

**FINAL EVALUATION REPORT
UNITED NATIONS -AZERBAIJAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION FRAMEWORK
2021 – 2025**

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CF	Cooperation Framework
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CPRPD	Convention for the Protection of Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CGAP	Consultative Group to Assist the Poor
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCO	Development Coordination Office
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EM	Evaluation Manager
EQ	Evaluation Question
ET	Evaluation Team
ETMT	Evaluation Technical Management Team
ESC	Evaluation Steering Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HRBA	Human Rights - Based Approach
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JRNA	Joint Recovery Needs Assessment
JSC	Joint Steering Committee
JWP	Joint Workplan
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MENR	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MIA	Ministry of the Internal Affairs
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoE	Ministry of Economy
MoE	Ministry of Energy
MoES	Ministry of Emergency Situations
MoH	Ministry of Health
MTCHT	Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies
MTR	Mid - Term Review
NCCSD	National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development
NCD	Non - Communicable Disease
NGO	Non - governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OMT	Operations Management Team
RBM	Results - Based Management
RC	Resident Coordinator
RG	Result Group
RCO	Office of the Resident Coordinator
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSC	State Statistical Committee
ToC	Theory of Change
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UN--Habitat	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
UNAPF	UN - Azerbaijan Partnership Framework

UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VNR	Voluntary National Report
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive Summary

Introduction: This report presents findings, conclusions and recommendations of the independent final evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Azerbaijan (2021-2025), commissioned by the United Nations Country Team and United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) in the country. The document was signed between United Nations (UN) Country Team and the Government of Azerbaijan on 1 March 2021. The UNSDCF sets the strategic vision and direction for cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) for the period of 2021-2025. The UNSDCF 2021 – 2025 builds around the following four priorities, with a focus on contributing to SDG targets to meet four strategic priority areas, as follows:

- 1: Inclusive growth that reduces vulnerability and builds resilience
- 2: Stronger institutions for better public and social services delivery
- 3: Protecting the environment and addressing climate change
- 4: A gender-equitable society that empowers women and girls

Purpose and Objectives of the Evaluation: The evaluation aims to ensure accountability, support learning, and inform the design of the next CF cycle. The specific objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Assess the contribution of the CF to national development results through evidence-based judgements using evaluation criteria (accountability).
- Identify factors that have affected the CF's contribution; answering the question of why the performance is as it is; and explaining the enabling factors and bottlenecks (learning).
- Reach conclusions concerning the UN's contribution across the scope being examined.
- Provide actionable recommendations for improving the CF's contribution, especially for incorporation into the new CF programming cycle. These recommendations should be logically linked to the conclusions and findings of the evaluation and should draw upon lessons learned identified through the evaluation.

Scope and key users: The evaluation covered the three years of CF implementation between March 2021 - June 2024. The evaluation looks at the UNSDCF 2021-2025 as a whole and covers contributions of all sub-outputs by both resident and non-resident agencies of the UNCT, also examining the cross-cutting issues and the global UN programming principles (e.g. leaving no one behind LNOB, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability and resilience, and accountability) and the scope of coverage of CF implementation across the country (desk review) assessing the geographical reach achieved by CF intervention.

The evaluation findings will be utilized to inform strategic planning, and future programming. Primary users of the evaluation include stakeholders involved in the implementation of the CF, including UNCT, governmental bodies, civil society organizations, contributing partners, and other relevant stakeholders while secondary users encompass a broader audience, academic and research community, media and the general public.

Methodology for the evaluation: The evaluation followed the UNEG-DCO Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and principles, employing a non-experimental, mixed-methods approach that combined desk reviews and analysis of available quantitative secondary data; primary qualitative data collection, along with data triangulation, to ensure a strong and credible evidence base. Data collection methods included stakeholder mapping, an in-depth review of UNSDCF design documents, implementation approaches, and results achieved, as well as an examination of policy documents and legislative frameworks. A contribution analysis was conducted to

identify factors that influenced progress. Interviews and group discussions were held with various stakeholders, including representatives from the UNRCO, UN agencies, government institutions, civil society, the private sector, and international partners. The evaluation included key informant interviews and group meetings with more than 135 stakeholders from the resident and non-resident UN agencies (53), national stakeholders from government institutions (53), interviews with NGOs, universities, and private sector (23) as well as international development partners (6). The evaluation adhered to UNEG guidelines and OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, focusing on relevance, adaptability, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and coordination. Key limitations included incomplete indicator data, limited availability of reliable, and disaggregated data for outcome-level results.

Findings and Conclusions

Relevance and Adaptability: The evaluation team (ET) found that The UNSDCF is largely aligned with Azerbaijan's socio-economic development priorities, particularly through its collaboration with the government and alignment with strategies like the "Azerbaijan 2030" plan. While the framework is results-oriented, with clear objectives and defined responsibilities, many indicators are set at a high level and do not always reflect the detailed linkages between UN interventions and outcomes. Challenges include the absence of baseline data, ambitious targets in sectors like MSMEs, and limited mechanisms for reliable, disaggregated data collection. Although the CF demonstrated some flexibility, it also encountered limitations. The conflict and the subsequent Great Return Programme introduced new challenges. While the CF did not fully repurpose itself to support this initiative, it provided targeted assistance through project-level interventions and capacity-building efforts, such as support for demining operations and the Joint Recovery Needs Assessment conducted with the government, EU and WB. In response to other shocks, such as the prolonged impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and declining global energy demand, the UNCT acted swiftly, continuing pandemic-related efforts from the previous cooperation cycle and working effectively with government and non-government partners to support the most vulnerable. However, the CF could strengthen its responsiveness by adopting more robust resilience-building and shock-responsive social protection measures to better address future challenges.

Coherence: The CF has effectively improved the coherence of UN support in Azerbaijan by promoting collaboration among the UN system, government, and other stakeholders through structured mechanisms like the Joint Government-UN Steering Committee Results Groups. These frameworks have helped align priorities and reduce overlap in activities. The UN has also strengthened its partnerships with non-governmental actors, including the private sector and civil society. Overall, the CF has fostered a more integrated development approach, though further work is needed to enhance the impact of these collaborations. The CF seeks to ensure policy consistency across sectors by aligning UN agency programs with its strategic priorities, as outlined in the structured Results Framework. While the CF's design and joint work plans (JWPs) generally align with higher-level objectives, there is a noted disconnect at the sub-output level, where specific agency activities do not always fully converge with the CF's broader goals. Adapting projects to JWP formats has led to inconsistencies, particularly in project sizes and resource allocations. Despite these challenges, increased collaboration among UN agencies and regular coordination meetings have strengthened a unified approach. The JWPs primarily function as internal UN coordination tools. The number of joint programmes remains limited. The CF has supported the development of an integrated response to national development ambitions and emphasizes human rights, gender equality, and the principle of leaving no one behind (LNOB).

Effectiveness: The Azerbaijan CF Results Framework is structured at the outcome level, with targets aligned with specific outcome indicators for five outcomes and 18 intermediate outcomes, largely drawn

from the SDGs. The infrequent measurement of these indicators complicates progress tracking. The indicators in the Results Matrix are not regularly updated due to data availability issues from official sources and challenges in primary data collection. This limits the effectiveness of the contribution analysis based on the theory of change guiding the CF's development. Furthermore, the high-level indicators often reflect the national vision and contributions from multiple stakeholders, making it difficult to attribute performance solely to the UN. