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EVALUATION OF UNDP CONTRIBUTION ALBANIA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present this Assessment of Development Results (ADR) in Albania. This is the first such assessment of UNDP's work in Albania, and it covers the period 2007–2015. It has been developed by the Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP as one in a series of over 90 country-level evaluations worldwide that constitute a vital component in UNDP's accountability and results-based management system.

Over the last decade, Albania's development context was largely defined by the country's efforts towards EU accession and the accompanying evolution of democratic institutions, systems, mechanisms and capacities. This evaluation comes at a time of great anticipation for the future of Albania, as the country gained its EU candidate status in June 2014.

UNDP has positioned itself well to play a meaningful role in Albania's development process. While aligning with the national priorities of EU accession, UNDP also leveraged its strong relationship with the Government to bring attention to other priorities such as social inclusion, aiming to support Albania's development process based on the human development perspective.

UNDP has a wide range of activities and has made important contributions to developing key policies and filling key institutional gaps in areas such as governance, social inclusion and environment.

It has played an important role in the territorial and administrative reform and also contributed to other government efforts, for example in the fight against corruption and domestic violence, in supporting the disabilities and the Roma communities, and in managing Albania's marine protected areas. However, the dependence on external funding is likely to have a significant influence over priority-setting of UNDP programmes.

Moving forward, UNDP's relevance in Albania's EU accession context remains being responsive to emerging development needs and priorities of the Government. The report includes a set of recommendations for UNDP consideration during its next programming period in Albania, and UNDP management have indicated the actions they intend to take in response.

I trust this report will be of use to readers seeking to achieve a better understanding of the broad support that UNDP has provided, including what has worked and what hasn't, and how UNDP may best position itself to help Albania continue on its path towards EU integration.
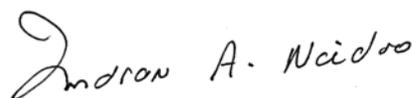
Indran A. Naidoo
Director
Independent Evaluation Office

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADR	Assessment of Development Results
CCR	Community Coordination Response
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil society organization
DaO	Delivering as One
DDPFFA	Department of Development Programming, Financing and Foreign Aid
DSDC	Department of Strategy and Donor Coordination
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign direct investment
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GNI	Gross national income
IDA	International Development Association
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
INSTAT	Albanian National Institute of Statistics
IPS	Integrated Planning System
LSMS	Living Standard Measurement Survey
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSDI	National Strategy for Development and Integration
ODA	Official development assistance
PoC	Programme of Cooperation
RBEC	Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
RBM	Results-Based Management
ROAR	Results-Oriented Annual Report
STAR	Support to the Territorial and Administrative Reform
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Independent Evaluation Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted in 2015 an Assessment of Development Results (ADR) of UNDP's country programme in Albania. The ADR aims at capturing and demonstrating evaluative evidence of UNDP's contributions to development results at the country level, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP's strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts for achieving development results. The objectives of this ADR are to:

■ Support the development of the next UNDP Country Programme Document

■ Strengthen accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders

■ Strengthen accountability of UNDP to its Executive Board

The ADR covers the period 2007–2015, which includes two programme cycles: the current one (2012–2016) and the one that immediately preceded it (2007–2011). This period is particularly important for Albania; during this time, the UNDP programme responded to a development context defined by the efforts towards European Union (EU) accession and government measures to further democratic institutions, systems, mechanisms and capacities. The election of a new government in June 2013 presented opportunities for development partners to engage in Albania on various reforms. It is significant that Albania's middle-income status and EU candidature in 2014 led to changes in the aid architecture as donors began to downsize their programmes. The United Nations (UN) system and UNDP responded to Albania's national development priorities as a One UN programme. UN and UNDP programmes evolved to respond to the changing priorities of Albania.

UNDP'S PROGRAMME

Key UNDP programme areas over the two cycles are as follows:

■ Democratic governance and local development: UNDP's democratic governance and local development portfolio covered a wide range of areas related to public administration reform. Key results were achieved in supporting the territorial and administrative reform, where UNDP offered its project management and implementation experience and coordinated donor contributions through the pooled funding mechanism. Other areas of UNDP's governance programme included policy planning, public service delivery, anti-corruption, information and communication technology, electoral assistance and statistics. In addition, UNDP supported regional and local development (including mine actions). UNDP's substantive engagement in economic governance was relatively minor.

■ Economic and social inclusion: Gender equality mainstreaming and gender-based violence were among the key areas of work in the economic and social inclusion portfolio. UNDP also worked on human rights and social inclusion enabling frameworks and supported specific vulnerable groups, such as Roma and Egyptian minorities and persons with disabilities. Employment promotion emerged as a key area in the current programme cycle in the wake of the economic slowdown and increasing unemployment rates, which increased the interest of national authorities in labour market interventions. Another key area was the work with civil society.

■ Environment: One of the key areas of interventions was biodiversity, where UNDP worked on improving the coverage and man-

agement effectiveness of marine and coastal protected areas, and supported integrated ecosystem management in the Prespa Lakes Basin. Climate change was a key area, with the support for the preparation of national communications to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and climate change adaptation in the Drini Mati River Delta. UNDP also worked on renewable energy (solar water heating), disaster management and environmental hotspots, and supported Albania's environmental administration in its efforts to comply with EU accession requirements.

METHODOLOGY

The ADR assessed UNDP's contribution to development results in three key programme areas: democratic governance and local development, economic and social inclusion, and environment. It also assessed the strategic positioning of UNDP in the EU accession and the Delivering as One (DaO) context. The evaluation included assessments of:

- The effectiveness of UNDP's contribution to development results in Albania in the three key areas of its support. Specific attention was paid to assessing the contribution related to UNDP's global vision of supporting countries in eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities and exclusion, and its contribution to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

- The quality of UNDP's contribution based on three criteria:

  ☐ Relevance of UNDP's interventions to the needs of the country, the national priorities and UNDP's mandate

  ☐ Efficiency of UNDP's interventions in terms of the use of human and financial resources (managerial efficiency and programmatic efficiency)

  ☐ Sustainability of the results to which UNDP contributed

The ADR was both retrospective and prospective. Retrospectively, the ADR assessed UNDP's contribution to national efforts to address development challenges in the three thematic areas noted above. Prospectively, the evaluation looked ahead to examine how UNDP can support Albania's development in the next programming cycle (2017–2021), taking into account the DaO modality and the EU accession context.

The evaluation used a mixed-method approach that included desk reviews of reference material, interviews and field visits. The interviews and site visits were conducted at the national and municipal levels in the capital Tirana and eight municipalities (Durres, Elbasan, Kamez, Korca, Lezha, Pogradec, Shkodar and Vlora). Data and information collected from various sources and methods were triangulated to strengthen the validity of the findings.

KEY FINDINGS

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

The UNDP programme, to varied degrees, contributed to the Government's reform agenda in a number of governance areas, including the territorial and administrative reform, service delivery reform, public policy planning, and others. UNDP's ability to respond quickly to the emerging needs and priorities of the Government was a key advantage in its support. Its capacity to mobilize funding and expertise in a short time enabled the Government to anticipate the first key actions and advance the reform agenda. UNDP's contribution has been effective in cases where it has closely followed government priorities and where there has been clear ownership of the reform agenda by government institutions.

UNDP's contribution has been most significant in furthering the territorial and administrative reform. UNDP contributed to the development of the law on territorial reform and the operational tools for the actual transfer and amalgamation process for new local government units after

the local elections in June 2015. The reform was politically highly sensitive, and UNDP, regarded as a neutral and reliable partner, has played an important role in supporting the development and implementation of the reform sequence. UNDP's effective coordination role and its work with various agencies in supporting the Government on a key governance reform have been central to its contribution.

In other programme areas, such as service delivery, ICT, policy planning and coordination, electoral assistance and anti-corruption, UNDP's scope of activities has been modest compared to the support of other agencies, but it was responsive to the needs of the Government. UNDP has used the immediate capacity needs of the Government as entry points to strengthen institutional capacities. Nevertheless, actual capacity development within the Government has not materialized to the desired extent. Key results in these areas include UNDP's contributions to the development of a long-term public service delivery strategy and a national anti-corruption strategy for the period 2015–2020, as well as the support with regard to Roma registration in the framework of the 2011 census.

UNDP has been consistent in its support to regional and local development in Albania over the past decade and is recognized as a key actor. While regional and local development support produced good project-level outputs, given the significant contextual changes, the sum of these outputs did not contribute to creating a regional and local development model in Albania. Almost two years of work in supporting the central government at the policy level in regional development was invalidated by the changing framework for EU's pre-accession assistance when the new financial framework 2014–2020 of the EU introduced a new funding and implementation approach. The scale and scope of UNDP's activities pertaining to economic governance was limited for any meaningful contribution to national development results in this area.

UNDP's work in mine action has contributed to the removal of life threats for the affected communities and enabled the restitution of land for the resumption of economic activities. Joint efforts by the Government of Albania, UNDP and other development partners led to the declaration of 'mine-free Albania' in 2009.

UNDP's support to governance reforms and local development is anchored in national polices and government priorities. The approaches taken by UNDP, particularly the emphasis on government institutions' leadership, were appropriate in improving programme relevance. UNDP has been able to respond to opportunities to contribute to the Government's reform agenda. The objectives in some cases (such as work on economic governance) are, however, over ambitious compared to the resources available.

Complementarity of UNDP operations with activities of other development actors was generally ensured. UNDP's positive cooperation with other donors and its ability to leverage resources through co-financing schemes and pooled funding were factors in its programme efficiency. More synergies could have been explored among interventions in some programme areas, for example, between territorial and administrative reform and service delivery, economic governance and regional and local development, or regional and local development and mine actions.

UNDP's policy support as part of its contribution to governance reforms has been sustainable as the results have been institutionalized and integrated within the public policy framework. The various laws, legislation and strategies that UNDP contributed to have been approved and are now in the implementation phase. UNDP's efforts to engage the staff of government institutions in the process contributed to ensuring their ownership of the outputs produced. UNDP has managed to build partnerships around a number of its initiatives to carry forward the outcomes and outputs achieved. Regional development is an area where the sustainability of UNDP's contribution at the central and regional policy level is weak, although

UNDP's interventions at the local level brought sustainable results.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The UNDP programme has focused extensively on social issues and UNDP has developed a niche in the area. UNDP has contributed to the development and enhancement of the Government's vision and strategy, including the gender equality strategy and the social inclusion strategy. UNDP has also supported the adoption of important laws and action plans, such as the gender-based violence laws and by-laws and the Roma action plan.

UNDP's work on gender and domestic-based violence has been highly effective, with positive results especially in building capacity for policy monitoring and systems at the local level. In the second programme cycle, UNDP extended its contributions to capacity development for key independent oversight bodies for human rights, such as the Ombudsman and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, who played a progressive role in removing discriminatory practices against women. Political participation of women was another important area of UNDP contribution following the institution of the gender quota in electoral legislation in 2008.

UNDP's contribution has been important in defining the social inclusion policy framework, but tangible results are difficult to measure in a context where the Government has not made significant advancement in the internalization of mechanisms and policies to mainstream social inclusion principles. Support to people with disabilities has been important at the policy, legislation and institutional levels and has been quite effective, especially at the local level. In this area, UNDP has prepared the Government for bigger institutional and legal changes advanced with the support of the World Bank.

UNDP's work with Roma and Egyptian minorities included capacity support for legislation and policy development; interventions in the reg-

ulatory framework for access to basic services (most prominently civil registration); and direct work for the empowerment of community-based organizations and employment opportunities for Roma women and youth. UNDP is recognized as a key government partner on Roma issues. However, the implementation of the national action plan for the Roma Decade is slow due to inadequate resources and insufficient coordination at the local and central level.

UNDP has been advocating and supporting civic participation and empowerment at all levels of governance, facilitating civil society actors to take active part in policy formulation and decision-making. Civic actors have led a number of initiatives, including the fight against domestic violence and the fight for women's rights. Initial results were encouraging, but civil society development issues have somewhat declined in the national agenda. While engagement with civil society actors persisted in the current programme cycle, initiatives aiming at direct capacity support for civil society organizations (CSOs) diminish in scope and budgetary weight. The nature of UNDP engagement with CSOs in the current programme cycle became skewed towards CSOs acting as service providers to help UNDP achieve specific results in awareness campaigns and similar activities.

UNDP's support in the employment and skill development area contributed to changes in the governance of Active Labour Market programmes. UNDP has made a significant contribution towards informing policymakers in key areas related to the labour market inclusion of disadvantaged groups, which have provided a meaningful basis for future intervention by the Government. UNDP's knowledge of Albanian governance systems, and its flexibility in responding to challenges in the alignment of economic development and social inclusion policies, has increased the significance of its contributions.

The objectives and key target groups addressed through interventions in the social inclusion port-

folio have not changed drastically over the two programme cycles, but their relevance to national strategic priorities has strengthened thanks to the relative importance that social inclusion and employment acquired in the national agenda. The sequencing and rationale for interventions has followed sound logic. UNDP's interventions in this area have moved gradually from capacity for government and non-government stakeholders to increasing awareness and understanding of social inclusion issues and visibility of vulnerable target groups in the early years, to supporting important legal initiatives, such as the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and related legislation. These efforts have been accompanied by measures to strengthen national and local-level domestic institutions and mechanisms in charge of implementation and monitoring.

The DaO modality has allowed for increased efficiency in the division of work among the UN agencies and reduced transaction costs for the Government. With the DaO, UNDP has been able to focus its programme in fewer areas but provide more systematic contributions. The evolution of UNDP's role in the gender area illustrates this division of work. Within UNDP's overall programme portfolio, there are good synergies among projects but they could be exploited more proactively.

UNDP has paid careful consideration to sustainability concerns in its programme, with enhanced emphasis on building national systems. However, the sustainability of results achieved is variable. It is higher in areas where there is clear ownership and government commitment, such as gender-based violence and employment. The pressure for UNDP to deliver outputs quickly and to show results, as well as inadequate human resources in some government institutions, have sometimes incentivized direct programme delivery by UNDP staff rather than through government institutions. This approach hampers capacity development and the prospects for sustainability.

ENVIRONMENT

UNDP has made important contributions to the Government's efforts in meeting its obligations under multilateral environment agreements through its support to the preparation of the national communications to the UNFCCC. UNDP activities complemented those of other agencies in facilitating government efforts to meet the EU accession requirements in different areas of environmental management, including protected areas, climate change adaptation, carbon finance, integrated ecosystem management, environmental hotspots and renewable energy.

UNDP is a key player on marine protected areas and contributed to the establishment of the first marine protected areas in Albania, as well as the finalization of the national strategic plan for marine and coastal protected areas. UNDP contributed to the preparation of a policy paper on carbon finance, providing a useful framework for further development in this area. UNDP supported the preparation of a number of other legal documents and strategic plans, for example, the national law for strategic environment assessment, by-laws for environmental impact assessment procedures and the law on renewable energy sources. UNDP's support has been critical for providing Albania an environmental legal and policy framework.

Through its support to the integration of climate change across sectors, UNDP contributed to the inclusion of climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Cross Sectorial Strategy for Environment and the Strategy of Rural and Agriculture Development in Albania within the framework of the National Strategy for Development and Integration. Climate change indicators were included in the integrated environmental monitoring system. Climate change adaptation was also included in the standard structure for management plans of protected areas in Albania.

Strengthening institutional capacity for better environmental administration has been a key component of UNDP's support. UNDP's support to the Ministry of Environment in the imple-

mentation of the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol, as well as in fulfilling its responsibility as the Designated National Authority to approve Clean Development Mechanism projects, was considered important. In 2014, the National Protected Area Agency was also established—an important step for moving work forward in this area.

At the local level, UNDP contributed to enhancing capacity through targeted seminars and special expertise workshops, for example on the preparation of local environmental action plans. There is increased awareness and understanding of environmental issues and better collaboration among stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations and local administrations. UNDP has contributed to a shift in the approach of the local administration in environment management towards more sustainable protection, preservation and use of natural resources. The Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool has been introduced in marine protected areas. As a result of the integrated ecosystem management intervention in Prespa, forest area under improved management has increased, as has lake surface under biodiversity-oriented management.

A participatory approach is systematically followed in all areas of environment, energy and climate change programmes, leading to strong local stakeholder engagement and ownership. Efforts were made to ensure that women participated in local-level environment activities.

Short-term interventions are a challenge for sustaining programme outcomes, and further efforts are needed to sustain the momentum generated. The strategies, plans and proposals prepared need to be implemented. UNDP has supported small pilot demonstration activities at the local level that have been beneficial, but more efforts are needed for wider application and institutionalization of some of the practices. Environment results depend on further reforms in the area and more sustained government initiatives. To produce climate change adaptation outcomes, further efforts are needed from the Government and other development partners to finance the

project proposals developed and implement the adaptation measures identified. UNDP's solar water heating intervention reached the individual and the service sectors, but in order to further promote the use of this renewable energy source, UNDP's interventions must penetrate the industrial sector, as the industrial facilities are the intensive end-users of hot water; the availability of an attractive financing mechanism (including subsidies) is critical for this to happen.

UNDP interventions have been aligned with national strategies and have responded to key priorities and needs, both of the central government and the local administration and communities. The interventions were designed taking into account good practices and lessons learnt in the respective areas. However, it is important to note that environment is an area where most of the resources come from external funding rather than core funds and this has significant influence over real priority setting. The availability of external funding has been the most important driving force determining where, how and when UNDP work has been undertaken.

Various measures have been taken to ensure the efficiency of the programme, but there is scope for improvement. UNDP has been able to leverage resources from others for the projects it supports. There are a few examples of synergies among UNDP-supported projects and this should be further developed.

National and local ownership of UNDP's interventions provides a strong basis for sustainability of outcomes. The enhanced capacities empowered the individuals in small communities to take actions. The activities provide avenues for further government action. Funding for environment management is a key challenge for sustainability.

UNDP'S STRATEGIC POSITIONING

UNDP has positioned itself well to play a meaningful role in Albania's development process. While aligning with the Government's EU accession priorities, the UNDP programme also

brought to attention other priorities. UNDP supported not only the EU-acquis priorities areas, but also other areas that are critical for inclusive development, such as youth employment and social inclusion.

A key challenge for UNDP is the limited core resources and its dependence on external funding. UNDP maintained a pragmatic and flexible approach to resource mobilization from different sources. An issue related to external funding is that key areas of UN support, such as governance, are also accession priority areas where the EU is directly involved. For the forthcoming programme, this would mean that UNDP's engagement on some of these issues depends largely on dialogue with both the Government and the EU for strategic and financial partnership and increasing government co-financing of programmes.

UNDP's comparative strengths in Albania include its strong relationship with the Government at the central and local level, its understanding of the socio-economic and cultural context and national institutions, and its technical and managerial capacities to effectively implement projects and provide policy advice. UNDP's strong working relationship with government institutions has inspired confidence in donors. Leveraging of partnerships with other development actors has played an important role in strengthening UNDP programmes. There have been successful examples of not just resource mobilization, but collaboration, such as the support to the territorial reform, which enhanced contribution to national development results. Collaboration with civil society partners in programme delivery resulted in tangible contributions in a number of areas, such as the work with the Roma community and work related to marine protected areas and climate change adaptation in the environment portfolio. While UNDP worked with CSOs mostly in implementing its activities at the local level, there is considerable scope for a more concerted effort to strengthen civil society capacities in areas where there are fewer CSOs or where capacities are weak.

UNDP has been consistent in its support in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment and human rights. It plays an important role in communicating and working with the Government to promote the implementation of international gender and human rights agreements, and has contributed to the formulation and adoption of gender equality legislation and secondary legislation that represents a significant step forward in achieving human rights for all in the country. Despite a strong gender portfolio and a growing effort to mainstream gender in other areas of UNDP work, mainstreaming gender in different UNDP programmes faced limitations. Many results in other areas of UNDP work (such as governance, local development and environment) are focused on equity in the number of women and men targeted (for example, to ensure the participation of women in training activities). More analysis of gender dimensions is required in planning and implementing other areas of the UNDP programme.

With its global network, UNDP has a strong advantage in supporting and facilitating knowledge exchange and collaboration among countries. It has made some important contributions in this area in its programmes in Albania.

Partnership between UNDP and other UN agencies takes place within the DaO modality, which raised the visibility of UN programming in Albania. UNDP played a key role in the formulation and implementation of the One UN programme. Within the DaO framework, UNDP demonstrated synergy with other UN agencies' programmes to enhance programme strategizing and contribution. The multidimensional characteristics of some areas, such as governance and social inclusion, offered a good entry point for joint programming among UN agencies. Overall, strong synergies with the UN agencies in DaO enhanced UNDP's contribution in Albania, as well as the contribution of the broader UN system.

The DaO modality increased UNDP's programme resources, though not as much as it did for the smaller UN agencies. The DaO modality

also provided more opportunities for UNDP's engagement in some areas little known during its previous experience in the country, such as youth employment. UNDP's involvement in some areas expanded (such as governance) and some other lines of work blossomed (such as social inclusion).

Despite funding coherence, the DaO in Albania has a degree of fragmentation in implementation and spreads thinly across a range of issues. Too many outcomes, outputs and related management processes led to fragmentation and overlap. Recognizing this problem, UN agencies underwent a mid-term review exercise in 2014 that resulted in a drastic reduction in areas of work down to only four outcomes. Nevertheless, challenges remain.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1. In the two periods under review, the UNDP programme was strongly anchored in Albania's development priorities. While aligning with the national priorities of EU accession, UNDP also leveraged its strong relationship with the Government to bring attention to other priorities, such as social inclusion, aiming to support the country's development process based on the human development perspective. UNDP is well positioned to support the Government and there is certainly an important role it can play in supporting Albania in attaining EU accessing goals and sustainable development.

Conclusion 2. UNDP has a wide range of activities in its Albania programme, and has, to varied degrees, contributed to development results in Albania. UNDP's contribution has been relevant and important in developing key policies and in filling key institutional gaps in areas such as governance, social inclusion and environment. The implementation of the various legislation and action plans is ongoing and yet to be accomplished.

Conclusion 3. Within the DaO framework, UNDP demonstrated synergy with other UN agencies' programmes to enhance programme strategizing and contribution. In addition to the strong partnership with the Government, leveraging partnerships with other development actors has played an important role in strengthening UNDP's programme. The participatory approach of the UNDP programme contributed to enhancing ownership of the programmes and outcomes.

Conclusion 4. UNDP's flexibility has given it a real comparative advantage in mobilizing resources from partners. The pooled funding mechanism used to support territorial and administrative reform not only enabled coherent support to policymaking, but also enhanced national ownership and results. Dependence on external funding is likely to have a significant influence over priority setting of UNDP programmes.

Conclusion 5. UNDP support complemented government staff needs and capacities, and this was important in the context of inadequate human resources in some government institutions. While UNDP support has enabled these institutions to function, UNDP's programme implementation approach in some cases did not facilitate capacity development to the desired effect, which may hamper the eventual sustainability of outcomes. Challenges exist in sustaining the programme's benefits, and continuous follow up was required to ensure lasting impact.

Conclusion 6. Despite a strong gender portfolio, systematic integration of gender issues in the design and implementation of UNDP's governance and environment programmes remains a challenge. There is not yet a multidisciplinary approach to cross-cutting issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: UNDP's relevance in an EU accession context remains being responsive to emerging development needs and priorities of the Government. Moving forward, UNDP should provide an adequate balance of policy and demonstration of viable development models. UNDP should focus more on service delivery at the local level.

Management Response: In Albania, UNDP enjoys strong alignment to the country's EU accession context. On the policy dialogue level, UNDP actively participates in joint fora with national and international development partners, e.g. Donor's Technical Secretariat and Development and Integration Partners, for coordination of assistance. Further UNDP engages actively in the Government's Integrated Policy Management Group (IPMG) architecture, which is a sector coordination mechanism. In some areas, e.g. in social policy and employment, UNDP together with UNWOMEN plays lead roles in support of EU-supported sector programs. In the water sector UNDP supports governance mechanisms to manage river basins in transboundary context to deliver better water quality and a more balanced use of natural resources.

The regional development policy, distinguished from area-based development, is a critical EU policy tool for cohesion of European regions. In Albania, policy for regional development has also been evolving. In the past programme period, UNDP supported the implementation of EU's 'Integrated Support to Decentralization' project, which aimed to establish Albania's regional development strategy and to support Albania's regions approximate the planning and institutional set up needed to engage with EU's regional development policy. The ADR provides valuable insight on the relevance and effectiveness of this work, noting also that the national policy and institutional framework objectives have been ambiguous. Going forward, UNDP will engage with national partners to support local governance mechanisms with a view to strengthen their capacities to participate in the further policy and institutional framework for regional development. Important partners are also among the international community, notably Austrian Development Agency and Swiss Development Cooperation. The Regional Development Fund is a critical asset of the Government, which can support such policy and institutional frameworks. UNDP will seek partnerships and identify strategies to support the country's newly amalgamated local government units so that the people of Albania derive measurable development gains from the evolving regional development policy of the Government. Supporting transparency and effectiveness of Fund operations as well as promoting

innovative funding, including co-mingling of funds with the Regional Development Fund, towards clear, measurable performance targets at municipal levels will be explored with partners.

While most social policy is not explicitly regulated by EU Acquis, there are complex and sophisticated EU instruments to promote European standards and norms in social rights. In Albania UNDP enjoys strong partnership with national and international development partners, to support Albania's institutions in aligning to these standards and norms. Going forward, the new Country Programme of UNDP for 2017–2021, identifies social inclusion as one of its key pillars. Specific target vulnerable groups are persons with disabilities, survivors of gender-based violence, and vulnerable Roma and Egyptian populations. In this context, UNDP's gender equality agenda, both through gender mainstreaming of key national policy frameworks and legislation and through developing capacities of independent institutions to remedy discrimination against women, are key programme components going forward. UNDP's comparative advantage will be on work at local levels at the level of the newly consolidated government units.

UNDP has supported the development of the vision and strategies for social inclusion and protecting the rights of vulnerable populations. Going forward, and leveraging once again the economies of scale and capacities established by Albania's territorial administrative reform, the new Country Programme of UNDP is designed so that results are delivered at the level of local government units. The strategy of implementation of the country programme is through local government units, with indicators and targets adopted for 61 municipalities, representing also a bringing to national scale, the pilots to policy work (e.g. in community response mechanism to gender-based violence) to national coverage through the 61 municipalities.

Recommendation 2: UNDP should continue to strengthen its efforts for resource mobilization. It should also explore cost-sharing options or technical service modalities fully financed by the Government.

Management Response: The Country Office acknowledges that a critical mass of programme funding is essential for achievement of development results supported by UNDP. The experience of the Country Office has been that UNDP's support, when linked to a nationally driven reform agenda, and delivered in coherence, partnership and collaboration with other development partners, has been effective in attracting also financial resources. National ownership and drive of results are critical. UNDP will concentrate resource mobilization efforts, not as a fund-raising effort towards UNDP projects, but rather as ensuring that national reform programmes are adequately resourced. To date, as underlined in the ADR, Government Cost Sharing towards UNDP-supported programmes and projects has not been substantial. However, the more UNDP focuses on delivering national reform programmes, the more national resources can be attached to programme results. During the past programming cycle the Country Office progressively dispelled the notion that UNDP is a donor. The Country Office will continue to offer a problem solving approach towards delivering of national reform agendas to government partners at central and local levels. This in turn will encourage pooling and comingling of national and international resources towards mutually agreed targets, some of which are most effectively delivered by UNDP. Comparative advantages lie not only in substantive command of areas such as rights of vulnerable communities, gender-based violence, local governance, but also in operational and managerial capacities for co-management with government and other national partners different sources of funding towards reform objectives. Local government partners will play an increasing role in such partnerships going forward, as they themselves will become more financially stronger actors. Further UNDP's project delivery strategies, through good governance mechanisms, participation, due process, transparency and effective utilization of funds (procurement, recruitment, contract management etc.) are instruments applicable in a variety of substantive areas.

The Government's reform agendas all require additional and innovative funding sources, some of which can be built through UNDP partnerships. Notable possibilities are energy-efficiency or innova-

tive municipal financing mechanisms, or financing mechanisms for protected areas. Co-mingling with Government funds through such instruments will increase scale and impact of programmes.

Recommendation 3: UNDP should strengthen partnership and knowledge cooperation with other development actors and should focus on scaling up impact.

Management Response: UNDP notes that development knowledge and replicable experience often sits with partners outside UNDP. This is also true in Albania. Some of the most important best practices in municipal services delivery, for example, have been accomplished through programmes supported by our partners across the country (SDC e.g. in Functional Areas; One Stop Shops; USAID on municipal finances; fiscal decentralization). UNDP support to the Government's reform programmes will need to be based on bigger investments on the side of the Country Office in learning from and leveraging the knowledge of other development partners, government units, civil society and academia. UNDP's programme design and management tools, such as Local Project Appraisal and Steering Committees, are formal and collaborative mechanisms (involving leadership of development partners, national institutions) for ensuring that such knowledge and experience is reflected upon, assessed, and brought to scale, as relevant in UNDP-supported reform programmes. Going forward UNDP will deploy more intent to knowledge management through these formal mechanisms as well as through other mechanisms such as project visits, experience exchange and more structured dialogue.

The recommendation to focus on scaling impact is at the heart of the strategy for delivering the Country Programme 2017-2021. It is also the Country Office's key strategy for UNDP Strategic Plan alignment parameter of scale. UNDP has been part of successful experiences of scaling pilots to policy levels. One such example has been the experience of the coordinated community responses to gender-based violence (CCR). Going forward, a virtuous cycle of pilot to policy will be closed with bringing this response mechanism to scale through the agency of

the 61 newly amalgamated municipalities (Evaluation of the CCR in the Context of Territorial Reform refers). Further the Country Office notes that scaling of UNDP-supported pilots or strategies may also be achieved through programmes supported by other development partners. For example UNDP pilots and models for financing for protected areas (2016 onward) provide inputs to broader policy and wider replication impact through EU-Italian Cooperation programme for Natura2000; or EU Climate Change Programs.

Recommendation 4: UNDP should apply a multidisciplinary approach to cross-cutting issues, including human rights, gender equality, social inclusion and environmental management.

Management Response: *UNDP's work in Albania with UNWOMEN and other UN agency partners was recently recognized by the UNDG as a case study of strengthening normative and operational linkages as called for in GA resolution 67/226 translating normative framework (CEDAW) into results in Albania in the legal framework as well as at civil society and popular levels for increasing voice and participation in demand of rights. https://undg.org/main/undg_document/eight-case-studies-on-integrating-the-united-nations-normative-and-operational-work/ The Country Office notes however that such successes need to be made more horizontal across all outcome areas of the UNDP Country Programme going forward. Therefore, the Country Office has volunteered to apply the Gender Seal to its programme and operations in 2016. Further, effective use of programme design tools such as pre-appraisals, appraisals and monitoring and evaluation are already yielding results in stronger mainstreaming of gender across the portfolios, with most recent examples being STAR2 and STAR-PAR pooled funding programmes in support of local governance. Stronger follow up Special Procedures of Treaty bodies 'recommendations for Albania as well as the Universal Periodic Review findings will also be integrated into the Country Programme, going forward.*

Environment – UNDP Country Office is regularly integrating Social and Environmental Standards in its programs as per applicable policy. Going for-

ward, it will be important not only formalistically meeting the Standards, but using the SES as basis for advocacy and further project design, e.g. integrating longer term disaster and climate change scenarios into floods rehabilitation works under ongoing program. More significantly, supporting the national mechanisms for mainstreaming of environmental and climate-related concerns in development and sectoral policy is a development challenge UNDP seeks to address through its upcoming Country Programme (2017-21) for which specific output targets to this regard have been agreed to and specified. The interministerial committee on climate change is a relatively young coordination mechanism for climate change mainstreaming. UNDP will support the governance and capacities of this committee to lead on policy direction that must be complied by line ministries.

Quality Assurance system for Country Office programming will be used throughout the new programme period. The Country Office has already mobilized other mechanisms for pursuing an issues-based approach that cuts across outcome areas They include the establishment of solution teams to support Tirana Municipality in follow up to the Smart City conference and multisectoral work plan of the Municipality. Further the Country Office's systematic use of Open Government and Open Data Partnerships including the Trust in Institutions Surveys help feed multidisciplinary assessments, performance monitoring into programme work across portfolios.

Recommendation 5: UNDP should prepare a long-term strategy for its development support to Albania during the course of the EU accession process. The strategy should outline UNDP's key areas of support to Albania in moving forward with EU membership.

Management Response: *The UNDP Country Programme 2017–2021 presents greater focus and credibility to our work going forward. Its alignment to the NSDI and the overarching goal of promoting rule of law and good governance with the ultimate objective of Albania's European integration outlines UNDP's strategy of support to Albania in moving forward with EU accession. In this context, the Country*

Office will explore in 2016 further entry points to support especially the anti-corruption and rule of law actors by expanding its current work. This can be further broadened in the frame of public administration reform including transparent business processes and effective public services delivery, to see how anti-corruption and rule of law support contributes to broader EU accession priorities. Each programme outcome area will be provided with the European integration relevance rationale in the Country Programme.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted a country-level Assessment of Development Results (ADR) in Albania in 2015. This chapter presents the objectives and scope of the evaluation; its methodology, approaches and processes; and the structure of the report.

1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

Independent of UNDP management, the IEO is responsible for (i) providing the Executive Board with valid and credible information from evaluations for corporate accountability, decision-making and improvement; and (ii) enhancing the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function and its coherence, harmonization and alignment in support of United Nations (UN) reform and national ownership.

The ADR aims at capturing and demonstrating evaluative evidence of UNDP's contributions to development results at the country level, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP's strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts for achieving development results. Its objectives are to:

- support the development of the next UNDP Country Programme Document

- strengthen accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders

- strengthen accountability of UNDP to the Executive Board

This is the first ADR conducted in Albania, which has been a pilot country for the Delivering as One (DaO) initiative since 2007. The evaluation was conducted in 2015 so its results could feed into the preparation of UNDP's new country programme, which will start in 2017. The new country programme is guided by the forthcoming Government of Albania/UN Programme of Cooperation (PoC), which will also start in 2017.

1.2 SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The ADR covered two programme cycles: the current one and the one that immediately preceded it. However, it emphasizes interventions implemented under the current programme cycle and interventions that span both programme cycles. The year 2007 was chosen as the starting point as that was when the DaO programme pilot in Albania began.

The scope of the ADR included all of UNDP's activities in the country and therefore covered interventions funded by all sources of finance, including core UNDP resources, donor funds, government funds and other sources. It included project-specific activities as well as 'non-project' activities such as policy dialogue, coordination and partnership building.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference (Annex 1), UNDP's contribution in Albania was assessed in three key programme areas based on thematic breakdowns of the country programme under the review periods: 1) democratic governance and local development, 2) economic and social inclusion, and 3) environment. The analysis for each key area will include an assessment of results achieved for all the outcomes linked to that area. More details about the outcomes and their evolution over different periods will be described in Chapter 3, and the Terms of Reference included a mapping of outcomes under these three key areas.

The ADR was both retrospective and prospective. Retrospectively, the ADR assessed UNDP's contribution to national efforts in addressing development challenges in the three above-mentioned thematic areas. The ADR drew conclusions about UNDP's overall performance and its performance in each of the areas. It assessed results, anticipated and unanticipated, positive and negative, and covered UNDP assistance funded from both core and non-core resources. Prospectively, the evaluation looked ahead to examine how UNDP can support Albania's development in the next programming cycle, 2017–2021, taking into account the DaO modality and European Union (EU) accession context.

1.3 METHODOLOGY, APPROACHES AND PROCESSES OF THE EVALUATION

1.3.1 METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION

Guided by the updated ADR Methodology Manual, the ADR evaluation methodology comprised two main components: (i) assessment of UNDP's contribution by thematic/programme areas, and (ii) assessment of the quality of this contribution. The ADR presented its findings and assessment according to defined criteria:

- **UNDP's contribution by programme areas.** The ADR assessed the **effectiveness** of UNDP in contributing to development results in Albania through its programme activities. The ADR paid specific attention to assessing the contribution to UNDP's overall vision of helping countries eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities and exclusion, and its contribution to furthering gender equality and women's empowerment.[1]

- **The quality of UNDP's contribution.** The ADR also assessed the quality of UNDP's contribution based on the following criteria:

- ☐ **Relevance** of UNDP projects and outcomes to the country's needs and national priorities, as well as to UNDP's mandate

- ☐ **Efficiency** of UNDP interventions in terms of use of human and financial resources (programmatic efficiency and managerial and operational efficiency)

- ☐ **Sustainability** of the results to which UNDP contributes (design for sustainability, scale and scaling up, capacity development and implementation issues)

The evaluation team assessed the key programme areas identified above (democratic governance and local development; economic and social inclusion; and environment) against these criteria to generate findings, broad conclusions and recommendations for future action.

Key explanatory factors: The ADR assessed how specific factors contributed to UNDP's performance, including:

- UNDP's strategic positioning in the country, defined as UNDP positioning within the national development/policy space and its strategies in assisting national development efforts. In Albania, this was examined with the EU accession context taken into account

- Programme design parameters, including targeting, gender mainstreaming and balance between upstream versus downstream initiatives

- Operational/management parameters, such as the availability of funding, implementation modalities, organization of the office, risk management and M&E practices

- Other country-specific factors that are assumed to have affected UNDP's performance in Albania, such as UNDP's position-

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1 Using the UN System-wide Action Plan (UN SWAP) to improve gender equality and the empowerment of women across the UN system.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

ing in the DaO modality, including support for coordination of UN and other development assistance, as well as the implications of the DaO mechanism for UNDP programme and partnership

The Terms of Reference (TOR) in Annex 1 include a non-exhaustive list of factors/questions considered in the evaluation.

1.3.2 APPROACHES OF THE EVALUATION

Data collection. The evaluation used a mixed-method approach that included desk reviews of reference materials, interviews and field visits. Reference material included programme-and policy-related documents; project documents and progress reports; past evaluation reports; self-reported data prepared by the UNDP Country Office (Results-Oriented Annual Reports, or ROARs); information available at the UN Resident Coordinator's Office about One UN PoC-related activities (including the evaluation report of the One UN programme 2012–2016 evaluation, completed in June 2015); and other relevant documents and reports available through the Government and UNDP. The evaluation team interviewed stakeholders, including government officials, beneficiaries, donors, development partners, UN agencies and UNDP staff. The interviews and site visits were conducted at the national and municipal levels in the capital Tirana and eight municipalities (Durres, Elbasan, Kamez, Korca, Lezha, Pogradec, Shkodar and Vlora). The interviews followed a protocol developed by the evaluation team. The team was largely able to interview key informants in all analysed areas and thereby ensure appropriate coverage and quality of the gathered information. Annexes 2 and 3 of the report include the lists of persons and documents consulted.

Data analysis. Data and information collected from various sources and methods were triangulated to strengthen the validity of the findings. For example, to arrive at a finding about project/programme achievements, the evaluation team examined documents and materials collected during the evaluation along with information gathered in interviews with national implementing partners, participating UN agencies, donors and UNDP programme specialists.

Under the DaO initiative, the UNDP programme stems from the overall One UN PoC framework, and multiple UN agencies are tasked with contributing to the thematic outcomes. In Albania, under the current PoC, UNDP shares both outcomes and outputs with other agencies. The ADR aimed to examine the plausible associations among programme elements and to ascertain the degree to which UNDP has contributed to outcomes.

UNDP projects that contributed to different outcomes and programmatic areas were at different stages of implementation at the time of the evaluation. Therefore, it may not always be possible to determine a project's contribution to results. In cases where projects or initiatives are ongoing, the evaluation team documented observable progress and tried to ascertain the likelihood that the outcome would be achieved given the programme design and measures already in place.

Results from the individual outcome and programme area analyses were examined and synthesized to identify a set of conclusions and recommendations.

Evaluation team. The evaluation was conducted by an independent team comprising an Evaluation Manager and an Associate Evaluation Manager (IEO staff), and two consultants (independent evaluation experts). An IEO research assistant supported the team. The roles and responsibilities of team members were specified in the TOR of the ADR (Annex 1).

1.3.3 EVALUATION PROCESS

The Evaluation Manager and the Associate Evaluation Manager conducted a preparatory mission to Albania between 13 and 23 April 2015, after which the TOR for the evaluation

were developed. The TOR included an evaluability assessment[2] and an overall evaluation plan for the ADR. An evaluation reference group — a group of stakeholders relevant to the country programme — was established; the TOR and other materials produced through the evaluation were shared with this group.

Following the recruitment of the external experts, the evaluation team conducted a data collection mission to Albania between 6 and 16 July 2015. The Associate Evaluation Manager joined the team from 9 to 16 July 2015. The team continued to collect data after the mission and to conduct analyses and prepare individual programme area reports. The individual reports were then synthesized into a draft final comprehensive report.

The draft ADR report was internally reviewed at the IEO, then shared with the Country Office and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (RBEC) for comment on 16 December 2015. Final comments from the Country Office and RBEC were received on 13 January 2016 and the revision process was completed on 27 January 2016. A stakeholder workshop was held on 26 February 2016, where comments were solicited from national stakeholders for use in finalizing the report.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report has six chapters. Following this introduction (Chapter 1), Chapter 2 provides an overview of Albania's development context and challenges, national responses to those challenges, and the development environment in which UNDP has operated. Chapter 3 presents UNDP's response and strategy in addressing national development needs; it also describes the country programme framework. Chapter 4 assesses UNDP's contribution to development results through its programmatic interventions. Chapter 5 considers UNDP's strategic positioning in Albania. Finally, Chapter 6 presents conclusions and recommendations, drawing on the findings and evidence presented in the previous chapters.

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2   The evaluability assessment was carried out for each programme area to ascertain the available information, identify data constraints, and determine the data collection needs and methods. It concluded that overall, the programme had sufficient information to conduct the ADR. It noted the evolution of outcomes in the country programme over time and the challenges in outcome coherence, which have been addressed in the evaluation design.

Chapter 2

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

This chapter presents the country context within which UNDP has operated. It summarizes Albania's key development challenges and the Government's response to those challenges through its national strategies. It also describes development cooperation in Albania.

2.1 COUNTRY CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

During the evaluation period, Albania's development context was largely defined by its efforts towards EU accession and the accompanying evolution of democratic institutions, systems, mechanisms and capacities. The election of a new government in June 2013 presented opportunities for development partners to engage in Albania on various reforms. Albania's middle-income status and EU candidature in 2014 led to changes in the aid architecture as donors began to downsize their programmes.

2.1.1 POLITICAL CONTEXT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

After 47 years of communist rule, Albania's political system has been a presidential-parliamentary democracy since 1992. In 2009, Albania applied for candidacy to the EU and the push for European integration has driven reforms since then. In June 2014, Albania gained its EU candidate status — a clear step forward in EU-Albania relations. Albania's candidate status reflects the country's progress in implementing the necessary reforms. The EU has encouraged further reforms and has focused particularly on administration and judiciary reforms, the fight against corruption and organized crime, and the promotion of fundamental rights.[3]

The first National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) of Albania covered the period from 2007–2013, which coincided with the financial framework of the EU and the instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). The NSDI succeeded the National Strategy for Socio-Economic Development, which until 2006 was the Government's primary strategic document. The NSDI was designed to inform the Medium Term Budget Programme process by providing a long-term direction for the allocation of resources across sectors. The NSDI defined the vision for the this period as "a country with high living standards, which is integrated in the European and Euro-Atlantic structures, is democratic and guarantees the fundamental human rights and liberties."[4]

The second NSDI, which was supposed to cover the period from 2014–2020, was not finalized by the time of the ADR's main data collection mission in July 2015. According to a draft released in June 2013, the NSDI II[5] identified three key pillars: growth through fiscal stability and increased competitiveness; sustainable growth through effective use of resources; and investing in people and social cohesion. Good governance, democracy and rule of law serve as the foundation for the achievement of Albania's vision of strong, sustainable and equitable growth and EU membership.

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3   European Commission, 'EU candidate status for Albania', June 2014, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO -14-439_en.htm

4   Republic of Albania Council of Ministers, 'National Strategy for Development and Integration 2007-2013', March 2008.

5   Republic of Albania Council of Ministers, 'National Strategy for Development and Integration 2014-2020', Draft, June 2013.

The Integrated Planning System (IPS) was introduced as the main tool for policy planning, budgeting and monitoring, aiming at "ensuring the coherence of the National Strategy for Development and Integration, the long-term sector and cross-sector strategies and the Medium Term Budget Program."[6] The IPS is the key national decision-making system for determining the strategic directions and allocation of resources. It aims to avoid overlapping *ad hoc* policies and strategies and to ensure compliance with financial planning processes. The World Bank refers to the Albanian IPS as one of the best practices in the region. However, consolidating the IPS framework to enhance its efficiency remains a challenge.[7]

Following the election of a new government in 2013, a comprehensive process for coordinating and developing the Government's policy priorities was established. This process, which complemented the existing planning and coordination mechanism, included the establishment of a 'Delivery Unit' at the Prime Minister's Office, which implements and monitors the process. Within the framework of the EU's IPA 2014–2020 programming, Albania is following a sector approach for planning policies, programmes and foreign investments. Currently, Albania is piloting four Integrated Policy Management Groups[8] as interministerial structures for drafting, implementing and monitoring policies, and for coordinating with donors.

Public administration reform is a fundamental pillar of the EU enlargement process, as stated in the 'Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2014–2015'.[9] It is also a key challenge for Albania. In 2009, the Government of Albania approved a cross-cutting Public Administration Reform Strategy 2009–2013, but properly implementing the legal framework for public administration was challenging. The OECD-SIGMA assessments,[10] as well as the European Commission's 2014 progress report, highlighted several problem areas. Challenges included a weak policy and strategic framework; inadequate capacity to draft effective policies and legislation that comply with the EU acquis; the need to establish a professional civil service through proper implementation of the Civil Service Law at all levels of administration; the need to guarantee independent monitoring and ensure transparency of the public administration; and the need to ensure administrative and political accountability.[11] In reply to these challenges, in April 2015, the Government adopted the Cross-cutting Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015–2020. The strategy envisages actions to strengthen the administrative capacity of both central and local government units, allowing them to exercise their authority to implement legislation enforcing transparency, effectiveness and inclusiveness.[12]

Corruption is a significant ongoing problem in Albania. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (2014), Albania ranked 110 out of 175 countries around the

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6   Republic of Albania, Ministry of Finance, 'Albania Public Finance Management Strategy 2014-2020', December 2014.

7   Ministry for Innovation and Public Administration, 'Cross-cutting Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015-2020', 2015.

8   Four groups are working on public administration reform, water, competitiveness and direct foreign investment, employment, training and social policy.

9   The EU structures its work on public administration reform around six key issues outlined in the Enlargement Strategy: the strategic framework of public administrative reform, policy development and coordination, public service and human resources management, accountability, service delivery, and public finance management.

10   SIGMA (Support for Improvement in Governance and Management) Annual Assessment on Albania, 2013 and 2014.

11   European Commission, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) 2014-2020 'Albania –Sector Reform Contract for Public Administration Reform', 2015.

12   Ministry for Innovation and Public Administration, 'Cross-cutting Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015-2020', 2015.

CHAPTER 2. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

world, and its score is the lowest in Europe.[13] Other challenges include weak institutional capacity and lack of civic engagement, resulting in a weak accountability relationship between government and citizens.[14]

Albania has endeavoured to establish a legal and institutional framework to fight corruption and increase transparency. In 2012, the Government amended the Albanian Constitution to restrict the immunity of high-level public officials, politicians and judges. Other amendments include an asset disclosure law and conflict of interest provisions. The new Civil Service Law, adopted in 2014, represents a major step towards enhancing professionalism and meritocracy in the public sector, and towards combatting politicization, inefficiency and corruption across a wide range of public sector bodies.[15] The Government also adopted the intersectoral Strategy against Corruption 2015–2020 in April 2015. The Action Plan and the monitoring instrument for implementation of the strategy were also developed and approved. A national anti-corruption coordinator has been appointed and a network of anti-corruption focal points has been established in all line ministries.

Decentralization, a top national priority, began to emerge on the political agenda in 2003. However, while there has been progress in the last decade, challenges remain, including the lack of a clear legal and regulatory framework and evolving local government capacities. In terms of fiscal decentralization, although local government revenues and expenditures have increased over the years, fiscal autonomy at local government level continued to be a challenge.

The current Government has made territorial and administrative reform a key priority and considers administrative fragmentation a major barrier to an effectively functioning local government system. Law 115/2014 formalized a new administrative and territorial division for Albania, reducing the number of local government units from 373 to 61. The most recent local elections, on 21 June 2015, were based on this new administrative division.

Challenges remain in implementing the new administrative and territorial division, especially the amalgamation process. Strengthening the capacity of local government units is another challenge; so far, there are no clear strategies or practices in government institutions to ensure proper transfer of knowledge and skills. Local government human resources management and financial control remain weak.[16] The Government has publicly committed to embark on a deeper reform package, including finalizing the decentralization strategy and revising the intergovernmental transfer system. The new 'National Cross-cutting Strategy for Decentralization and Local Government 2015–2020' was adopted on 29 July 2015.

Albania's progress in regional development has been slow over the past decade. The inefficient use of rural infrastructure and services, and the increasing congestion in urban areas due to rural-urban migration, is one challenge. Another relates to overall weak capacities in managing regional development. Public functions and development responsibilities are not clearly defined in the legal and institutional frameworks. There is still little alignment among the national, regional and local levels of strategic planning and implementation. Territorial and administrative reform, as well as the establishment of the Regional Development Fund (coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office), are expected to boost regional development initiatives.

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13 Transparency International, Corruption Measurement Tools, www.transparency.org/country#ALB (accessed Feb 2015).

14 Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Swiss Cooperation Strategy Albania 2014-2017.

15 European Commission, 'Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on Albania's Progress in the Fight Against Corruption and Organized Crime and in the Judicial Reform', 2014 .

16 European Commission, 'Albania 2014 Progress Report', Commission Staff Working Document, 2014.

2.1.2 ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

The World Bank considers Albania an upper middle-income country.[17] Before the global financial crisis, Albania was one of the fastest-growing economies in Europe, enjoying average annual GDP growth rates of 6 percent. However, after 2008 average growth halved, and in 2012 and 2013, growth rates fell to below 2 percent, "reflecting the deteriorating situation in the Eurozone and the difficult situation in the energy sector" (see figure 1).[18]

Regarding Albania's 'doing business' regulations,[19] in the World Bank's 2016 'Doing Business' report, Albania's overall ranking deteriorated to 97th

place, from 62nd in 2015, due to negative changes especially related to construction permits.[20]

In recent years (2008–2013), the inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) has been relatively stable and much higher than in the previous period. In 2013, the amount of FDI inflow was US$1,254 million, compared to $325 million in 2006 and $652 million in 2007.[21]

This increase in foreign investments has led to an increase in formal non-agricultural employment in the private sector (more than doubling between 1999 and 2013).[22] However, the unemployment rate in Albania remains relatively high. According to the National Institute of

Figure 1. Real change in gross domestic product, 2002–2013
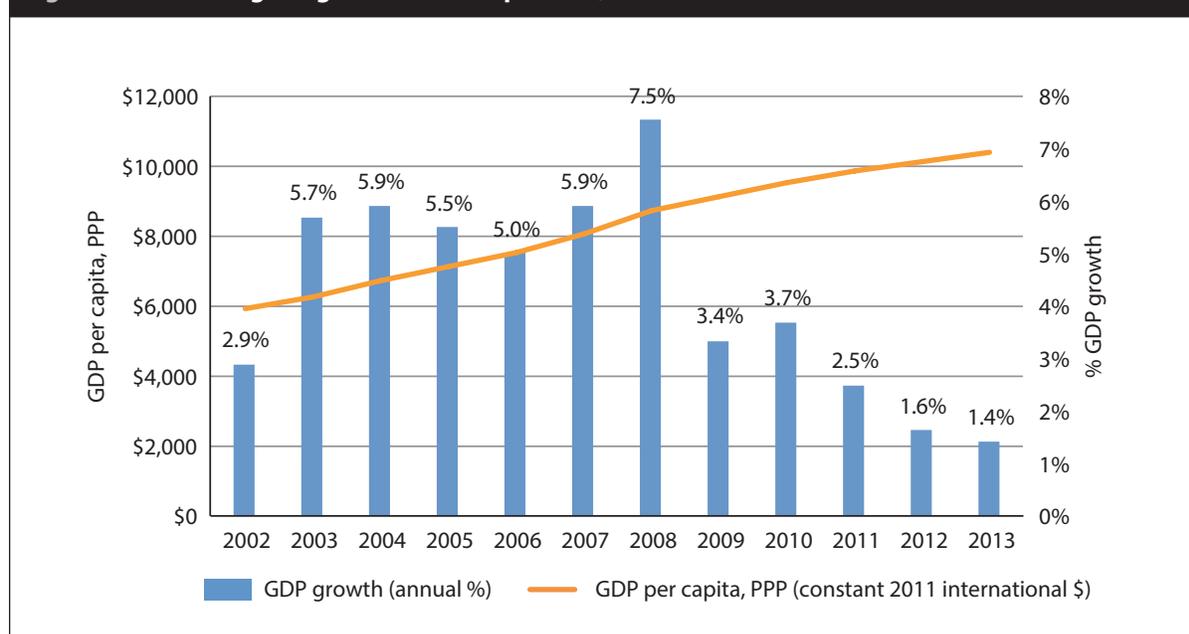
Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2014

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17   World Bank List of Economies, January 2015.

18   World Bank, 'Country at a Glance: Albania', www.worldbank.org/en/country/albania (accessed Feb 2015)

19   Including full e-procurement, establishment of the National Business Registration Centre and one-stop service for business licensing, single ID business number, e-tax system, and flat tax rate.

20   Albania's rank in dealing with construction permits dropped by 67 points, from 122nd place in 2015 to 189th place in 2016.

21   World Bank, World Development Indicators 2014.

22   World Bank, country overview www.worldbank.org/en/country/albania/overview

Statistics (INSTAT), in 2014, the unemployment rate for people age 15 to 64 years was 17.9 percent.[23] Vulnerable groups, including youth, women, persons with disabilities, Roma and Egyptians, are more disadvantaged, and the current labour market is particularly unfavourable to them.[24]

The unemployment trend and declining economic activity among women and other vulnerable groups have been drawing increased attention from national and international partners. Their efforts to strengthen the capacity of state institutions encompass labour market institutions as a prerequisite to addressing employment challenges in both policy and programme development. In 2012, labour market policy reform focused on reorienting the National Employment Service from administering benefits to providing services, assisting job seekers in re-employment and providing quality services to enterprises. Strengthening the planning, design, monitoring

and evaluation of active labour market policies is a priority, as is targeting groups at risk of labour market exclusion, especially women, youth, ethnic minorities and job seekers with low educational attainment.

The National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2014–2020 was among the first strategies presented by the new Government in February 2014. The strategy outlines the Government's vision of employment and vocational education as one, helping unemployed job seekers attain the proper training and skills to enter the labour market.

2.1.3 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Albania's Human Development Index value for 2013 is 0.716, which is in the high human development category and positions the country at 95th out of 187 countries and territories. This falls below the average of 0.735 for countries in the high human development group and below the average

Figure 2. **Human Development Index trends, 1990–2013**
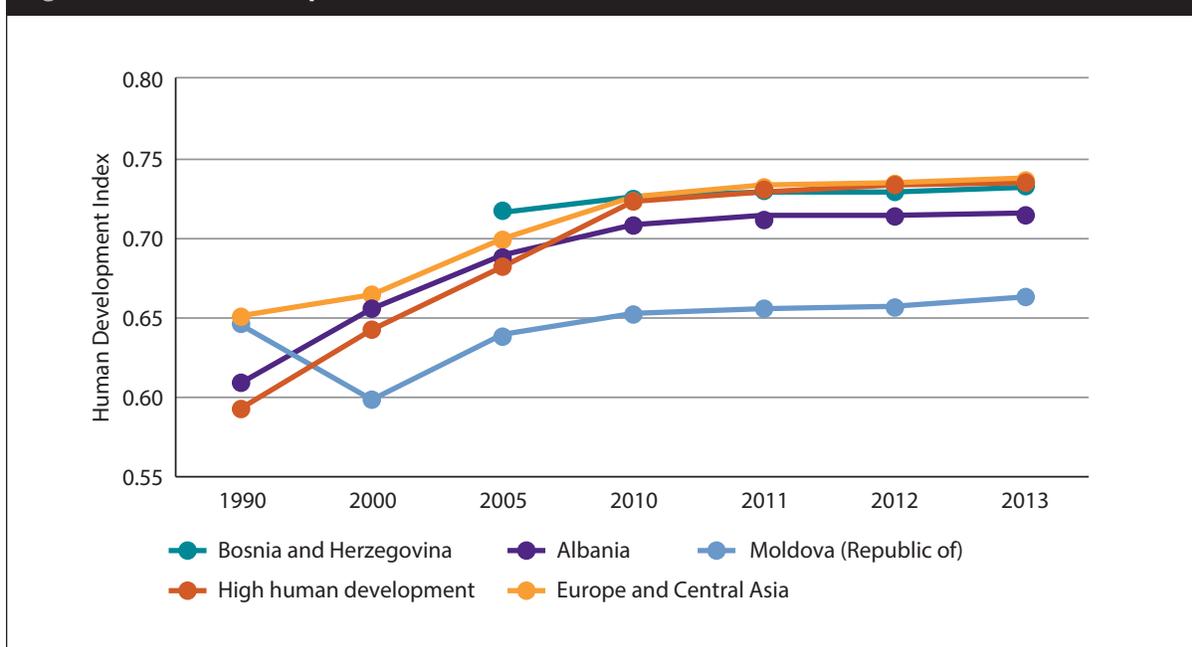
Source: UNDP Human Development Report Office (2014)

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23   Albanian Institute of Statistics, 'Unemployment rate 2007-2014', www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/labour-market.aspx
24   Ibid.

of 0.738 for countries in Europe and Central Asia. Between 1990 and 2013, Albania's Human Development Index value increased from 0.609 to 0.716, an increase of 17.6 percent, or an average annual increase of about 0.47 percent (see figure 2).[25]

Albania's headcount poverty rate decreased from 25.4 percent in 2002 to 14.3 percent in 2012.[26] However, when analysing only the five years following the global financial crisis (2008 to 2012), the poverty rate slightly increased[27] (see figure 3).

Figure 3. Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines, 2002–2012
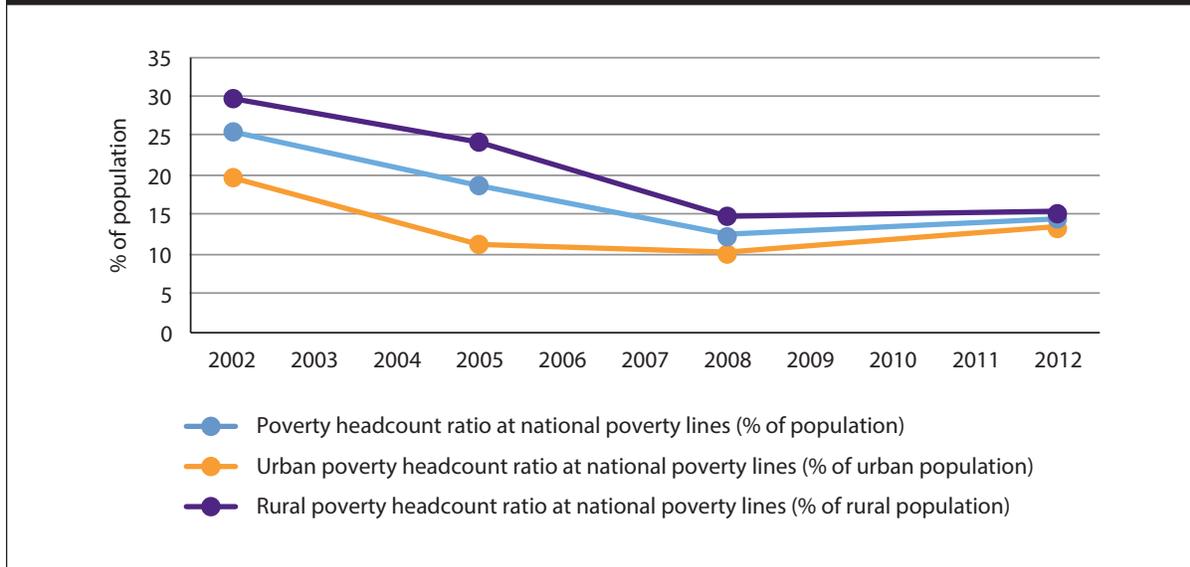
Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2014, based on data from the Living Standard Measurement Survey

Figure 4. Poverty rate by region, 2002–2012
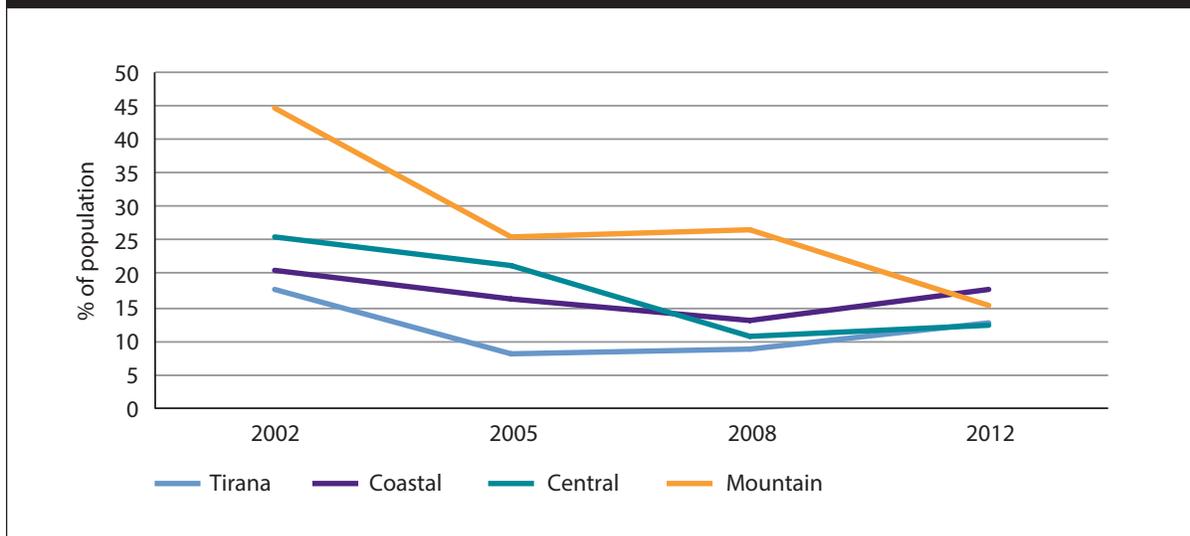
Source: Living Standard Measurement Survey, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012

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25 UNDP Human Development Report Office, 2014.

26 World Bank, World Development Indicators 2014.

27 Ibid.

The Living Standard Measurement Survey shows poverty rates by regions. The most recent survey (2012) showed that the gap has shrunk since 2002 (see figure 4).

Social protection programmes include cash benefit payments for poverty alleviation (social assistance) and for people with disabilities, as well as non-cash programmes related to social care services. Social assistance benefits significantly dropped in 2013 compared to previous years, despite an increase in poverty rates. Doubts about the effectiveness of targeting the poor have been raised; the World Bank reports that according to the Living Standard Measurement Survey's 2008 data, only 22 percent of the poor actually received cash benefits, revealing poor targeting.[28] Reforms are ongoing with the introduction of a United Scoring Formula, which aims at improving targeting accuracy and scaling the size of benefits to the degree of poverty.

The Social Protection Strategy 2015–2020 covers issues within the remit of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. It addresses social assistance payments (economic aid and disability assistance); disability support reforms (cash and care); and social care services (both existing and potential). The objective of the strategy is to create a system of social protection, including policies and mechanisms to protect people excluded or in need of protection through preventive and social reintegration programmes at local and national levels.

Gender-based discrimination is prevalent in Albania and women face discrimination in a number of areas. Discrimination translates into lower formal employment rates, early school drop-out, limited access to land and property, and lower levels of representation in high-level elected and appointed bodies.[29] Apart from rule of law issues, gender equality is hampered by the fact that men generally have more economic clout than women. Indeed, factors including gender discrimination, time-consuming family demands and a lack of childcare make it difficult for women to be self-sufficient. These issues become an even greater impediment in rural Albania, where opportunities for professional development and employment are scarce. Finally, women also face challenges in owning land, real estate and capital.

Domestic violence is a recognized problem in Albania.[30] The share of women who reported experiencing domestic violence in Albania increased from 56 percent in 2007 to 59.4 percent in 2013,[31] with 53 percent of women currently living in constant abuse.[32] An online system to report violence was launched, but is operational in only 29 municipalities.[33] The first National Strategy on Gender Equality and Elimination of Domestic Violence 2007–2010 was a serious attempt by the Albanian Government to address issues related to gender mainstreaming and the protection of women against abuse and violence. The current strategy (2011–2015) builds on the earlier one and addresses two major issues: gender equality and reduction of domestic-based violence.

As a result of awareness campaigns and the work of a network of civil society organizations (CSOs) and women's groups, domestic violence is increasingly seen as less of a private matter;

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28 http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTALBANIA/Resources/ABCDE_presentation_UfukG_FINAL.pdf

29 http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/albania/documents/eu_albania/local_strategy_women_en.pdf

30 www.instat.gov.al/media/226355/femra_meshkuj_2013.pdf

31 This figure (59.4 percent) includes all types of violence, including psychological violence. The incidence of physical domestic violence is 23.7 percent.

32 UNDP, 'National statistics reveal increased level of domestic violence in Albania- Men and boys unite to end it', December 2013, www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2013/12/06/national-statistics-reveal-increased-level-of-domestic-violence-in-albania-men-and-boys-unite-to-end-it.html

33 European Commission, 'Albania Progress Report', October 2014, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-albania-progress-report_en.pdf

more women are reporting cases of gender-based violence. However, the system's effectiveness is jeopardized by unstable structures, inadequate resources, poorly defined roles, and a lack of accountability, particularly among local-level public officials. The effectiveness of local-level referral mechanisms must be strengthened, and cooperation between the national and local levels of governance is required.

Roma and Egyptians in Albania represent one of the poorest and most vulnerable strata of the population. During Albania's transition from communism, Roma and Egyptians were marginalized into extreme poverty as state enterprises collapsed and Roma and Egyptian communities struggled with low levels of education and qualifications. Recent studies show that due to high levels of unemployment, their poverty levels and the gap between them and the majority population is increasing.[34] Despite laws and strategies such as the Law Against Discrimination (2010), the National Strategy on Roma (2003) and the Plan of Action for the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2009), a monitoring report by the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance[35] found that the situation of Roma is one of extreme poverty and social and economic marginalization. The implementation of these laws and strategies is hampered by the lack of investments and a generally low degree of attention to these issues by local government actors. Minimal media coverage of Roma issues and a general lack of awareness exacerbate their position and future prospects.

Roma CSOs in Albania are not considered strong, and they struggle to influence the decisions of public institutions. In addition, their efforts to mobilize significant support from the community they represent are not always fruitful. They do not always cooperate with one another and they struggle to set, advocate, pursue and negoti-

ate a common agenda. Many Roma and Egyptian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focus on documenting needs for housing, health care, employment, social assistance, education and civil registry because they believe that understanding and documenting the issues will make it easier to deliver support. They often voice their concerns about human rights, discriminatory access to social and economic means, and political representation. However, their work — especially at the central level — is at times detached from the communities. This detachment is mostly due to a lack of funding, but also reflects a lack of capacity to articulate, formulate and properly present their needs.

The preparation of a Social Inclusion Policy Document is underway. It intends to prioritize access to public services for people with disabilities and the Roma and Egyptian communities, and to develop inclusive services for deprived rural communities, focusing on women and child inclusion.

Overall, the Government's commitment to social development has grown but remains insufficient. Budgets in support of vulnerable groups are limited at the central and local levels. The Government's vision for social inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable groups still needs to be formalized. Progress also depends on overall growth and structural changes in the economy.

2.1.4 ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Albania is relatively well endowed with natural resources and rich biodiversity. However, it has paid insufficient attention to environmental preservation in its development policy, leading to environmental degradation. Unclear property rights, weak administrative capacity, corruption and poverty contribute to overexploitation and unsustainable natural resource management.[36] Key

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34   Gedeshi I., Miluka J., 'Needs assessment of the Roma and Egyptian communities in Albania', UNDP, 2013.

35   ECRI Report Albania, 2009.

36   SIDA's Help Desk for Environment and Climate Change, Albania, 'Environment and Climate Change Policy Brief', 2011, http://sidaenvironmenthelpdesk.se/wordpress3/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Albania-ECCPB-Alb-Nov-2011.pdf

environmental challenges include waste management and pollution, land degradation and biodiversity losses. There is no strategic approach to waste management and there is a chronic lack of investment in waste management infrastructure. Industrial wastes are disposed without consideration for environmental and human health, and industrial pollution is concentrated in 'hotspots'.[37]

Land degradation and biodiversity loss result from a lack of law enforcement. Almost 16 percent of Albania's territory has been declared protected areas, but inadequate conservation and protection measures, attributable in part to a lack of management capacities and financial sustainability, leave protected areas vulnerable. Overall, there is a need to improve protected area management and biodiversity conservation, both in terms of regulatory and policy frameworks and institutional capacity for programming, implementation and enforcement. The recent establishment of the National Agency for Protected Areas is expected to improve the administration of Albania's protected areas.

Most environmental issues in Albania are interrelated and cross-sectoral. The Ministry of Environment is the key government institution responsible for environmental issues, but other responsible institutions also implement activities affecting the environment. Cooperation mechanisms between the Ministry of Environment and line ministries are insufficient. This negatively affects coordination and the exchange of information needed for reporting and policy development, including the integration of environmental considerations into sector strategies and programmes. In general, resource allocation remains low and synergies in operationalizing various acts of legislation are still evolving. Local-level environmental management needs are not adequately met. A draft Environmental Intersectorial Strategy 2015–2020 has been prepared, aimed at promoting sustainable development and protecting natural resources.

Compliance with EU environmental requirements for accession drives Albania's efforts towards the sustainable management of its environment and natural resources. However, its environmental policies and practices have been ambiguous[38] and enforcement remains a challenge. Although staff numbers in the National Environment Agency and the State Environmental Inspectorate increased following the election and restructuring in 2013, capacity for planning and implementing environmental programmes, and for enforcing environmental legislation, remains weak.[39] According to the European Commission's 2014 Albania progress report, "significant further efforts are needed in all areas to strengthen administrative capacity and to ensure proper implementation and enforcement of legislation and its further alignment with the acquis."[40]

The security of Albania's energy supply is fragile, and the country remains highly dependent on hydropower.[41] Hydropower plants provide all of the produced electricity. The heavy reliance on hydropower avoids the greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution associated with some other sources of electricity, but it increases the country's vulnerability to climate change. Fluctuations in precipitation, on which hydropower depends, make it difficult for Albania to meet energy demand and maintain energy supply. Unsustainable payment collection rates and serious financial debts are also challenges for Albania's energy sector. The energy efficiency law was approved

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37 UN Albania, Environment – Albania's legislative and policy framework on environment aligned with the EU acquis communautaire and other international standards "Protecting Albania's natural resources", February 2014.

38 Albania National Institute of Statistics, www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/environment.aspx

39 ROAR 2013.

40 European Commission, 'Albania Progress Report', October 2014, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-albania-progress-report_en.pdf

41 Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, Swiss Cooperation Strategy Albania 2014-2017.

in December 2015, and the national renewable energy action plan has not yet been finalized.[42]

Albania is one of the most vulnerable countries in the region to changing climate trends. It is highly exposed to shifts in climate such as increasing temperatures and decreasing precipitation, and to more frequent extreme events, like floods and droughts.[43] Climate change also has implications for biodiversity loss, coastal erosion, forest fires and fresh water resources. Economic sectors such as coastal tourism, agriculture and horticulture are sensitive to climate change.[44] The energy sector is also affected given its high reliance on hydropower.

Despite Albania's vulnerability, public participation, awareness and understanding of climate change and environment in general remain an issue.[45] The European Commission's '2014 Albania Progress Report' noted that administrative and technical capacity related to climate change remains limited, while allocated resources and funding remain largely insufficient. The administrative framework for addressing climate change requires considerable strengthening to align with the EU climate acquis.[46]

Overall, EU accession is the main driver for improving performance in the areas of environment, energy and climate change. However, as noted in the European Commission's 2014 progress report, there has been little progress in these areas. There have been dynamic changes in legislation and policy in recent years, but further

efforts are needed to enhance law enforcement, to strengthen capacity to measure and monitor compliance, and to enhance accountability for the implementation of policies and strategies.

2.2 DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Generally, foreign aid has been decreasing, but it remains sizeable in terms of Albania's gross national income (GNI). According to the World Bank, official development assistance (ODA) fell from $486 million in 2002 to $360 million in 2012.[47] This is mainly "due to the global economic crisis and to the fact that Albania is developing and is being considered more and more a country not in need in a lot of areas."[48] Figure 5 shows ODA trends, both in terms of amount received and ODA as a percent of GNI.

The EU is by far Albania's biggest donor and has the largest portfolio in the country. Major bilateral development partners include Greece, Germany, Italy and the United States.[49] Figure 6 shows the 10 biggest multilateral and bilateral contributors of ODA to Albania and their respective financial contributions over the period 2007–2013. During this period, the UN in total provided around $33.27 million.

Albania's aid architecture has changed in recent years owing to the global financial crisis and Albania's middle-income status. Several European bilateral donors have phased out aid to Albania, including the United Kingdom, the

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42 European Commission, 'Albania 2015 Progress Report', Commission Staff Working Document, 2015.

43 World Bank, 'Climate Change in Albania', September 2013, www.worldbank.org/en/country/albania/brief/climate-change-in-albania

44 www.climateadaptation.eu/albania/

45 UN Albania, Environment – Albania's legislative and policy framework on environment aligned with the EU acquis communautaire and other international standards 'Protecting Albania's natural resources', February 2014.

