutions

Supports Vision
2030 Pillar:
A Vibrant Society



Main SDG
addressed:



Government
implementing
partner:



هيئة الرقابة ومكافحة الفساد
Control and Anti-Corruption Authority

and partnerships against corruption in the public sphere, business, and sports. Within Saudi Arabia, Nazaha’s recommended amendments to the Anti-Bribery Law have led to a Royal Decree criminalizing the bribery practices by public officials, and to the establishment of a dedicated department to combat such offenses. Furthermore, the Authority for Spending Efficiency and Government Projects was established to enhance the efficiency of government agencies in planning and using its resources.

The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Nazaha and UNDP in 2019 marked the beginning of a new partnership and collaboration on projects designated to strengthen international cooperation and to prevent and combat corruption, as a significant contribution towards promoting justice and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, in line with SDG 16 and related targets.

menting various initiatives to prevent and combat corruption whilst, at the same time, promoting transparency and accountability. These include revising the legal framework, building capacities and systems, monitoring government services, raising awareness and contributing to international efforts



General Manager of International Relations Dr. Nassir Aba Alkhail, Assistant President of International Collaboration at Nazaha; Ms. Margaret Jones Williams, Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP; Saud Al Fassam Programme Analyst; Hessah Almuqati, Programme Assistant discussed the implementation of the extended cooperation. Photo Credit: Nazaha 2023

Nazaha, the Oversight and Anti-Corruption Authority of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is actively implementing a one-year initiation project between Nazaha and UNDP from May 2022 – May 2023 succeeded in organizing and hosting the first Ministerial Meeting of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Agencies in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The first of its kind, the meeting was attended by high-level international delegations led by relevant Ministers, heads and representatives of anti-corruption law enforcement agencies in the OIC Member States, heads of international anti-corruption organizations, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units, along with integrity and anti-corruption experts from Saudi Arabia and other countries. The meeting deliberated the approval of the draft “Makkah Al-Mukarramah Convention of the OIC Member States on Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Cooperation” as a key international instrument to enforce anti-corruption legislation.

This kick-off initiative was followed by signing a new one-year UNDP project in September 2023 to strengthen Saudi Arabia’s legal anti-corruption framework, provide technical support to Nazaha in its effective implementation of the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, while also supporting capacity development within Nazaha’s departments, as well as trainings and awareness raising sessions for other government entities under Nazaha’s supervision.

“The Makkah Al-Mukarramah Convention is a key and adequate framework for preventing and combating corruption in the OIC Member States, through effective mechanisms for prevention, law enforcement, international cooperation, and assets recovery.”

Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC),

H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha

Together, these initial steps of joining efforts with the government to

- 1 ensure transparent and accountable institutions, and
- 2 position Saudi Arabia as a leader and role model on anti-corruption in the region and beyond, in line with the government’s vision to further support and strengthen the capacity of Nazaha to investigate and prosecute corruption cases, and to continue refining the legal framework to address all forms of corruption. UNDP and its Country Office in Saudi Arabia are uniquely positioned to apply the organization’s unmatched global track record and expertise on anti-corruption to support the government in achieving these goals.

2.4.2
Boosting national statistics and data

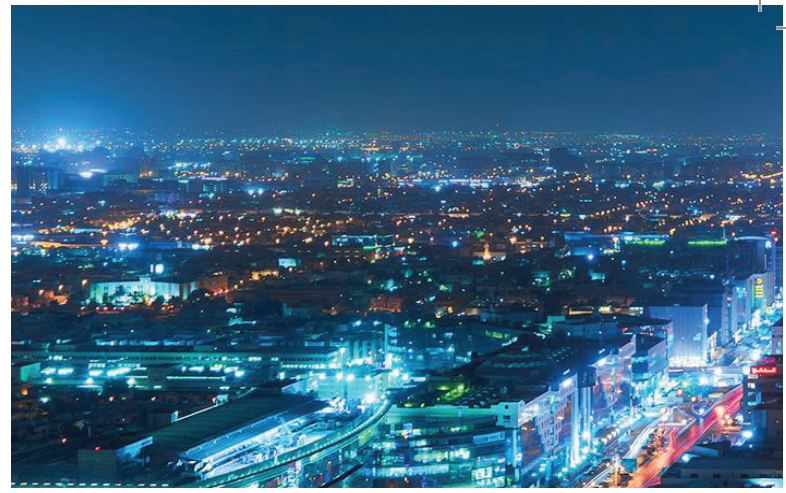
Supports Vision 2030 Pillar:
A Thriving Economy



Main SDG addressed:



Government implementing partner:



Both Vision 2030, and the global development agenda, require accurate and updated statistics at national and subnational levels for their proper implementation, monitoring, and reporting. This has prompted the General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT) to go through a major revision of its corporate strategy and to formulate a framework that addresses the statistical needs of Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Program 2020, while at the same time allowing planning and monitoring against agreed upon SDG targets and indicators that are relevant to the national context.

Detailed analysis and mapping of Vision 2030 against the global SDGs shows many similarities between the development aspirations and goals of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the international commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



Introductory meeting between UNDP Resident Representative Ms. Nahid Hussein and GASTAT President Dr. Fahad Al Dossari.



**In 2017, UNDP
agreed on a project with
GASTAT to :**

- 1 support the revision of its institutional framework for statistics and its alignment with Vision 2030 and the SDGs;
- 2 develop its capacities to strengthen technical and statistical analysis; and
- 3 upgrade its technology infrastructure to meet the growing demand for sustainability indicators and reporting in all sectors of the economy;
- 4 establish a national data-bank and,
- 5 develop marketing capacity for vibrant public relations.

Successful implementation of these planned results has led to the project's extension until December 2024. Within the review period for this report, the project has been instrumental in:

- 1 improving GASTAT's capacities to integrate statistical analysis into decision-making for achieving the Vision 2030 goals and the SDGs and to perform more effectively in the field of statistics governance and quality control;
- 2 producing and disseminating reports on innovative survey methodologies to update statistical systems, and for calculating indicators to produce statistical data and information in support of Vision 2030 and
- 3 improving GASTAT performance in compiling rapid estimates of GDP growth for oil, public, and non-oil sectors, and of producing periodic national accounts for economic activities and expenditure components.

Looking ahead, the government continues to take important and systematic steps towards promoting open data and free access to information, thus enhancing transparency and accountability in its transactions, and facilitating public monitoring, analysis, and evaluation. Guided by the National Strategy for Statistical Development, GASTAT keeps striving towards the establishment of an effective, professional, and credible statistical system by 2030. The five strategic axes of the strategy should provide ample space for further deepening the partnership between GASTAT and UNDP in fostering collaboration between data users, providers and producers, while incorporating the latest technologies and enhancing communication and awareness about evidence-based planning.



As part of achieving the comprehensive set of goals of Vision 2030, the government prioritized that all ministries and other government institutions should strive for organizational excellence to improve efficiency, effectiveness and quality of their services, as well as their overall performance. More specifically, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia set out to increase its engagement at the regional and global levels through improved consular services and by promoting Saudi Arabia’s international relations and position. This focus further accentuated the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the importance of cooperation with the United Nations System, including UNDP.

Under the “Umbrella Programme for Advisory Services to MOFA” from 2018-2023 UNDP has been supporting MOFA’s alignment to the above-mentioned development challenges and goals. Through a wide range of capacity development measures, the programme has proven instrumental in supporting MOFA’s Five Year Strategic Plan and its ten strategic objectives.

The following figure clearly depicts these ten strategic objectives:



During the review period for this report, the Umbrella Programme has continued to make progress on several of the ten strategic objectives, including through the following achievements:

■ **Activation of MOFA Strategy and Planning Deputyship:** Successfully completed the diagnostic report, formulated a strategic operating model, and initiated transformative initiatives, crafting a comprehensive roadmap that propels the S&P deputyship in MOFA towards realizing its vision and mission.

■ **Establishing and Activating the Project Management Office**

Activating the EPMO office within MOFA, increased maturity of the project management practice within MOFA.

■ **Data Mobility:**

Successfully completed and updated compensation and benefits reports for the first, second, and third years, reflecting meticulous attention to detail and adherence to organizational standards.

■ **Health Insurance System:**

Revolutionized healthcare insurance through advanced data analytics, optimizing expenditure efficiency, and elevating the quality of insurance contracts.

■ **Internal Communication and Work Environment:**

Launched the strategic plan survey, conducted thorough analysis, and constructed initiatives and programs based on survey insights, driving strategic development and organizational progress.

■ **Benefits and Compensation for Employees in Diplomatic Missions:**

Reviewed the compensation structure for diplomatic staff, assessing and updating benefits, allowance, and salaries in the Saudi missions in USA, UK, France, Switzerland, Sweden and China, in comparison with the local market in order to maintain competitiveness. In addition, work contracts and labor laws requirements for the missions in the above countries were formulated in order to identify clear guiding principles for wage practices and legal benefits and to comply with the obligatory human resource practices.

■ **Support the Implementation of the Diplomatic Posts Rule:**

Applying the Diplomatic Posts Rule by assigning staff to the updated wage and benefits classification in addition to updating policies for talents and establishing an assessment center for the diplomatic positions and a center for leadership evaluation relevant to career progress.

■ **Promoting Collaboration and Saudi Representation in the United Nations**

UNDP and MOFA discussed signing a memorandum of understanding to further promote the bilateral partnership between Saudi Arabia the UN System. The memorandum, set to be signed in 2024, identifying a number of cooperation areas, including using MOFA’s employment platform to announce job opportunities in the UN System with the objective of boosting Saudi representation in the UN.

<p>2.4.4 Promoting dialogue, respect, and national unity</p>	<p>Supports Vision 2030 Pillar: An Ambitious Nation</p> 
<p>Main SDG addressed:</p> 	<p>Government implementing partner:</p> 

Vision 2030 and its National Transformation Program promote social cohesion and national identity, as well as the empowerment of women and youth, as essential elements for achieving the Kingdom’s transformational economic, social and environmental goals in the next years.

Although Saudi Arabia has a long history of political stability and social cohesion, the government decided to invest in precautionary initiatives towards addressing any risks to national unity. In this regard, a special focus is given to measures and activities targeting the youth (below the age of 25) who represent about 50% of the population.

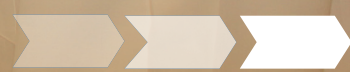
In 2003, the Kingdom established the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue (KACND) to promote a culture of dialogue and respect for differences and diversity, preserve national unity, and protect the societal fabric through effective communication and fruitful partnerships locally and international-

ly. The KACND addresses vital themes such as politics, religion, culture, economics, and education. Furthermore, it encourages civil society organizations and individuals to contribute and participate in its national dialogue program across the Kingdom.

The partnership between KACND and UNDP began with a project in 2018 to better understand social inclusion aspects of Saudi youth through surveys and assessments, and to use the collected data to inform national education curricula, youth strategies, as well as new entertainment initiatives and cultural events.

A subsequent phase of the project, extended until 2022, successfully produced a National Cohesion Index (NCI) to help decision-makers and development practitioners to better monitor and understand social and political dynamics in Saudi Arabia, and to identify priorities and entry points for potential interventions aimed at strengthening national cohesion. Through the project and its key deliverable, the NCI, KACND’s existing index has been effectively revised and aligned with global best practices and UN principles, enabling the Kingdom to measure its social cohesion according to established international standards. The project and its NCI also provided instrumental support to the formulation of a UNDP report for the Arab region which considered gender, age group and socio-economic status in its questionnaires and analyses.

PARTNERSHIPS



2 - 5 Partnerships

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



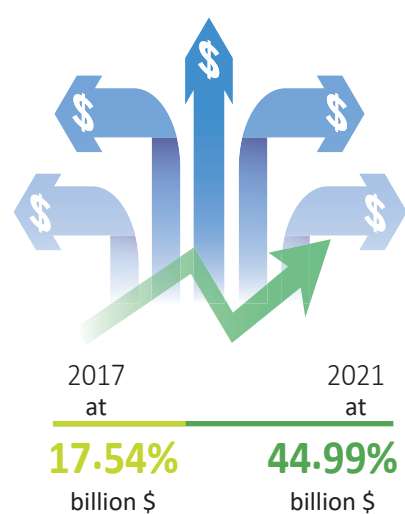
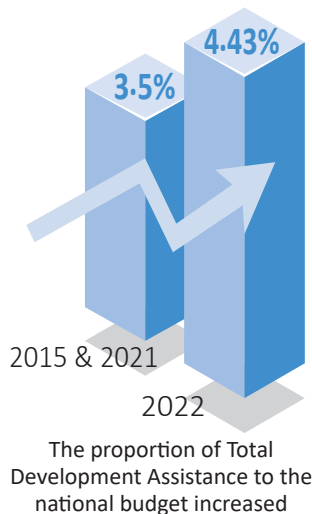
Partnerships are at the heart of all UNDP programmes and other activities. Based on its nearly universal presence and substantive interventions and expertise - both intellectual acumen and practical experience - UNDP's broad and flexible sustainable development mandate allows the organization to engage in a wide and diverse spectrum of development issues and settings. These valuable assets combined with its long legacy of trust have made UNDP a partner of choice, both globally and in Saudi Arabia.

2.5.1 Saudi Arabia's leadership on humanitarian and development partnerships

As part of realizing the ambitious Vision 2030 and achieving the SDGs, Saudi Arabia has expanded its partnerships, including through increased collaboration with international organizations and other countries, and through regular active participation in high-level international fora and conferences. The Kingdom has also strengthened its participation in international development cooperation and assistance efforts. As a G20 member, Saudi Arabia has demonstrated strong commitment to sustainable development by leading towards "seizing the opportunities of the 21st century for all" during its presidency.

Saudi Arabia's Total Development Assis-

tance has increased over time, with the highest value in 2021 at 44.99 billion USD and the lowest in 2017 at 17.54 billion USD. The proportion of Total Development Assistance to the national budget increased between 2015 and 2021, from 3.5% to 4.43%. In 2022, the Kingdom was ranked 8th globally in terms of humanitarian assistance according to the UNOCHA Financial Tracking Service. According to the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization of the Economic Cooperation Development (OECD-DAC), in 2021, the Kingdom provided 1.05% of its Gross National Income (GNI) as Official Development Assistance, the highest GNI percentage of all countries globally.