46 European Commission, 'Albania Progress Report', October 2014, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents /2014/20141008-albania-progress-report_en.pdf

47 World Bank, World Development Indicators 2014.

48 Elena Pici, Jonada Pasmaciu, Eglantina Hysa, Jona Hoxhaj and Mergleda Hodo, 'Evaluation of Millennium Development Goals Process: Case of Albania', *Mediterranean Journal of Social Science*, July 2014, www.mcser.org/journal/ index.php/mjss/article/download/3127/3083

49 OECD, QWIDS (Query Wizard for International Development Statistics), 2014.

Figure 5. ODA trends, 2002–2012
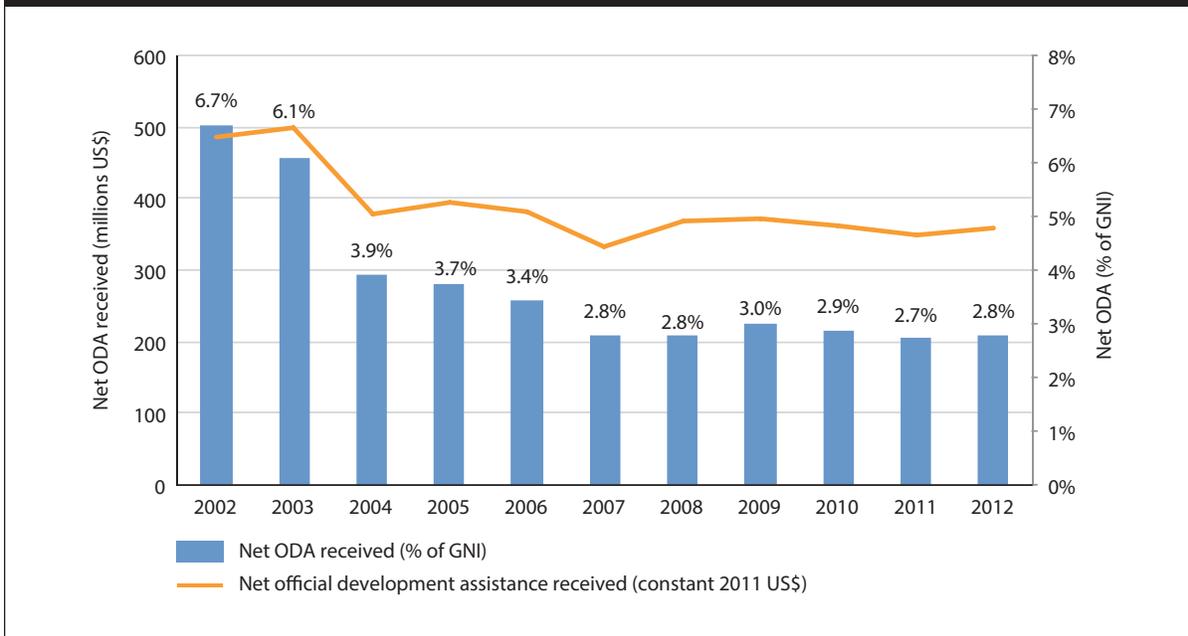
Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2014

Figure 6. Major multilateral and bilateral contributors of ODA, 2007–2013 (US$ millions)
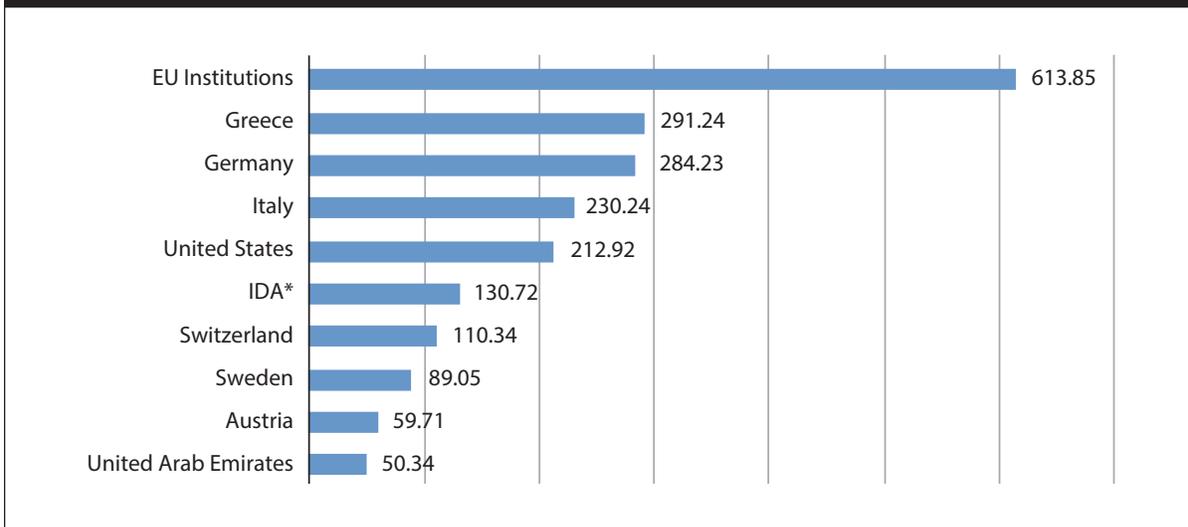
Source: OECD, QWIDS (2014)
* IDA = International Development Association, World Bank

Netherlands and Denmark. Remaining 'traditional' key donors are the United States, Austria,[50] Germany, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland.[51] 'New' donors are appearing, including Turkey, Japan, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and China. The European Union, the

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50   In June 2014, Austria decided to continue for an indefinite period of time its bilateral development cooperation with Albania, as noted in the Albania Country Strategy 2015-2020, www.entwicklung.at/uploads/media/CS_Albania_2015-2020.pdf

51   In contrast to many other donors, Switzerland's aid volume to Albania is growing, as noted in the Swiss Cooperation Strategy Albania 2014-2017.

World Bank, and the UN are traditional multilateral development partners.

The majority of EU assistance for the period 2014–2017[52] (€320.5 million) is for reforms in preparation for EU membership (democracy and governance, including public administration reform, rule of law and fundamental rights). Resources were also allocated to support agriculture and rural development (€92 million); the environment (€68 million); education, employment and social policies (€69 million); transport (€56 million); and competitiveness and innovation (€44 million).

The World Bank, in its Country Partnership Framework for Albania 2015–2019,[53] identified three focus areas: restoring macroeconomic balances, creating conditions for accelerated private sector growth, and strengthening public sector management and service delivery. Indicative lending from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development over the five-year period stands at about $1.2 billion.

Albania's key bilateral development partners have programmes and projects covering areas including democratic governance and rule of law (Sweden, Germany, Switzerland and others); economic development (Switzerland, United States, Italy and others); economic and social inclusion (Sweden, Switzerland and others); and environment, energy and climate change (Germany, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria and others).

Overall donor coordination in Albania is under the responsibility of the Deputy Prime Minister, with support from the Department of Development Programming, Financing and Foreign Aid (DDPFFA). DDPFFA coordinates the meetings of the international donor community and sector working groups. A yearly high-level donor-government roundtable focuses on aid harmonization. There is a Donor Technical Secretariat composed of four multilateral donor organizations, with the rotating participation of two bilateral donors. The sector working groups support coordination at the sector level and include government and donor representatives and other stakeholders as required.[54] There have been other changes in the donor coordination, with the piloting of Integrated Policy Management Groups as interministerial structures for drafting, implementing and monitoring policies, and for coordinating with donors.

2.3 DEVELOPMENT ISSUES AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

With EU accession as its key national priority, Albania is a party to several regional networks and agreements. It is part of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, endorsed by the European Council in 2014. The strategy has four thematic pillars: sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sector ('blue growth'), regional connection (transport and energy networks), environmental quality and sustainable tourism.[55] Albania is also a signatory of the Energy Community Treaty and the Central European Free Trade Agreement, which prepares the country's trade policy to meet EU standards. It also participates in the Environment and Climate Regional Accession Network and the Rural Development Standing Group, which enhance regional cooperation in the implementation of environmental

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52 European Commission, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II), 'Indicative Strategy Paper for Albania (2014-2020)'.

53 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Finance Corporation and Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, Country Partnership Framework for Albania for the period FY15-FY19, 27 April 2015.

54 European Commission, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II), 'Indicative Strategy Paper for Albania (2014-2020)'.

55 www.adriatic-ionian.eu/about

and agricultural policies.[56] Albania is a member of the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe[57] and has entered into agreements for transboundary cooperation with neighbouring countries on environment- and conservation-related areas, given that many environmental issues are cross-border.

In addition to support from the EU through the IPA for Albania, Albania has and will continue to receive support under the IPA multi-country programmes. It will also participate in cross-border cooperation programmes with neighbouring Western Balkan countries and Member States, and in trans-national cooperation programmes under the European Regional Development Fund. Albania also participates in some Union Programmes.[58]

During the last two decades, migration has been at the core of Albania's political, economic and social changes. According to UNDP, around one third of the total population lives abroad, and some 10 to 15 percent of national income comes from remittances.[59] 'Brain drain' is a much-discussed issue. An important government priority over the past decade has been to reduce brain drain from public administration and academia by encouraging highly qualified Albanians who have left the country to return or to contribute in alternative ways to the country's development.

56   European Commission, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II),' Indicative Strategy Paper for Albania (2014-2020)'.

57   http://albania.rec.org/about/albanian_office

58   Albania participates in Union Programmes such as the Seventh Research Framework Programme, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, Lifelong Learning, Europe for Citizens, Culture and Customs. Albania has also recently concluded or is in the process of concluding new agreements for programmes including Horizon 2020, Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Fiscalis 2020, Erasmus+, Creative Europe and Employment and Social Innovation. Albania has applied for observer status in the EU Fundamental Rights Agency.

59   Albert Soer, 'Migration in Albania-can we get the genie back in the bottle?', UNDP, December 2012, http://european-dcis.undp.org/blog/2012/12/19/migration-in-albania-can-we-get-the-genie-back-in-the-bottle

Chapter 3

UNDP'S RESPONSE AND STRATEGIES

To support the Government of Albania's response to its development challenges, the UN system in Albania articulated its collective work in the PoC between the Government of Albania and the UN in Albania 2007–2010 (later extended to 2011) and 2012–2016. UNDP defined its programme strategy in the Country Programme Document (CPD) 2006–2010 (later extended to 2011) and the Common CPD 2012–2016. This chapter presents an overview of UNDP's programme of work in the past two programme cycles and its relationship with the UN system.

3.1 UNDP'S COORDINATION WITH THE UN SYSTEM

UNDP support to Albania began in June 1991 following the establishment of the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement with the Government of Albania. UNDP's work is strongly nested within the work of the UN system in Albania, particularly since a high-level panel appointed by the UN Secretary-General recommended in 2006 a 'One UN' approach at the country level. As part of the UN reform process, the One UN concept aims at improving UN system-wide coherence based on the principle of four 'Ones'—one leader, one programme, one budgetary framework, and one office. In 2007, Albania became one of eight countries to pilot the DaO initiative.

The first One UN Programme in Albania was signed in October 2007. It covered the period 2007–2010/2011 and was guided by:

i. The Stabilization and Association Agreement, and the over-riding priority of the Albanian Government to join the EU

ii. National priorities expressed in the NSDI

iii. The IPS

iv. Programmes of other international partners, to ensure synergies and avoid duplication

v. The global reform context, particularly with respect to harmonization and increased aid effectiveness in the context of the Paris Declaration[60]

UNDP was one of the 14 UN agencies, funds and programmes participating in the One UN Programme in Albania. Of these 14 agencies, six are non-resident.[61] The PoC for this period focused on five priority areas, with gender and capacity development as cross-cutting principles:

i. More transparent and accountable governance

ii. Greater participation in public policy and decision-making

iii. Increased and more equitable access to quality basic services

iv. Regional development to reduce regional disparities

v. Environmentally sustainable development

In total, 12 joint outcomes were identified. UNDP was a participating agency in 10 out of the 12 outcomes, and contributed 33 percent of the total One UN programme's regular resources.

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60 Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania In partnership with the United Nations, One United Nations Programme Albania – Programme Framework Document 2007-2010.

61 Resident agencies include UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNV and WHO. Non-resident agencies include FAO, IFAD, ILO, UNEP, UNESCO and UNIDO.

For the current cycle, the Common CPD for Albania 2012–2016 was prepared by three UN agencies: UNDP, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF. The Executive Boards of these three agencies approved the Common CPD in September 2011, prompting the formulation of the PoC 2012–2016. UNDP is one of 20 participating organizations[62] in this PoC, which continued to expand and deepen the UN DaO approach. The goal of the PoC is to promote sustainable and equitable development, social inclusion and adherence to international norms, and the fulfilment of international obligations in support of Albania's EU integration.

The PoC 2012–2016 has four priority areas and 11 outcomes. UNDP was a participating agency in nine of the 11 outcomes and contributed 34 percent of the total resources.[63] In 2014, following the mid-term review of the PoC 2012–2016, the Results Framework was updated and the number of outcomes was reduced from 11 to four; UNDP participated in all four.

3.2 UNDP'S STRATEGIES, PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET

3.2.1 PROGRAMME PORTFOLIOS

UNDP support in Albania for the two periods under review is summarized below, based on the CPDs and One UN PoC documents.

For the previous cycle, the UNDP Executive Board approved the CPD for Albania 2006–2010 in June 2005. The four programme outcomes identified in the CPD 2006–2010 (later extended to 2011) and used for internal reporting (such as the ROARs) are shown in table 1.

In 2007, when Albania became a UN DaO pilot country, UNDP's commitments as articulated in the CPD 2006–2010 were folded into the One UN PoC. Of the 12 PoC outcomes, UNDP participated in 10, as listed in table 2.

For the current cycle, as part of the preparation of the Government of Albania and the UN PoC 2012–2016, a Common CPD was prepared

Table 1. UNDP country programme outcomes and indicative resources, 2006–2010		
UNDP country programme outcome		**Indicative resources (US$)**
Outcome 1	Comprehensive integrated planning framework with results-based management (RBM) feedback mechanisms in place – with government effectively utilizing these tools to implement priority interventions for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)	3,500,000
Outcome 2	Policies developed and implemented that support the achievements of the MDGs	2,300,000
Outcome 3	Institutions and fora in place to support people's participation, including youth and women. People empowered to take active part in policy formulation and decision making at all levels	6,990,000
Outcome 4	Regional socio-economic growth increased through implementation of fiscal decentralization, private sector development, community participation and improved delivery of public services	13,895,000
	Total	**26,685,000**

Source: UNDP Albania CPD 2006–2010 [DP/DCP/ALB/1]

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62 The 20 participating organizations are FAO, IAEA, IFAD, ILO, IOM, ITC, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UNV, UN Women, and WHO.

63 The two programme outcomes of the One UN PoC that UNDP does not participate in are related to education and health. The education outcome envisions boys and girls over the age of three (including youth), especially from marginalized groups, participating in quality formal and informal education. The health outcome envisions universal health insurance and quality, gender-sensitive and age-appropriate public health services available to all, including at-risk populations.

Table 2. UN Programme of Cooperation 2007–2010/2011 outcomes in which UNDP participated	
Programme of Cooperation development goal	**Programme of Cooperation outcomes in which UNDP participated**
More transparent and accountable governance	Outcome 1.1: National Institutions and public sector able to respond to the requirements of the EU accession process, including implementation of the Integrated Planning System
	Outcome 1.2: Government policies and practices necessary to promote social inclusion and reduction of regional disparities are strengthened
	Outcome 1.3: Government adopts economic policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks that promote pro-poor growth, socially inclusive legal and economic empowerment
Greater participation in public policy and decision-making	Outcome 2.1: Civil society better able to participate in public debate and advocate for state-citizen accountability
	Outcome 2.2: Institutions and forums in place to support people's participation and empowerment to take active part in policy formulation and decision-making
Increased and more equitable access to quality basic services	Outcome 3.2: Institutional framework for education in place that promotes inclusive quality education for all children
	Outcome 3.3: Government adopts policies, regulatory and institutional frameworks that promote provision of integrated quality services, with special emphasis on strengthening social protection system
Regional development to reduce regional disparities	Outcome 4.1: A national strategy on regional development, with linkages to sector strategies, the NSDI and the Medium-Term Budget Programme, is adopted and implemented aiming at promotion of social inclusion and reduction of regional disparities
Environmentally sustainable development	Outcome 5.1: Government meets environmental requirements of EU accession process and of multilateral environment agreements
	Outcome 5.2: Environmental management improved to protect natural resources and mitigate environmental threats

Source: Integrated Results and Budgetary Framework, One UN programme Albania 2007-2010/2011

by three UN agencies: UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF. The PoC 2012–2016 was approved by the agencies' Executive Boards in September 2011 and included nine outcomes for UNDP. The outcomes and UNDP indicative resources are listed in table 3.

In 2014, a mid-term review of the PoC 2012–2016 was conducted. In addition to updating progress towards expected outcomes, the mid-term review report[64] noted several weaknesses in the PoC results framework. The report found the framework was fragmented, with too many outputs that were also too narrowly defined. It also found that the PoC results framework was financially unviable, lacked focus for strategic positioning, and had unclear aims. The mid-term review proposed to update the results framework to reduce the number of outcomes from 11 to four, as follows:

- Outcome 1 – Human rights: Human rights and gender equality considerations guide interactions between citizens and institutions

- Outcome 2 – Inclusive social policies (health, education, labour and social protection): The rights of individuals and groups are ensured through equitable, inclusive and evidence-based sectoral policies

- Outcome 3 – Governance and rule of law: The Albanian State executes major gov-

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64   Mid-term review report, Government of Albania – UN PoC 2012-2016, 15 September 2014.

Table 3. UNDP country programme outcomes as defined in the common CPD and the One UN PoC and indicative resources (2012–2016)	
UNDP country programme outcome as defined in the Common CPD and the One UN PoC 2012–2016	**Indicative resources (US$)**
Governance and rule of law — Outcome 1.1: Strengthen public oversight, civil society, and media institutions to make authorities more accountable to the public, and better able to enforce gender-equality commitments in planning, programming and budgeting processes Outcome 1.2: Enhance public administration capacities, practices and systems so as to effectively deliver on national development priorities and international obligations Outcome 1.3: Ensure that the Government meets international obligations and standards for juvenile justice, for managing migration and in the fight against organized crime and corruption	8,210,000
Economy and environment — Outcome 2.1: Government, trade organizations and the private sector support inclusive and sustainable economic growth through enhanced regulatory frameworks, trade facilitation and investment promotion Outcome 2.2: National authorities and institutions, the private sector and the general public protect, preserve and use natural resources more sustainably, taking into account the impacts of climate change and the achievement of European environment standards	13,016,000
Regional and local — Outcome 3.1: Institutional capacities, frameworks and policies meeting international standards promote equitable and sustainable regional development, focusing on land use and livelihoods for women and men, and on agriculture, tourism and cultural and natural-heritage management Outcome 3.2: The public, including marginalized groups and communities, better receive equitable, inclusive and accountable decentralized services from regional and local governments	12,650,000
Inclusive social policy — Outcome 4.1: The rights of disadvantaged individuals and groups are equally ensured through legislation, inclusive policies, social protection mechanisms and special interventions Outcome 4.2: All people better realize fundamental rights to work, have greater and inclusive employment opportunities and can engage in comprehensive social dialogue	4,600,000
Total	**38,476,000**

Source: UNDP Albania Common CPD 2012–2016

ernance processes following internationally agreed democratic principles and practices, while upholding the rule of law and eliminating key factors of exclusion of women

- Outcome 4 – Regional and local development: Government of Albania implements policies that advance democratic, equitable and sustainable regional and local development

As already noted, UNDP participates in all four outcomes and is the outcome coordinator for outcomes 3 (governance and rule of law) and 4 (regional and local development).

Given the evolution of outcomes over time, the ADR assessed UNDP's contribution to development results in three key programme areas: democratic governance and local development, economic and social inclusion, and the environment. Annex 1 of the TOR includes a mapping of outcomes over different periods under these three key areas. More specifically, the outcomes described in the UNDP CPD 2006–2010, the Common CPD 2012–2016, the One UN PoC 2007–2010/2011, the One UN PoC 2012–2016, and the updated One UN PoC 2012–2016 results framework have all been linked to the three key areas, showing how the outcomes have

evolved over time. The analysis for each key area will include an assessment of results achieved for all the outcomes linked to that area.

3.2.2 FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The UNDP programme budget and expenditures fluctuated significantly during the periods under review (see figure 7). In 2007, the budget was approximately $10 million. It decreased to $8.0 million and $8.6 million in 2008 and 2009, respectively. It then increased by more than 40 percent to reach $12.4 million in 2010, and increase again in 2011, reaching $13.6 million — the highest level during the review period. UNDP's programme budget fell slightly in 2012, and then dropped by more than half to $6.5 million in 2013 before increasing again in 2014 to $7.1 million. UNDP's expenditures fluctuated in line with its budget. Execution rates were generally around 80 percent, with the highest rate during the review period at 91 percent (in 2009 and 2012) and the lowest at 67 percent (in 2013).

The budget fluctuations, particularly the 50 percent drop from 2011 and 2012 to 2013, are attributable to various factors, including Albania's evolution from lower middle-income to upper middle-income status, which prompted the exit of many donors and the reduction of funding from non-core resources. 2013 was also an election year, which explains the slow-down in the execution rate.

The majority of UNDP resources during the review period targeted interventions related to democratic governance and local development (see figure 8). The budget and expenditure for this thematic area peaked in 2012, reflecting the sizable resources dedicated to key projects, including Art GOLD 2, support to decentralization, ICT support and development advisory service.

Figure 8 shows an increase in resources in the economic and social inclusion thematic area. This trend is reflected in the budget and expenditure data by programme period (see figure 9). Figure 9 shows that resources for interventions in the economic and social inclusion thematic area increased in the current cycle compared to the previous cycle. Budget and expenditures for this area in the first three years of the current cycle (2012–2014) exceeded budget and expenditures amounts for the full five years of the previous cycle (2007–2011).

Figure 7. Programme budget and expenditure, 2007–2014
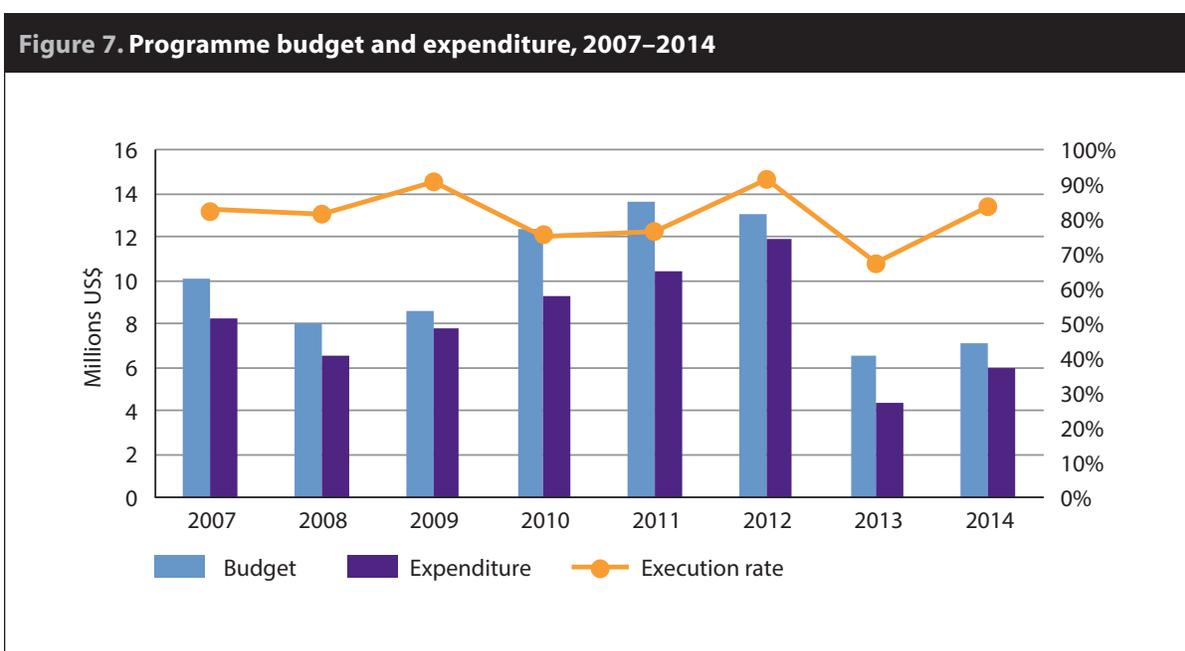
Source: Data from country office (2015)

Figure 8. Budget and expenditure by thematic areas, 2007–2014[65]

Democratic governance & local development
Economic & social inclusion
Environment
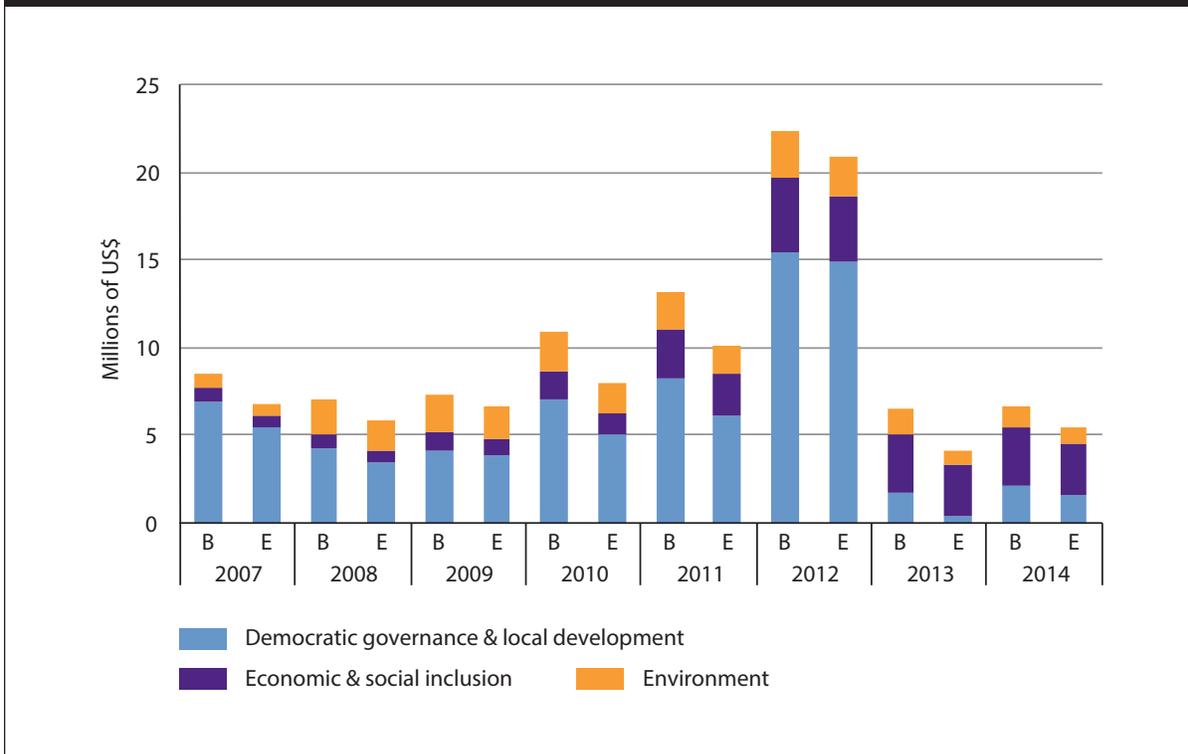
Source: Data of projects from Atlas, confirmed with Country Office (2015)

Figure 9. Budget and expenditure by programme period, 2007–2011 and 2012–2014

Democratic governance & local development
Economic & social inclusion
Environment
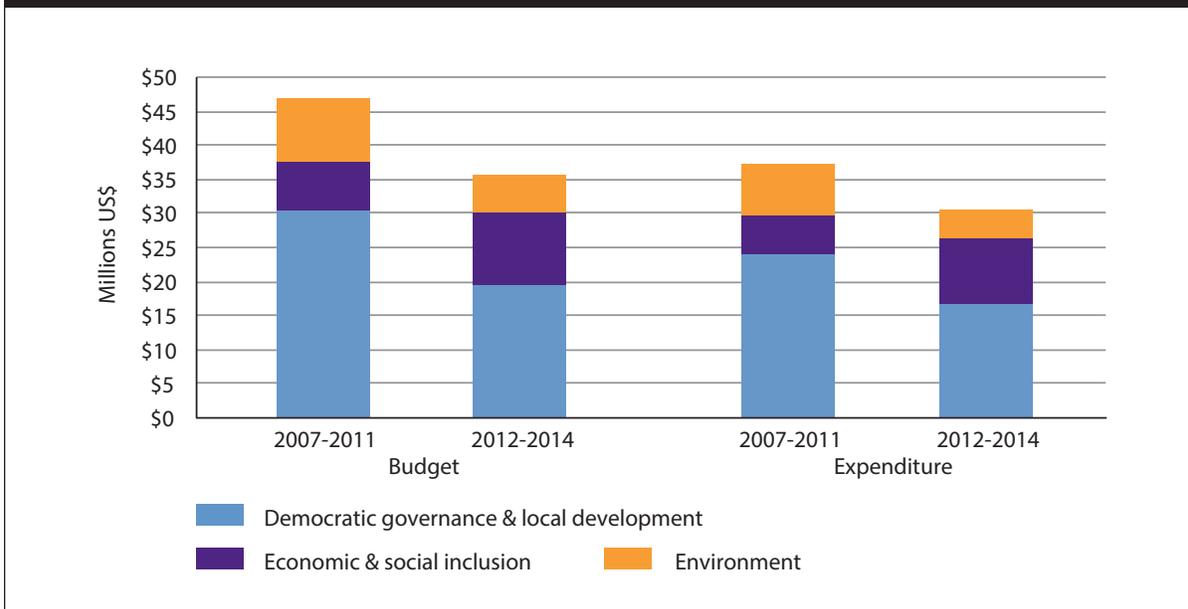
Source: Data of projects from Atlas, confirmed by Country Office (2015)

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65 The figures were calculated based on the list of projects to be considered for this evaluation drawn from UNDP Atlas and classified among thematic areas by the Evaluation Team in consultation with the Country Office. The figures do not include budget and expenditure from management projects.
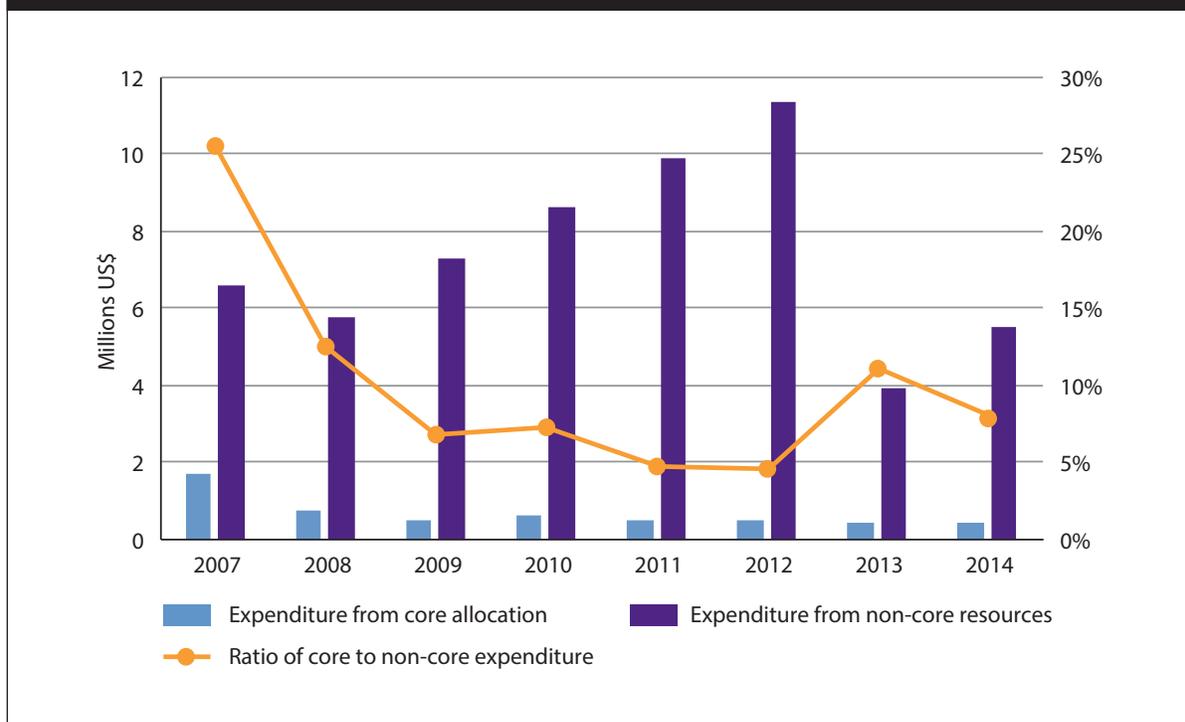
Source: Data from Country Office (2015)

Throughout the period 2007–2014, funds from external non-core resources represented a critical component of country programme operations (see figure 10). Core resources have been low, at around half a million dollars in the last few years.

3.3   PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

3.3.1   COUNTRY OFFICE STAFF AND STRUCTURE

The Country Office has noted that because of the significant decline in programme size since 2013 (see figure 7), the office structure, which was essentially put in place in 2002, was larger and more costly in 2013 than necessary. Accordingly, in late 2013 and throughout 2014, the Country Office prepared and implemented an action plan to right-size the office in line with expected programme size and delivery in future years. The Country Office considered this an opportunity to

reorganize itself in order to reposition and expand partnerships — particularly with the Government and the EU — in light of the interests of the relatively new Government and Albania's EU candidate status as of June 2014.[66]

At the time of the evaluation, the Country Office comprised 20 staff members, including two international staff and 18 national staff. Women, numbering 15, made up 75 percent of the staff. The Resident Representative, Country Director, and Operations Manager were all women. The office was supported by 44 service contractors.

According to the 2014 Global Staff Survey, staff feel that the key strengths of the Country Office include supervisors' staff management skills, the accuracy and effectiveness of the performance evaluation system, and a sense of personal accomplishment. Staff also feel they have a good understanding of what is expected from them in their

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66   UNDP Albania, 'Country Office Action Plan', October 2014 update.

job, and believe they are treated fairly, regardless of difference. Challenges identified include training for staff to handle their jobs, creating an environment of openness and trust, and encouraging new and improved ways of accomplishing defined tasks.[67]

3.3.2 PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Almost 70 percent of the projects under review during the two programme cycles have followed the Direct Implementation Modality, whereby UNDP takes on the role of implementing partner. By thematic areas, the majority of the projects in the environment portfolio have been executed by national implementing partners (National Implementation Modality) with a Letter of Agreement between UNDP and the Government for the provision of support services.[68] In the democratic governance and local development portfolio, as well as in the economic and social inclusion portfolio, most projects have been directly implemented by UNDP, with a few exceptions, such as the 'Support to the Territorial and Administrative Reform' project and the ICT project. These projects have been executed by national implementing partners, with a similar Letter of Agreement in place.

Under the One UN PoC, the UN agencies collectively report on achievements at output and outcome levels. Annual Work Plans are signed off on by both the Government and the UN. At the strategic level, there is a Joint Executive Committee, co-chaired by the Director of the Department for Development Programming, Financing and Foreign Aid[69] and the UN Resi-

dent Coordinator, with the heads of the participating UN agencies as members. At the technical level, output working groups, formed by representatives from implementing partners and UN agencies, oversee the achievement of specific outputs. The outputs working groups are responsible for the coordinated design and implementation of relevant activities that are included in the Joint Annual Work Plans, as well as resource mobilization and the preparation of requests for funds from the Coherence Fund. There are also outcome coordinators, who are responsible for supporting the respective output working groups in contributing to the overall outcomes, while maximizing synergy and complementarities. All outcome coordinators are members of the Results-Based Management (RBM) Advisory Committee.[70]

Following the mid-term review[71] of the One UN PoC and the consequent reduction in the number of outcomes and outputs, the number of output working groups declined. The co-chairs of the output working groups took on greater leadership and coordination roles. The roles of outcome coordinator, which had been filled by senior programme staff before the mid-term review, are now filled by agency heads. Outcome coordinators/heads of agencies and output co-chairs are all members of the RBM Advisory Committee,[72] enabling the committee to address substantive coordination issues.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities are undertaken in line with the results framework and the M&E strategy of the PoC. They include periodic reports of output working groups, and annual reports of the One UN PoC, submitted

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67   UNDP 2014 Global Staff Survey, Albania.

68   According to the letters of agreement, the UNDP Country Office may provide, at the request of the designated institutions, the following support services: (i) Identification and/or recruitment of project personnel; (ii) identification and facilitation of training activities; and (iii) procurement of goods and services.

69   Under the previous Government (pre-June 2013), it was the Department for Strategy and Donor Coordination, as cited in the PoC document.

70   UN Albania, Government of Albania and UN PoC 2012-2016.

71   Mid-term review report, Government of Albania- UN PoC 2012-2016, 15 September 2014.

72   Together with the RBM/Knowledge Management Specialist in the Resident Coordinator's Office.

to the Joint Executive Committee. Mid-term review and final evaluation of the One UN PoC have been organized as planned. At the project level, the Government, implementing partners and UNDP are responsible for agreeing on the necessary M&E mechanisms and tools, and for developing an M&E plan. UNDP is responsible for preparing an evaluation plan at the office level and for meeting other corporate reporting requirements, such as the ROARs.

Chapter 4

UNDP'S CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

This chapter analyses UNDP's contribution in three programme areas: democratic governance and local development, economic and social inclusion, and environment. For each programme area, the chapter examines the **effectiveness** of UNDP's contribution and the quality of the contribution measured by its **relevance, efficiency** and **sustainability**. UNDP's global vision for the eradication of poverty and reduction of inequality and exclusion, as well as UNDP's con-

tribution to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, are included in the analysis of effectiveness.

4.1 DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

The following outcomes are examined in this thematic area:

Outcomes related to democratic governance and local development	
CPD 2006–2010/2011	• Comprehensive integrated framework with RBM feedback mechanisms in place with Government effectively utilizing these tools to implement priority interventions for the achievement of the MDGs • Regional socio-economic growth increased through implementation of fiscal decentralization, private sector development, community participation and improved delivery of public services
One UN Programme Albania 2007–2010/2011	• National Institutions and public sector able to respond to the requirements of the EU accession process, including implementation of the IPS • Government adopts economic policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks that promote pro-poor growth, social inclusion, legal and economic empowerment • A national strategy on regional development, with linkages to sector strategies, the NSDI and the Medium Term Budget Programme, is adopted and implemented aiming at promotion of social inclusion and reduction of regional disparities
Common CPD 2012–2016 (similar to outcomes included in the original One UN PoC 2012–2016)	• Enhance public administration capacities, practices and systems so as to effectively deliver on national development priorities and international obligations • Ensure that the Government meets international obligations and standards for juvenile justice, for managing migration and in the fight against organized crime and corruption • Government, trade organizations and the private sector support inclusive and sustainable economic growth through enhanced regulatory frameworks, trade facilitation and investment promotion • Institutional capacities, frameworks and policies meeting international standards promote equitable and sustainable regional development, focusing on land use and livelihoods for women and men, and on agriculture, tourism and cultural and national heritage management • The public, including marginalized groups and communities, better receive equitable, inclusive and accountable decentralized services from regional and local governments
One UN PoC updated results framework 2015-2016	• The Albanian State executes major governance processes following internationally agreed democratic principles and practices, while upholding the rule of law and eliminating key factors of exclusion of women • Government of Albania implements policies that advance democratic, equitable and sustainable regional and local development

4.1.1 UNDP'S INTERVENTION STRATEGIES, KEY ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

At the beginning of the previous country programme, UNDP's programme focused strongly on building democratic institutions and governance systems for achieving national objectives and MDG targets. The proposed programme for 2006–2010/2011[73] included three key pillars: supporting the 'enabling environment' to achieve the MDGs, strengthening participation in the development process, and promoting regional development in support of the MDGs. Since the Government signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU in mid-2006, EU accession has been the highest national priority, dominating the policy space. UNDP therefore gradually aligned its assistance with the European integration agenda.

UNDP's intervention strategy for democratic governance and local development in both programme periods (2007–2011 and 2012–2016) included technical assistance for the development of strategic and legal frameworks, institutional capacity building to support interventions, and support for stakeholder consultation and participation.

UNDP's support in the area of democratic governance and local development is grouped into 11 sub-areas. The sub-areas, along with their key activities and outputs, are listed below.

Policy planning and development effectiveness. For its work in this area, UNDP partnered with the Department of Strategy and Donor Coordination (DSDC), currently the Department for Development Programming, Financing and Foreign Aid (DDPFFA). In 2006–2008, through the 'Immediate Multi-donor Support to the Integrated Planning System (IPS)' project executed by UNDP, UNDP provided initial support for establishing and implementing the DSDC as part of the IPS. UNDP also supported the preliminary work for establishing the IPS Trust Fund,[74] which was later managed by the World Bank. At the central planning level, UNDP supported the preparation of the two NSDIs. In addition, it supported the establishment of a donor database in 2008 which provided up-to-date information on all assistance provided to Albania by donors operating in the country.[75] Although the database worked for some time, it could not be sustained.[76] UNDP supported DSDC on other issues related to donor coordination and effectiveness, including the preparation of the External Assistance Strategy Document 2008–2010 and related annual reports.

Public service delivery. A key project in this sub-area is 'Innovation Against Corruption: Building a Citizen-centric Service Delivery Model in Albania',[77] implemented by the Minister of State for Innovation and Public Administration. The project supports the Government's efforts to reform public administration by changing the way public services are provided, making use of a variety of interventions under a citizen-centric approach to combatting corruption, fostering a customer-care culture, and increasing the efficiency of the Albanian public administration. Since 2014, UNDP has been supporting the development of a long-term public service delivery strategy and institutional capacities in this

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73   Country programme document 2006–2010/2011 (DP/DCP/ALB/1).

74   IPS Trust Fund I was a pooled funding of €7.2 million managed by the World Bank over the period 2008–2013. Trust Fund II of around €3 million was established for the period 2014–2017.

75   The database included data at project level, the total commitments made for the project, the total amount of disbursement, disbursements for all the years since 2007, type of assistance provided (grant vs loan), beneficiary ministry, NSDI strategic area to which it belongs, sector assisted, and other information.

76   It was then switched to an excel spreadsheet, which is being updated every year.

77   Partially funded by Italy.

area. UNDP has supported the national Agency for the Delivery of Integrated Services of Albania to become operational and capable of overseeing the implementation of service delivery reform. It has also helped to develop the framework and to build the capacities of the Minister of State for Innovation and Public Administration to manage the process. This assistance will continue beyond 2015 to complement institutional capacities of the Minister of State in the coordination of various assistance streams and support policy implementation.

Decentralization, territorial and administrative reform. UNDP's support for territorial and administrative reform is a key result in this area. Through the 'Support to the Territorial and Administrative Reform (STAR)' project, UNDP offered its project management and implementation experience and helped attract and coordinate donor contributions in support of reform. The Government endorsed the proposed pooled-funding mechanism and it met with swift donor response. The STAR project provided technical, operational and logistical support to the territorial reform process through the Minister of State for Local Issues, the central institution responsible for the development and implementation of the reform. Major outputs in this area include:

i.   the law on territorial reform, drafted and endorsed by Parliament, resulting in a new administrative division with a smaller number of larger local government units

ii. due diligence process of local government units commenced with the development of guidelines and methodology

iii. operational tools for actual transfer and amalgamation process for new local government units, which started to be developed after the June 2015 local elections

iv. work on the new decentralization strategy started in 2014 with support from the US Agency for International Development and multiple development partners, including UNDP

Regional and local development. In 2008, regional development became the focus of a trilateral agreement between the Government of Albania, the European Commission and UNDP. The agreement aimed to establish national institutional and management structures for managing EU accession funds. UNDP extended support to improving regional development planning and implementation. A study on regional disparities was undertaken in 2010. UNDP supported outlining a regional development policy framework encompassing sectorial considerations for integration in the NSDI. It also supported Regional Development Fund reform measures, including improved criteria for project selection, linking funding levels to GDP and taking into account regional/local priorities. With UNDP support through the EU-funded 'Integrated Support to Decentralization' project, four of Albania's 12 regions finalized their regional development strategies in 2012.

Through the Art Gold project,[78] UNDP has supported the establishment of Local Economic Development Agencies in Shkoder and Vlore regions to offer services to entrepreneurs and institutions. Examples of services offered include entrepreneurship promotion; technical assistance for the creation of micro, small and medium enterprises; special credit for investment; economic development planning and monitoring; and territorial marketing. In addition, the Kukes Regional Development Initiative aimed at improving livelihoods, promoting participation and supporting the private sector. Several other initiatives were related to culture and eco-tourism at regional and local levels.

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78   Mainly funded by Italy

Mine action. For over a decade, UNDP has led donors' support to mine action[79] through direct financial and technical assistance to the Albanian Mine Action Committee. Key outputs included establishing and strengthening the Albanian Mine Action Committee; establishing and strengthening the capacities of a dedicated unit at the Ministry of Defence dealing with demining policies and actions; supporting the adoption of international demining standards; and supporting field operations for clearing areas mined during the Kosovo[80] war, which culminated with the declaration of 'mine-free Albania' in 2009. The mine action programme in Kukes region has helped to clear mines and unexploded ordnance in a 952,771 m^2 area, and to destroy a total of 253 anti-personnel mines and 1,390 small arms ammunition. The project included social reintegration activities targeting mine victims through the provision of vocational training, psycho-social support from peers and heath care access. In 2011, project activities evolved into a programme for removing and destroying residual ammunition and weaponry from communist times; assisting mine victims through the establishment of specialized units at Kukes hospital; and supporting the integration of mine victims into economic life and activities.

Anti-corruption. In 2014–2015, in the process of referral of corruption cases, UNDP supported the National Anti-corruption Coordinator to establish a web-based electronic system for recording, tracking and analysing corruption data. UNDP supported some government events of national coverage, including an international conference, the national launch and tabling of the draft anti-corruption strategy, and citizens' town hall hearings.[81] In 2013, UNDP supported Albania's self-assessment under the UN Convention Against Corruption by providing technical assistance to the Department of Internal Control and Anti-Corruption at the Office of the Prime Minister and facilitating stakeholders' meetings through activities such as data collection and analysis or drafting of technical reports to the Government.

Information and communications technology (ICT). UNDP support in this area includes specialized technical assistance for the preparation of the national ICT strategy in 2008, the e-school initiative, the establishment of the National Agency for Information Society, Gov-Net, e-accounting, Inter-Operability (also known as X-Road),[82] and the development of a set of key policy papers, such as the Security Policy Study and an Intranet and Internet Study.[83] As part of those efforts, UNDP supported interventions in three municipalities on enhancing citizens' participation at the local level. These interventions included an ICT application called 'e-participation'. E-portals have been established in municipalities to enhance citizen involvement in administration processes, policymaking, decision-making, service delivery, information sharing and consultations.[84]

Electoral assistance. UNDP has provided support to the Central Election Commission, the national institution in charge of administering elections in Albania. It has also supported the

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79 Albania's mine contamination resulted from the 1999 Kosovo conflict. A post-conflict general survey of the Albanian Armed Forces identified 15.25 km2 of mine-contaminated area along the Albanian/Kosovo border, affecting 39 villages in Kukes, Has and Tropoja districts, which form the Albanian region of Kukes. Since 1999, there have been 210 mine/unexploded ordnance accidents, resulting in 272 casualties, including 238 injured persons and 34 deaths. Note that all reference to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of the Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

80 Reference to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of the Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

81 Government of Albania and United Nations, Programme of Cooperation 2012-2016, 'Progress Report 2013'.

82 An integrated data management system for public administration.

83 UNDP in Albania, 'Supporting the Government of Albania to Improve ICT Infrastructure and e-Services', www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/operations/projects/democratic_governance/ict.html (accessed June 2015)

84 UN in Albania, 'Citizens-Key Role in Fighting Corruption', December 2012, www.un.org.al/subindex.php?faqe=news&newsid=414

Electoral College, a specialized court for election dispute resolution that operates as a division of the Court of Appeals of Tirana. Support for these initiatives was delivered through the 'Strengthening Electoral Processes in Albania' programme, which was designed to improve election officials' competencies and to strengthen electoral processes and systems. BRIDGE[85] training (using a module developed specifically for the Albanian context on electoral dispute resolution) was organized for the Electoral College and a gender module of BRIDGE was offered to representatives of the Central Election Commission and civil society. All the dispute cases lodged against the Electoral College have been resolved in a legitimate manner.[86]

Statistics. UNDP supported INSTAT in data collection and analysis. Specifically, UNDP helped INSTAT to finalize the 2012 Living Standard Measurement Survey, conduct the second National Survey on Domestic Violence, and prepare and implement the CENSUS 2011. Census support focused on Roma registration through logistical support and training to over 100 field operators who registered the Roma community in different regions of the country. Overall, UNDP's support in this area has been modest in scope and funding.

Brain Gain initiative. In 2008, UNDP worked closely with the Prime Minister's Office and supported the implementation of the 'Brain Gain' programme, promoting the return of highly qualified Albanian professionals from abroad to public administration and academia. A capacity gap assessment identified key expertise lacking in line ministries. The Department for Public Administration and the ministries worked together to identify positions and recruit Albanians from abroad with UNDP assistance. The

Brain Gain programme has brought back over 100 qualified Albanians from abroad to teach at universities to fill critical gaps in academia and public administration. The initiative was institutionalized through government decrees aimed at providing incentives for qualified Albanians living abroad to return home.

Economic governance. UNDP's substantive engagement is relatively minor in this area, and its investment of programme resources is limited.[87] UNDP supported the Albanian Investment Development Agency in analysing Albania's documented procedures in relation to enterprise creation and development, in order to assess Albania's ability to attract FDI. This analysis informed the preparation of a Strategic Action Plan to promote FDI and the decision to establish an E-Regulations system. UNDP provided technical assistance in drafting an operational manual promoting international best practices and benchmarks in identifying, licensing and managing industrial zones.

4.1.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF UNDP'S CONTRIBUTION

UNDP programmes, to varied degrees, contributed to the Government's reform agenda in a number of governance areas. UNDP's ability to respond quickly to the emerging needs and priorities of the Government is a key advantage in its support to the Government's reform agenda.

The push for European integration has been the main driver for governance reforms in Albania. The EU and other development partners — including the World Bank, the UN and bilateral partners — all work to support the Government in different reform agendas. In this con-

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85 BRIDGE (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections) is a professional development programme focusing on electoral processes. BRIDGE is an initiative of five organizations, including UNDP.

86 ROAR 2013 and United Nations Albania, Summary Final Report 'Strengthening Electoral Processes in Albania', 2015.

87 Accordingly, the 2004 mid-term review of the One UN PoC concluded that there is no need for a separate outcome in this sub-area, and that any work related to this field will be merged into the outcome on regional and local development in the new results framework.

text, UNDP's ability to respond quickly to the emerging needs and priorities of the Government is a key advantage that creates entry points for UNDP to contribute to a number of governance areas, such as territorial and administrative reform, service delivery reform, policy planning and the fight against corruption.

While larger donors have also been responding to the Government's call for support in different reform agendas, UNDP's fast and flexible response, along with its capability to mobilize funding and expertise in a short time, has enabled the Government to anticipate the first key actions and advance the reform agenda. This is the case of UNDP's support to administrative and territorial reform and service delivery reform. For this reason, UNDP's support to these reforms is highly appreciated by the Government and development partners. In the areas of policy planning and anti-corruption, UNDP's flexibility and responsiveness to the needs and requests of government institutions have been key advantages in its support to the Government; UNDP contributions have created favourable conditions for further support from other development partners in these areas.

UNDP's contribution has been most significant in furthering territorial and administrative reform.

The STAR project is one of the most prominent success stories of UNDP operations in Albania. UNDP contributed to the development of the law on territorial reform and to the operational tools for the actual transfer and amalgamation process for new local government units after the local elections in June 2015. The territorial and administrative reform was politically highly sensitive owing to its direct impacts on the business model and nature of responsibilities assumed by the local administration. Its effects on citizens' access to, and delivery of, public services also contributed to the political sensitivity of the reform. But more importantly, the reform is leading to the rationalization of local public employment, cutting of inevitable redundancies, which in turn

usually leads to resistance. The process had to be managed carefully and with full transparency, from redrawing the administrative map to its detailed implementation in each administrative area. The reform was initiated by the Government and there has been significant government commitment and political will, leading to high ownership of the reform process.

UNDP, regarded as a neutral and reliable partner, has played an important role in supporting the development and implementation of the reform sequence. UNDP successfully managed the multi-donor fund, which is a good example of donor coordination in facilitating a reform. Donors who contributed to the STAR fund include the US Agency for International Development, Italian Cooperation, Swiss Development Cooperation and the Swedish International Development Agency. There is a great likelihood that the STAR II project will begin in 2016, and UNDP is expected to play a similar role, using the same implementation modalities and processes. The STAR project is a good example of UNDP's effective coordination role and its ability to work with various agencies in supporting key governance reform.

UNDP was responsive to the needs of the Government, although in some areas its scope of activities has been modest compared to other agencies.

Service delivery is a new area for UNDP operations in Albania, but it has garnered greater emphasis from the Government and other development partners over the last two years. UNDP supported the Minister of State for Innovation and Public Administration in improving and reengineering the public service delivery architecture. During 2014–2015, UNDP support was important in the development of a long-term public service delivery strategy covering the process of public service delivery reform. UNDP support was also important in establishing the National Agency for the Delivery of Integrated Services to oversee the implementation of the service delivery reform. UNDP has played an

important role in the early stage of the service delivery reform agenda in Albania, but it is too early to draw further conclusions about the outcome of the service delivery reform. UNDP's assistance to the Government's service delivery reform will continue beyond 2015. Other donors are likely to approve significant funding to support the Government's service reform agenda.[88]

UNDP assistance has contributed to strengthening the policy planning and coordination processes in Albania through support to the DSDC. In 2006–2008, UNDP supported the preparatory phase for the establishment of the IPS Trust Fund, which was then managed by the World Bank. The IPS became the backbone of Albania's planning system and is considered one of the most effective models for transition countries.[89] In the formulation of the NSDI, UNDP support enabled effective consultation processes at the local level, which informed the strategy. UNDP supported the DSDC on the establishment of a donor database that worked for some time but could not be sustained. An integrated aid management system, which was intended to improve the data management of donor-funded projects and link to the budget planning software and treasury system, did not materialize as planned. The operationalization of such a system was expected to be funded under the IPS Trust Fund, but this did not materialize.

UNDP's support has been important, particularly with regard to Roma registration in the framework of the 2011 census. Although the census process was largely supported by the EU,[90] UNDP was best placed to support Roma registration thanks to its experience with other projects supporting Roma communities in Albania. Using Roma community representatives to register the Roma population proved very effective, especially compared to earlier attempts, which had not produced credible results. Registering the Roma population is an important step towards ensuring the inclusion of this vulnerable group in the development process. In the area of statistics, however, UNDP support to INSTAT in data collection and analysis has been modest, especially compared to the permanent support offered to INSTAT by EU IPA funding (on institutional capacities, legal framework and alignment of Albania statistics with EUROSTAT standards) and Swedish SIDA (substantial support on IT statistical systems).

Although not a key area of UNDP support, UNDP's anti-corruption initiatives contributed to the preparation of a national anti-corruption strategy for the period 2015–2020. UNDP supported the first national report on Chapters 2 and 3 of the UN Convention Against Corruption. It also assisted with research, analysis and technical assistance to support a new law on whistle-blowers, and the February 2015 design and launch of an online anti-corruption platform and an interministerial database and monitoring tool tracking nearly 5,200 corruption cases currently under investigation. The fight against corruption is crucial for Albania's progress towards EU accession, and the EU and the Council of Europe have been leading assistance in this area under EU-IPA allocations for rule of law. The EU is expected to further intensify its support to Albania on anti-corruption initiatives with considerable allocations expected from IPA 2016 as part of sector budget support.[91] UNDP's support to establishing basic legislation on anti-corruption and the framework for the function of the National Coordinator for Anti-Corruption contributed to creating favourable conditions for further work in this area.

UNDP's electoral assistance was significant in terms of supporting the institutional capacities of

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88   For example, a World Bank loan of $32 million was approved and became operational in September 2015 and will support the Government in moving the service reform agenda forward.

89   SIGMA, World Bank assessments.

90   EU allocated around €9 million to support the census process in Albania.

91   The package is still under negotiation between the EU and the Albanian Government.

the electoral management bodies and was different from the assistance provided by other traditional partners supporting electoral processes in Albania, such as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the Council of Europe. UNDP contributed to instilling new systems and methodologies in election administration, including management systems for candidate and party registration. The training that UNDP developed and provided has helped the Central Election Commission and the Electoral College to be well prepared for managing electoral disputes. UNDP also contributed to developing an online platform for reporting election results in two piloted regions (Vlora and Gjirokastra). The platform, a first for Albania, has proved useful for following election results in real time.

The scale and scope of UNDP's economic governance activities were limited in terms of meaningful contribution to national development results.

UNDP supported a range of small interventions that covered a broad spectrum of actors, including central institutions, regulatory entities and the private sector. UNDP support to the Albanian Investment Development Agency in preparing a Strategic Action Plan and organizing trade fairs and exhibitions promoting FDI in Albania was a key achievement. The objectives of UNDP interventions in this area were overly optimistic given the limited size of interventions, and some planned results did not materialize because funding was inadequate. Anticipated results that were never realized include a FDI database and e-portal; knowledge products related to FDI flows and their effects on job creation for vulnerable groups; concrete changes to the regulatory framework for investment promotion; and the design and adoption of market surveillance measures. Furthermore, UNDP's involvement in this area is limited compared to other agencies,

including USAID, GIZ, Italian Cooperation, and the World Bank.[92]Recognizing the minimal, sporadic engagement of UNDP and the UN in general in this area, the 2014 mid-term review of the One UN PoC decided that there is no need for economic governance as a separate outcome. Accordingly, work related to this field has been merged into the outcome on regional and local development in the revised results framework for 2015–2016.

UNDP has been consistent in its support to regional and local development in Albania over the past decade and is recognized as a key actor. While regional and local development support produced good project-level outputs, given the significant contextual changes, the sum of these outputs did not contribute to creating a regional and local development model in Albania.

At the central government policy level, key activities and outputs included the regional disparities assessment, proposals related to regional development policies and a regional development index. This effort was accompanied by capacity-building assistance designed to help central agencies prepare for regional development activities in the context of EU IPA component III. However, almost two years of work in this area was invalidated by the changing framework for IPA assistance when the new financial framework 2014–2020 of the EU (IPA II) introduced a new funding and implementation approach.

At the regional and local level, UNDP supported the development of regional development strategies and strategic plans. The regions of Vlora and Shkodra satisfactorily implemented their respective strategic plans. Both regions have demonstrated their ability to implement complex EU-funded projects and to expand their operational capacities by creating networks of experts from other regions. Several local com-

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92   USAID supports reducing barriers on business registration, IFC and GIZ support improving frameworks to attract FDI, the World Bank and Italian Cooperation support credit guarantees schemes, and the EU earlier supported small and medium enterprise development.

munities in the region of Vlora and Shkodra have accomplished some of their priorities in tourism and local economic development. The Kukes region developed its regional tourism and environment strategy and engaged in capacity-building activities for cross-border cooperation programmes and rehabilitating public infrastructure works. The Kukes Regional Development Initiative contributed to improving livelihoods, promoting participation and supporting the private sector. In 2008 alone, 21 ongoing and new small-scale infrastructure works were completed, benefiting over 26,000 inhabitants (over 20 percent of Kukes' population). Forty community-based organizations participated in these activities, with over 1,000 members, and 18 local companies.

While these local development initiatives provide models for local development, their longevity and wider adoption is uncertain. Challenges include stagnating decentralization reform, the heavy financial dependence of many local government units on the national budget, and the limited development capacities of small government units. Given the territorial reforms and the related institutional reformulation, the regional development initiative provides important lessons for local-level planning.

In cases where UNDP has closely followed government priorities and where there has been clear ownership of the reform agenda by government institutions, UNDP's contribution has been effective.

Government commitment, ownership and leadership were key to UNDP's contribution to territorial and administrative reform, service delivery, ICT, mine action and other areas. These areas, where UNDP support is perceived as most effective, were not strictly programmed in different country programme documents, but emerged as government priorities following elections in 2009

and 2013; UNDP has been flexible in responding to emerging government priorities.

In areas lacking government ownership and prioritization, and where the policy and institutional framework was ambiguous, the effectiveness of UNDP support has been weak. This was the case with UNDP's support to regional and local development and economic governance. Although the Government embarked on a strategic approach to regional development, it later shifted its focus to preparing for IPA management and institution building. The consecutive refusals of Albania's EU candidate status in 2010 and 2011 resulted in a relaxed national commitment to domestic regional development. The Government was reluctant to set up the necessary bodies directly responsible for regional development. The legal framework regulating the structure, roles and responsibilities of both the local and the regional authorities were ambiguous. There were also a large number of donors supporting regional development initiatives;[93] these initiatives were not properly coordinated and often offered inconsistent approaches or models for regional development. Furthermore, the changed framework for EU IPA assistance has affected the effectiveness of work in this area. At present, territorial and administration reform, and the establishment of the Regional Development Fund, are expected to boost regional development.

In some cases it is also challenging for UNDP to find the right balance between being flexible enough to respond to *ad hoc* requests and maintaining focus on long-term goals. UNDP has been responsive to the needs of the Government, including *ad hoc* requests that often served the immediate needs of government institutions. UNDP has used these immediate capacity needs as entry points to strengthen institutional capacities. Nevertheless, actual capacity development within the Government has not materialized to the desired extent. Explanations for this shortcoming include over-reliance by government

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93   In parallel to UNDP initiatives, the Austrian Development Agency and Swiss Cooperation were supporting regional development in northern Albania, and USAID intensively supported development of municipal plans.

institutions on constant UNDP support. Overall, institutional capacity development as a core dimension of support is challenging for UNDP in Albania, as in other EU accession countries. With the EU often leading governance reform and institutional strengthening, UNDP has limited space and resources to pursue a long-term capacity development agenda.

UNDP's support to central government institutions, its work in mine action, and its support to regional and local development initiatives have contributed to the fight against exclusion and inequalities in Albania.

UNDP contributed to the reduction of exclusion by facilitating the participation of vulnerable groups. At the central level, examples include UNDP's support to the electoral process and its support to INSTAT in the 2011 census in registering the Roma population. The e-participation tool created through the 'Enhancing Citizens' Participation at Local Level' project has improved communication with citizens by requesting, receiving and incorporating their feedback into local governance processes, including in the areas of budgeting, urban planning and quality of public service delivery.

In its regional and local development initiatives, UNDP has encouraged a participatory approach in the preparation of local strategic plans. For example, the Vlora and Shkodra regions' strategic plans were developed with the participation of more than 600 representatives of the national, regional and local governments, as well as representatives from civil society, the private sector and the citizen themselves. At the community level, UNDP used social mobilization to initiate greater dialogue, trust and partnership between villagers and their local government institutions. Through a participatory process, citizens of communes and municipalities formed community-based organizations with their own rules

of conduct that ensured their functioning as self-governing institutions.

UNDP's work in mine action has contributed to the removal of life threats for the affected communities and has enabled the resumption of economic activities on demined lands. The vocational training and other support provided through UNDP's social reintegration programme help mine victims find work, enhance their economic situation, and return to economic activities. UNDP's work in mine action has enhanced the protection of the rights of people with disabilities at the national level, as discussed in section 4.2 below (Economic and Social Inclusion).

UNDP contributed to the capacity of central and local governments to mainstream gender into policymaking and local development planning, and to encourage the establishment of a gender equality unit.

UNDP support to mainstreaming gender concerns into policymaking and local development planning has been important. UNDP, in cooperation with other UN agencies, advocated for the recruitment of full-time gender equality employees across all local government units and line ministries, as required by the gender equality law. The presence of a dedicated employee is viewed as a precondition for gender mainstreaming in every legal, sub-legal, policy and budget draft under development. Amendments to several laws — including the labour code, the electoral code, the criminal code, and civil and administrative legislation — were introduced. Some other activities in this area include UNDP support to INSTAT in conducting the Second National Survey on Domestic Violence and the 'Gender and Corruption in Public Administration' survey conducted in 2014 as part of a regional initiative on removing barriers to women's advancement in the civil service.[94]

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94   United Nations Albania, Research Report, 'Gender and Corruption in the Albanian civil service', December 2014.

UNDP-supported municipalities now have full-time staff to address gender-related and domestic violence issues. Training and mentoring programmes for these staff and other municipal employees were organized. UNDP supported several municipalities across the country in engaging women and men in the local planning processes. Technical support has been provided to ensure gender mainstreaming in the formulation of local development plans. The participation of gender experts in strategy development meetings with local stakeholders has helped improve local officials' understanding of gender mainstreaming. The local development plans were developed through a participatory process involving men and women.

4.1.3 QUALITY OF UNDP'S CONTRIBUTION

4.1.3.1 Relevance

UNDP support to governance reforms and local development is anchored in national polices and government priorities. UNDP's approaches, particularly its emphasis on government institutions' leadership, were appropriate for improving programme relevance. In some cases, the objectives are over ambitious compared to the resources available.

The broad areas of work planned and described in UNDP programming documents are all in line with national policies and government priorities, as well as with UNDP's mandate. At the operational level, UNDP's interventions were also in line with Albania's priorities as expressed in the NSDI, relevant sector or sub-sector strategies, and Albania's strategic documents related to EU accession. For example, UNDP support to policy planning and development effectiveness has been relevant to the Government's evolving need to improve its national strategic planning frame-

work, donor coordination and external assistance management functions. UNDP's support to INSTAT is relevant to the need to enhance national capacities for the collection, analysis and use of data. The fight against corruption is one of the main political criteria for Albania before negotiations for EU accession can begin;[95] it is, therefore, a key priority in the Government's agenda. Through its interventions, UNDP also responded to the Government's requests in promoting the ICT agenda. UNDP's support to economic governance was also relevant to government priorities on generating inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Albania by enabling regulatory frameworks, trade facilitation and investment promotion.

In implementing its country programme, UNDP has been able to respond to opportunities to contribute to the Government's emerging reform agenda. UNDP's support of Albania's territorial and administrative reform is one example. UNDP programming documents did not include an objective on territorial reform. Nevertheless, UNDP responded to the Government's priorities and has been able to mobilize and coordinate donor support through a pooled funding mechanism to assist the Government in developing the vision, strategic orientation and related legislation to support this reform. The Albanian Parliament approved Law 115/2014, which formalized Albania's new administrative and territorial division and reduced local government units from 373 to 61 in time for local elections in June 2015. Had this deadline passed, the next real opportunity would not have arisen before the 2019 local elections, which would probably have been too late.[96] UNDP's support to service delivery reform is another example.

UNDP's objectives for some of its work in this area were overambitious. This was the case with

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95 European Commission, 'Annual Report on Albania, 2014'.

96 A Swedish-funded study notes, "it may already be too late in some respects. . . for instance, EU accession negotiations are likely to be well under way by then, and national authorities will be under pressure to fill any gaps revealed in administrative capacity."

UNDP support to economic governance and regional development, where UNDP's assistance was ambitious in scope and coverage relative to its time-frames and resources. UNDP's engagement and delivery in economic governance is the smallest among all the outcomes. The mid-term review of the One UN programme in 2014 recognized this issue and decided to eliminate the separate outcome on economic governance. Work related to this area was merged into the outcome on regional and local development.

4.1.3.2 Efficiency

The complementarity of UNDP operations with activities of other development actors was generally ensured in the democratic governance and local development portfolio. More synergies could have been explored between different interventions in this portfolio.

In general, outputs under the democratic governance and local development portfolio have been delivered on a timely basis, with adequate quality and within budget. In a few cases, projects suffered delays,[97] especially projects that were jointly funded with other development partners. However, these delays did not affect the quality of outputs. The right-sizing exercise undertaken by the Country Office in 2014–2015, when democratic governance and regional development were merged into one programme unit, contributed to enhancing the managerial efficiency in this area.

Synergetic works were promoted with multiple stakeholders and the duplication of efforts was generally avoided. An exception, however, occurred in the area of regional and local development, where in some cases, more than one donor was advising the same beneficiaries on the same subject: local and municipal development strategies in northern regions of Albania. Synergies with operations of other UN agencies

have been ensured for efficient use of resources. UNDP's cooperation with other donors and its ability to leverage resources through co-financing schemes and pooled funding was a factor in its programme efficiency. And pooled funding has proved to be a successful approach.

Further joint synergies could have been explored between a number of sub-areas, for example, between territorial and administrative reform and service delivery, economic governance and regional and local development, regional and local development and mine actions.

4.1.3.3 Sustainability

UNDP's contribution to governance reforms and institutional strengthening are important to the implementation phase. UNDP's contribution has been well aligned with government priorities and public policy frameworks.

UNDP's policy support as part of its contribution to governance reforms has been sustainable as the results have been institutionalized and integrated within the public policy framework. The various laws, legislation and strategies that UNDP contributed to have been approved and are now in the implementation phase. These include the law on territorial reform, and legislation on anti-corruption and public service delivery strategy. These policies, strategies, and legislation are in various stages of implementation. All are within the Government's priority areas and there are national commitments to continue efforts.

The sustainability of UNDP-supported outcomes depends, among other things, on the extent to which institutional capacity has been built. Given the limited human resources in government institutions, UNDP must often use external service contractors to deliver outputs such as policy/strategy documents. Though the

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97 For example, the preparation of NSDI 2015–2020 is taking almost two years. Other examples include preparatory phases of STAR and service delivery, preparatory phase of regional development interventions, joints interventions with the World Bank on economic governance.

long-term capacity development perspective is missing, UNDP's efforts to engage the staff of government institutions helped ensure their ownership of outputs.

UNDP has managed to build partnerships around a number of its initiatives to carry forward the outcomes and outputs achieved. This is the case for activities related to policy planning (IPS), territorial reform, anti-corruption and service delivery reform. In each of these areas, UNDP has partnered with others who bring forward the results achieved and enhance the prospect for sustainability of outcomes.

The sustainability of UNDP's regional development contribution at the central and regional policy level is weak. Regional strategies developed with UNDP support did not reach an advanced stage of implementation, primarily because of significant contextual changes. Nevertheless, UNDP's interventions at the local level brought sustainable results, such as small-scale interventions including roads and schools in the region of Kukes, Shkodra, Elbasan and Korca. In these cases, local community ownership is strong, creating a good prospect for sustainability. The Local Economic Development Agencies established with UNDP support through the Art Gold project have become self-sustained non-profit structures.

4.2 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The following outcomes are examined in this thematic area:

Outcomes related to economic and social inclusion	
CPD 2006–2010/2011	• Institutions and forums in place to support people's participation and empowerment to take active part in policy formulation and decision-making
One UN Programme Albania 2007–2010/2011	• Government policies and practices necessary to promote social inclusion and reduction of regional disparities are strengthened • Civil society better able to participate in public debate and advocate for state-citizen accountability • Institutions and forums in place to support people's participation and empowerment to take active part in policy formulation and decision-making • Institutional framework for education in place that promotes inclusive quality education for all children • Government adopts policies, regulatory and institutional frameworks that promote provision of integrated quality services, with special emphasis on strengthening social protection system
Common CPD 2012–2016 (similar to outcomes included in the original One UN PoC 2012–2016)	• Strengthen public oversight, civil society and media institutions to make authorities more accountable to the public, and better able to enforce gender-equality commitments in planning, programming and budgeting processes • The rights of disadvantaged individuals and groups are equally ensured through legislation, inclusive policies, social protection mechanisms and special interventions • All people better realize fundamental rights to work, have greater and inclusive employment opportunities and can engage in comprehensive social dialogue
One UN PoC updated results framework 2015–2016	• Human rights and gender equality considerations guide interactions between citizens and institutions • The rights of individuals and groups are ensured through equitable, inclusive and evidence-based sectoral policies

UNDP's programmatic focus in this area has been consistent over the two programme cycles. The first programme cycle focused on building democratic institutions and governance systems, and on achieving the MDGs. This work included support to national institutions on the development of gender-sensitive policies and monitoring frameworks. Another area of intervention in this period related to strengthening civil society capacities and promoting participation in public policymaking through the empowerment of women and other groups. Social inclusion as a programmatic area also emerged in this period in the framework of EU-wide initiatives and in regional efforts for a Joint Inclusion Memorandum. Work on the empowerment of vulnerable communities (particularly Roma), disability rights, women's empowerment and domestic violence, as well as on unemployed and disadvantaged youth, intensified over this period.

Mainstreaming gender equality and working on gender-based violence and with vulnerable communities remain the core areas of UNDP's programme in the current programme cycle 2012–2016. While UNDP supported the Government in its basic strategic and legislative framework over the previous programme cycle, it committed to continue supporting legislation, policies promoting inclusion, social protection mechanisms and special interventions that ensure fulfilment of the rights of disadvantaged individuals and groups. This included the development of sector-specific or secondary legislation, as well as direct support to establishing government implementation mechanisms and institutions at the national and local level, such as the Community Coordination Response (CCR) mechanism on domestic violence. Employment emerged as a key area of UNDP intervention during this period, in the wake of the economic slowdown and increasing unemployment rates, which

increased the interest of national authorities in labour market interventions.

Overall, the expected outcome of the economic and social inclusion portfolio for 2007–2016 was to "support policies and implementation measures designed to avoid exclusion by removing barriers that stand in the way of people realising their full capabilities."[98] Work focused on women's empowerment, gender equality mainstreaming and gender-based violence; specific vulnerable groups, such as minorities and persons with disabilities; and employment promotion and labour market interventions. The intervention approach included a combination of technical assistance for the development of legislative and strategic frameworks, capacity-building initiatives to support implementation, and support for stakeholder consultations and participation.