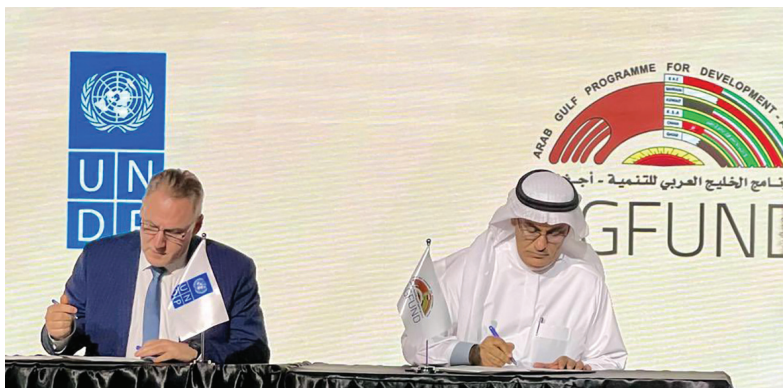




Through its active engagement with the United Nations system, the Islamic Development Bank, the World Bank and other international organizations, Saudi Arabia provides generous technical and financial support to the development of sustainable infrastructure and a range of initiatives and projects in developing countries. Additionally, Saudi Arabia has provided bilateral international assistance through two main national agencies: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief), and the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD). Since its creation in 2015, KSRelief

has provided more than 6 billion USD in humanitarian assistance to 91 countries. SFD was established in 1974 and has contributed over 18 billion USD to finance more than 700 development projects across 85 countries, primarily in Africa and Asia, targeting sectors like social infrastructure, transportation, and agriculture.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a long-term core-contributing member to UNDP's regular resources which support the world's poorest countries to eradicate poverty and strengthen resilience, coming just be-



UNDP Regional Director for Arab States and the Executive Director of AGFUND signing an MOU on the sidelines of COP28 in Dubai, UAE



Bilateral meeting between UNDP Saudi Arabia Resident Representative, Ms. Nahid Hussein, and SFD CEO Mr. Sultan Murshed, on March 22, 2023

hind China and Finland in contributions to UNDP. During the 2022-2023 review period for this report, UNDP has established a dedicated capacity at its Regional Bureau for Arab States to substantively support the identification, strengthening, and development of new partnerships in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, UNDP has established a New Strategic Partnerships team at corporate level for increased engagement with donor countries such as Saudi Arabia who may participate in the OECD's Development Assistance Committee but are not one of its 32 Members.

In view of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's position as a distinguished donor to UNDP, and to contribute to "development financing" as part of UNDP's global Strategic Plan 2022-2025, UNDP Saudi Arabia Office has embraced an integrated approach to partnerships which entails both, resource mobilization for other UNDP Country Offices, as well as scaling up local projects to the global level for increased visibility around five central themes: HDP-Nexus, Digitalization, Water, Energy and Economic Diversification.

A noteworthy event which underlines the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's global leadership position in international development and humanitarian assistance took place on the sidelines of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, in September 2023, with the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief) and UNDP hosting a high-level roundtable discussion entitled "The Humanitarian, Development, and Peace Nexus: From Theory to Practice with the Compass Towards 2030". Calling for an integrated approach that brings together humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors



UNDP Administrator Mr. Achim Steiner and KSrelief Supervisor General H.E. Dr. Abdullah Al Rabeeah sign corporate Memorandum of Understanding on 22 September, 2022

to address protracted humanitarian crises, the roundtable discussion highlighted the need for concerted efforts amongst all stakeholders towards area-based and context-specific durable and development solutions.

This event was preceded by the signing of a corporate Memorandum of Understanding/Cooperation Program between King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief) and UNDP in September 2022 in New York, between the Supervisor General of KS Relief, Dr. Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Rabeeah, and the UNDP Administrator, Achim Steiner, on the sidelines of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly. The cooperation program aims to enhance the knowledge sharing, capacity building, research, and initiatives in the areas of sustainable livelihoods, crisis prevention and recovery, peacebuilding, post-crisis stability, and the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus.

2.5.2 UNDP partnership with the UN system

The UNDP Administrator is the Vice-Chair of the global UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), which unites the 40 UN entities that contribute to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the country level and which collectively constitute the UN development system. The UNSDG provides strategic direction and oversight to ensure UNDS entities to deliver coherent, effective, and efficient support to countries seeking to achieve sustainable development.

In Saudi Arabia, UNDP is part of the United Nations Country Team which comprises 25 UN entities (UN agencies, funds and programmes). 18 UN entities, including UNDP, are signatories to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022–2026 for Saudi Arabia which constitutes the overarching programme framework for all UN system activities in the Kingdom.

With its continued commitment to SDG 17 “Partnerships for the Goals”, UNDP has stepped up its

engagement and collaboration during 2022-2023 with a considerable number of UN sister entities, including with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) on the challenges to the country’s marine ecosystems linked to SDG 14; the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) on disability and inclusion; the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN Women on gender; the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) on developmental housing and urbanization; and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on food security and food waste. In addition, UNDP collaborated with UNFPA on statistics and the 2022 national census. UNDP is further broadening UN system-wide engagement in Saudi Arabia, including through direct engagement with other UN entities,

as well as innovative financing solutions to address the national and global development agenda.

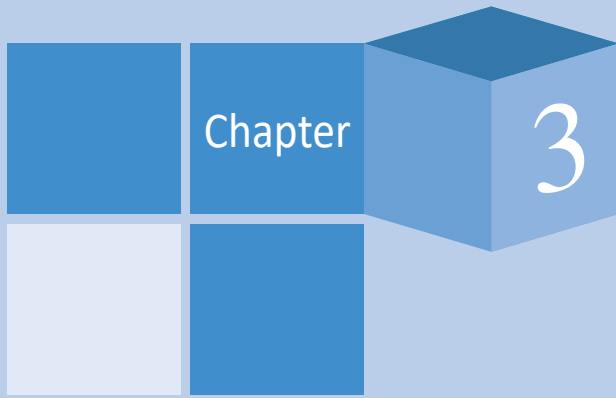
During the review period of this report, UNDP has also been an active participant in numerous events in Saudi Arabia to commemorate international UN Days, including United Nations Day, International Women's Day, International Day for Persons with Disabilities, and International Volunteer Day, partnering closely with various segments of Saudi society (government, academia, civil society organizations, women, and youth). Through these and other UN system-wide events, UNDP has further strengthened its partnerships with numerous development institutions, foundations and civil society organizations representing different segments of Saudi



society, as well as representatives of private sector outfits who seek to contribute to the international development agenda and the SDGs.