UNDP's interventions in the area of economic and social inclusion can be grouped into a number of sub-areas, with key activities and outputs as follows:

Human rights and social inclusion enabling framework. In the previous programme cycle, UNDP focused on working with the Government to create awareness and the mechanisms to promote and monitor policies for empowering specific target groups. Its efforts in this regard focused mainly on interventions in the national strategic framework, support for disability rights legislation, and the first Roma's programme, 'Empowering Vulnerable Communities', which started in 2008. In the current programme cycle, work on social inclusion intensified, along with targeted support to human rights institutions such as the Commissioner on Anti-Discrimination and the Ombudsman. Interventions focused on assistance for the anti-discrimination law and capacity support for these two public oversight institutions in reaching out to local communities and advocating for gender equality, the Roma, people with disabilities and other vulnerable

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98   UNDP Albania, www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/in_depth/

groups. Technical assistance for the national policy framework facilitated the preparation of the Social Inclusion Policy Document 2015–2020 outlining the vision, policy approach, targets and building blocks for inclusive development. A Social Housing Situation Analysis and Needs Assessment were conducted, providing a baseline for the identification of vulnerable groups and their characteristics.

Gender equality mainstreaming. UNDP supported the legal and policy framework promoting gender equality and the rights of women, along with public awareness and advocacy campaigns in support of gender equality and women's rights. Support was provided to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in developing the second National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence. UNDP also contributed, along with other UN agencies and development partners, to the adoption of Albania's first quota system in the Law on Gender Equality in Society. Two legislative improvements in the area of gender were achieved with UNDP support in 2012: gender equality amendments to the Electoral Code and to the Criminal Code. Support for strategic litigation on women's rights was provided during the current programme cycle, enabling the establishment of case law on women's rights and monitoring of legislation implementation.

Gender-based violence. UNDP supported the implementation of Albania's first domestic violence law through the preparation of secondary legislation, public awareness, advocacy campaigns and capacity building for local government and others involved in its implementation. In 2010, UNDP supported the establishment of the first government-run domestic violence shelter. In the current programme cycle, UNDP focused its interventions on creating and strengthening sustainable mechanisms against domestic violence. UNDP supported the establishment of a national management information system to report domestic violence cases (REVALB) and CCR mechanisms in target areas. It also supported the Social Inclusion Department in the

Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. Work on developing legislation and strategies continued with the adoption of the National Action Plan on Involvement of Men and Boys as Partners to Women and Girls in Challenging Gender Stereotypes and Combating Gender Based Violence and its implementation as part of the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence Against Women campaign.

People with disabilities. UNDP supported the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities through a programme targeting government and other stakeholders, which started in 2010 ('Promoting Disability Rights in Albania'). Following the Convention's ratification, in the current programme cycle, UNDP supported Albania's preparations to comply with its requirements, including a review of the existing legislation for compliance with the Convention, the Law on Inclusion of and Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities, the Decree on the Recognition of the Sign Language, a review of the Disability Assessment System, as well as capacity development initiatives for governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. Disability issues were raised as a specific target within the social inclusion policy document.

Roma and Egyptian minorities. UNDP interventions under the 'Empowering Vulnerable Communities' project focused on assisting the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to elaborate a National Strategy on Roma and a National Action Plan for the Roma Decade through broad consultations with civil society.

UNDP also worked directly with target communities, mobilizing vulnerable Roma and Egyptian communities to prioritize their local development needs and facilitating access to services through support for civil registration. Two main programmes focusing on Roma and Egyptian communities issues were implemented in the current programme period: 'Empowering Vulnerable Local Communities', a joint programme financed by UN Human Security Trust Fund, and 'Supporting Social Inclusion of Roma

and Egyptian Communities', funded by the EU. These programmes focused on empowering Roma and Egyptian groups through support for active participation and engagement with local and national authorities, as well as employment and vocational training assistance. UNDP studied housing policies and practices affecting Roma in Albania and followed up by supporting legal amendments proposing positive measures for Roma in social housing, social welfare interventions, and the relocation of Roma communities from informal settlements in consultations with CSOs and Roma communities. Four local Roma/Egyptian Community Development Plans (2014–2020) were prepared and training was provided to 60 local government officials.

Employment. UNDP provided support to employment and skill enhancement for disadvantaged youth in poor regions of Albania through employment promotion initiatives within the framework of the MDG Fund Youth Employment and Migration Joint Programme. As employment became a priority for the Government in the current programme cycle, UNDP intensified interventions in this area through a combination of innovative active labour market measures. UNDP promoted entrepreneurship and territorial employment pacts as national-level interventions while simultaneously responding to local-level needs through the 'Local-level Responses to Youth Employment Challenge' project. UNDP also worked towards labour market inclusion of disadvantaged groups through a project titled, 'Addressing Social Exclusion through Vocational Education and Training'.

Civil society. In the NSDI formulation process, UNDP facilitated civil society consultation, including for the preparation of key sector strategies that fall under the framework of the NSDI. UNDP also trained CSOs by identifying and addressing their capacity needs to contribute to the MDG-based local planning processes. In 2010, UNDP supported the preparation of the

Civil Society Index, which assessed the state of civil society in Albania. The report highlighted key opportunities and challenges for future development of the civil society sector. UNDP has also worked with the media in promoting development through capacity-building activities for journalists to enhance their awareness, understanding and reporting skills on development issues, especially human rights, gender equality and poverty issues. In the current programme cycle, UNDP's work with civil society focused on revitalizing civil society in remote and rural areas under the 'Empowering Civil Society in Rural Areas' project.

4.2.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF UNDP'S CONTRIBUTION

The UNDP programme in Albania has focused extensively on social issues and has developed a niche in the area. UNDP has contributed to the development of the Government's vision and strategy, and has supported the adoption of important laws and action plans. Interventions have been both at the central and at the local levels, and have contributed to the reduction of exclusion and inequalities.

UNDP, in the framework of the One UN, is a key player in the areas of gender equality and the fight against domestic-based violence, and in the area of social inclusion. It has contributed to the development of the Government's vision and strategy in these areas, including the gender equality strategy and social inclusion strategy. It also supported the adoption of important laws and action plans such as the gender equality law, gender-based violence by-laws and the Roma action plan. At the local level, UNDP provided positive models of implementation for gender-based violence through the CCR mechanism. Domestic violence cases have been managed by a multidisciplinary team with unified data collection and improved responses. This led to an increase in reported cases of domestic violence, from 3,020 in 2013 to 3,094 in 2014.[99] Recognizing the benefits of the CCR approach,

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99   Government of Albania and United Nations, Programme of Cooperation 2012-2016, 'Progress Report 2014'.

the Government passed sub-legislation in 2011 making CCR the normative model for all local government units in Albania.[100] This is an example of major achievement at the policy level following successful piloting in the field.

UNDP has contributed to the fight against exclusion and inequalities through its work with Roma and Egyptian minorities and people with disabilities, and through its general support to the social inclusion enabling framework. In 2010, UNDP and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in partnership with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and civil society organizations, assisted the Albanian Parliament to adopt a comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Law outlawing discrimination on the basis of a range of factors, including disability, and establishing an independent commissioner for protection against discrimination. The commissioner promotes legal awareness, undertakes studies, receives complaints and applies sanctions. There are many other examples of UNDP's contribution to the fight against exclusion, including the registration of Roma in the civil registry, the approval of a decree recognizing sign language, and the Law on Inclusion of and Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities. Overall, UNDP's contribution has been important to ensuring the rights of disadvantaged individuals and groups through legislation, inclusive policies, social protection mechanisms and special interventions.

UNDP's organizational capacities and expertise, partnerships with other agencies, and ability to speedily deliver outputs have increased the effectiveness of its contribution in this area.

UNDP's contribution has been important in defining the social inclusion policy framework, but tangible results are difficult to measure. Support to people with disabilities has been important at the policy, legislation and institutional levels, and has been quite effective, especially at the local level. It has prepared the Government for bigger institutional and legal changes taken forward with the support of the World Bank. UNDP is recognized as a key government partner on Roma issues.

UNDP has made important contributions to defining the social inclusion policy framework. However, tangible results are difficult to measure in a context where the Government has not significantly advanced the internalization of mechanisms and policies to mainstream social inclusion principles. When providing renewed support to the social inclusion policy document as a cross-cutting issue in the second NSDI 2015–2020, UNDP, in the ongoing programme, has further emphasized the need to provide mechanisms and instruments to measure and monitor social inclusion indicators across all areas and sectors. The main government actor in this areas has been the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (previously Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs), but UNDP has increasingly engaged other line ministries responsible for implementing the policies, such as the Ministry of Urban Development (social housing[101]) and the Ministry of Education (primarily on Roma issues). However, the approach of building ownership among stakeholders has been undermined by pressure to deliver results and donor accountability, which has resulted (in some cases) in UNDP delivering outputs rather than building government capacity to take on reforms. UNDP has provided technical assistance for the development of social inclusion documents that were formally endorsed, but they have not been backed with the budgets and human resources needed to implement them.

Albania ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in November 2012, following intensive government and

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100 Final report, 'Analysis of the functioning of the coordinated community response to domestic violence at the local level in Albania', 2015.

101 Ministry of Urban Development has drafted the Social Housing Strategy 2016-2026 in collaboration with UNDP.

stakeholder awareness-raising, as well as capacity support by UNDP in the two preceding years. The ratification of the Convention was crucial in accelerating government action towards effective social inclusion of persons with disabilities. UNDP provided support to the Government in the adoption of several laws related to disabilities as well as an assessment of the national legislation for compliance with the Convention's requirements. UNDP interventions were seen as most significant in capacity support to CSOs working in disability areas to create demand for improved social inclusion of these groups. UNDP support was also significant in assistance for legislation, most notably the Law on Inclusion of and Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities and its by-laws, but also smaller amendments on access to education for children with disabilities law and sign language by-law. The assessment of infrastructure intervention costs and support for actual interventions in physical infrastructure in public institutions in Tirana, Korca and Lushnja to provide a model for the Government were seen as highly effective by stakeholders across the board. Nevertheless, work on the rights of people with disabilities is still at an early stage. The Government has reached a critical point in reforming the disability cash benefit system with World Bank support and creating the linkages — and trade-offs — between cash and in-kind support.[102]

UNDP's work with Roma and Egyptian minorities included capacity support for legislation and policy development (Roma Action Plan, including the latest 2015–2020); interventions in the regulatory framework for access to basic services (most prominently civil registration); and direct work for the empowerment of community-based organizations and employment opportunities for Roma women and youth. Awareness of the challenges associated with improving opportunities for minorities has significantly increased across the Government at the national and local level, according to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. This Ministry in particular appreciates the systematic and targeted approach UNDP has employed in mainstreaming policies around culturally diverse communities at all government levels throughout the years. However, implementation of the national action plan for the Roma Decade has been slow owing to inadequate resources and insufficient coordination at local and central levels. There continues to be a regular need for efficient coordination among institutions involved in the various types of registration (such as birth and residency), but critical services for Roma are largely provided by CSOs and financed by international donors.

UNDP's engagement with Roma and Egyptians communities has also focused on economic empowerment. For example, vocational training in non-traditional sectors and business development services were provided to 90 Roma artisans, job seekers and potential entrepreneurs, and new models were set up for Roma youth integration in the framework of the 'Social Inclusion for Roma and Egyptian Communities' project. Beneficiaries and government institutions believe UNDP's approach in working with vulnerable communities in recent years has yielded tangible impacts with potential for multiplication as they provide the interface and real life examples for implementing policies developed at the national level. This includes intensified direct empowerment work; community-based organization establishment and strengthening; and work with local authorities and targeted infrastructure interventions in Roma neighbourhoods to improve living conditions[103] and access to education, health and social services.

UNDP's work on gender and domestic-based violence has been highly effective, with positive

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102 The World Bank, through its Social Assistance Modernization Project, focuses on streamlining procedures, eligibility and allocations of cash assistance schemes (social assistance and disability benefits), aiming at improving targeting and coverage of target groups as well as optimization of spending between cash and non-cash services.

103 For example, in 2014, the Ministry of Urban Development, in collaboration with UNDP, supported the construction of a main sewage collector and the reconstruction of Roma community's housing in the Municipality of Otllak.

results especially in building capacity for policy monitoring and systems at the local level. Nevertheless, there were challenges in the capacity development component, especially in government institutions, notwithstanding UNDP's explicit interventions to provide the tools and know-how.

The One UN, through SIDA financing, has been the most relevant development partner in gender, at least during the second programme cycle.[104] UNDP has provided key contributions in:

- training professionals to understand and implement gender equality and domestic violence legislation

- assisting Albania to pilot referral mechanisms for victims of domestic violence in three municipalities

- establishing a national online case-tracking mechanism to ensure follow-up of reported cases at all levels

- improving Albania's normative and policy framework on gender equality and domestic violence

- making progress on establishing the first shelter for victims of domestic violence

- sensitizing the community on these issues

UNDP and other UN agencies periodically support awareness campaigns on gender-based violence. These are perceived as having a positive impact on target population thanks to the innovative and creative techniques of collaborating CSOs.

A new law on Gender Equality, prepared with UNDP support, was approved by the Albanian Parliament in July 2008, while in 2010 UNDP supported the development of the second National Strategy on Gender Equality and Gen-der-Based Violence. Government representatives have indicated that the highly participatory model of evaluating and revising the Gender Strategy will be a best practice and model for other strategies of the second NSDI (2015–2020).

In the second programme cycle, UNDP extended its contributions to capacity development for key independent oversight bodies for human rights, such as the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and the Ombudsman, primarily in increasing their visibility, proactivity and outreach to vulnerable communities. The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination played a progressive role in removing discriminatory practices towards women, and issued formal decisions against the practice of marking birth certificates of children born out of wedlock as discriminatory against children and their unwed mothers. The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination handled 15 complaints in 2011 compared to 172 new cases in 2014 plus 12 *ex officio* cases.

The political participation of women was another important area of UNDP contribution in the framework of the One UN Programme, following the institution of the gender quota in electoral legislation in 2008. The number of women in Parliament grew from 16.4 percent in 2009 to 25.7 percent in 2014. The most recent increases reflect the decision to replace vacant seats with women only. UNDP engages with women parliamentarians and politicians at other levels in support of policy development initiatives. UNDP also supported the piloted citizens' scorecards process on gender equality; men and women in local communities in seven regions in Albania engaged in the citizen scorecards process. Through this process, citizens identified and prioritized gender-specific needs and discussed them with candidates for the May 2011 local elections. Many elected mayors embraced these

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104　Donors allocated significant resources to gender issues in the early 2000s, culminating in the 2005–2008 period in which One UN, SIDA (through Swedish civil society organizations) and a number of other bilateral donors aligned their activities and lobbied in favour of passing key legislation and building national awareness. In the second programme cycle, financing on gender has decreased.

priorities and will work towards their implementation. This piloted process will be a model for engaging citizens, tackling corruption, and addressing minorities and vulnerable communities' issues.

A civil society monitoring study of court decisions from the gender equality perspective prompted the High Council of Justice to address domestic violence legislation and initiate a thematic monitoring report. This judicial scrutiny is expected to result in changes and improvements in judicial practice in upholding women's rights and holding perpetrators accountable. UNDP support to civil society for strategic litigation for women's rights contributed to a greater use of available legal remedies by women and to greater involvement of public oversight mechanisms, particularly the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, in protecting women's rights and gender equality.

UNDP's contribution in the area of gender-based violence is widely recognized. More than one in two women report suffering at least one form of gender-based violence at the hands of a family member, according to a survey by INSTAT. Official statistics show that the share of women reporting such violence increased from 56 percent in 2007 to 59.4 percent in 2013.[105] It is assumed that this rise does not indicate a greater incidence of violence, but a greater willingness to report it. Reporting was encouraged through a national awareness campaign coupled with support for improved response through professional capacity-building interventions, establishment and consolidation of CCR mechanisms, provision of sheltering services and national standards for this type of service. The impact of these efforts is evidenced in the ongoing upward trend in the report rate to police and other authorities. With the entry into force of the Criminal Code amendments, supported by UNDP, the number of criminal proceedings against domestic violence increased; 1,212 cases were reported in 2013 ver-

sus 867 cases in 2012. CCR mechanisms have been established in major urban centres and show early signs of sustainability. CCRs that received direct technical support from UNDP are sustainable and continue to operate efficiently even after UNDP terminated technical support.

The capacity-development component, especially within the central government, has not been very effective, despite UNDP's efforts to provide tools and know-how. UNDP has put major efforts into building the capacity of gender-related institutions. Trainings on the new Gender Equality Law were organized for judges, prosecutors and employees of State Social Services and social services units in communes and municipalities. Training on the domestic violence law was also organized for these social services units. In addition, civil servants from five municipalities were trained to discuss issues of gender equality and mainstreaming, and domestic violence and its legal implications. However, pressure to deliver 'value for money' and demonstrable results led to UNDP facing a trade-off between delivering outputs fast and investing in long-term capacity development. This trade-off was also an issue with the central Government's precarious approach to gender and social inclusion policies, which are often traded for more pressing short-term priorities.

UNDP has been well positioned to bring together key national stakeholders from public and civic sectors, as well as potential supporters from civil society, in a result-oriented policy dialogue on alternatives for addressing civil society development concerns and challenges to participatory governance. The body of knowledge on civil society produced through UNDP support has become a reliable foundation for interventions designed by public, civic and private actors and for the vision of civil society itself to build a 'third sector' relying on good governance principles, oriented by citizens' and community needs.

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105   Domestic violence in Albania, national population-based survey, 2013.

UNDP has been advocating and supporting civic participation and empowerment at all levels of governance, facilitating civil society actors to participate in policy formulation and decision-making. Civic actors have led a number of initiatives, including the fight against domestic violence and for women's rights. The piloted citizens' scorecards process on gender equality is a good example and a good model for other areas of citizen engagement. UNDP has been advocating and supporting civic participation at all levels of governance and has extended capacity support to various civil society actors at the national and local level. UNDP's empowerment approach has mobilized vulnerable Roma and Egyptian communities to prioritize their local development needs, and facilitated their dialogue and partnering with local government units. Local authorities are now implementing infrastructure development projects identified by Roma and Egyptians. Organizations representing the interests of these ethnic communities have built partnerships with non-Roma professional organizations,[106] enabling them to bring the voice of their communities closer to decision-making processes. The 'Social Inclusion for Roma and Egyptian Communities' project was a comprehensive intervention involving community-based forums, Roma and Egyptian CSOs, and local and central government. The project was inspired by the human rights-based approach, which has been crucial in achieving realistic and sustainable results.

A 2010 study of the Civil Society Index using the CIVICUS global methodology revealed the state-of-play of civil society development and challenges in Albania, along with recommendations for future support interventions. UNDP pursued some of these findings in a subsequent project (2012) targeting civil society capacity development in rural and remote areas. Initial results were encouraging, but civil society development issues had somewhat declined on the national agenda. This was also reflected in the

results framework of the current One UN PoC, which did not explicitly address civil society strengthening. While engagement with civil society actors persisted in the current programme cycle, initiatives aiming at direct capacity support for CSOs diminish in scope and budgetary weight. The nature of UNDP's engagement with CSOs in the current programme cycle became skewed towards CSOs acting as service providers to help UNDP achieve specific results in awareness campaigns and similar activities.

UNDP's support in the employment and skill development area contributed to changes in the governance of Active Labour Market programmes. UNDP's knowledge of the Albanian governance systems and flexibility in responding to challenges in the alignment of economic development and social inclusion policies have increased the significance of its contributions.

Employment only emerged as a key area of UNDP interventions in the current programme cycle when it was referenced in one of the outcomes of the Common Country Programme Document 2012–2016, which states: "All people better realize fundamental rights to work, have greater and inclusive employment opportunities and can engage in comprehensive social dialogue." Since 2012, the Albanian Government has dedicated increased efforts to modernizing labour market institutions and reorienting the National Employment Service from benefit administration to service provision, assisting job seekers in re-employment and providing quality services to enterprises. This policy objective was at the core of the UNDP employment programme 'Local Level Responses to the Youth Employment Challenge', jointly implemented with the International Labour Organization. This programme was based on a previous successful model piloted in three disadvantaged regions of Albania through the Joint UN Programme on Youth Employment and Migration.

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106   The 'Social Inclusion for Roma and Egyptian Communities' project invested in increasing the capacity of Roma and Egyptian communities through training and mentorship schemes between established Roma and non-Roma CSOs.

Through this project, UNDP contributed significantly to the piloting and subsequent adoption of new labour market measures, specifically measures targeting people with disabilities. In 2014, UNDP supported the National Employment Service in the governance of active labour market measures, particularly in setting new transparency standards in their operationalization. Such standards were a necessity given that the Government's budget for active labour market measures tripled in 2014 to $2.7 million. Over 300 businesses throughout the country received training on active labour market measures, eligibility criteria and application procedures. Local employment offices' staff were trained on the revised implementation modalities. As a direct result of the added visibility and increased transparency of the active labour market measures allocation process as supported by UNDP, the number of applications by private businesses increased fivefold. UNDP allocated funds for the implementation of active labour market measures, which were executed through direct budget support to the National Employment Service, increasing the national ownership of the project.

As part of national efforts to match skills development with labour market demand, UNDP supported policies for the labour market integration of vulnerable groups through vocational education and training. A practical guide for National Employment Service staff to address the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups through targeted active labour market programmes and vocational education and training has been developed and translated in Albanian. It is considered a useful tool for the National Employment Service in its work with the vulnerable groups. Through the 'Addressing Social Inclusion through Vocational Education and Training' project, UNDP has made a significant contribution towards informing policymakers in two key areas related to the labour market inclusion of disadvantaged groups: a situation analysis on the access of people with disabilities to vocational education and training, and social inclusion and the rural labour market, which have provided a meaningful basis for future Government interventions.

UNDP's interventions in the area of employment are considered important by the Government at the national and local level. The very positive results achieved with the 'Local-level Responses to Youth Employment Challenge' project and other measures, in the overall context of increasing unemployment especially among youth and vulnerable people, made UNDP's role crucial in providing technical assistance to the Government. As a result, UNDP has over the years emerged as one of the most important development partners in the employment sector, alongside more traditional partners in the field, such as GIZ and the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation. Measures and instruments employed under the employment outcome (entrepreneurship support schemes, vocational training and integration in active labour market programmes) were expanded to other interventions in the social inclusion portfolio, including women's and Roma communities' empowerment.

4.2.3 QUALITY OF UNDP'S CONTRIBUTION

4.2.3.1 Relevance

UNDP prioritized social inclusion, although social policy is not governed by EU acquis *per se*. UNDP's interventions in this area are highly relevant to national strategic goals as well as to UNDP's corporate mandate and programming principles. The sequencing and rationale for interventions has followed sound logic. The approach of having local-level interventions to provide insights and feedback to the central policymaking level is relevant. UNDP is widely considered to have a niche in supporting the Government on social inclusion policies and practice.

UNDP's contributions have not only been well anchored in the NSDI and sectoral strategies (many of which were developed also through UNDP support), but have also been shaped to accommodate human rights principles. For example, the NSDI 2007–2013 acknowledges the situation of labour market in the country and identifies the challenges of creating

direct employment opportunities through special employment programmes for vulnerable groups, especially young people, women, persons with disabilities and Roma.

The objectives and key target groups addressed through interventions in the social inclusion portfolio have not changed drastically over the two programme cycles, but their relevance to national strategic priorities has strengthened over the years due to the relative importance that social inclusion and employment acquired in the national agenda. Almost all UNDP interventions have been developed based on a thoroughly participatory approach through prior consultations with government at the national and local level, and consultations with target groups and CSOs. The interventions have been systematic over a relatively long period, which has enabled UNDP to gain a good understanding of the country's development context, governance challenges and priorities for future development.

The sequence and rationale for interventions has followed sound logic. The implicit theory of change for interventions has recognized that in the given context, the process of transferring know-how and support was crucially dependent on building awareness of a critical mass of local actors on the need for reforms. In this regard, the underlying intervention logic has typically rested on the principle that a critical mass of awareness and demand for policies and services must be established before supporting policy and legislation development. The implementation of these policies and legislations came later, through capacity-development initiatives for the national Government, but also through direct support to local authorities and communities. This is the case with interventions in the gender equality area, which UNDP has pursued since the late 1990s when Albanian society and the Government were in the early stages of accepting and owning gender equality goals. However, concerted efforts by UNDP and other development partners (such as USAID and SIDA) in working with civil society groups and exercising pressure on the public opinion culminated in the breakthrough gender equality and domestic-based

violence legislation and awareness campaigns in 2008. Work in social inclusion has followed similar paths, with increased understanding of the needs of vulnerable communities and the needs to create equitable opportunities for their integration into society. UNDP's interventions in this area have evolved gradually. In the early years, UNDP focused on building capacity among government and non-government stakeholders to increase awareness and understanding of social inclusion issues and the visibility of vulnerable target groups. Over time, however, the focus shifted to supporting important legal initiatives, such as the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and related legislation, along with measures to strengthen domestic institutions and mechanisms at the national and local levels for implementation and monitoring.

Local-level interventions provide insights and feedback to the central policymaking level. Local initiatives were aimed at providing direct support to target groups, such as Roma, vulnerable women and unemployed youth. While local initiatives were typically implemented on a pilot basis in select districts, they were effective mechanisms for providing insights into local capacities and situations, and were intended to provide feedback to the central policymaking level. Local-level initiatives and capacity development support in the area of employment, and in work with CCRs and Roma, linked to UNDP's other interventions in local governance and development.

4.2.3.2 Efficiency
The Delivering as One modality has allowed for increased efficiency in the division of work among UN agencies and has reduced transaction costs for the Government. UNDP has been able to focus its programme in fewer areas while providing more systematic contributions. There are good synergies among projects within UNDP's programme portfolio, but they could be exploited more proactively.

UNDP programmes have usually been implemented within the specified time-frames and budgets. In some cases, UNDP has provided

results beyond the initial plans at no additional cost, but through the engagement of internal staff (for example, in the development of the governance mechanism for active labour market measures in 2014, which was considered a major success of the programme). UNDP staff have addressed implementation obstacles in a timely and constructive manner through intensified engagement with national authorities.

Despite the relatively small size of the programme, UNDP has managed to provide impressive results with quality outputs for the Government. The Government and non-governmental partners appreciate UNDP's flexibility and ability to mobilize resources swiftly. Although UNDP's financial contribution is modest compared to development partners such as the EU, the World Bank and bilateral donors, its fast delivery, thorough knowledge of Albania's development context and challenges, and highly professional staff have increased the significance of its role in this area.

The Delivering as One modality enabled increased efficiency in the division of work among UN agencies and has reduced transaction costs for the Government. UNDP has been able to focus its programme on fewer areas, but provide more systematic contributions. The evolution of UNDP's role in the gender area illustrates this division of work. Since the first One UN programme and the Gender Joint Programme, UNDP has focused primarily on gender-based violence, with UN Women (UNIFEM at the time) assuming a greater role in gender equality mainstreaming. This division of roles, which has continued in the second One UN programme, has allowed UNDP to focus on specific issues around gender equality that are anchored in the broader context of its capacity development support for national-level institutions (i.e. support to the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination), and to focus its resources on gender-based violence.

There are good synergies among projects within UNDP's programme portfolio, but they could be exploited more proactively. Linkages between projects under different outcomes in the social

inclusion area have been established at the objective level, but joint project activities targeting specific groups and/or territories have rarely materialized. For example, Roma and gender projects have increasingly engaged in creating economic empowerment opportunities, while employment projects have targeted women, Roma and persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that projects in these areas have cooperated or joined resources for joint activities.

4.2.3.3 Sustainability
UNDP has given careful consideration to sustainability concerns in its programme, with enhanced emphasis on building national systems. However, the sustainability of results is variable. It is higher in areas where government commitment is clear, such as gender-based violence and employment.

UNDP has given careful consideration to sustainability concerns in its economic and social inclusion portfolio by putting enhanced emphasis on building national systems. In the social inclusion and gender area, UNDP has worked on policy and legal frameworks, as well as at the implementation level through assistance in establishing systems for evidence-based policymaking (i.e. the ROMALB and domestic violence databases). In the employment area, UNDP has worked closely with the Government to help it deliver results, through direct budget support to the National Employment Services and through joint design of the new active labour market measures governance systems.

However, sustainability of the results achieved is mixed. It is higher where national ownership of priorities and government commitment to achieving results is tangible, such as the gender-based violence and employment areas. The establishment of CCRs in the major districts and their continued operations even after the withdrawal of UNDP support is encouraging, despite variations in the coverage and efficiency of the CCRs. The sustainability of interventions in the social inclusion enabling framework and work with vulnerable communities such

as Roma and Egyptian minorities and persons with disabilities remain to be verified as they are still at an early stage. It should be acknowledged that social changes require time and a critical mass of factors that contribute to long-term sustainability, such as changes in social perceptions, creation of citizen demand, organizational changes in government and real prioritization of objectives. Although preliminary observations indicate promising results, the magnitude and complexity of social challenges for the Roma require sustained support by development partners, and more importantly, by the Government through institutionalization of support measures and financing for vulnerable communities.[107]

UNDP has been working on developing a number of strategies and action plans, including the renewal of plans in areas such as social inclusion and Roma communities. Support for the development of strategies has been delivered through the mobilization of external technical assistance, and national stakeholder ownership over the process of development and the objectives has varied. A clear government commitment, evidenced through the allocation of human and financial resources for the implementation of the strategies, is lacking. In some cases, UNDP's promptness in satisfying government requests and delivering results has undermined capacity development within the Government, at the expense of future sustainability. Commitments and capacities within the Government to deliver social inclusion objectives have not significantly increased, as witnessed by a continuous lack of resources allocated for this purpose.[108]

The pressure for UNDP to deliver outputs quickly and to show results, as well as inadequate human resources in some government institutions, have sometimes incentivized direct programme delivery by UNDP staff rather than through government institutions. This hampers capacity development of national partners and the prospects for sustainability. This trade-off between capacity development (through government commitment and capacity development) and efficiency (delivering outputs) is a challenge moving forward.

4.3 ENVIRONMENT

The following outcomes are examined in this thematic area:

Outcomes related to environment	
CPD 2006–2010/2011	• Policies developed and implemented that support the achievement of the MDGs
One UN Programme Albania 2007–2010/2011	• Government meets environmental requirements of EU accession process and of multilateral environment agreements • Environmental management improved to protect natural resources and mitigate environmental threats
Common CPD 2012–2016 (similar to outcomes included in the original One UN PoC 2012–2016)	• National authorities and institutions, the private sector and the general public protect, preserve and use natural resources more sustainably, taking into account the impacts of climate change and the achievements of the European environment standards
One UN PoC updated results framework 2015–2016	N/A

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107 UNDP, through EU financial support, has been one of the major development partners in targeting Roma and Egyptian community challenges. However, interventions remain small relative to the needs of the community. At best, they create models to be replicated.

108 The government budget for social inclusion programmes is fairly modest at less than €240000 per year (2014–2017 estimates). It includes mostly staff costs related to the monitoring of strategies and action plans, and awareness activities focused on specific topics, such as gender equality and domestic violence. Some measures are included under social protection/social care service budgets for all vulnerable categories, but are still very low at €4.4 million, or 3 percent of total cash and non-cash social protection national funding. These numbers are not projected to increase in the medium term.

4.3.1 UNDP'S INTERVENTION STRATEGIES, KEY ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

As demonstrated in the outcome statements in the table above, environment's position in UNDP's programming documents has evolved over time. In the previous country programme cycle (the CPD 2006–2010/2011, approved in April 2005), environment was part of a general outcome on developing and implementing policies to support the achievement of the MDGs. The One UN programme document for the same period was more specific, with two outcomes dedicated to environment. Similarly, both the Common CPD 2012–2016 and the One UN PoC 2012–2016 had a separate environmental outcome. Following the mid-term review of the One UN PoC in 2014, when the outcomes were consolidated and brought to a more strategic level, environment has been considered as two outputs under bigger outcomes on governance and rule of law, and regional and local development. The first output is about line ministries ensuring and enforcing the conservation and sustainable use of public goods, and the second output specifically addresses mainstreaming climate change adaptation and mitigation measures across sectors.[109]

Despite variations in the positioning of the environment programme in UNDP's strategic planning documents, UNDP has been consistent in its support to environmental issues in Albania. Its overall objective has been to support mainstreaming the environment into Albania's national policy frameworks and national development strategies. UNDP has also focused on local programmes, supporting the Government to comply with EU and international environmental standards; to protect, preserve and use natural resources more sustainably; and to adapt and adjust to the current and expected impacts of climate change.

UNDP's approach involves interventions both at the central/policy level and the local level. At the policy level, UNDP supports the preparation of policies, strategies and action plans; the implementation of national commitments to international conventions; and the establishment and operation of structures for sound environmental management. At the local level, UNDP supports enhancing the basis for the economically efficient and sustainable use of natural resources.

UNDP's interventions in the area of the environment are broadly grouped into the following sub-areas, key activities and outputs:

Biodiversity. UNDP supported the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded regional project 'Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Prespa Lakes Basin', which aimed at establishing land- and water-use management practices for restoring ecosystem health in the Prespa Lakes Basin, modifying productive sector practice to improve ecosystem health, conserving biodiversity and strengthening protected areas and strengthening transboundary cooperation. The project has contributed to the declaration of the Ohrid – Prespa transboundary biosphere reserve with Macedonia and to the establishment of the Prespa National Park Management Committee. It has also contributed to the introduction of sustainable development practices in the Prespa Lakes Basin. The project supported the development of the Local Environmental Action Plans in Liqenas and Proger communes in the Albanian Prespa region, which are now being implemented.

The ongoing 'Improving Coverage and Management Effectiveness of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas' project aims at improving the bio-geographical representation and the management arrangements of marine and coastal protected areas. In 2010, UNDP supported

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109 Output 3.4 of the updated results framework states: "Line Ministries ensure and enforce the conservation, sustainable use of public goods. (Public goods and common goods: the air we breathe, cultural heritage, natural heritage, biodiversity, recreational areas, coasts, parks, urban spaces etc.)." Output 4.4 of the updated results framework states: "Key ministries and local authorities adopt local, regional and national action on climate change adaptation (including short term e.g. disaster risk management) and mitigation across sectors."

the establishment of the first Albanian marine protected areas (Karaburun-Sazani) and the preparation of a management plan. Two other potential marine areas are being assessed for designation. The proportion of total national territory covered by protected areas has increased to approximately 16 percent. A National Strategic Plan for Marine and Coastal Protected areas was prepared and the National Protected Area Agency was recently established. A two-year moratorium on hunting (with a national action plan) was declared in 2014.

EU accession-related environment requirements. UNDP supported the restructuring of the National Environmental Agency and the National Inspectorate of Environment, Water and Forests. It supported the preparation of guidelines on the establishment and functioning of an environment fund.

UNDP has developed a programme to support the environmental administration in its efforts to comply with EU accession requirements. The programme aims at providing assistance in the field of horizontal legislation, public access to environmental information and awareness, financial and economic instruments for environment, small-scale waste management, and integration of environment into other sectoral policies. The national law for Strategic Environmental Assessment, and by-laws for environment impact assessment procedures, public participation and environment impact assessment in a transboundary context, have been approved.

Climate change. During the two programme cycles under evaluation, UNDP has supported the preparation of the second and third national communications to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). UNDP has also supported climate change adaptation with various activities and outputs,

including the preparation of a policy paper on climate change adaptation in the Drini Mati River Delta and beyond, the incorporation of adaptation measures into the local development plans for the Lezha region. UNDP also supported ecosystem development plans for the Drini-Mati River Delta, the finalization of two national appropriate mitigation actions and the establishment of an interministerial committee on climate change. UNDP supported the preparation of a policy paper on carbon finance to contribute to ongoing efforts to develop Albanian public and private sector capacities to access carbon finance.

Energy. A UNDP-supported solar water-heating project aims to promote renewable energy in Albania by creating an enabling legal and regulatory framework, enhancing awareness and increasing demand, creating a certification and quality control scheme, and enhancing capacity of the supply chain. Through this project, UNDP supported the preparation of the Law on Renewable Energy Sources promoting solar energy.[110] The law is in line with EU directives, and the feed-in tariff for renewable energy provided in the law will help Albania meet its commitment of a 38 percent target for renewable energy (excluding large hydro) by 2020. In addition, UNDP supported the revision of the National Renewable Energy Action Plan in compliance with the Energy Community Secretariat. UNDP supported the development of technical standards at the municipal level, and since 2012, a small grants scheme for solar water heating at the municipal level in six municipalities has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 595,000 tons of carbon dioxide (CO_2). There have been some initiatives pertaining to energy efficiency in housing.

Disaster management. UNDP supported the rehabilitation of public infrastructure prioritized

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110   Law No 138/2013, adopted on 2 May 2013, promotes solar energy by establishing (i) minimum objectives on using solar energy; (ii) mandatory installation of solar water-heating systems; (iii) certification and labelling of solar water-heating systems; and (iv) tax exemption from the custom duties and VAT for solar water-heating systems.

by Shkodra prefecture and the local government of Shkodra district to meet the recovery needs of the communities most vulnerable and most affected by the 2010 floods. A Post-Disaster Needs Assessment in a number of sectors, notably agriculture, has been carried out as a joint effort of UNDP, EU and the World Bank. In 2015, UNDP developed a project[111] to support strengthening disaster resilience of at-risk local government units and communities following the flood in February 2015.