As Chair and Co-chair of various UN-internal coordination mechanisms in 2022-2023, such as the Programme Support Team, Operations Management Team, and several UN thematic working groups (including those on disability, environment, gender, and youth), UNDP has played a key role in ensuring the coherent, efficient and effective performance of the UN Country Team in Saudi Arabia. UNDP has also played an instrumental role in the development of a UN Joint Work Plan which helps the UN Country Team to operationalize the UNSDCF 2022-2026 for Saudi Arabia, including through the identification of joint UN system agencies and programmes.





ACHIEVEMENTS ON CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

3 - 1 Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEWE) are directly supported by SDG 5 and cut across the “5 Ps” of the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Vision 2030 puts emphasis on gender equality by recognizing women’s potential and aiming to invest in their capabilities to contribute to society and the economy. It sets two goals in this regard:

- (i) Increasing the number of job opportunities for both men and women, especially in the private sector to 3 million; and
- (ii) Increasing women’s participation in the workforce from 22% to 30%. The latter target has already been met by a staggering rise in the women’s share of the labor force from 21% in 2017 to 34.7% in 2022. The level of women’s economic participation also increased from 17 to 37% during the same period.

The global UNDP Human Development Report 2022 confirms high levels of gender development and low levels of gender inequality in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Whereas the Kingdom has been making progress for decades with regards to women’s health and education, it has significantly stepped up its efforts in recent years by introducing several reforms and initiatives which establish a new era and open promising horizons for women’s empowerment, thus contributing to transformational changes in Saudi society. Among such steps are the gesture to lift restrictions for women’s mobility and travel, fighting harassment in the workplace, encouraging employment in the

private sector, and appointing women to senior positions in the state apparatus.

Despite the above-mentioned increase in the participation of women in public life and in the economy, continued efforts will be needed to address the remaining gaps in labor participation and unemployment rates between men and women, and to implement evidence-based policy reforms for gender equality in line with international norms and standards.

The UNDP Country Office has responded to these challenges - and the momentum created by Vision 2030 towards women’s empowerment – by intensifying efforts in the last two years. Under the new global UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025, it conducted a comprehensive gender assessment and developed a gender action plan. In addition, the office issued its first UNDP Saudi Arabia Gender Equality Strategy 2023-2027, with the following key objectives:

- 1 Support national organizations in implementing Vision 2030 for higher participation of women in public life and the economy.
- 2 Strengthen national capacities for evidence-based policy reforms for gender equality, in line with Vision 2030 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and guided by international women’s rights frameworks.
- 3 Societal engagement to enhance women’s participation.

The level of women’s economic participation also increased from **17** to **37%** during the same period

especially in the private sector to **3** million

the women’s share of the labor force increased from **21 %** in 2017 to **34.7 %** in 2022

The implementation and development of new projects under UNDP's Country Programme 2023-2027 reflect the objectives of the UNDP Gender Equality Strategy by mainstreaming GEWE in new initiatives which are described in more detail in the report's Prosperity chapter. One is the (not yet signed) "Support to the Implementation and Delivery of Riyadh City Program" which includes a project dedicated to supporting the Royal Commission for Riyadh City (RCRC) Human Capital program towards increasing women's participation in the workforce in Riyadh City. Another is the new "Sustainable Road and Transport Management Project II" with MOTLS. Linked to the project, UNDP commissioned a Qualitative Study on Women Participation in the Transport Sector in 2023 to provide more insights into the progress made in empowering women in the transport sector. This is considered an essential factor in harnessing Saudi Arabia's existing human capital to realize the objectives of Vision 2030 and the SDGs. The study specifically assessed the advancements and potential openings for women in the transport sector, with a particular emphasis on their participation within MOTLS.

In addition to mainstreaming GEWE into UNDP's programmes and projects, the UNDP Country Office also contributed to other efforts. In February 2022, UNDP organized a webinar on gender equality for the United Nations System Staff College as part of its Sustainable Development Reflection Series. The webinar dived into the specifics of SDG 5: Gender Equality in the context of Saudi Arabia, specifically addressing the process of gender mainstreaming and the rapid pace of change on gender-related issues in the Kingdom.

In 2023, UNDP joined forces with the UN Country Team in Saudi Arabia to promote GEWE through activities focused on women and girls with disabilities. It also contributed to the commemoration of the 67th International Women's Day under the theme

"Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality" which highlighted that Saudi Arabia has been able to narrow the digital gender gap according to the 2022 Gender Digital Gap Index report, based on indicators such as internet coverage, affordability, and women's education programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Another important initiative supporting GEWE in Saudi Arabia in 2023 has been UNDP's support to the 2022 Arab States Compendium of Gender Justice and the Law Reports from 17 countries in the region, including Saudi Arabia. The reports which were jointly published by UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA and UNESCWA, examine different areas of national legislation and their alignment with international standards. For Saudi Arabia, the report includes recommendations such as introducing legislation for gender disaggregated statistics, strengthening women empowerment in rural areas, and increasing the representation of women in decision-making circles, including the Shura Council, to bring it in line with international minimum standards.



3 - 2 Youth

According to the 2022 Population Census for Saudi Arabia, the first in 12 years, the population of Saudi Arabia has reached 32.2 million, 42% of whom are foreign nationals. With 63% of Saudis under the age of 30, and 29 as the total population's median age, youth empowerment is a central tenet of Vision 2030. Youth is also a key cross-cutting theme of the global 2030 Agenda which recognizes youth as a major force for sustainable development and a key agent

for social change, economic growth and technological innovation. From calling for urgent climate action to tackling inequalities and gender-related challenges, young people are driving the Decade of Action to achieve the SDGs.

The Saudi National Strategy for Youth serves as a comprehensive framework for youth development, outlining national goals, priorities, and policies that empower young people to take an active role in shaping their present and future.



Youth

In 2011, HRH Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz established **Misk Foundation** as a non-profit organization dedicated to cultivate and encourage youth learning and leadership for a better future in Saudi Arabia. Vision 2030 has further contributed to actively engaging Saudi Arabia's youth in the realization of the SDGs through various initiatives, programs, and organizations that empower them, build their skills, and provide platforms for sustainable development and positive change. Amongst these are **Saudi Youth for Sustainability**, a youth-led national organization which seeks to empower and connect young leaders to drive positive changes towards a sustainable future, **Al-Ahsa Volunteering Team**, a youth-led initiative that aims to implement the 17 SDGs in Saudi Arabia, starting with the city of Al-Ahsa, and the **Youth Leadership Programme Saudi Arabia** which offers training on the SDGs, Gender Equality, and Social Innovation.

The current UNDP Saudi Arabia Country Programme 2023-2027, as well as the previous programme cycle 2017-2021, both include youth-sensitive development and youth empowerment as cross-cutting thematic priorities, with a focus on promoting youth skills development and employment, as well as active participation of youth in socio-economic development and formal political processes and decision-making.

During the 2022-2023 reporting period, the UNDP Country Office participated in several

noteworthy initiatives and organized events to empower young Saudis, harness their potential and link their voice to current international events. Some of them are listed below:

In April 2023, UNDP supported 15 Saudi Arabian Youth to attend the **ECOSOC Youth Forum in New York** which was held during April, 25 – 27, 2023. The ECOSOC Youth Forum served participating youth from around the globe to share their thoughts and proposals on social and economic issues for subsequent consideration by member states at the UN SDG Summit in September 2023.

In May 2023, the UNDP Saudi Arabia Office conducted the public speaking competition "**Youth speak & compete**", in partnership with **Saudi Youth Society**. The event which was hosted by the **UN World Tourism Organization** in Riyadh, had 50 university students between the age of 18-28 who compete against each other in teams with compelling ideas, strategies and solutions to achieve the SDGs. As a result of this competition and the cooperation with Saudi Youth Society, the UNDP Country Office – for the very first time - hosted a Summer Training Program throughout July and August 2023 for a total of 13 selected students from the winning teams. The training programme allowed the selected students to gain valuable insights into the work of UNDP, as well as hands-on experiences in using their knowledge and skills to support UNDP projects and related activities.



Participants of the Saudi Arabian Youth delegation at the ECOSOC Youth Forum in New York, April 2023

For the fourth consecutive year, UNDP participated as a knowledge partner in the **MISK Fellowship Annual Competition** which took place in June 2023. The annual competition requires talented young Saudi women and men to find innovative solutions to the challenges that hinder the achievement of SDGs in the Kingdom.



Participants of the public speaking competition “Youth speak & compete”, hosted by the UN World Tourism Organization in Riyadh, May 2023

For the first time, the UNDP Country Office, together with the UN World Tourism Organization, organized an **International Youth Day** event in August 2023. The so-called “**Youth Café**” at the UN House hosted around 80 participants including youth from Misk, Mawhiba, Saudi Youth Society, KAUST University and the Authority of People with Disability. The event served as a networking and knowledge sharing opportunity while, at the same time, informing about youth employment opportunities in the growing tourism sector, the mandate and work of the Authority of People with Disability, and Saudi youth participation in global events including the ECOSOC Youth Forum in New York.

On October 21, 2023, the second **Local Conference of Youth “LCOY”** in Saudi Arabia, hosted by the Saudi Youth Climate Network, in partnership with Pristine NGO and Global Shapers Riyadh Hub, and sponsored by Électricité de France (EDF) Saudi and UNDP, took place at the UN House in Riyadh. Ahead of the **UN Climate Change Conference, COP 28**, in Dubai, this of-

icial event of the Children and Youth Constituency of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, brought together young climate advocates and experts to engage in intergenerational dialogue and debates, with a focus on actionable solutions that promote climate literacy, adoption of green skills, and expediting the implementation of Saudi Arabia’s green goals.

In its 18th year, the so-called “**KSA LCOY18**” featured keynote speeches from representatives of Électricité de France (EDF), Islamic Development Bank, UNDP and UNICEF, and addressing a spectrum of critical topics, including innovative low-carbon technologies, youth inclusion in sustainable development, children and youth rights across all sectors, and comprehensive social, environmental, and economic development efforts in Muslim-majority countries.

The event concluded with an interactive session to gather youth statements from the audience. These were captured and submitted for inclusion in the official youth policy paper for the COP28 climate negotiations, the supreme decision-making body of the global Climate Change Convention.



A group photo of the Local Youth Conference team “LCOY”

3 - 3 Volunteerism

The global 2030 Agenda recognizes the need for all of society to be involved to achieve the SDGs, leaving no one behind. As part of this approach, volunteering is recognized as a powerful and cross-cutting means of implementing the SDGs. By providing new channels for interaction between governments and people, volunteerism allows that people are involved in planning processes and decisions which affect their lives.

The crucial relevance of volunteerism is also clearly emphasized in Vision 2030 which notes the significance of active citizen engagement and the role of civil society. Volunteering has long been a cornerstone of Saudi society, with about 1,000 non-profit organizations and groups in the country. The Kingdom has specific legislation on volunteering, and one of the Vision 2030 targets aims at rallying one million volunteers per year by 2030. Many volunteers work on critical issues such as health, youth and sports, disaster risk reduction, and education, among others.

Within the UN system, volunteerism is supported through the global UN Volunteers (UNV) Programme. During 2012-2022, the UNV Programme engaged over 11,000 UNVs in countries around the world. UNVs make up 15% of UNDP's workforce in the Arab States, with 450 UN Volunteers supporting program implementation in fourteen UNDP Country Offices. Currently, UNDP Saudi Arabia employs seven UNVs in its Country Office in Riyadh to work as part of UNDP's programme pillar teams and in other administrative functions.

VOLUNTEERISM

over

11
thousand

UNVs
to countries around
the world

UNVs
make up

15%

of UNDPs
workforce in the
Arab States

with

450

UN Volunteers

supporting program implementation
in fourteen UNDP country offices

On December 7, 2023, the UNDP Country Office celebrated International Volunteer Day, acknowledging the crucial role played by UN Volunteers (UNVs) in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Kingdom. By recognizing the work of Saudi UNVs under the theme “Together, we strive to build a better, more sustainable future, for Saudi Arabia and beyond”, UNDP senior management confirmed its commitment to promote volunteerism and the UNV programme as central modalities for engaging the potential of Saudi youth and achieving sustainable development.

In 2023, and based on UNDP’s global partnership with UNV, the UNDP Saudi Arabia Office supported an initiative to offer 30 young Saudis international UNV volunteer assignments for a duration of six months. A joint agreement between the Ministry of Economy and Planning, UNDP and UNV provides the basis for selected Saudi volunteers to use their capacities and knowledge for assignments in economic development and other priority themes identified by the Ministry, with deployments taking place in

jointly agreed countries. The agreement establishes close cooperation between UNV and the Government of Saudi Arabia that boosts the Kingdom’s participation in various UN activities around the world. Through deploying young Saudis as international UN Youth Volunteers to different UN agencies, funds and programmes, the agreement will help build national capacities around the world and promote the advancement of the SDGs. At the same time, the agreement allows Saudi UN Youth Volunteers to gather relevant experience and increases the representation of Saudi Arabia in the UN system.

«Saudi Vision 2030 targets to create a million volunteers by 2030. The National Transformation Program also aims to produce a new generation of professionals who can help lead the country’s future across key areas such as its economy and long-term development.»

Ministry of Economy and Planning



DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT



3 - 4 Disability-inclusive development

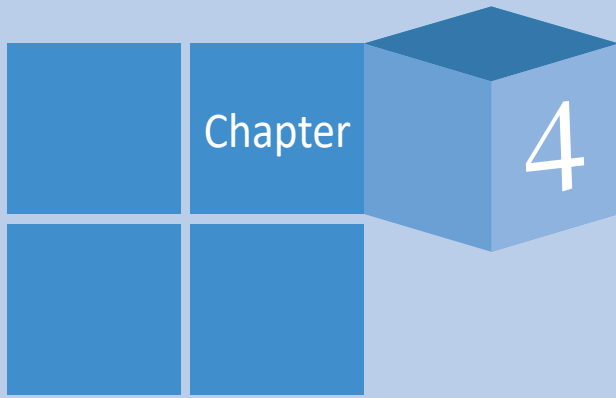
Persons with disabilities (PWD) are disadvantaged in all areas of human life, ranging from an adequate standard of living, decently paid work, participation in education, to social and community life. The global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its overarching principle to “leave no one behind”, including PWD and other disadvantaged groups, has recognized disability-inclusive development as a cross-cutting issue to be considered in the implementation of all SDGs.