Environmental hotspots. UNDP supported the development of a comprehensive inventory of environmental hotspots, the preparation of environment impact assessments for some priority hotspots and action plans for the remediation of environmental hotspots. A list of 35 hotspots was produced and preliminary site investigation was conducted.[112] A web database related to the hotspots in Albania has been created. In-depth assessments of nine priority sites were completed and UNDP supported the rehabilitation of four sites.

Other activities. Through the GEF-funded Small Grants Programme, UNDP supported a number of small-scale activities in biodiversity conservation, abatement of climate change, protection of international waters, prevention of land degradation and elimination of persistent organic pollutants. UNDP supported the Government to prepare its eco-tourism strategy as well as the National Strategy on Cultural Diplomacy and a cultural marketing strategy. UNDP also organized the Post-2015 consultations on environment. This in part led to the development of a movement through the Civic Alliance Against Import of Waste, which led to the Government banning imported waste in September 2013. UNDP also supported Albania's engagement with the Rio+20 process, particularly its preparation of the national self-assessment exercise to take stock and engage in Rio outcomes.

4.3.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF UNDP'S CONTRIBUTION

UNDP support has been important in helping Albania to meet its obligations under multilateral environmental agreements. UNDP's contribution to environmental policies and strategies, and to developing institutional frameworks and capacities for sound environmental management, has been important. UNDP activities complemented those of other agencies in facilitating government efforts to meet the environmental requirements of the EU accession process.

UNDP's contribution to government efforts in meeting multilateral environmental agreements was demonstrated in its support to the preparation of the national communications to the UNFCCC. Albania's national communications aim at enabling the country to enhance available greenhouse gas (GHG) emission data; perform targeted research; and strengthen technical capacity and institutions to address GHG inventory, GHG mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Through support for the preparation of these national communications, as well as the Technology Needs Assessment, UNDP has raised awareness among national decision makers regarding climate change mitigation and adaptation issues and their impact on development.

UNDP has joined other agencies (the World Bank, GEF, EU, and bilateral donors such as Austria, German, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland) in supporting government efforts to address the many environmental management challenges associated with EU accession. These include protected areas, climate change adaptation, carbon finance, integrated ecosystem management, environmental hotspots and renewable energy.

UNDP is a key player on marine protected areas and supported the establishment of the first

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111   Financed by EU IPA funds.

112   Final report, 'Identification and prioritisation of environmental "hot spots" in Albania', 2011.

marine protected areas in Albania, as well as the finalization of the national strategic plan for marine and coastal protected areas. UNDP supported the preparation of a policy paper on carbon finance, providing a useful framework for further development in this area.[113] UNDP's support to the preparation of a number of other legal documents and strategic plans — including the national law for strategic environment assessment, by-laws for environmental impact assessment procedures and a law on renewable energy sources — has been critical to building the environmental legal and policy framework.

Strengthening institutional capacity for better environmental administration has been a key component of UNDP support. UNDP's support to the Ministry of Environment in the implementation of the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol, as well as in fulfilling its responsibility as the Designated National Authority to approve Clean Development Mechanism projects, was considered important. Similarly, the restructuring of the National Environment Agency and the National Inspectorate of Environment, Water and Forests was critical to the organized functioning of environmental institutions. In 2014, the National Protected Area Agency was also established — an important step for moving work forward in this area. Efforts included shifting the focus from individual protected areas towards a more institutionalized mechanism to enable the governance of overall protected area systems, and the institutional, financial and economic sustainability of these systems within the broader governance frameworks.

Through its support to the integration of climate change across sectors, UNDP contributed to the inclusion of climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Cross Sectorial Strategy for Environment and the Strategy of Rural and Agriculture Development in Albania within the framework of the NSDI. Climate change indicators were included in the integrated environmental monitoring system.[114] Climate change adaptation was also included in the standard structure for management plans of protected areas in Albania. A number of other programmes and policies at the regional level were modified to take into account climate change adaptation, including the Concept for Development of Lezha Region (2010–2016), local strategies for tourism and agro-tourism, local strategies for forestry, and the Mati River Basin Management Plan. UNDP's collaboration with other environment actors enhanced its contribution to climate change integration.

Despite the efforts by the Government, challenges remain in terms of inter-institutional coordination on environment-related issues. More concerted efforts are needed to strengthen the coordination mechanisms within government structures to avoid overlapping activities and to promote an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to environmental management. UNDP is supporting the Government in setting up an Environment Inter-Ministerial Council with a mandate to address the cross-sectoral dependencies involving environmental issues and coordination at the most senior decision-making level. These efforts are at an initial stage.

UNDP has contributed to a shift in the environmental management approach of the local administration. The capacities of local institutions and communities are enhanced and there is increased awareness and understanding of environmental issues. Collaboration

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113   The policy paper provides a useful analysis of the international carbon market, the national framework for the Clean Development Mechanism in Albania, priority areas for the Clean Development Mechanism, fundamental requirements for Albania's competitive participation in the Clean Development Mechanism, and some of Albania's proposals for the carbon market.

114   The integrated Environmental Monitoring System was supported by the EU-funded 'Consolidation of the Environmental Monitoring System in Albania' project. The integration of climate change monitoring elements into this national monitoring system resulted from collaboration between the UNDP climate change adaptation project and the EU-funded project.

among stakeholders, including NGOs and local administration, has improved.

UNDP organized a number of targeted seminars and special expertise workshops, for example on the preparation of local environmental action plans. These have been very beneficial for enhancing local-level capacity. The cross-sectoral forum on marine and coastal protected areas has served as a mechanism for streamlining the interactions, roles and responsibilities among all stakeholders — including national institutions, marine and protected areas and coastal site managers, NGOs and local fishermen's associations — in the management of marine and coastal protected areas. Representatives of interested stakeholders (including NGOs) and national and local authorities are members of the steering committee, which facilitates involvement and ownership. The detailed stakeholder analysis prepared during the design of UNDP interventions played an important role in enabling this collaboration.

UNDP has contributed to a shift in the approach of the local administration in environment management towards more sustainable protection, preservation and use of natural resources. The Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool[115] has been introduced in marine protected areas and more than half of the local administration was trained on how to use this tool, enhancing their approaches and capacities in managing and monitoring marine protected areas. As a result of the integrated ecosystem management intervention in Prespa, forest area under improved management has increased, as has the surface area of lakes under biodiversity-oriented management. This also had a catalytic effect, bringing a new perspective on resource conservation and use, and initiating changes in behaviour related to environmental protection across a range of stakeholders.

The Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool score for Prespa National Park was 37 in 2011, up from 31 in the baseline assessment in 2007.[116]

A participatory approach is systematically followed in all areas of the environment and energy programme, leading to strong local engagement and ownership.

Stakeholders consider UNDP's participatory approach to be a key success factor in its local-level environment initiatives. From the design stage, the Drini Mati River Deltas adaptation project has envisaged the use of participatory rural appraisal techniques to engage local communities in bottom-up assessments of climate risks and vulnerabilities of coastal ecosystems and community livelihoods, and in identifying and implementing adaptation response measures. Experiences during the project's implementation showed significant benefits from involving local communities, who "were able to provide on-site explanation of trends and issues and historical information very specific to the area which complemented the expert data which was available through the more official channels."[117]

Communities were also involved in design and management under the 'Marine and Coastal Protected Areas' project, and in preparation of the management plan for the Karaburun-Sazan Marine Protected Area. Similarly, in the 'Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Prespa Lakes Basin' regional project, communities were involved in analysing the situation and defining priority management actions for the Local Environmental Action Plans of Liqenas and Proger communes in the Prespa region. UNDP's approach provided opportunities for local community members to have their voices heard on issues that are important to them, such as envi-

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115   This is a global performance management tool. It established the baseline for monitoring protected areas across the country in compliance with conventions on protected areas and EU requirements.

116   UNDP Albania, 'Terminal evaluation, Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Prespa Lakes Basin (Regional)', 12 September 2012.

117   UNDP Albania, 'Terminal evaluation, Identification and implementation of the Adaptation Response Measures in the Drini-Mati River Deltas', May 2013.

ronmental issues in local hotspots and prioritizing climate change adaptation measures to be implemented in their areas.

Efforts were made to ensure women participated in local-level environment activities. The climate change adaptation and renewable energy projects reached out to women in local communities and engaged them in various activities, including writing project proposals.[118] Women's groups were involved in the discussion during the development of the marine protected areas strategy.

Interventions are short-term and further efforts are needed to sustain the momentum generated. Operationalization of various plans and strategies is key to achieving results.

This is the case for UNDP interventions in several areas, including climate change, carbon finance, protected areas, environmental hotspots and renewable energy. The strategies, plans and proposals prepared need to be implemented. UNDP has supported small pilot demonstration activities at local levels. These have been beneficial, but greater efforts are needed for some of the piloted practices to be more widely applied and institutionalized. Environmental results depend on further reforms and more sustained government initiatives.

UNDP support has created great momentum for adaptation issues in the Drini Mati River Delta region. A vast number of research studies and analyses have been prepared; community-level stakeholders are fully engaged and take ownership of the adaptation measures proposed. At the end of the UNDP-supported project, there were a total of 11 project proposals developed on priority measures to adapt to climate change in the region. To produce adaptation outcomes, further efforts are needed by the Government and other development partners to finance those project proposals and implement the adaptation measures identified.

The management plan for the first marine protected area, Karaburun-Sazani, has been prepared

and now must be implemented. The operationalization of the management plan would help to test and validate the methodology for replication. Similarly, work related to the identification and prioritization of environmental hotspot should be complemented by activities to address issues identified. As with the Drini Mati River Delta region action plans and adaptation project proposals, follow-up investments by the Government and donors are needed to fund environmental impact assessments for the remaining hotspots and clearing them.

Albania's renewable energy agenda is in its early stages, and UNDP's support provided initial frameworks and models. UNDP's solar water-heating intervention reached individual and service sectors. However, in order to further promote the use of this renewable energy source, UNDP's interventions must penetrate the industrial sector; industrial facilities are intensive end-users of hot water. The availability of an attractive financing mechanism (including subsidies) is critical for this to happen.

Local resource users need to see concrete, tangible benefits to buy into innovative externally initiated environmental management initiatives and practices. In a number of environment projects, there have been pilot activities at local levels to demonstrate the benefits. For example, in the Prespa Lakes basin, six NGOs were engaged to implement pilot demonstrations of small-scale projects addressing improvements in forest ecosystem management, the fishery sector, and waste clean-up and management. Most of these pilot activities have been well implemented and meet their objectives. However, more efforts are needed from the Government to replicate and scale up those initiatives, and to implement the plans and proposals prepared. This requires, among other things, commitments from all levels of stakeholders, resources and a more enabling policy environment. This issue will be discussed in greater details in section 4.3.3.3 (Sustainability).

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118   Six project identification forms out of 11 were drafted by women in the climate change adaptation project.

4.3.3 QUALITY OF UNDP'S CONTRIBUTION

4.3.3.1 Relevance

UNDP support in the environment area has been aligned with national priorities and has responded to key priorities and needs, both of the central government and of the local administration and communities. UNDP's work in this area is also relevant to UNDP's mandate, UN strategic documents and multilateral environmental agreements. The interventions were designed taking into account good practices and lessons learnt in their respective areas.

UNDP interventions in the last two programme cycles have aligned with national priorities, which are to comply with the requirements of the EU acquis, as noted clearly in the NSDI (both in terms of environment[119] and energy[120]), as well as some sectoral strategies and action plans. UNDP's support on solar water-heating systems is in line with the National Energy Strategy, which recognizes that diversifying energy sources is key to meeting steadily rising demand and ensuring secure supplies. Work on marine protected areas is fully aligned with the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan, which prioritizes establishing marine protected areas to conserve the unique marine biodiversity of Albania. However, it is important to note that most of the resources in the environment area come from external funding rather than core funds, and this has significantly influenced real priority setting. The availability of external funding has been the most important driving force determining where, how and when UNDP work has been undertaken.

UNDP interventions also took into account the priorities of local administrations and communities through a participatory approach to the design and implementation of projects. For example, the marine and coastal protected areas initiatives responded to the needs of the municipality of Orikumi and local fishermen through their association. UNDP demonstrated a willingness to adapt to evolving priorities in many of its interventions, including for example on climate change adaptation when it organized a number of training sessions on the preparation of project proposals following the requests by stakeholders.

UNDP programmes also align with its corporate priorities, as noted in the Strategic Plan 2014–2017.[121] They are also in line with other UN Strategic documents, such as the UN Strategic Plan for Biodiversity Decade 2011–2020, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, and the UNFCCC. Some of the projects in the portfolio were designed to support national commitments to these UN conventions.[122]

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119 The NSDI noted the need to adopt the European Community legal standards and enforce environmental legislation through strengthening the Regional Environment Agencies and inspectorates. It also recognized the need to invest in environmental protection to ensure EU standards are met; to manage environmental resources through a clear legal framework implemented through a well-monitored and enforced permit system; and to protect forests, maintain biodiversity, develop eco-tourism, and improve communication and awareness (NSDI, page 46-48).

120 Regarding energy, the NSDI recognized the need to establish an effective institutional and regulatory framework, encourage the efficient use of energy and increase the use of renewable energy sources (NSDI, page 42-43).

121 The aim of the first area of work (sustainable development pathways) of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2014–2017 is to "help improve the resource endowments of the poor and boost their prospects for employment and livelihoods." The Strategic Plan also discussed the importance of issues related to effective maintenance and protection of natural capital; sustainable access to energy and improved energy efficiency; planning, policy frameworks and institutional capacities to substantially reinforce action on climate change; and the assessment of key economic, social and environmental risks to the poor and excluded.

122 The 'Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Prespa Lakes Basin' project supported the primary objectives of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity: the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of these components. The marine protected areas project also supported Albania's national commitments to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, in particular the Convention's programme of work on protected areas. The Prespa project also supported the objectives of other multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Convention on Migratory Species.

UNDP's interventions were designed taking into account good practices and lessons learnt. For example, the carbon finance project's design reflected the lessons learned as reported in the UNDP Global Clean Development Mechanism assessment report. The marine and coastal protected areas project built on earlier work regarding protected area gap assessment and marine and coastal protected area development in the framework of the programme supporting country action on the Convention on Biological Diversity's Programme of Work on Protected Areas. The Prespa project built on lessons of the UNDP-GEF 'MedWetCoast' project (Conservation of Wetland and Coastal Ecosystems in the Mediterranean Region). It also drew from lessons from the GEF-financed activities in the Danube river basin, as well as from other GEF-supported international water programmes. The design of the solar water-heating project has incorporated experiences from the Mediterranean Renewable Energy Programme supported by the Ministry of Environment of Italy in other Mediterranean countries.

UNDP's approach of linking national policies to local-level interventions in a number of its projects is relevant to the achievement of the intended objectives. The design of the marine and coastal protected areas project set the project strategy of pursuing actions both at the systemic level (to ensure that an enabling environment is in place) and in a pilot marine and coastal protected areas site (to enable stakeholders to growth truth the new legal and policy frameworks).

The design of the Prespa project, a regional project covering Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece was complex and ambitious. The mid-term review of the project considered it to be poorly designed and overly complex, attempting to cover almost all threats and issues pertaining to the Prespa Basin in a single project, particularly given the politically, ethnically and institutionally complex environ-

ment. The terminal evaluation noted that "Project designs and goals need to be cognizant of the fact that new approaches (i.e. integrated ecosystem management) can take a long time to gain traction and overcome societal inertia, and projects must be designed with stakeholder needs and capacities in mind to reach success." The design of this project is considered to have "multiple significant flaws, particularly with respect to implementation arrangements,"[123] which negatively affected the results achieved.

4.3.3.2 Efficiency

Various measures have been taken to ensure the efficiency of the programme, but there is scope for improvement.

All the projects under review were nationally implemented. Under this arrangement, implementing partners represented by government ministries and other national entities are responsible for implementing activities, and UNDP programme/project staff are responsible for securing and disbursing funds, ensuring the quality of programme/project design, and providing oversight. In general, UNDP provides technical support and facilitates procurement of services as needed and requested by the implementing partners. Two UNDP units were established to support the day-to-day management of the projects: one unit dealing with protected areas and biodiversity, and the other dealing with climate change adaptation and energy. The project steering committee (project board), chaired by a senior official, serves as an important mechanism to address project issues and provides overall guidance to the project. UNDP is also part of the project board. In the case of the marine and coastal protected areas project, the project steering committee has merged with the management committee overseeing the marine protected area; this was considered beneficial by stakeholders and has improved efficiency in meetings, as noted in the mid-term review. In general, partners favourably view UNDP staff's

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123   UNDP Albania, 'Terminal evaluation, Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Prespa Lakes Basin (Regional)', 12 September 2012.

ability to efficiently manage projects in terms of timely responses, regular communication and the ability to provide guidance.

The carbon finance project, the Drini Mati River Deltas adaptation project and the Prespa Lakes project all have a no-cost extension. Implementation of Drini Mati River Deltas adaptation project was initially slow because of problems in procurement and recruitment. However, the project eventually gained momentum and there were no further delays. Similarly, the integrated ecosystem management project in the Prespa Lakes basin also began slowly, but picked up during implementation; the delivery rate at the end of the project was high.[124] The initiation of the environmental hotspot project was delayed by five months, which triggered the postponement of some activities, such as start of the preliminary site investigations and the in-depth assessment and donor workshops. The project has tried to catch up during implementation.

There are, however, areas where there is scope for improvement. For example, for the Prespa regional project, the project structure of three separate components (and three separate management units for the Albanian component, the Macedonian component and transboundary component) was not ideal; coordination and communication among the three components was inconsistent. The delay in receiving co-financing (from the Government in the solar water-heating project) or parallel financing from other development partners (KfW in the case of the Prespa Lakes project) affected the implementation of the projects. KfW-supported activities in Albania began much later than originally intended — they did not start until October 2011, approximately six months before the end of the GEF-funded Albania component of the Prespa project. Some aspects of the Albanian component were slower to start than they could have been because the team initially tried to wait for the KfW project to start.

UNDP has been able to leverage resources from others for the projects it supports. UNDP's core resources are extremely limited and half of the expenditures for the environment portfolio come from GEF financing. The remainder comes from other donors, including the EU, bilateral donors, and co-financing from the Albanian Government. At the project level, efforts have been made to ensure cost effectiveness and value for money. For example, the 'Marine and Coastal Protected Areas' project included a cost-effectiveness analysis that analysed and compared different approaches for increasing protection of Albania's marine and coastal biodiversity. The approach followed by the project (establishing Albania's first marine protected area and strengthening management effectiveness of the existing coastal protected areas) was considered to be the most cost-effective, particularly when coupled with the project's method of combining systemic and site-specific actions.

There are a few examples of synergies among the UNDP-supported projects that need to be further developed. For example, there are synergies between the 'Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Prespa Lakes Basin' project and the GEF Small Grants Programme, where the Small Grants Programme would pilot more efficient wood burning stoves for residents of Prespa area in Albania in order to reduce firewood consumption in Albanian Prespa. The solar water-heating project has also entered into relations with the GEF Small Grants Programme to jointly support the implementation of pilot projects in several public buildings at the local level. This project also made use of materials available through the knowledge management component of the global solar water-heating project, as well as material from pre-existing demonstration projects in Albania when preparing public awareness materials on solar water heating. Cooperation was also established between this project and the UNDP regional project on 'Supporting RBEC Transition to

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124   The delivery rate was 98.1 percent for the whole project and 99.65 percent for the Albania component, as noted in the project terminal evaluation.

Low-emission Development' to share costs for some joint activities.[125]

4.3.3.3 Sustainability

Although national and local ownership of UNDP's interventions provide a strong basis for the sustainability of outcomes, challenges remain. The activities provide avenues for further government action along with adequate funding for environmental management.

Environmental management (for example, protected areas, solar water heating/renewable energy, climate change adaptation measures and environmental hotspots) is considered important in several government policies and strategies. This is unlikely to change in the future since these are key issues and initiatives for EU accession and for Albania's sustainable development. UNDP interventions are well anchored in government priorities, policies and strategies. In the area of carbon finance, the preparation of the Albania Policy Paper for Carbon Finance is a key achievement. The paper created the legal and institutional framework for further work by the Government and other partners in this area.

UNDP activities in general enjoy good government engagement and the participation of local administration, CSOs and the community, thereby enhancing ownership. The Drini Mati River Deltas adaptation project is a good example. Ownership of project results was very well established at the regional and commune level, thanks to participatory processes in the identification of the adaptation measures. Another example of high country ownership is the marine and coastal protected areas project, thanks to the highly participatory approach of its design and management. On renewable energy, a memorandum of understanding was established between UNDP and the Tirana Municipality to cooperate in various activities to promote solar water-heating market transformation. Cooperation with the Lezha Municipality was also established.

In terms of results achieved, the enhanced capacities empowered individuals in small communities to take action. Towards the end of the climate change adaptation project, the Regional Council of Lezha organized a large donor meeting to present adaptation project proposals for financing. This meeting demonstrates the extent to which the local authority became proactive in raising resources to improve the livelihoods of its communities. So far, an adaptation measure proposed by the local community has been considered by the EU Project Facility Technical Assistance Window, Western Balkans. One of the 12 project proposals on adaptation measures prepared by the project has been picked up and financed with funds from the Special Climate Change Fund through a UN Environment Programme project.

Local support for integrated ecosystem management in the Prespa Lakes Basin was generally good. Representatives of Proger commune were considering updating their Local Environmental Action Plan on their own since the original one developed with UNDP support was at that point a few years old.[126] On renewable energy, the platform for sustainability includes significant support from the Government, fiscal measures to stimulate the markets, improved building regulations to stimulate the uptake of solar water heating, and training programmes on solar water-heating system installation and reparation.

Funding is a key challenge for the sustainability of most of the outcomes in the environment

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125   Costs were shared for the presentation in Tirana of the Slovenian Eco-Fund (February 2014) and the study tour in Slovenia for Albanian decision makers (June 2014) to profit from their positive experience and continue with the elaboration/establishment of the Renewable Energy Sources Fund in Albania as a manner to secure the sustainability of the measures taken in the course of the project.

126   UNDP Albania, 'Terminal evaluation, Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Prespa Lakes Basin (Regional)', 12 September 2012.

area. Budget and human resources are insufficient to manage the protected areas properly, and they suffer from a lack of conservation and protection measures. At the national level, funds to support the administration and maintenance of the marine protected area post-project are not yet identified or in the budget of the Ministry of Environment, though there were positive signals during the discussion with the staff. At the local level, although the local authorities are actively engaged, they do not have sufficient resources (financial, equipment and trained personnel) to support the expectations of a marine protected area administration as presently configured. Similarly, even though the Ministry of Environment is generally supportive, human and financial resources have not been in place for integrated ecosystem management in Prespa basin.[127] As the UNDP project is now already completed, further capacity development activities in the region are supported through the KfW-funded project.[128]

For renewable energy, the Government has indicated its intention to put in place a Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency Investment Fund, which would improve prospects for sustainable results of UNDP-supported project in this area.

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127   Ibid.

128   This project was originally expected to be implemented in parallel with the UNDP Prespa regional project (Albania component), but it was delayed. It began implementation in October 2011 and would continue for five years. Total project cost is €3 million.

Chapter 5

UNDP'S STRATEGIC POSITIONING

This chapter examines the strategic positioning of UNDP within the EU accession context. It focuses on UNDP's strategic relevance and responsiveness; its ability to leverage its comparative strengths and use its partnerships; the promotion of UN values from a human development perspective; and UNDP and the DaO modality.

5.1 STRATEGIC RELEVANCE AND RESPONSIVENESS

UNDP has positioned itself well to play a meaningful role in Albania's development process. While aligning with the Government's EU accession priorities, UNDP's programme also brought to attention other priorities, such as social inclusion issues.

The objectives of UNDP's work in all programme areas reviewed were anchored in the country's strategic objectives and priorities, as articulated in its various development policies, national strategies and international frameworks. The UNDP programme responded to key institutional and capacity needs and priorities, and the Government has high expectations of continuing to receive UNDP support in the coming programme cycles.

While aligning with the Government's EU accession priorities, the UNDP programme also brought to attention other priorities. UNDP supported not only the EU-acquis priorities areas, but also other areas that are critical for inclusive development, such as youth employment and social inclusion.

The flexibility and responsiveness UNDP demonstrated have enabled timely support to emerging development issues and evolving needs. Many stakeholders applauded UNDP's flexibil-

ity in accommodating emerging issues in project design, even in the midst of implementation. The adaptive management approach of some projects in the environment portfolio has been considered to be good practice. Overall, UNDP was regarded as a trusted, reliable partner with high responsiveness to national and local needs, both long term and emerging.

A key challenge for UNDP is its limited core resources and its dependence on external funding.

Albania's middle-income country status has made it more difficult to mobilize funding from development partners. UNDP maintained a pragmatic and flexible approach to resource mobilization from different sources. In anchoring its programmes to national priorities, it has also seen its role evolve to more elaborate funding mechanisms, such as pooled funding. This was particularly evident in areas of democratic governance, such as support to the territorial and administrative reform. Indeed, this flexible approach provided a buffering dimension to the declining UN coherence funding that occurred for a variety of reasons, including the EU agenda and Albania's middle-income country status. UNDP used this flexibility to its advantage to support activities where it has comparative strength and to build partnerships that proved crucial for its sustainability.

The dependence on external funding may have significant influence over real priority setting; the availability of funding can be an important driver determining where, how and when UNDP could focus its interventions. The high degree of uncertainty in financing, and the considerable financing gaps at the time of programme formulation, also led to weaker outcome indica-

tors and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. An issue related to external funding is that key areas of UN support, such as governance, are also accession priority areas where the EU is directly involved, at the political level as well as in strategic dialogue, programming and financing. For the forthcoming programme, this would mean that UNDP's engagement on some of these issues depends largely on dialogue with both the Government and the EU for strategic and financial partnership and increasing government co-financing of programmes.

5.2 UNDP COMPARATIVE STRENGTHS AND PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to the strong partnership with the Government, leveraging partnerships with other development actors has played an important role in strengthening UNDP programmes.

UNDP's comparative strengths in Albania include its strong relationship with the Government at both the central and the local level, its understanding of the socio-economic and cultural context and national institutions, and its technical and managerial capacities to effectively implement projects and provide policy advice. UNDP is considered a reliable partner with good technical expertise in its key areas of support. Overall, evolving development priorities coupled with UNDP's long-term presence and expertise provide space for potential future engagement.

UNDP's strong working relationship with government institutions has inspired confidence in donors. The partnerships with donors in Albania have allowed UNDP to mobilize resources for its programmes. Key contributing partners to UNDP programme expenditure in the period 2007–2014 were the EU, GEF (for the environment programme), Government of Italy, and Switzerland (SDC). The Spanish Government was also an important partner, particularly through the MDG Fund. Other bilateral partners include Germany, Austria and Sweden. Interviews with donors show that they appreciate UNDP's performance, particularly its responsiveness. There have been successful examples of not just resource mobilization, but collaboration, such as the support to the territorial reform, which enhanced contribution to national development results. Most recently, UNDP signed partnership agreements with the Government of Italy on modernizing public service delivery[129] and with Germany on human security.[130] UNDP also plays a key coordination role in the donor community together with the EU, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the World Bank, and served as rotating chair of the Donor Technical Secretariat several times.

Collaboration with a broad range of partners (CSOs, the private sector, media, target beneficiary groups) in programme delivery resulted in tangible contributions in a number of areas, such as the work with the Roma community and work related to marine protected areas and climate change adaptation in the environment portfolio. NGOs have taken active part in awareness-raising activities and have contributed to various discussions by sharing their own experiences.[131] The NGOs appreciated the platform/facilitation that UNDP provided, as well as other support, for example on training in the preparation of proposals to apply for environment-related grants. Overall, cooperation with civil society has been beneficial not only for effectively implementing UNDP activities, but also for enhancing the capacities of the NGOs involved.

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129   This is in the context of the 'Innovation against Corruption: Building a Citizen Centric Service Delivery Model in Albania' project, implemented under the leadership of the Minister of State for Innovation and Public Administration. The Government of Italy provided funding through UNDP amounting to €265,000.

130   The agreement extends support to the Albanian Mine and Munition Coordinating Office for unexploded ordinance/ammunition clearance operations until end of 2016 with funding from Germany amounting to €250,000.

131   For example, local environmental NGOs such as EIRLA, Environment and Health, ECO Integration participated in roundtable discussions on adaptation to climate change, and shared their experiences in overcoming flooding damages, protecting ecosystems, and assessing climate change risk, as well as in adaptation tools and measures.

Albania has a strong presence of CSOs in different areas, some with high capacities. While UNDP worked with CSOs mostly in implementing its activities at the local level, there is considerable scope for a more concerted effort to strengthen civil society capacities in areas where there are fewer CSOs or where capacities are weak. UNDP's work in the social inclusion portfolio (in particular with the Roma communities) in the second programme cycle is one of the few cases where a civil society development and promotion component was incorporated in the approach. The results framework of the current PoC did not address civil society strengthening *per se*, and the nature of engagement with CSOs in this cycle was skewed towards CSOs as service providers.

5.3 PROMOTION OF UN VALUES

5.3.1 GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

UNDP has been consistent in its support in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment and human rights.

UNDP plays an important role in communicating and working with the Government to promote the implementation of international gender and human rights agreements, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Support was provided to the independent oversight bodies for human rights, including the Ombudsman and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination. UNDP has also contributed to the formulation and adoption of gender equality legislation and secondary legislation that represents a significant step forward in achieving human rights for all in the country. Adoption of these

laws and implementing regulations offered a clear framework for action and sent a message that gender-based violence and discrimination activities are in breach of the law, that public authorities may intervene, and that violators may be held accountable.[132] Particularly at the local level, the CCR mechanism to fight against gender-based violence is an important achievement.

Within the framework of UN cooperation in Albania, gender equality and women's empowerment have been identified in key strategic documents as a major development issue requiring a multisectoral approach. The One UN Programme 2007–2010/2011 identified gender as a cross-cutting theme. Similarly, within the framework of the One UN PoC 2012–2016, the UN Country Team has established a Gender Theme Group to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender into the programme. The Gender Theme Group is led by UN Women, and UNDP is an active participant.

The UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2014–2017 noted that "gender equality, rooted in human rights, is recognized both as an essential development goal on its own and as vital to accelerating sustainable development" and therefore "the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women is central to the mandate of UNDP and intrinsic to its development approach."[133] In 2009, UNDP launched the Gender Marker, which requires all UNDP-supported projects to be rated against a four-point scale[134] indicating its contribution towards the achievement of gender equality. In Albania, 69 percent of projects with an available Gender Marker rating have a rating of 0 or 1, meaning either the outputs are not expected to contribute noticeably to gender equality or the outputs will contribute in some way to gender equality, but not significantly. The remaining 31 percent of projects have a Gender Marker rating of 2 or 3, meaning the

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132   ROAR 2009.

133   UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2014–2017.

134   0 = outputs that are not expected to contribute noticeably to gender equality; 1 = outputs that will contribute in some way to gender equality, but not significantly; 2 = outputs that have gender equality as a significant objective; and 3 = projects/outputs that have gender equality as a principal objective.

projects have gender equality either as a significant objective or a principle objective. While gender is an important area of work for UNDP in Albania, which is in line with the findings discussed in chapter 4, it is largely confined to gender equality and women's empowerment projects.

Despite a growing effort to mainstream gender in other areas of UNDP work, mainstreaming gender in different programmes of UNDP faced limitations. Many results in other areas of UNDP work (such as governance, local development and environment) are focused on equity in the number of women and men targeted (for example, to ensure the participation of women in training activities carried out). The gender results of environment interventions are mainly in promoting women's participation and knowledge to protect, sustain and manage the environment and its resources. There have been no interventions with the potential to address deeper gender and environment management relationships. There has also been a lack of systematic gender analysis in programme design, including a lack of contextual analysis of the needs, priorities and roles of women and men, and consequently a lack of specific actions to address any gender-based inequalities that may have emerged from this analysis. All projects in the environment portfolio and a majority of projects in the governance and local development portfolio have a Gender Marker rating of 0 or 1.

Optimal gender mainstreaming results require more exploration of gender differences and their causes to ensure that planned interventions respond to these issues rather than identifying 'women' in general as a target group for specific attention. More analysis of gender dimensions is required in planning and implementation in other areas of the UNDP programme.

5.3.2 KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND COLLABORATION WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

With its global network, UNDP has a strong advantage in supporting and facilitating knowledge exchange and collaboration among countries.

Knowledge exchange with other countries was actively practiced in some programmes. In the area of democratic governance and local development, UNDP has facilitated collaboration with Peru's Institute for Liberty and Democracy, which provides Albania a direct exchange of experience on the methodology for tackling issues of extra-legality in Peru and other developing countries. UNDP also facilitated the engagement of Estonia's e-Governance Academy in supporting Albania's National Agency for Information Society. The e-Governance Academy shared Estonia's experience in developing government institutional capacities to promote and implement ICT policies and standards, in order to support the development of an information society in Albania. Bulgarian expertise was also introduced to the Albanian private sector in the area of human resource management, within the framework of UNDP support to the UN Global Compact.

In the economic and social inclusion portfolio, UNDP has facilitated exchanges with Poland on issues related to disability rights. In 2014, a study tour to Macedonia was organized to exchange experiences on employment promotion programmes. Lessons learned through the tour are now starting to be replicated in Albania.

In the environment portfolio, working groups with representatives from the Prespa Lakes basin in Albania, Macedonia and Greece were convened to discuss transboundary issues pertaining to monitoring environmental factors, conservation and fishery. On World Wetlands Day, a Tripartite Agreement was signed by the environment ministers of the three countries aiming to facilitate trilateral cooperation to ensure the effective protection of the Prespa ecosystem and sustainable development in the Prespa area. This agreement is generally perceived as a significant step forward in cooperation in watershed management. On energy, collaboration with Slovenia aimed at sharing experiences from the Slovenian Eco-Fund to inform the establishment of Albania's Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency Fund as the sustainable financial incentive mechanism for solar water-heating systems.

5.4 UNDP IN THE DELIVERING AS ONE (DAO) MODALITY

UNDP demonstrated synergy with other UN agencies' programmes to enhance programme strategizing and contribution. Although the DaO modality did not increase UNDP's programme resources as much as it did for smaller UN agencies, it provided more opportunities for UNDP engagement in some areas.

Partnership between UNDP and other UN agencies in Albania takes place within the DaO modality. UNDP played a key role in the formulation and implementation of the One UN programme. The first One UN Programme, in 2007, was formulated through a participatory process with the active engagement of several UN agencies. UNDP, the largest agency with a broader programme and considerably more resources, took a lead role. As the Administrative Agent for the Coherence Fund, UNDP's role and contribution in DaO is important. Development partners acknowledge UNDP's contribution and the dependability UNDP brings to DaO modality.

Within the DaO framework, UNDP demonstrated synergy with other UN agencies' programmes to enhance programme strategizing and contribution. The first DaO programme consisted of five main outcomes, most of which are traditional, core UNDP areas of engagement in Albania. In the spirit of cooperation, when other UN agencies with mandates related to UNDP's joined DaO, UNDP and these agencies looked for synergies in working together. Examples include UNEP on environment and UN Women on gender. Overall, strong synergies with UN agencies in DaO enhanced UNDP's contribution in Albania, as well as the contribution of the broader UN system. The multidimensional characteristics of some areas, such as governance and social inclusion, offered a good entry point for joint programming among UN agencies.

The DaO modality increased UNDP's programme resources, though not as much as it did for the smaller UN agencies. It raised the visibility of UN programming, and the first One UN programme was met with great enthusiasm from international partners, who committed un-earmarked funding to the Coherence Fund. UNDP had to adopt a conservative stance in claiming its share of the Coherence Fund, accepting that the priority was to empower as many UN agencies as possible. However, as the DaO modality paved the way for Albania to become eligible and a priority recipient of global funding mechanisms, resources outside the Coherence Fund became available and UNDP became a key partner in the delivery of several joint programmes.[135] The MDG Achievement Fund,[136] financed by Spain, and the current Developing Results Together Fund[137] proved to be catalytic financing mechanisms that boosted UNDP's programming.

The DaO modality also provided more opportunities for UNDP's engagement in some areas. It opened new opportunities in non-traditional areas of programming, where UNDP forged working partnerships with other UN agencies, such as the International Labour Organization in the area of employment. Joint programmes such as Cultural Heritage, Youth Employment and Migration and Economic Governance, provided UNDP, either as a lead or a partner agency, with the means to explore and engage in areas little known during its previous experience in the country. UNDP's involvement in some areas expanded (such as in governance) and some other lines of work blossomed (such as social inclusion).

Despite funding coherence, the DaO in Albania has a degree of fragmentation in implementation, and spreads thinly across a range of issues. The

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135 For instance, Gender Joint Programme, Youth Employment and Migration Programme, Economic Governance Programme.

136 www.mdgfund.org

137 https://undg.org/home/guidance-policies/joint-funding-approaches/delivering-results-together-fund/

DaO modality increased workloads, which has affected UNDP's operations. UNDP, with the broadest mandate among UN agencies, is present in almost all areas of UN programmes (with a few exceptions) in Albania. This posed certain difficulties as UNDP had to report on progress even in outcomes where its presence was minimal. Too many outcomes with programmatic interventions spread over several outputs and related management processes led to fragmentation and overlap.[138]

A complex institutional structure accompanied this fragmentation with the establishment of programme working groups later known as outcome/output groups, co-chaired by a lead UN agency and the respective government institution. Due to its broad engagement in the programme, UNDP had to spend time and resources engaging in heavy coordination structures. UNDP faced a heavier workload as considerable extra staff time and efforts were dedicated to UN programming, monitoring and evaluation. Other UN agencies faced similar increases in workloads, but UNDP's was particularly sizable. The workload was spread over the management levels of UNDP, from the preparations and participation in the Joint Executive Committee down to outcome coordination and technical multi-partner output working groups in charge of implementation, review and progress reporting.[139]

Recognizing this problem, UN agencies underwent a mid-term review exercise in 2014 that resulted in a drastic reduction in areas of work down to only four outcomes. UNDP led the formulation and is in charge of overall coordination of two of these new outcomes.[140] Nevertheless, some of the challenges remain. Double reporting is an endemic feature of DaO, as there have been few attempts by UN agencies to relieve their own systems and use the standardized UN reporting. Furthermore, evaluation reports of joint programmes in Albania show that it took considerable time and effort to conclude financial agreements between UN agencies. The issue of non-harmonized procedures, different management approaches and incompatible financial systems among UN agencies are reported to have had an impact on the efficient delivery of results.[141]

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138   UN Annual Report 2014, www.un.org.al/editor-files/file/2014ProgressReportAlbania.pdf

139   In addition inter-agency advisory bodies included the Operations Management Team, the Communications Team, the Gender Theme Group, the HIV and AIDS Theme Group, and the Results-Based Management Advisory Committee.

140   Mid Term Review Report, Government of Albania – UN Programme of Cooperation, 2014, https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Albania-MID-TERM-REVIEW-25-September-2014.pdf

141   Final evaluation of UNDP – ILO Project Local Level Responses to Youth Employment Challenges, http://erc.undp.org/evaluationadmin/manageevaluation/viewevaluationdetail.html?evalid=7424

Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the Stabilization and Association Agreement in June 2006, EU accession has become the top priority of the Albanian Government. The rate of progress must accelerate if Albania is to meet the required conditions for EU membership. With increased IPA financial aid, the dynamics of donor coordination have been changing, and the European Commission is increasingly taking the lead. Participation of other donors in supporting the country's development and fulfilment of the EU accession conditions has been intense. Within this context, the role of UNDP in informing development priorities relates not only to funds it can mobilize, but also to the intellectual leadership it is able to provide. Based on the findings presented in chapters 4 and 5, this chapter presents conclusions regarding UNDP's performance and contributions to development results in Albania from 2007 to 2015, as well as recommendations to inform the forthcoming country programme.

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1. In the two periods under review, the UNDP programme was strongly anchored in Albania's development priorities. While aligning with the national priorities of EU accession, UNDP also leveraged its strong relationship with the Government to bring attention to other priorities, such as social inclusion, aiming to support the country's development process based on the human development perspective. UNDP is well positioned to support the Government and there is certainly an important role it can play in supporting Albania in attaining EU accession goals and sustainable development.

UNDP played a close and important role in supporting government priorities articulated in

the national development frameworks (NSDI). EU accession has been the highest national priority during the period under review. The Government has focused its efforts in implementing various reforms to meet the requirements of EU candidature, particularly in areas such as public administration, rule of law, and adoption of the EU common legal frameworks. Besides support to national policy and planning, UNDP work in many areas, including local governance, ICT, service delivery, public administration, anti-corruption, environment and energy, aim to contribute to these reform processes of the Government. UNDP is also a responsive partner supporting emerging needs of the Government. Support to territorial and administrative reform is a good example.

In addition to supporting the Government in its EU integration priorities, UNDP played an important role in navigating policy discussions to support Albania's development based on the human development perspective. By leveraging its strong relationship with the Government, UNDP managed to bring to attention other priorities. For example, within the EU, social development and community development are usually regulated based on member states' own policies and legal frameworks — there are relatively few common EU laws in these areas. While these are non-EU acquis areas, for Albania, they will remain very important for years to come. UNDP work on social inclusion, as well as all its work at the community level, contributed to filling these crucial gaps. UNDP also supported Albania in meeting its international obligations as specified in some multilateral conventions, for example on human rights and gender (i.e. the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), and the UNFCCC. Overall UNDP is widely acknowledged as a responsive

partner supporting the Government in addressing evolving development issues.

The next few years are critical for Albania on its road towards EU accession, and UNDP and the UN in general have the capabilities and expertise to address key gaps. The One UN PoC 2012–2016 evaluation completed in 2015 indicates that "the overall sense from partners in both government, civil society and from donor organizations is that the UNDP (and overall UN agencies) are still very relevant to Albania – especially for its normative role and contributions."[142] Donors perceive an important role for the UN in cooperating with the Government to ensure that areas beyond the EU acquis, or in areas which there is only 'soft' acquis or broad principles to which the country must adhere, are not neglected. Building on its past work and the partnerships it has developed, UNDP is well positioned to support the Government in addressing some of these challenges in Albania.

Conclusion 2. UNDP has a wide range of activities in its Albania programme, and has, to varied degrees, contributed to development results in Albania. UNDP's contribution has been relevant and important in developing key policies and in filling key institutional gaps in areas such as governance, social inclusion and the environment. The implementation of the various legislation and action plans is ongoing and yet to be accomplished.

UNDP has provided important support to the Government in the formulation of various policies, strategies and action plans, both in EU acquis and in other areas that are important for human development in the country. Examples include the law on territorial reform; the anti-corruption strategy; the public service delivery strategy; the social inclusion policy; the gender equality policy; gender-based violence laws and by-laws; the Roma action plan; and legislation related to environmental impact assessment, strategic environment assessments and renewable energy sources. UNDP contributed to the establishment and strengthening of necessary institutions, frameworks and functions, including, for example, the National Agency for the Delivery of Integrated Services, the National Anti-Corruption Coordinator and the National Protected Area Agency.

Through its work in the area of democratic governance and local development, UNDP has played an important role in Albania's territorial and administrative reform, and has also contributed to other Government efforts, including in ICT, service delivery, policy planning and coordination, and mine actions. The work in regional development, however, has been less successful for various reasons, including the change in context and government priorities. UNDP's contribution to economic governance was limited.

In the area of economic and social inclusion, UNDP's work in gender and Roma issues has been particularly successful, with positive results in empowerment and inclusion of local communities, building capacity for policy monitoring and systems at local levels for domestic-based violence. UNDP's work in the area of social inclusion has yielded tangible impact with potential for replication as they provide models for implementing policies developed at the national level. UNDP's support in the employment and skill development area contributed to changes in the governance of active labour market programmes.

In the area of the environment, UNDP contributed to the establishment of the first marine protected area in Albania, and to the preparation of a national strategic plan for marine and protected areas. Support from UNDP has enabled the Government to meet its obligations under the UNFCCC, and led to the inclusion of climate change adaptation in the cross-sectorial

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142 Evaluation of the Government of Albania and United Nations Programme of Cooperation (PoC) 2012-2016 - June, 2015

strategy for environment and the strategy of rural and agriculture development within the framework of the NSDI. UNDP has contributed to a shift in the approach of the local administration in environment management towards more sustainable protection, preservation and use of natural resources. However, the work is short term and further work depends on reforms in the area.

The implementation of various legislation and action plans is ongoing and yet to be accomplished. Too many action plans remain unfunded and not implemented. Institutional capacity in Albania, particularly at the local level, is still evolving. UNDP's approach of focusing on capacity development is appropriate in addressing this issue, and has had important achievements. However, there is still a need to continue to strengthen institutional capacity, so that national and local institutions are in a position to effectively implement the legislation and action plans. Funding is another challenge. The monitoring and enforcement of the legislation and action plans (for example in the environment areas and other areas) has cost implications.

Conclusion 3. Within the DaO framework, UNDP demonstrated synergy with other UN agencies' programmes to enhance programme strategizing and contribution. In addition to the strong partnership with the Government, leveraging partnerships with other development actors has played an important role in strengthening UNDP's programme. The participatory approach of the UNDP programme contributed to enhancing ownership of the programmes and outcomes.

The DaO modality provided a conducive setting and visibility for UN programmes. In this framework, by establishing partnerships and combining respective strengths with other UN agencies, UNDP was able to construct fruitful programmes that benefited from different agencies' expertise, such as the joint programmes in employment, gender and social inclusion. Although the DaO modality did not increase programme resources for UNDP as much as it did for smaller UN agencies, it provided opportunities for UNDP's engagement in areas little known during its previous experience in the country, such as youth employment. Strong synergies with UN agencies in DaO enhanced UNDP and UN contributions in Albania.

UNDP's partnership with other multilateral and bilateral development actors has allowed it to mobilize resources for its programme in all three thematic areas. In addition to fund mobilization, partnership with others helped create synergies and enhance complementarities. UNDP has collaborated with civil society in the implementation of its activities, both at the central and local levels. UNDP also organized capacity development activities for civil society and contributed to strengthening civil society voices in various development issues, including gender and human rights.

UNDP's interventions in general have benefited from a high level of government ownership, thanks to UNDP's strong relationship with the Government and its participatory approach to both programme design and implementation. Almost all UNDP interventions have been developed based on a thorough participatory approach through prior consultations with the Government at national and local levels, and consultations with target groups and CSOs. There are many good examples of this, such as in the environment area, where the involvement of local communities and local administrations in programme activities (protected areas, climate change adaptation measures) has significantly enhanced their ownership of the results.

Conclusion 4. UNDP's flexibility has given it a real comparative advantage in mobilizing resources from partners. The pooled funding mechanism used to support territorial and administrative reform not only enabled coherent support to policymaking, but also enhanced national ownership and results. Dependence on external funding is likely to have a significant influence over priority setting of UNDP programmes.

UNDP's flexibility has given it a comparative advantage in resource mobilization and a coordinating role in elaborate funding mechanisms, particularly in the area of democratic governance. The pooled funding mechanism used to support Albania's territorial and administrative reform has been a positive experience of enhanced coordination in delivering support, with increased impact and reduced implementation and coordination requirements. UNDP's programming modality has allowed it to explore and develop innovative partnerships that proved crucial for its sustainability.

The availability of external funding can be an important driver determining where, how and when UNDP can intervene. In the EU accession context, with the EU often leading the governance reform and institutional strengthening, UNDP has limited space and resources, and often must seize available opportunities rather than set and pursue a long-term agenda. Overall, UNDP's ability to pursue a long-term development agenda in Albania is influenced by various factors, such as EU accession priorities and progress therein, the Government agenda and reform plans, and other important elements within the country context that UNDP has to adapt to.

Conclusion 5. UNDP support complemented government staff needs and capacities, and this was important in the context of inadequate human resources in some government institutions. While UNDP support has enabled these institutions to function, UNDP's programme implementation approach in some cases did not facilitate capacity development to the desired effect, which may hamper the eventual sustainability of outcomes. Challenges exist in sustaining the programme's benefits, and continuous follow up was required to ensure lasting impact.

UNDP has been responsive to the needs of the Government and has provided direct institutional support to various government institutions in its programme. UNDP's contribution has been important, given that some government institutions have inadequate human resources

to implement multiple aspects of the reform agenda. However, the pressure for UNDP to deliver outputs quickly and show results has at times been a perverse incentive for UNDP to deliver programmes directly rather than through government institutions, hampering capacity development of national partners and the sustainability of outcomes. Although UNDP has endeavoured to use the immediate capacity needs of the Government as entry points to strengthen institutional capacities, actual capacity development within the Government has not materialized to the desired extent.

In many cases UNDP has contributed to shaping the Government's vision, policies, strategies and action plans. The sustainability of these results depends on their implementation, enforcement and continuous follow-up, which in turn depends on government commitment and available funding. In addition, given UNDP's limited resources, many of its interventions particularly at the local level are of pilot nature; sustainability depends on whether the results of these pilot interventions can be replicated and scaled up. In this regard, there have been only limited examples of scaling up successful results of UNDP interventions, despite UNDP's efforts in knowledge management and advocacy.

Conclusion 6. Despite a strong gender portfolio, systematic integration of gender issues in the design and implementation of UNDP's governance and environment programmes remains a challenge. There is not yet a multidisciplinary approach to cross-cutting issues

UNDP has successfully supported national efforts to address gender inequality at the policy level. In this regard, UNDP has contributed to the development of gender-related legislation, capacity building and awareness raising. At the local level, the Community Coordination Response mechanism for addressing domestic violence issues is also a notable achievement.

Mainstreaming measures to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment were not

systematically carried out. In many UNDP programme interventions, the integration of gender concerns has not gone beyond ensuring the participation of women as a means to being more responsive to the specific needs of the women. There is not yet a multidisciplinary approach to addressing cross-cutting issues, including not only gender, but also human rights, social inclusion and environmental management.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Moving forward, the adoption of EU standards, community acquis, and rule of law reforms will remain at the heart of Albania's reform agenda and progress related to EU integration. The Government's vision in its national development strategy assumes that Albania will remain committed to EU integration. It also assumes that the Government will continue to implement relevant reforms and that the process will intensify during 2016–2020, with the aim of initiating accession negotiations[143] once the country has achieved the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria. Accordingly, Albania's focus on European integration-related reforms is expected to grow over the next years. The same will be true with regard to EU assistance to support Albania in the related reforms. The EU is expected to remain the key donor in Albania, and its assistance will clearly and increasingly focus on areas concerning central institutional reforms, rule of law and adoption of the common legal framework. The EU's support to accession countries traditionally includes limited funding for social[144] and community development — areas that will remain highly important to Albania for years to come. There

will certainly be funding and intervention gaps in these areas that will need to be filled.

Moreover, while some EU assistance is expected to support core infrastructure (mainly in the preparation and feasibility phase in areas such as transport and environment), the infrastructure development funding that Albania will likely receive will be more loan-based.[145] There is also no allocation for energy from IPA II. The following recommendations should be viewed in this context.

Recommendation 1. UNDP's relevance in an EU accession context remains being responsive to emerging development needs and priorities of the government. Moving forward, UNDP should provide an adequate balance of policy and demonstration of viable development models. UNDP should focus more on service delivery at the local level.

It is expected that even after EU accession, most of Albania's territory will remain eligible for structural support under the EU 'convergence objective' for decades. Albanian regions need to become more competitive and to develop their specific potentials. They must also improve agricultural productivity and enhance services, including the tourism industry, in order to provide jobs for the growing working-age population. Improved standards for public infrastructure and services need to be secured, as well as environmental sustainability. This requires differentiated strategies and approaches to regional development, which in turn requires a high level of coordination between national and regional actors in preparing and implementing those

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143   The membership negotiations are based on conditions and timing of the candidate's adoption, implementation and enforcement of all current EU rules (the 'acquis'). These rules are divided into 35 policy areas (chapters), such as transport, energy and environment, each of which is negotiated separately.

144   Social areas (such as health, education and community development) are usually regulated based on member states' own policies and legal frameworks; there is relatively little 'acquis communautaire' or common EU law in these areas.

145   The common tendency in accession countries is for EU funding to establish and support the soft framework for infrastructure investments (i.e. through the Western Balkans Investment Facility, or IPA-funded single project pipelines operations). Specialized lending institutions — such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Investment Bank, the World Bank — and EU member states institutions such as KfW, Italian Cooperation and Austrian Cooperation Agency (in the case of Albania) tend to provide loans for major infrastructure interventions.

strategies. Activities pertaining to jobs creation and labour force development, improved transport networks, and economic diversification away from low-productivity agriculture can translate into higher incomes and improved economic welfare. Detailed programmes need to be region specific with spatial and sector differentiation. Building on its past work, UNDP, to the extent possible, should focus its programme on regional and local development initiatives in Albania.

From a sustainable human development perspective, areas beyond the chapters of EU accession should not be neglected. UNDP key areas of support should include social inclusion, access to social services, and gender equality and gender-based violence. These are areas where UNDP has demonstrated expertise and where ongoing support is needed. In addition, UNDP should continue to work in areas where the Government and other partners demonstrate their strong endorsement for and active engagement in sustainable results through institutional or financial commitments.

UNDP has contributed to the development of a multitude of strategies and action plans whose implementation is ongoing. Moving forward, UNDP's support should focus on implementation, particularly on service delivery at the local level. This links strongly to the development of local government management capacity. UNDP should build on its positive experiences working with vulnerable groups and local communities in its social inclusion and environment portfolio.

Recommendation 2. UNDP should continue to strengthen its efforts for resource mobilization. It should also explore cost-sharing options or technical service modalities fully financed by the Government.

UNDP has been fairly successful in mobilizing resources for its programmes in Albania and efforts for resource mobilization should continue along similar lines. The decline of core UN resources, along with the expected withdrawal (or decreased funding and operations) of bilateral donors,[146] is likely to lead to a situation where some areas of the UNDP programme may not receive the same level of co-funding in the future.

EU assistance has introduced a new implementation modality with IPA II, sector budget support. The upcoming EU sector budget support[147] in areas where UNDP has been active for years could have both positive and negative effects on EU funding through UNDP (EU grants to UNDP have been relatively substantial over the past decade). Given the nature of budget support, the funding will go directly to the Government's budget and treasury system. However, given UNDP's policy engagement and operational capability, this can present an opportunity for UNDP to play a constructive role through possible government cost-sharing (if the Government is willing to adopt such implementation modalities).

The UN Country Team is committed to reviewing the Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy to take into account the shift to sector programmes with EU direct budget assistance and potential government cost sharing. Given the partnership that UNDP has developed over the years with the Government, UNDP should explore cost-sharing options or technical service modalities fully financed by the Government. In addition, the territorial and administrative reform programme opened the possibility of pooled-funding interventions to maximize contribution to development results; UNDP should identify additional areas where such pooled-funding collaboration is possible.

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146   The latest experience of accession countries indicates that most bilateral donors withdraw once the country advances in the negotiations process for EU accession.

147   Budget support so far is allocated for public finance reform (IPA 2014, €40 million); public administration reform (IPA 2015, €30 million); and employment and social sector (IPA 2015, €32 million). Discussions have begun on allocations for the anti-corruption, competitiveness and water sectors for IPA 2016.

Recommendation 3. UNDP should strengthen partnership and knowledge cooperation with other development actors and should focus on scaling up impact.

Leveraging partnerships with other development actors has played an important role in strengthening UNDP programmes and has helped, to a certain extent, to create synergies and enhance complementarities. Moving forward, UNDP should strengthen established partnerships and sharpen its focus on scaling up impact. Because UNDP interventions, particularly at the local level, tend to be pilots, UNDP should focus on knowledge management and advocacy with other development partners (government, donors, private sector, civil society), with a view to replicate and scale up successful interventions for wider impact.

Recommendation 4. UNDP should apply a multidisciplinary approach to cross-cutting issues, including human rights, gender equality, social inclusion and environmental management

UNDP made an important contribution to addressing issues such as human rights, gender, social inclusion and environmental management. There is considerable scope to integrate gender and social inclusion issues in development policies and to promote an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to these issues. UNDP should further strengthen its efforts to mainstream gender in its work on governance, local development and the environment.

More concerted efforts are needed to strengthen coordination mechanisms within the government structures responsible for environment issues in order to promote an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to environmental management. UNDP should work with the Government to introduce specific indicators for environmental mainstreaming in selected sector strategies and plans.

Recommendation 5. UNDP should prepare a long-term strategy for its development support to Albania during the course of the EU accession process. The strategy should outline UNDP's key areas of support to Albania in moving forward with EU membership.

Although there is still a role for UNDP to play in Albania in the coming years, UNDP needs to define its role in the changing context and prepare a long-term strategy for its development support to Albania during the course of the EU accession process. Given the emerging development needs in Albania, it may not be possible to clearly outline all issues. However, the strategy should define UNDP's key areas of support to Albania as the country progresses further in its preparations for EU membership in the coming years. The development of the strategy should take place during the course of the next country programme cycle, and should be carried out within a time-frame jointly defined with the Government. Such an approach would make UNDP's presence and role more credible.

Annex 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts country evaluations called 'Assessment of Development Results' (ADRs) to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP's contributions to development results at the country level, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP's strategy in facilitating and leveraging national effort for achieving development results. The purpose of an ADR is to:

- ■ Support the development of the next UNDP Country Programme Document

- ■ Strengthen accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders

- ■ Strengthen accountability of UNDP to the Executive Board

ADRs are independent evaluations carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.[148] The IEO is independent of UNDP management and is headed by a Director who reports to the UNDP Executive Board. The responsibility of IEO is twofold: (i) provide the Executive Board with valid and credible information from evaluations for corporate accountability, decision-making and improvement; and (ii) enhance the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function and its coherence, harmonization and alignment in support of United Nations reform and national ownership.

Based on the principle of national ownership, IEO seeks to conduct ADRs in collaboration with the national authorities where the country programme is implemented.

UNDP Albania has been selected for an ADR since its country programme will end in 2016. This is the first ADR for Albania, and will be conducted in 2015 towards the end of the current UNDP programme cycle of 2012–2016, with a view to contributing to the preparation of UNDP's new programme starting from 2017, which is guided by the forthcoming Government of Albania/United Nations Programme of Cooperation starting in the same year.

2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

After 47 years of communist rule, Albania's political system has been a presidential-parliamentary democracy since 1992. In 2009, Albania applied for candidacy to the European Union, and the country gained its EU candidate status in June 2014. This is a clear step forward in EU-Albania relations, reflecting the progress the country has made in European integration and in implementing the necessary reforms. The EU is keen to encourage further reform in Albania, with particular focus on administration and judiciary reform, the fight against corruption and organized crime, and fundamental rights.[149]

The historically polarized political climate remains "a major obstacle for deepening democratisation, functional decentralized institutions and a rigorous application of the rule of law."[150] Transparency and inclusiveness in the legislative process have improved, but the parliament's

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148   http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/evaluation-policy.pdf

149   European Commission, 'EU candidate status for Albania', June 2014, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_ MEMO-14-439_en.htm

150   Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, 'Swiss Cooperation Strategy Albania 2014-2017'.

oversight role needs to be further strengthened. Judicial reform is ongoing, but the functioning of the judicial system and effective judicial independence continues to be hampered by politicization, limited accountability and insufficient resources, among other issues.[151] The Integrated Planning System (IPS) was introduced as the main tool for policy planning, budgeting and monitoring of the Government, aiming at "ensuring the coherence of the National Strategy for Development and Integration, the long-term sector and cross-sector strategies and the Medium Term Budget Program."[152] However, consolidation of the framework of the IPS in order to enhance its efficiency is still a challenge.[153]

Regarding local government, a reform of the existing territorial and administrative structure has taken place recently, aiming at achieving more efficient delivery of services at the local level. Through this reform, the number of local government units was reduced from 373 to 61 larger units, the communes were abolished and the 12 existing regions were kept. Challenges remain in terms of strengthening the capacity of local government units. Local government human resources management and financial control remain weak.[154]

Corruption is a major and ongoing problem in Albania. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index (2014) published by Transparency International, Albania ranked 110 out of 175 countries around the world and its score is the lowest in Europe.[155] Other challenges include weak institutional capacity and lack of civic engagement resulting in weak accountability relationship between government and citizens.[156]

Albania is classified by the World Bank as an upper middle-income country.[157] Before the global financial crisis, Albania was one of the fastest-growing economies in Europe, enjoying average annual GDP growth rates of 6 percent. However, after 2008 average growth halved, and in 2012 and 2013, the growth rates fell to below 2 percent, "reflecting the deteriorating situation in the Eurozone and the difficult situation in the energy sector."[158] The Government is engaged in finding and identifying new resources that will secure a sustainable development of the economy.

Albania's Human Development Index value for 2013 is 0.716, which is in the high human development category and positions the country at 95th out of 187 countries and territories. Between 1990 and 2013, Albania's Human Development Index value increased from 0.609 to 0.716, an increase of 17.6 percent or an average annual increase of about 0.47 percent.[159] Albania's headcount poverty rate has decreased from 25.4 percent in 2002 to 14.3 percent in 2012.[160] However, when analysing only the five years since the global financial crisis, the poverty rate had a slight increase over the period 2008 to 2012.[161] According to data from the Albania

151   European Commission, 'Albania 2014 Progress Report, Commission Staff Working Document', 2014.

152   Republic of Albania, Ministry of Finance, 'Albania Public Finance Management Strategy 2014-2020'.

153   Ministry for Innovation and Public Administration, 'Cross cutting Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015-2020', Draft.

154   European Commission, 'Albania 2014 Progress Report, Commission Staff Working Document', 2014.

155   Transparency International, Corruption Measurement Tools, www.transparency.org/country#ALB (accessed Feb 2015)

156   Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, Swiss Cooperation Strategy Albania 2014-2017

157   World Bank List of Economies (January 2015).

158   World Bank, 'Country at a Glance: Albania', www.worldbank.org/en/country/albania (accessed Feb 2015)

159   UNDP Human Development Report Office (2014).

160   World Bank, World Development Indicators 2014.

161   Ibid.

Institute of Statistics, the unemployment rate in the country is around 18 percent. Vulnerable groups, including young people, women, persons with disability, Roma and Egyptians are more disadvantaged, and the current labour market situation is particularly unfavourable to them.[162] Due to long-standing social exclusion, Roma and Egyptians are facing a level of poverty estimated three times higher than the remaining population in Albania.

The drafting of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Elimination of Domestic Violence 2007–2010 marked a positive development in introducing gender issues at all levels. Domestic violence is a serious problem in Albania.[163] The overall level of violence experienced by women in Albania has increased from 56 percent in 2007 to 59.4 percent in 2013, with 53 percent of women currently living in constant abuse.[164] Currently, an online system to report violence cases has been launched in the country, but is operational in only 29 municipalities.[165]

In the area of the environment, there has been progress in the last few years in terms of horizontal legislation and approximation with EU environmental acquis. However, various challenges remain including limited enforcement due to the weak capacities of environmental authorities, lack of resources for monitoring and ensuring full compliance with environmental standards.[166] Regarding energy, the security of energy supply is still fragile and the high dependence of Albania on hydropower persists.[167] The new energy strategy, including the law on energy efficiency and the national renewable energy action plan, is still to be finalized.[168] Albania is also very vulnerable to climate change due to high exposure to extreme weather, high sensitivity and low adaptive capacity.[169]

Generally, foreign aid has been decreasing but remains sizeable in terms of the Albania's gross national income (GNI). According to World Bank statistics, official development assistance (ODA) has decreased from $486 million in 2002 to $360 million in 2012.[170] Major bilateral development partners include Greece, Germany, Italy, the United States, Switzerland, Sweden and Austria over the period 2007–2013. Of the multilateral development partners, the European Institutions has the largest portfolio in the country, followed by the International Development Association (IDA).[171]

3. UNDP PROGRAMME STRATEGY IN ALBANIA

The Government of Albania and UNDP signed the Standard Basic Framework Agreement in 1991. The Country Programme Document for Albania 2006–2010 was approved by the UNDP Executive Board in June 2005, following the UNDAF 2006–2010, and included four programme outcomes as follows:

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162   Albanian Institute of Statistics, 'Unemployment rate 2007-2014', www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/labour-market.aspx

163   UNICEF, 'Domestic Violence Against Women in Albania', www.unicef.org/albania/domviol_eng.pdf

164   UNDP, 'National statistics reveal increased level of domestic violence in Albania- Men and boys unite to end it', December 2013, www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2013/12/06/national-statistics-reveal-increased-level-of-domestic-violence-in-albania-men-and-boys-unite-to-end-it.html

165   European Commission, 'Albania Progress Report', October 2014, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-albania-progress-report_en.pdf

166   UNDP Albania, ROAR 2012.

167   Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, 'Swiss Cooperation Strategy Albania 2014-2017'.

168   European Commission, 'Albania 2014 Progress Report, Commission Staff Working Document', 2014.

169   SIDA's Helpdesk for Environment and Climate Change, 'Albania – Environment and Climate Change Policy Brief', 2011.

170   World Bank, World Development Indicators 2014

171   OECD, Query Wizard for International Development Statistics (QWIDS), 2014.

Table A.1.1. Country programme outcomes and indicative resources (2006–2010)		
UNDP country programme outcome		**Indicative resources (US$)**
Outcome 1	Comprehensive integrated planning framework with RBM feedback mechanisms in place – with government effectively utilizing these tools to implement priority interventions for the achievement of the MDGs	3,500,000
Outcome 2	Policies developed and implemented that support the achievements of the MDGs	2,300,000
Outcome 3	Institutions and fora in place to support people's participation, including youth and women. People empowered to take active part in policy formulation and decision making at all levels	6,990,000
Outcome 4	Regional socio-economic growth increased through impwlementation of fiscal decentralization, private sector development, community participation and improved delivery of public services	13,895,000
	Total	**26,685,000**

Source: UNDP Albania Country Programme Document 2006–2010 [DP/DCP/ALB/1]

In 2007, Albania was one of the eight pilot countries designated for the UN reform known as 'Delivering as One (DaO)', aiming at greater coherence, effectiveness and efficiency among the UN system at the country level. The Government of Albania signed the DaO programme on 24 October 2007 with the aim to enhance development results and impact in support of national priorities including the country's EU accession goals, by bringing together the comparative advantages and strengths of the UN system with a common purpose, a unified and coherent management system and expected greater cost efficiencies. Albania's One UN programme 2007–2010 (later on extended by another year to 2011), was built on the previous United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2006–2010 as well as previous agency commitments and agreements with the Government of Albania. In this regard, UNDP's previous commitments as demonstrated in the Country Programme Document 2006–2010 mentioned above were reflected in the One UN programme. There are 14 UN agencies, funds and programmes, of which six are non-resident agencies,[172] participating in the One UN Programme in Albania.

The One UN Programme 2007–2010/2011[173] was guided by (i) The Stabilization and Association Agreement and the over-riding priority of the Albanian Government to join the European Union; (ii) national priorities expressed in the National Strategy for Development and Integration; (iii) the Integrated Planning System; (iv) programmes of other international partners, to ensure synergies and avoid duplication; and (v) the global reform context, particularly with respect to harmonization and increased aid effectiveness in the context of the Paris Declaration.

The programme was focused on five priority areas, with gender and capacity development as cross-cutting principles. The five priority areas are (i) more transparent and accountable governance; (ii) greater participation in public policy and decision-making; (iii) increased and more equitable access to quality basic services; (iv) regional development to reduce regional disparities; and (v) environmentally sustainable development. UNDP was a participating agency for 10 out of the 12 outcomes, and contributed to 33 percent of the total One UN programme's regular resources.

172 Resident agencies include UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNV and WHO. Non-resident agencies include FAO, IFAD, ILO, UNEP, UNESCO and UNIDO.

173 Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania In partnership with the United Nations, 'One United Nations Programme Albania – Programme Framework Document 2007-2010'.

ANNEX 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Regarding the current programme cycle, as part of the preparation of the Government of Albania and the UN Programme of Cooperation 2012–2016, a Common Country Programme Document was prepared by three UN agencies: UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF. The Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF approved the final Common Country Programme Document for Albania in September 2011, which prompted the start of the formulation of the Government of Albania and the UN Programme of Cooperation 2012–2016. The Programme of Cooperation was signed by 20 participating organizations,[174] and continued to expand and deepen the Delivering as One approach of the UN. The goal of the programme of cooperation is to promote sustainable and equitable development, social inclusion and the adherence to international norms and fulfilment of international obligations, in support of the integration of Albania into the EU. The programme has four priority areas and 11 outcomes. UNDP was a participating agency in nine out of the 11 outcomes and contributed to 34 percent of the total resources.[175] The nine programme outcomes as indicated in the CCPD 2012–2016 and

the Programme of Cooperation 2012–2016, as well as UNDP indicative resources are as follows:

In 2014, following the mid-term review of the Programme of Cooperation 2012–2016, the Results Framework was updated and the number of outcomes was reduced from 11 to four outcomes, and UNDP participated in all the four outcomes. The four outcomes in the updated Results Framework are as follows: (i) Outcome 1 - Human rights: Human rights and gender equality considerations guide interactions between citizens and institutions; (ii) Outcome 2 – Inclusive social policies (covers Health, Education, Labour and Social Protection): The rights of individuals and groups are ensured through equitable, inclusive and evidence based sectoral policies; (iii) Outcome 3 – Governance and Rule of Law: The Albanian State executes major governance processes following internationally agreed democratic principles and practices, while upholding the rule of law and eliminating key factors of exclusion of women; and (iv) Outcome 4 – Regional and local development: Government of Albania implements policies that

Table A.1.2. Common Country Programme/One UN Programme of Cooperation outcomes and UNDP indicative resources (2012-2016)		
UNDP Country Programme Outcome as defined in the CCPD and the One UN Programme of Cooperation 2012–2016		**UNDP indicative resources (US$)**
Governance and rule of law	Outcome 1.1: Strengthen public oversight, civil society, and media institutions to make authorities more accountable to the public, and better able to enforce gender-equality commitments in planning, programming and budgeting processes	8,210,000
	Outcome 1.2: Enhance public administration capacities, practices and systems so as to effectively deliver on national development priorities and international obligations	
	Outcome 1.3: Ensure that the Government meets international obligations and standards for juvenile justice, for managing migration and in the fight against organized crime and corruption	

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174 The 20 participating organizations are FAO, IAEA, IFAD, ILO, IOM, ITC, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UNV, UN Women and WHO.

175 The two programme outcomes of the One UN Programme of Cooperation for which UNDP is not a participating agency are related to education (boys and girls over the age of three, including youth, especially from the marginalized groups, participate in quality formal and informal education) and health (health insurance is universal and quality, gender sensitive and age appropriate public health services available to all including at-risk populations).

Economy and environment	Outcome 2.1: Government, trade organizations and the private sector support inclusive and sustainable economic growth through enhanced regulatory frameworks, trade facilitation and investment promotion	13,016,000
	Outcome 2.2: National authorities and institutions, the private sector and the general public protect, preserve and use natural resources more sustainably, taking into account the impacts of climate change and the achievement of European environment standards	
Regional and local development	Outcome 3.1: Institutional capacities, frameworks and policies meeting international standards promote equitable and sustainable regional development, focusing on land use and livelihoods for women and men, and on agriculture, tourism and cultural and natural-heritage management	12,650,000
	Outcome 3.2: The public, including marginalized groups and communities, better receive equitable, inclusive and accountable decentralized services from regional and local governments	
Inclusive social policy	Outcome 4.1: The rights of disadvantaged individuals and groups are equally ensured through legislation, inclusive policies, social protection mechanisms and special interventions	4,600,000
	Outcome 4.2: All people better realize fundamental rights to work, have greater and inclusive employment opportunities and can engage in comprehensive social dialogue	
	Total	**38,476,000**

Source: UNDP Albania Common Country Programme Document 2012–2016

advance democratic, equitable and sustainable regional and local development.

Given all the changes in programme areas and the evolvement of the outcomes over time, the evaluation will assess UNDP's contribution to development results based on analysis by three key programme areas: 1) democratic governance and local development, 2) economic and social inclusion, and 3) environment. Annex 1 includes a mapping of outcomes over different periods under these three key areas. More specifically, all the different outcomes as described in the (i) UNDP Country Programme Document 2006–2010; (ii) UNDP Country Programme Document 2012–2016, (iii) One UN Programme 2007–2010/2011 (the 10 outcomes in which UNDP was a participating agency); (iv) One UN Programme 2012–2016 (the nine outcomes in which UNDP was a participating agency were the same as the nine outcomes described in the UNDP Country Programme Document 2012–2016) and (v) the new results framework (after mid-term review) of the One UN Programme 2012–2016 have been linked to the three key areas, showing how the outcomes have evolved over time. The analysis for each key area will include an assessment of results achieved for all the outcomes linked to that area.

4. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

ADRs are conducted in the penultimate year of the ongoing UNDP country programme in order to feed into the process of developing the new country programme. As this is the first ADR in Albania, the ADR will cover present and previous programme cycle. There will be, however, greater emphasis on interventions under the current programme and interventions that span both periods. The year 2007 was chosen to be the cutoff point as it was the year when the One UN programme started to be piloted in Albania.

As a country-level evaluation of UNDP, the ADR will focus on the formal UNDP country programme approved by the Executive Board. The scope of the ADR includes the entirety of UNDP's activities in the country and therefore covers interventions funded by all sources of finance, core UNDP resources, donor funds, government funds, etc. There will also be initia-

tives from the regional and global programmes that are included in the scope of the ADR. It is important to note, however, that a UNDP country office may be involved in a number of activities that may not be included in a specific project. Some of these "non-project" activities may be crucial for the political and social agenda of a country.

Special efforts will be made to capture the role and contribution of UNV through undertaking joint work with UNDP. This information will be used for synthesis in order to provide corporate level evaluative evidence of performance of the associated programme.

5. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation methodology comprises two main components: (i) assessment of UNDP's contribution by thematic/programme areas; and (ii) assessment of the quality of this contribution. The ADR will present its findings and assessment according to the set of criteria provided below, based on an analysis by three key programme areas as identified above (i.e. governance and local development, economic and social inclusion and environment), in order to generate findings, broad conclusions and recommendations for future action.