According to official national statistics, the percentage of individuals with disabilities constitutes 7.1% of the total population of Saudi Arabia. In line with Vision 2030, which seeks to provide a decent life for all citizens and residents, the Saudi Authority for Persons with Disabilities is leading the Kingdom’s efforts to empower persons with disabilities by ensuring their rights, enhancing their role in society, and providing them with comprehensive care and services so that they can fully participate in all aspects of the country’s social and economic development. Saudi Arabia’s Social Protection System also includes dedicated Disability Support Programs which include provision of financial aid, waving of visa and customs fees, reduced transport fees, as well as support in recruiting domestic help and nurses.

The current UNDP programming cycle 2023-2027 has been aligned with the government’s vision and goals by supporting disability inclusion with government partners, non-profit organizations and other United Nations entities. Specifically, it assists in strengthening the

effectiveness and implementation of national policies on disabilities, and in promoting a gradual shift from the prevailing charity-based model in Saudi Arabia to a rights-based approach. In addition to mainstreaming disability-inclusive development in its programmatic activities, the UNDP Saudi Arabia office has responded to the national requirement of including 4% PWD in all workplaces with a staff count of 25 persons or more by implementing several disability-inclusion (DI) actions during the 2022-2023 reporting period. These include:

- 1 Successful recruitment of a visually impaired Saudi communications/research officer, in partnership with the UN Volunteers Programme
- 2 Installation of directional tactile tracks in the UNDP office to guide the visually impaired PWD from the entrance door to elevators, wash-room facilities, meeting rooms and workstations.
- 3 Installation of braille in the elevator beside the floor buttons
- 4 Contribution to the on-going review to the formulation of a DI Strategy for the UN Country Team in Saudi Arabia
- 5 Nomination of a DI focal point in the UNDP office



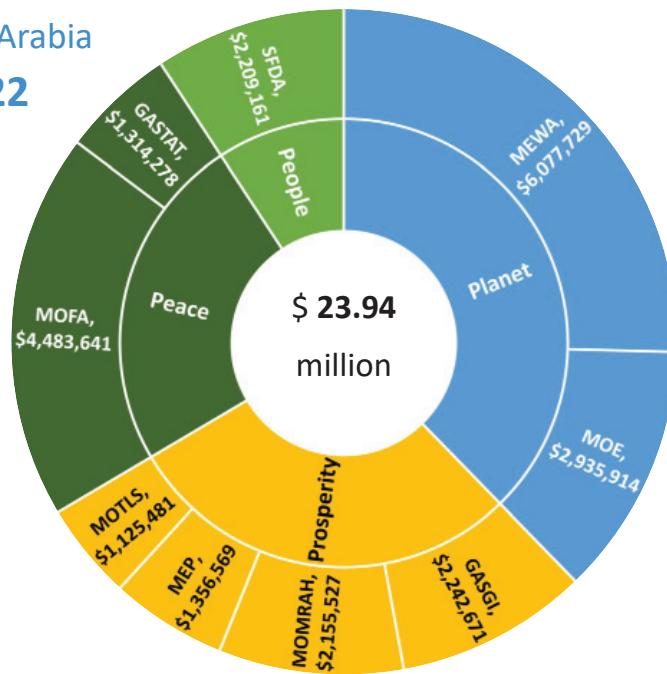
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

4 - 1 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

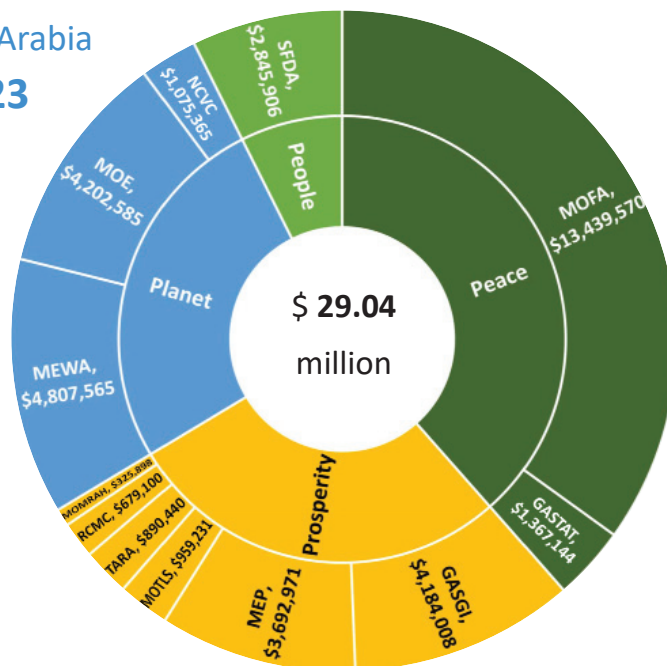
During the reporting period 2022-2023, UNDP Saudi Arabia has increased its programme delivery from USD23.94 million in 2022 to USD 29.04 million in 2023. The following chart shows the delivery for each year under the People, Planet, Prosperity, and Peace dimensions, with a breakdown per government counterpart.

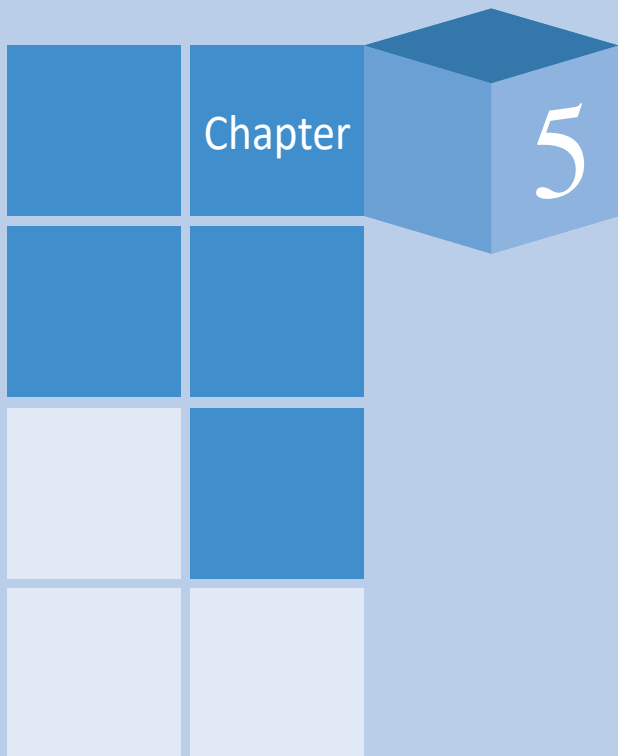
Figure 5: UNDP Saudi Arabia Delivery in 2022 and 2023 (in million USD)

UNDP Saudi Arabia Delivery 2022



UNDP Saudi Arabia Delivery 2023





LOOKING FORWARD

5 - 1 Project Pipeline

Enabling sustainable tourism

Since the launch of Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has greatly accelerated its efforts to promote the country as rich in livable tourist destinations with promising sectors to diversify the economy away from the sole reliance on oil and natural gas. The introduction of the e-visa and initiatives to promote the Kingdom's rich cultural heritage and natural assets, as well as major events like the Red Sea International Film Festival and the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix are helping to attract millions of annual visitors. Additionally, as a central location in the Arab and Islamic world, Saudi Arabia is making major investments to provide pilgrims with state-of-the-art facilities and services.

During the 2022-2023 review period of this report, UNDP has engaged with the Ministry of Tourism to develop and operationalize an interactive digital platform for measuring the sustainability of tourism. Although the project document has not been signed yet, it is expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- Establishing a standardized database for the integration of tourism statistics with other economic, social and environmental indicators for the monitoring of sustainable tourism;
- Providing a strategic direction for the development and management of tourism statistics to aid planning, governance and decision making by measuring the contribution of tourism to the diversification of the economy and mitigating the impact of tourism on the environment and the local communities;
- Establishing a platform for stronger stakeholder engagement for the collection, analysis and production of tourism statistics.

5 - 2 Strategic Direction

The year 2023 marked the first year of implementing the new UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) 2023-2027 for Saudi Arabia. Several new UNDP projects signed during 2023, including with MEWA, Nazaha (the Kingdom's Oversight and Anti-Corruption Authority), and SFDA, and many more projects either ongoing or in the pipeline, all them are tangibly contribute to either of the three pillars of Saudi Vision 2030 and serve to consolidate the Kingdom's position as a regional and global leader in achieving inclusive and sustainable development and the SDGs. In close collaboration with the government, UN sister entities, and other partners and stakeholders, the UNDP Saudi Arabia Office is well underway to translate the vision and planned results of its CPD 2023-2027 into concrete actions and initiatives on-the-ground.

As a demonstration of the close convergence of the Kingdom's own ambitions with the global development agenda and UNDP's work, the UNDP Country Programme is fully funded by the government.



By aligning public capital flows with SDG-based programmes and projects, the government also contributes to UNDP's corporate USD 1 trillion "Moonshot" target which helps to mobilize game-changing public and private sector resources towards the SDGs. UNDP's global strategic ambitions are matched by the Kingdom's own vision to play a leadership role well beyond the confines of its borders by using its intellectual, cultural and economic potential. Saudi Arabia has displayed continuous and profound interest in delivering on the SDGs and is keen to demonstrate this through strategic investments in global development initiatives.

In line with the objectives of the Saudi Vision 2030 and the programme priorities laid out in the UNDP CPD 2023-2027, and based on the feedback from government counterparts, UNDP is strategically positioned as a partner of choice across several sectors to support the Kingdom in achieving its ambitious vision and goals. At the same time, the Kingdom's rapid and profound transformation - and the great demand for top-notch expertise, knowledge products, institutional reforms and innovations this transformative path is creating - will sometimes outweigh what UNDP can deliver. UNDP will therefore carefully analyze and consider where its comparative advantages can best be utilized, which partnerships can be essential to boost delivery and impact, and where other actors might be better positioned to lead and provide support.

Building on the numerous achievements, partnerships and new initiatives highlighted in this report, UNDP's future direction will be guided by the following strategies and actions:

Overall strategies:

- Continued provision of technical support and policy advisory services across several sectors and in the areas of People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships by utilizing in-country personnel, mobilizing UNDP regional and international teams and leveraging global expertise and knowledge networks as well as encouraging South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC).
- Strengthen engagement with government counterparts in advising on potential programming opportunities, and in providing concrete and tailored solutions to key development challenges including in integrated water resources management, climate change adaptation and mitigation, diversification of the energy mix, urban growth and expansion, food and drug administration, health, data collection and statistics and diversification of the economy.
- In 2023, the Kingdom has published its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) on Saudi Arabia's progress in achieving the SDGs. Drawing on global experience and expertise, UNDP has provided instrumental support in formulating the VNR 2023. As a way forward, UNDP is looking to work closely with relevant government counterparts to further deepen the localization of the SDGs, including through the development of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs).

Strategies and actions supporting the “5 Ps”:

Planet

- In September 2023, His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, announced the establishment of the Global Water Organization (GWO) which aims to integrate and enhance international efforts to secure and manage water globally in a sustainable manner. The GWO will be a platform for exchange of expertise, advancing technology, fostering innovation and sharing research and development experiences. UNDP’s partnership with MEWA for over a decade and with its current IWRM project is perfectly positioned to support the Kingdom in the operationalization of the Global Water Organization.
- The MENA Climate Week, recently hosted by the Kingdom highlighted the government’s commitment and will to invest in clean energy. UNDP has been a key partner of the Ministry of Energy in the reform of the energy sector and improving energy efficiency in the Kingdom. With the Vision 2030 target of increasing the share of renewables in the energy mix from 1% to 50%, UNDP can again support the Kingdom through the expansion of the current, on-going energy project.
- The Middle East Green Initiative (MGI), led by the Kingdom focuses on emissions reduction and afforestation across the region in a collaborative regional approach to combating climate change. Additionally, the nationally focused Saudi Green Initiative (SGI) has three ambitious targets of reducing carbon emissions, rehabilitating 40 million hectares of land and increasing terrestrial and marine protected areas to 30% of the country. With ongoing initiatives such as the National Centre for Vegetation Development and Combatting Desertification UNDP is already support-

ing the framework for the establishment of tree nurseries which will contribute to both the targets of the MGI and the SGI. In partnership with UNEP and FAO, UNDP is providing technical support to the MGI with a view to facilitate the management of the fund (yet to be decided). Expansion of these initiatives will help to accelerate the Kingdom’s achievement of its targets.

Prosperity

- Saudi Vision 2030 - with its focus on economic transformation and diversification - has enabled the Kingdom to move away from oil dependence, diversify income sources, and enhance competitiveness. This is reflected in the doubling of Saudi Arabia’s non-oil revenues in just four years, a new record in non-oil exports in 2022, and raising shares of manufacturing and services, as well as tourism.
- In the area of urban development and infrastructure enhancement, UNDP is currently the partner of choice for the Royal Commission of Makkah City and Holy Sites (RCMC) on an initiative to address the existing infrastructure and service delivery challenges, including those related to land, planning, upgrading of public utilities, facilities and amenities. This aims to establish RCMC as an effective contributor to the achievement of specific objectives of Vision 2030 and to realize the goal of providing quality services to 30 million visitors performing Umrah by 2030. While this initiative is in its early stages, acceleration of implementation is planned for 2024 with potential expansion of the project over several years.

PEOPLE

- UNDP will seek to further advance the gender dimension with additional gender expertise to deliver transformational gender equality results while also prioritizing youth to create opportunities for mentorship and training, as well as for Saudi youth and young professionals within the UN system.