▪ **UNDP's contribution by programme areas:** The ADR will assess the **effectiveness** of UNDP in contributing to development results of Albania through its programme activities. Specific attention will be paid to assess the contribution related to UNDP's overall vision of helping countries achieve poverty eradication and reduce inequalities and exclusion, and its contribution to furthering gender equality and women's empowerment.[176]

▪ **The quality of UNDP's contribution.** The ADR will also assess the quality of UNDP's contribution based on the following criteria:

☐ **Relevance** of UNDP projects and outcomes to the country's needs and national priorities, as well as UNDP's mandate

☐ **Efficiency** of UNDP interventions in terms of use of human and financial resources (programmatic efficiency and managerial and operational efficiency); and

☐ **Sustainability** of the results to which UNDP contributes (design for sustainability, scale and scaling up, capacity development and implementation issues)

Key explanatory factors: The ADR will assess how specific factors explain UNDP's performance. These factors could be related to UNDP's strategic positioning in the country, programme design parameters, operational/management parameters as well as any other country-specific factors that are assumed to have had an impact on UNDP's performance (such as UNDP's positioning in the DaO modality, including support for coordination of UN and other development assistance). Below is a non-exhaustive list of factors/questions that the evaluation will look at:

▪ UNDP's strategic positioning: UNDP positioning within the national development/policy space and the strategies it took in assisting national development efforts

☐ Responsiveness: Responsiveness of UNDP's programme to the challenges and needs of Albania; UNDP strategic positioning in relation to Albania's EU accession context and priorities; attention paid to programme areas that are underemphasized in EU accession priorities and bringing them to the attention of the development actors in Albania including the government. Responsiveness of UNDP to the changes in the Government and the priorities of the

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176 Using the UN System-wide Action Plan (UN SWAP) to improve gender equality and the empowerment of women across the UN system.

Government (handling the government transition, and political and bureaucratic changes that affect contribution of UNDP)

☐ National ownership and capacity: Facilitating implementation of the national development strategies and EU accession priorities; engaging with the Government's sector strategies; UNDP programme response to challenges of national capacity development

☐ Comparative strengths: Skills and expertise needed to support Albania given European and EU accession context and the comparative strength of UNDP

☐ Balance of short/long-term needs: Prioritizing long-term development needs as against short-term requests for assistance by the Government. Priority areas of support before phasing out UNDP programme in Albania

■ DaO context

☐ DaO mechanism and implications for UNDP programme and partnership (building on the synergies between UNDP programmes and the programmes of other UN partners; strategically using DAO mechanism in getting the involvement and commitment of the Government); joint programming and its implications for UNDP's contribution; joint programming and transaction costs and efficiency for UNDP

☐ Partnerships: Effective partnership and strategic alliances in supporting key national priorities

☐ Looking forward: role of UNDP in the sectoral budget support; role in integrating the Sustainable Development Goals in national/sector strategies; medium- and long-term strategic implications for UNDP given Albania's upper middle-income status and EU accession process; lessons for UNDP for DaO engagement

(planning as one versus implementing as one)

■ Programme design parameters:

☐ Targeting: Addressing issues of those living in poverty and experiencing the greatest inequalities/exclusion (women, youth, disabled, Roma, etc.); promoting UN values from a human development perspective

☐ Balance between upstream versus downstream initiatives, capital and regional versus local level interventions

☐ Gender mainstreaming: incorporating gender equality and women's empowerment within/across thematic areas — in design, allocation of resources and implementation; leveraging on DaO for enhancing contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment

■ Operational/management parameters:

☐ The availability of funding (decrease in funding from donors), UNDP's funds mobilization strategy, UNDP's ability to mobilize resources, including cost sharing with the UN agencies and with the government

☐ The capacities of national partners and the implementation modalities (national vs direct implementation)

☐ The organization of the country office and its management efficiency in DaO context

☐ The extent to which UNDP fosters gender equality in its management and operational practices

☐ Risk management, M&E practices

Assessment at the outcome level: As mentioned in section III, given the extensive change and evolvement of the outcomes over time, instead of developing an outcome paper for each outcome, the evaluation team will develop a thematic paper for each of the three key pro-

grammatic areas identified above. The paper will examine the programme's progress towards the outcomes that are linked to that thematic area (as per the mapping included in annex 1) and UNDP's contribution to that change. There will, however, be challenges in outcome coherence and the indicators used for the outcome performance assessment, which will be addressed in the evaluation design. Each thematic paper will be prepared according to a standard template, which will facilitate synthesis and the identification of conclusions and recommendations in the ADR report for UNDP to consider together with main partners for future programming.

6. DATA COLLECTION

Assessment of existing data. An assessment was carried for each programmatic area to ascertain the available information, identify data constraints, to determine the data collection needs and methods. The assessment outlined the level of evaluable data that is available. There are 23 decentralized evaluations undertaken during the period 2007–2014 plus one decentralized evaluation completed but the report is not yet available. Seven out of the 23 evaluations were completed in 2007 and involved projects/programmes implemented before 2007 (the cut-off date of this ADR). Most of the evaluations were project evaluations and there was no outcome evaluation. In addition to the above evaluations, by June 2015, the review report of the One UN programme will be available. Some key staff members have been with the office since the beginning of the period under review, so there is good institutional memory with UNDP. Overall the programme has sufficient information to conduct the ADR. However, as mentioned above, there will be challenges in identifying and collecting data on indicators used for the outcome performance assessment, given the evolvement of the outcomes in the country programme over time.

It is also important to note that UNDP projects that contributed to different outcomes/programmatic areas were at different stages of implementation, and therefore it may not always be possible to determine the projects' contribution to results. In cases where the projects/initiatives are still at initial stage and have not completed their duration, the evaluation will document observable progress and try to ascertain the possibility of achieving the outcome given the programme design and measures already put in place.

Data collection methods. The evaluation will use data from primary and secondary sources, including desk review of documentation and information and interviews with key informants, including beneficiaries, partners and managers. A multi-stakeholder approach will be followed and interviews will include government representatives, civil society organizations, private sector representatives, UN agencies, multilateral organizations, bilateral donors, and beneficiaries of the programme. Focus group discussions will be used to consult some groups of beneficiaries as appropriate.

The evaluation team will also undertake field visits to selected project sites to observe the projects first-hand. It is expected that regions where UNDP has a concentration of field projects (in more than one programme area), as well as those where critical projects are being implemented will be considered. There should be coverage of all programme areas, except those covered well in the decentralized evaluations.

The IEO and the country office have identified an initial list of background and programme-related documents which is posted on an ADR SharePoint website. The following secondary data will be reviewed: background documents on the national context, documents prepared by international partners during the period under review and documents prepared by UN system agencies; programme plans and frameworks; progress reports; monitoring self-assessments such as the yearly UNDP Results Oriented Annual Reports (ROARs); and evaluations conducted by the country office and partners.

Validation. The evaluation will use triangulation of information collected from different sources

and/or by different methods to ensure that the data is valid.

Stakeholder involvement. At the start of the evaluation, a stakeholder analysis was conducted to identify all relevant UNDP partners, as well as those who may not work with UNDP but play a key role in the outcomes to which UNDP contributes. Each thematic paper will also develop a stakeholder analysis within the scope of the programmatic areas.

7. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP. The UNDP IEO will conduct the ADR in consultation with the UNDP Albania Country Office, the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Government of Albania. The IEO Evaluation Manager will lead the evaluation and coordinate the evaluation team. The IEO will meet all costs directly related to the conduct of the ADR.

Government of Albania. The Council of Ministers and other key government counterparts of UNDP in Albania will facilitate the conduct of ADR by providing necessary access to information sources within the government, safeguarding the independence of the evaluation, and jointly organizing the final stakeholder meeting with the IEO when it is time to present findings and results of the evaluation. Additionally, the counterparts will be responsible within the Council of Ministers for the use and dissemination of the final outputs of the ADR process.

UNDP Country Office in Albania. The Country Office will support to the evaluation team to liaise with key partners and other stakeholders, make available to the team all necessary information regarding UNDP's programmes, projects and activities in the country, and provide factual verifications of the draft report on a timely basis. The Country Office will provide the evaluation team support in kind (e.g. arranging meetings with project staff, stakeholders and beneficiaries; and assistance for the project site visits). To

ensure the independence of the views expressed in interviews and meetings with stakeholders held for data collection purposes, country office staff will not participate.

UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (RBEC). RBEC will support the evaluation through information sharing, and will also participate in discussions on emerging conclusions and recommendations.

Evaluation Reference Group. A reference group will be established for the evaluation, comprising: (i) the Resident Coordinator; (ii) the Ambassador of Albania to the United Nations based in New York; (iii) Representative from the key government counterpart, which is the Department for Development Programming, Financing and Foreign Aid, Council of Ministers; and (iv) Representative from the European Union Delegation. The key tasks of the evaluation reference group are to: (i) Reviewing the TOR; (ii) Reviewing a draft evaluation report and provide comments, including any factual corrections required; and (iii) Participate in the final stakeholder workshop to discuss the results and way forward as a basis for the future country programme strategy. The ADR team, with the Country Office's support, will communicate and engage with the Evaluation Reference Group throughout the process to maximize national ownership.

Evaluation Team. The IEO will constitute an evaluation team to undertake the ADR. The IEO will ensure gender balance in the team, which will include the following members:

- Evaluation Manager (EM)*:* IEO staff member with overall responsibility for managing the ADR, including preparing for and designing the evaluation (i.e. this ToR) as well as selecting the evaluation team and providing methodological guidance. The EM will be responsible for the synthesis process and the preparation of the draft and final evaluation reports.

- **Associate Evaluation Manager (AEM):** The AEM will support the EM in the preparation and design of the evaluation, the selection of the evaluation team, and the synthesis process. The AEM will review the draft report and support the EM in other aspects of the ADR process as may be required.

- **Consultants:** Two consultants will be recruited. Each consultant will be responsible for one thematic area on (i) democratic governance and local development; and (ii) economic and social inclusion. The third thematic area on environment will be under the responsibility of the EM. One of the consultants will also be responsible for looking at strategic positioning issues, coordination issues, plus support the EM in the synthesis process

- **Research Assistant:** A research assistant based in the IEO will provide background research and documentation.

The roles of the different members of the evaluation team are summarised in Table 3.

8. EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation will be conducted according to the approved IEO process as outlined in the *ADR Method Manual*. The following represents a summary of key elements of the process. Four major phases provide a framework conducting the evaluation.

Phase 1: Preparation. The IEO prepares the ToR and the evaluation design, following a preparatory mission to UNDP Albania country office by the Evaluation Manager and the Associate Evaluation Manager. The objectives of the mission were to: (i) present the evaluation purpose, process and methodology to key stakeholders; (ii) seek the engagement by key national counterparts in the evaluation; (iii) expand the evaluability assessment initiated during desk review; (iv) determine the scope, approaches and time-frame of the evaluation; (v) obtain stakeholder perspectives of any prominent issues to be covered in the evaluation; (vi) discuss logistical and administrative support that would be required from the Country Office during the evaluation; and (vii) identify the parameters for the selection of the ADR team and the possibility of engaging national experts.

Additional evaluation team members, comprising development professionals, will be recruited once the ToR is complete.

Phase 2: Data collection and analysis. The phase will commence in June 2015. An evaluation matrix with detailed questions and means of data collection and verification will be developed to guide data collection. The following process will be undertaken:

- **Pre-mission activities:** Evaluation team members conduct desk reviews of reference material, and prepare a summary of the context and other evaluative evidence, and identify thematic area-specific evaluation questions, gaps and issues that will require validation during the field-based phase of data collection.

- **Data collection mission:** The evaluation team will undertake a mission to the country to engage in data collection activities. The esti-

Table A.1.3. Data collection responsibilities by thematic areas		
Outcome	**Report**	**Data collection**
Governance and local development	Consultant	Consultant
Economic and social inclusion	Consultant	Consultant
Environment	EM	EM
Strategic positioning issues	—	EM and consultant
Operations and management issues	—	EM and consultant

mated duration of the mission is a total of two weeks between 6 and 17 July 2015. Data will be collected according to the approach outlined in Section VI with responsibilities outlined in Section VII.

Phase 3: Synthesis, report writing and review. Based on the thematic reports, the EM and AEM and the consultant will undertake a synthesis process.

The first draft of the ADR report will be prepared and subjected to the quality control process of the IEO. Once cleared by the IEO, the first draft will be further circulated with the Country Office and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States for factual corrections. The second draft, which takes into account factual corrections, will be shared with the evaluation reference group for review.

The draft report will then be shared at stakeholder workshop where the results of the evaluation will be presented to key national stakeholders. Moreover, the ways forward will be discussed with a view to creating greater ownership by national stakeholders in taking forward the lessons and recommendations from the report, and to strengthening accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders. Taking into account the discussion at the stakeholder workshops, the final evaluation report will be prepared. The UNDP Albania Country Office will prepare the management response to the ADR, under the oversight of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

Phase 4: Production, dissemination and follow-up. The ADR report will be widely distributed in both hard and electronic versions. The evaluation report will be made available to UNDP Executive Board by the time of approving a new Country Programme Document. It will be widely distributed by the IEO within UNDP as well as to the evaluation units of other international organisations, evaluation societies/networks and research institutions in the region. The Albania Country Office and the Government of Albania will disseminate to stakeholders in the country. The report and the management response will be published on the UNDP website[177] as well as in the Evaluation Resource Centre. The Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States will be responsible for monitoring and overseeing the implementation of follow-up actions in the Evaluation Resource Centre.[178]

9. TIME-FRAME FOR THE ADR PROCESS

The tentative time-frame of the evaluation process and respective responsibilities are shown below. The current Programme of Cooperation, as well as the Common Country Programme Document is from 2012–2016. Results of the ADR should feed into the next UNDP programme formulation to be presented in the new Common Country Programme Document starting 2017. The final ADR report — an input on UNDP performance — should be made available to the 2016 June session of the Executive Board.

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177   web.undp.org/evaluation

178   erc.undp.org

Table A.1.4. Tentative time-frame		
Activity	Responsible party	Proposed time-frame
Phase 1: Preparation		
ADR initiation and preparatory work	EM/RA	January-March
Preparatory mission	EM/AEM	13-23 April 2015
TOR completed and approved by IEO Director	EM	June 2015
Identification and selection of consultant team members	EM	May-June 2015
Phase 2: Data collection and analysis		
Development of evaluation tools and protocols	EM	June 2015
Preliminary drafts of outcome papers	Consultants	June 2015
Data collection mission	EM/AEM/Consultants	6 - 17 July 2015
Analysis and submission of outcome papers to EM	EM/Consultants	August
Phase 3: Synthesis and report writing		
Analysis of findings and synthesis of results	EM/AEM	September
First draft for internal IOE clearance	EM	October
First draft to CO/RBEC for comments	CO/RB	November
Submission of the revision (final draft) to CO/RBEC and Evaluation Reference Group	EM/CO	December
Draft management response	CO	December 2015 /January 2016
Stakeholder workshop in Albania	IEO/CO/RBEC	Early 2016
Phase 4: Production and follow up		
Editing and formatting	IEO	March 2016
Final report	IEO/CO/RBEC	April 2016
Dissemination of the final report	IEO	April 2016

Annex 1 to the Terms of Reference: Mapping of outcomes over different periods by programmatic areas

Programmatic areas	Outcomes as described in UNDP Country Programme Documents (CPD)	Outcomes in which UNDP was/is a participating agency as described in the One UN Programme of Cooperation	Description
Democratic governance and local development	**2007–2011 UNDP CPD:** • Comprehensive integrated framework with RBM feedback mechanisms in place with Government effectively utilizing these tools to implement priority interventions for the achievement of the MDGs • Regional socio-economic growth increased through implementation of fiscal decentralization, private sector development, community participation and improved delivery of public services **2012–2016 UNDP CPD (similar to One UN Programme of Cooperation outcomes period 2012-2014, before mid-term review):** • Enhance public administration capacities, practices and systems so as to effectively deliver on national development priorities and international obligations • Ensure that the Government meets international obligations and standards for juvenile justice, for managing migration and in the fight against organized crime and corruption (very little UNDP engagement) • Government, trade organizations and the private sector support inclusive and sustainable economic growth through enhanced regulatory frameworks, trade facilitation and investment promotion (little UNDP engagement) • The public, including marginalized groups and communities, better receive equitable, inclusive and accountable decentralized services from regional and local governments • Institutional capacities, frameworks and policies meeting international standards promote equitable and sustainable regional development, focusing on land use and livelihoods for women and men, and on agriculture, tourism and cultural and national heritage management	**2007-2011 One UN Programme of Cooperation:** • National Institutions and Public Sector able to respond to the requirements of the EU Accession Process, including implementation of the IPS • Government adopts economic policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks that promote pro-poor growth, social inclusive, legal and economic empowerment • A national strategy on regional development, with linkages to sector strategies, the NSDI and the medium-term budget programme, is adopted and implemented aiming at promotion of social inclusion and reduction of regional disparities **2015–2016 One UN Programme of Cooperation new results framework (after mid-term review):** • The Albanian State executes major governance processes following internationally agreed democratic principles and practices, while upholding the rule of law and eliminating key factors of exclusion of women • Government of Albania implements policies that advance democratic, equitable and sustainable regional and local development	ICT, e-accounting, LSMS, decentralization, regional development Census, brain gain, anti-corruption Regional trade, economic governance ART GOLD STAR

Programmatic areas	Outcomes as described in UNDP Country Programme Documents (CPD)	Outcomes in which UNDP was/is a participating agency as described in the One UN Programme of Cooperation	Description
Economic and social inclusion	**2007-2011 UNDP CPD:** • Institutions and forums in place to support people's participation and empowerment to take active part in policy formulation and decision-making **2012-2016 UNDP CPD (similar to One UN Programme of Cooperation outcome period 2012-2014, before mid-term review):** • Strengthen public oversight, civil society and media institutions to make authorities more accountable to the public, and better able to enforce gender-equality commitments in planning, programming and budgeting processes • The rights of disadvantages individuals and groups are equally ensured through legislation, inclusive policies, social protection mechanisms and special interventions • All people better realize fundamental rights to work, have greater and inclusive employment opportunities and can engage in comprehensive social dialogue	**2007-2011 One UN Programme of Cooperation:** • Government policies and practices necessary to promote social inclusion and reduction of regional disparities are strengthened • Civil society better able to participate in public debate and advocate for state-citizen accountability • Institutions and forums in place to support people's participation and empowerment to take active part in policy formulation and decision-making • Institutional framework for education in place that promotes inclusive quality education for all children • Government adopts policies, regulatory and institutional frameworks that promote provision of integrated quality services, with special emphasis on strengthening social protection system **2015–2016 One UN Programme of Cooperation new results framework (after mid-term review):** • Human rights and gender equality considerations guide interactions between citizens and institutions • The rights of individuals and groups are ensured through equitable, inclusive and evidence based sectoral policies	Gender Civil society Roma Disability Empowering local vulnerable communities Employment
Environment	**2007–2011 UNDP CPD:** • Policies developed and implemented that support the achievement of the MDGs **2012–2016 UNDP CPD (similar to One UN Programme of Cooperation outcome period 2012-2014, before mid-term review):** • National authorities and institutions, the private sector and the general public protect, preserve and use natural resources more sustainably, taking into account the impacts of climate change and the achievement of the European environment standards	**2007–2011 One UN Programme of Cooperation:** • Government meets environmental requirements of EU accession process and of multilateral environment agreements • Environmental management improved to protect natural resources and mitigate environmental threats	Carbon finance Tourism Prespa ecosystem Climate change Adaptation response mechanism Solar water heating Marine and coastal protections Mine action

Annex 2
PERSONS CONSULTED

GOVERNMENT OF ALBANIA

Abeshi, Pellumb, General Director of Environment, Ministry of Environment

Alltari, Argent, Chief of Cabinet, Ministry of Environment

Andoni, Doris, Director, National Housing Agency

Arapi, Oriana, Director, Strategic Planning Unit, Department for Development Programming, Financing and Foreign Aid, Council of Ministers

Baci, Jonida, Head of Cabinet, Ministry of Urban Development and Tourism

Baraku, Irma, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner

Bejtja, Ilir, Deputy Minister of Energy, Ministry of Energy and Industry

Benussi, Irena, Specialist, Gender Equality Unit, Ministry of Social Affairs and Youth

Beqiraj, Arben, Deputy Mayor, Municipality of Vlora and Vice President, Board of AULEDA Local Economic Development Agency of Vlora

Beqiraj, Edi, Expert at Urban and Projects Department, Central Commune of Vlora

Berberi, Fredo, Chairman, Central Commune of Vlora

Bozo, Ilda, Director, Social Inclusion and Gender Equality Directorate, Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth

Brace, Adriatik, Regional Coordinator, Ministry of State for Local Issues

Braha, Arben, Project Manager, Mine Action Programme

Bregasi, Agim, Director of Electric Energy, Ministry of Energy and Industry

Bruka, Shefqet, Former Head, Kukes Regional Council

Bundo, Alfred, Director of Projects and EU Integration, Ministry of Energy and Industry

Cano, Eridana, Chief of Staff, Minister of State for Local Government

Capoj, Gezim, Mayor, Municipality of Orikum

Cucaj, Abdul, Expert, Vlora Regional Directorate of Forestry Service

Cungu, Maxhit, Head, Shkodra Regional Council

Daragjati, Klaudia, Executive Director, TEULEDA (Shkodra Agency for Regional Development)

Dedej, Zamir, Director of the National Agency of Protected Areas, Ministry of Environment

Dervishaj, Brunilda, Specialist, Gender Equality Unit, Ministry of Social Affairs and Youth

Dhembi, Mimoza, Director of Budget, Ministry of Finance

Filo, Sotiraq, Mayor, Municipality of Korca

Gace, Valbona, Director of Social Directorate, Vlora Regional Council

Gjergj, Filipi, Head, Albanian Institute of Statistics

Gjermeni, Eglantina, Minister, Ministry of Urban Development

Gjini, Jak, Environment Specialist, Lezha Municipality

Gjoncaj, Llazar, Expert, Vlora Regional Directorate of Forestry Service

Goxholli, Elvira, Director of Foreign Relations, Central Electoral Committee

Hamzallari, Dritan, Deputy Mayor, Municipality of Pogradec

Harito, Milena, Minister of State, Public Administration

Hoti, Enea, Advisor, Ministry of State for Local Issues

Hoxha, Ferit, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations

Hoxha, Nardi, Responsible Officer for Agriculture and Environment, Proger Commune and Member, Management Committee of Prespa National Park

Hysolakoj, Nexhip, Head of Monitoring Unit, Vlora Regional Administration of Protected Areas

Kalus, Mario, Director, Vlora Regional Directorate of Forestry Service

Kastrati, Pranvera, Chief of Section on Small and Medium Enterprise, Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Entrepreneurship

Kazazi, Merita, Director of Programming and Development Department, Shkodra Regional Council

Kela, Mimoza, Director of Finance, Municipality of Pogradec

Koci, Mirela, Executive Director, AULEDA Local Economic Development Agency of Vlora

Kojdheli, Genc, Director, National Employment Service

Kola, Mejvis, Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Urban Development

Konomi, Ardit, Prefect of Korca County

Kospiri, Bardhylka, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth

Kuko, Valbona, Former Director, Department for Development Programming, Financing and Foreign Aid, Council of Ministers

Lazaj, Lorela, Director, Vlora Regional Administration of Protected Areas

Lleshi, Lefterije, Head, Central Election Commission

Lopari, Enkeleda, Advisor, Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth

Maci, Linda, Director of Regional Development and Integration, Regional Council in Lezha

Malevin, Sidrit, Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration

Mehillaj, Tatjana, Tourism Expert, Municipality of Orikum

Mujaxhi, Fatbardha, Specialist, Shkodra Regional Employment Office

Nikolla, Dile, Director of Strategic Programming Department, Municipality of Lezha

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MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Evaluation recommendation 1:	
UNDP's relevance in an EU accession context remains being responsive to emerging development needs and priorities of the government. Moving forward, UNDP should provide an adequate balance of policy and demonstration of viable development models. UNDP should focus more on service delivery at the local level.	

Management response:

In Albania, UNDP enjoys strong alignment to the country's EU accession context. On the policy dialogue level, UNDP actively participates in joint fora with national and international development partners, e.g. Donor's Technical Secretariat and Development and Integration Partners, for coordination of assistance. Further UNDP engages actively in the Government's Integrated Policy Management Group (IPMG) architecture, which is a sector coordination mechanism. In some areas, e.g. in social policy and employment, UNDP together with UNWOMEN plays lead roles in support of EU-supported sector programs. In the water sector UNDP supports governance mechanisms to manage river basins in transboundary context to deliver better water quality and a more balanced use of natural resources.

The regional development policy, distinguished from area-based development, is a critical EU policy tool for cohesion of European regions. In Albania, policy for regional development has also been evolving. In the past programme period, UNDP supported the implementation of EU's 'Integrated Support to Decentralization' project, which aimed to establish Albania's regional development strategy and to support Albania's regions approximate the planning and institutional set up needed to engage with EU's regional development policy. The ADR provides valuable insight on the relevance and effectiveness of this work, noting also that the national policy and institutional framework objectives have been ambiguous. Going forward, UNDP will engage with national partners to support local governance mechanisms with a view to strengthen their capacities to participate in the further policy and institutional framework for regional development. Important partners are also among the international community, notably Austrian Development Agency and Swiss Development Cooperation. The Regional Development Fund is a critical asset of the Government, which can support such policy and institutional frameworks. UNDP will seek partnerships and identify strategies to support the country's newly amalgamated local government units so that the people of Albania derive measurable development gains from the evolving regional development policy of the Government. Supporting transparency and effectiveness of Fund operations as well as promoting innovative funding, including co-mingling of funds with the Regional Development Fund, towards clear, measurable performance targets at municipal levels will be explored with partners.

While most social policy is not explicitly regulated by EU Acquis, there are complex and sophisticated EU instruments to promote European standards and norms in social rights. In Albania UNDP enjoys strong partnership with national and international development partners, to support Albania's institutions in aligning to these standards and norms. Going forward, the new Country Programme of UNDP for 2017–2021, identifies social inclusion as one of its key pillars. Specific target vulnerable groups are persons with disabilities, survivors of gender-based violence, and vulnerable Roma and Egyptian populations. In this context, UNDP's gender equality agenda, both through gender mainstreaming of key national policy frameworks and legislation and through developing capacities of independent institutions to remedy discrimination against women, are key programme components going forward. UNDP's comparative advantage will be on work at local levels at the level of the newly consolidated government units.

UNDP has supported the development of the vision and strategies for social inclusion and protecting the rights of vulnerable populations. Going forward, and leveraging once again the economies of scale and capacities established by Albania's territorial administrative reform, the new Country Programme of UNDP is designed so that results are delivered at the level of local government units. The strategy of implementation of the country programme is through local government units, with indicators and targets adopted for 61 municipalities, representing also a bringing to national scale, the pilots to policy work (e.g. in community response mechanism to gender-based violence) to national coverage through the 61 municipalities.

(Continued)

Key action (s)	Time-frame	Responsible unit (s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
1. Regional Development:				
i) Engage in renewed dialogue with part-ners on the basis of ISD programme experience, expertise from the region (e.g. Ch22 related scoping exercises) and experience of other development partners to identify entry points of support to development effectiveness of the government's regional develop-ment policy instruments;	Q2 2016	Senior Management		
ii) Support the consolidation of local government units as agents of regional development policy;	Q2 2016-2018	STAR2 Project; STAR PAR Multi Donor Projects (Outcome 1 of the new CPD)		
2. Social development beyond Acquis Chapters: CPD Outcome 3 dedicated to human rights and social inclusion	2017-2021	RR/CD/Programme		
3. Focus on local services delivery: Draft CPD delivers assistance through the 61 newly amalgamated municipalities. Specific output targets identified in all four Outcomes of the CPD related to support towards delivery of policy/strategy through local government units.	Q2 2016	RR/CD/Programme		

Evaluation recommendation 2:

UNDP should continue to strengthen its efforts for resource mobilization. It should also explore cost-sharing options or technical service modalities fully financed by the Government.

Management response:

The Country Office acknowledges that a critical mass of programme funding is essential for achievement of development results supported by UNDP. The experience of the Country Office has been that UNDP's support, when linked to a nationally driven reform agenda, and delivered in coherence, partnership and collaboration with other development partners, has been effective in attracting also financial resources. National ownership and drive of results are critical. UNDP will concentrate resource mobilization efforts, not as a fund-raising effort towards UNDP projects, but rather as ensuring that national reform programmes are adequately resourced. To date, as underlined in the ADR, Government Cost Sharing towards UNDP-supported programmes and projects has not been substantial. However, the more UNDP focuses on delivering national reform programmes, the more national resources can be attached to programme results. During the past programming cycle the Country Office progressively dispelled the notion that UNDP is a donor. The Country Office will continue to offer a problem solving approach towards delivering of national reform agendas to government partners at central and local levels. This in turn will encourage pooling and comingling of national and international resources towards mutually agreed targets, some of which are most effectively delivered by UNDP. Comparative advantages lie not only in substantive command of areas such as rights of vulnerable communities, gender-based violence, local governance, but also in operational and managerial capacities for co-management with government and other national partners different sources of funding towards reform objectives. Local government partners will play an increasing role in such partnerships going forward, as they themselves will become more financially stronger actors. Further UNDP's project delivery strategies, through good governance mechanisms, participation, due process, transparency and effective utilization of funds (procurement, recruitment, contract management etc.) are instruments applicable in a variety of substantive areas.

The Government's reform agendas all require additional and innovative funding sources, some of which can be built through UNDP partnerships. Notable possibilities are energy-efficiency or innovative municipal financing mechanisms, or financing mechanisms for protected areas. Co-mingling with Government funds through such instruments will increase scale and impact of programmes.

(Continued)

Key action (s)	Time-frame	Responsible unit (s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
1. Replicate pooled funding mechanisms of STAR for broader range of partners' contributions, including Government and EU, towards shared goals	2016 Q2	STAR2 Project; STAR PAR Multi Donor Projects (Outcome 1 of the new CPD)		
2. Strengthen the capacities of the Country Office staff in Government cost-sharing approaches and benefits by engaging IRH support and staff secondment	2016	UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub / Programme Unit	Detail assignments	
3. Strengthen programme approach to enable innovative funding and financing mechanism for development	2017-2021	Programme Unit (Climate Change Team; Protected Areas Team; Tirana Smart City Team)	New programme period	

Evaluation recommendation 3:

UNDP should strengthen partnership and knowledge cooperation with other development actors and should focus on scaling up impact.

Management response:

UNDP notes that development knowledge and replicable experience often sits with partners outside UNDP. This is also true in Albania. Some of the most important best practices in municipal services delivery, for example, have been accomplished through programmes supported by our partners across the country (SDC e.g. in Functional Areas; One Stop Shops; USAID on municipal finances; fiscal decentralization). UNDP support to the Government's reform programmes will need to be based on bigger investments on the side of the Country Office in learning from and leveraging the knowledge of other development partners, government units, civil society and academia. UNDP's programme design and management tools, such as Local Project Appraisal and Steering Committees, are formal and collaborative mechanisms (involving leadership of development partners, national institutions) for ensuring that such knowledge and experience is reflected upon, assessed, and brought to scale, as relevant in UNDP-supported reform programmes. Going forward UNDP will deploy more intent to knowledge management through these formal mechanisms as well as through other mechanisms such as project visits, experience exchange and more structured dialogue.

The recommendation to focus on scaling impact is at the heart of the strategy for delivering the Country Programme 2017-2021. It is also the Country Office's key strategy for UNDP Strategic Plan alignment parameter of scale. UNDP has been part of successful experiences of scaling pilots to policy levels. One such example has been the experience of the coordinated community responses to gender-based violence (CCR). Going forward, a virtuous cycle of pilot to policy will be closed with bringing this response mechanism to scale through the agency of the 61 newly amalgamated municipalities (Evaluation of the CCR in the Context of Territorial Reform refers). Further the Country Office notes that scaling of UNDP-supported pilots or strategies may also be achieved through programmes supported by other development partners. For example UNDP pilots and models for financing for protected areas (2016 onward) provide inputs to broader policy and wider replication impact through EU-Italian Cooperation programme for Natura2000; or EU Climate Change Programs.

Key action (s)	Time-frame	Responsible unit (s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
1. Knowledge Management: Pre PACs and PACs dedicate agendas to knowledge management in collaboration with partners (e.g. site visits to SDC supported One Stop Shops in the context of STAR2)	Immediate	CD, Programme / Outcome Boards		
2. Scaling: The Country Programme 2017-2021 establishes specific targets for national scaling of past/evaluated pilots (e.g. CCR; municipal service delivery models; municipal energy tracking tools; one stop shops; archives etc.) to 61 municipalities balancing local government autonomy with standardization benefits. (This action is linked/and comprises same set of activities with Action 3 in response to Recommendation 1)	Immediate	Program/ STAR Team; Climate Change Team; Protected Areas Team; Gender Team		

(Continued)

Evaluation recommendation 4:

UNDP should apply a multidisciplinary approach to cross-cutting issues, including human rights, gender equality, social inclusion and environmental management.

Management response:

UNDP's work in Albania with UNWOMEN and other UN agency partners was recently recognized by the UNDG as a case study of strengthening normative and operational linkages as called for in GA resolution 67/226 translating normative framework (CEDAW) into results in Albania in the legal framework as well as at civil society and popular levels for increasing voice and participation in demand of rights. https://undg.org/main/undg_document/eight-case-studies-on-integrating-the-united-nations-normative-and-operational-work/ The Country Office notes however that such successes need to be made more horizontal across all outcome areas of the UNDP Country Programme going forward. Therefore, the Country Office has volunteered to apply the Gender Seal to its programme and operations in 2016. Further, effective use of programme design tools such as pre-appraisals, appraisals and monitoring and evaluation are already yielding results in stronger mainstreaming of gender across the portfolios, with most recent examples being STAR2 and STAR-PAR pooled funding programmes in support of local governance. Stronger follow up Special Procedures of Treaty bodies 'recommendations for Albania as well as the Universal Periodic Review findings will also be integrated into the Country Programme, going forward.

Environment – UNDP Country Office is regularly integrating Social and Environmental Standards in its programs as per applicable policy. Going forward, it will be important not only formalistically meeting the Standards, but using the SES as basis for advocacy and further project design, e.g. integrating longer term disaster and climate change scenarios into floods rehabilitation works under ongoing program. More significantly, supporting the national mechanisms for mainstreaming of environmental and climate-related concerns in development and sectoral policy is a development challenge UNDP seeks to address through its upcoming Country Programme (2017-21) for which specific output targets to this regard have been agreed to and specified. The interministerial committee on climate change is a relatively young coordination mechanism for climate change mainstreaming. UNDP will support the governance and capacities of this committee to lead on policy direction that must be complied by line ministries.

Quality Assurance system for Country Office programming will be used throughout the new programme period. The Country Office has already mobilized other mechanisms for pursuing an issues-based approach that cuts across outcome areas They include the establishment of solution teams to support Tirana Municipality in follow up to the Smart City conference and multisectoral work plan of the Municipality. Further the Country Office's systematic use of Open Government and Open Data Partnerships including the Trust in Institutions Surveys help feed multidisciplinary assessments, performance monitoring into programme work across portfolios.

Key action (s)	Time-frame	Responsible unit (s)	Tracking	
			Comments	**Status**
1. Gender Seal – Gender Seal Action Plan and Gender Equality Strategy for the Country Office prepared and implemented	2016	RR/CD; Gender Seal Team		
2. Gender mainstreaming ensured through all phases of programme development (pre-PAC and PAC mechanisms) and implementation collaboratively with development partners and Government	2016	CD/Programme Unit	(Starting with STAR PAC scheduled for March)	
3. UPR recommendations integrated in the Country Programme (Outcome 2)	2016	RR/CD/ Gender Team; Social Inclusion Team; Roma and Egyptian Programme Team; Governance Team		
4. Environment: UNDP will support the governance and capacities of the Inter ministerial committee on climate change committee to lead on policy direction that must be complied by line ministries. This is captured as a result in our CPD Outcome 4	2017-2021	CD/Environment Team	Country Programme Outcome 4	
5. Support Open Data Partnership including Trust in Institutions Surveys that cut across multiple issues	2017-2021	RR/CD		
6. Integrated support to Tirana Municipality to help address multidisciplinary issues	2017-2021	CD/ Programme		

Evaluation recommendation 5:
UNDP should prepare a long-term strategy for its development support to Albania during the course of the EU accession process. The strategy should outline UNDP's key areas of support to Albania in moving forward with EU membership.

Management response:

The UNDP Country Programme 2017-2021 presents greater focus and credibility to our work going forward. Its alignment to the NSDI and the overarching goal of promoting rule of law and good governance with the ultimate objective of Albania's European integration outlines UNDP's strategy of support to Albania in moving forward with EU accession. In this context, the Country Office will explore in 2016 further entry points to support especially the anti-corruption and rule of law actors by expanding its current work. This can be further broadened in the frame of public administration reform including transparent business processes and effective public services delivery, to see how anti-corruption and rule of law support contributes to broader EU accession priorities. Each programme outcome area will be provided with the European integration relevance rationale in the Country Programme.

Key action (s)	Time-frame	Responsible unit (s)	Tracking	
			Comments	**Status**
1. Country Programme preparation and appraisal	By end Q2 2016	RR/CD		
2. Identify relevant SDG targets and indicators and promote discussions on inequalities following IRH development dialogue	End 2017	RR/CD		

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