- By leading the UN system working group on disability inclusion, UNDP will build on recent achievements, including the adoption of a UNCT Strategic Framework for Disability Inclusion, the successful recruitment and workplace adaptations for a visually impaired research officer, as well as joint UN system advocacy for aligning the national disability inclusion framework with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which contributed to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.
- As the principal development actor in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and using its integrator role in assisting the UN Resident Coordinator and the UN Country Team to facilitate integrated analyses, planning and implementation to deliver a multidimensional approach to the SDGs, UNDP will continue to act as a major service provider and enabler for UN system-wide collaboration and development impact.

Partnerships

- UNDP will contribute to the ongoing revision of the UN Country Team's partnership strategy with a focus on ensuring successful implementation of the National Sustainability Roadmap. Specifically, UNDP aims to further expand its engagement and support to women, youth, persons with disabilities, and communities in remote areas, including through broadening partnerships with the private sector, academia and nonprofit organizations.
- In close partnership with other UN Agencies and through the mechanisms of the United Nations Country Team, UNDP will use its broad development mandate and expertise to support key events that will be hosted by the Kingdom in 2024. These include World Environment Day, the United Nations Convention to Combat Drought and Desertification (UNCCD) COP 16, the Global Health Exhibition and the Saudi Energy Convention. UNDP will continue to co-chair the Environment & Urban Working Group together with UNEP. It will provide policy advisory support to the Ministry of Environment, together with UNEP and FAO, on the operationalization of the Middle East Green Initiative (see also under Planet above), with total funding of USD 2.5 billion and membership of 21 countries from the Middle East, Africa, Central and South Asia, and Latin America. UNDP has finalized a health sector initiative with WHO which is anticipated to be implemented in 2024. UNDP is positioned as a key partner in multi-agency initiative on SDG localization.
- The Kingdom is placing emphasis on its role in South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC). Given Saudi Arabia's status as the largest southern provider of ODA and one of the major development and humanitarian donors at the global level - and with its demonstrated visionary thinking and strong leadership on eminent international priorities including digitalization, sustainable agriculture, water and waste management, energy efficiency, green economy, gender equality and access to education - the country is well placed to engage in SSTC, both as a provider and beneficiary of cutting-edge knowledge and expertise. In Saudi Arabia, UNDP leads the UN Coordination Group on SSTC which facilitates UN system-wide support aligning with Saudi objectives. Through this group of UN entities who are active in Saudi Arabia, and through its own country programme, UNDP can contribute to strategically position the Kingdom to lead in this area through partnerships, peer-to-peer exchanges and technology transfer.
- Given current developments at regional and global level, UNDP can support the Kingdom in developing a Red Sea Strategy advancing peace, security, economic development and socio-economic progress.
- UNDP will aim to prioritize the creation of strategic partnerships with entities such as the Public Investment Fund, and with the private sector to support the application of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles, help improve the business regulatory environment, assist in the diversification of its energy base, invest in workforce skills that match the diversification agenda, and promote inclusive and sustainable growth.

- To further strengthen and expand its partnerships, and to increase visibility in high-level Saudi-based events and fora, UNDP plans to increase its advocacy and outreach by mobilizing a high caliber communications team.

PEACE

- The Kingdom is placing emphasis on its role in South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC). Given Saudi Arabia's status as the largest southern provider of ODA and one of the major development and humanitarian donors at the global level - and with its demonstrated visionary thinking and strong leadership on eminent international priorities including digitalization, sustainable agriculture, water and waste management, energy efficiency, green economy, gender equality and access to education - the country is well placed to engage in SSTC, both as a provider and beneficiary of cutting-edge knowledge and expertise. In Saudi Arabia, UNDP leads the UN Coordination Group on SSTC which facilitates UN system-wide support aligning with Saudi objectives. Through this group of UN entities who are active in Saudi Arabia, and through its own country programme, UNDP can contribute to strategically position the Kingdom to lead in this area through partnerships, peer-to-peer exchanges and technology transfer.
- Given current developments at regional and global level, UNDP can support the Kingdom in developing a Red Sea Strategy advancing peace, security, economic development and socio-economic progress.

Strategies supporting Cross-cutting Issues:

- In line with its Country Programme 2023-2027, UNDP will intensify efforts to mainstream digitalization as an enabler and accelerator for achieving the objectives of Vision 2030 and the SDGs across all UNDP projects and activities, based on the new "Digital for Sustainable Development" (D4SD) Partnership, a forward-thinking ini-

tiative led by the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) that aims to promote and accelerate digital transformation across the Arab States region.

- UNDP will seek to further advance the gender dimension with additional gender expertise to deliver transformational gender equality results while also prioritizing youth to create opportunities for mentorship and training, as well as for Saudi youth and young professionals within the UN system.
- The advancement of volunteerism based on Saudi Vision 2030, and the growing partnership with the global UN Volunteers (UNV) Programme will continue to focus on inclusivity by selecting women, youth, and persons with disabilities to strengthen the capacities and implementation of UNDP's projects. The partnership will be further expanded for both national UNVs and Saudi nationals in the international UNV category.
- By leading the UN system working group on disability inclusion, UNDP will build on recent achievements, including the adoption of a UNCT Strategic Framework for Disability Inclusion, the successful recruitment and workplace adaptations for a visually impaired research officer, as well as joint UN system advocacy for aligning the national disability inclusion framework with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which contributed to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.
- Increase efforts towards results-based management and reporting of all UNDP projects to ensure effective and real-time tracking of UNDP's contributions to development results and impact, with a focus on localized SDG targets and indicators.

Partners

<p>King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue مركز الملك عبد العزيز للحوار الوطني</p> 	<p>الهيئة الملكية لمدينة مكة المكرمة والمشاعر المقدسة ROYAL COMMISSION FOR MAKKAH CITY AND HOLY SITES</p> 	<p>الهيئة الملكية لمدينة الرياض ROYAL COMMISSION FOR RIYADH CITY</p> 	<p>الهيئة العامة للغذاء والدواء Saudi Food & Drug Authority</p> 
<p>وزارة الاقتصاد والتخطيط MINISTRY OF ECONOMY & PLANNING</p> 	<p>وزارة النقل TRANSPORT MINISTRY</p> 	<p>وزارة الطاقة MINISTRY OF ENERGY</p> 	<p>وزارة الشؤون البلدية والقروية Ministry of Municipal & Rural Affairs</p> 
<p>الهيئة العامة للإحصاء General Authority for Statistics</p> 	<p>أمانة منطقة الرياض RIYADH REGION MUNICIPALITY</p> 	<p>GASGI الهيئة العامة للمساحة والمعلومات الجيومكانية General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information</p> 	<p>وزارة الخارجية MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS</p> 
<p>أوقاف AWQAF</p> 	<p>وزارة السياحة Ministry of Tourism</p> 	<p>وزارة البيئة والمياه والزراعة Ministry of Environment Water & Agriculture Kingdom of Saudi Arabia المملكة العربية السعودية</p> 	<p>هيئة الرقابة ومكافحة الفساد Control and Anti-Corruption Authority</p> 
<p>المركز الوطني لتنمية الغطاء النباتي ومكافحة التصحر National Center for Vegetation Cover Development & Combating Desertification</p> 		<p>مسك مؤسسة محمد بن سلمان Mohammed Bin Salman Foundation</p> 	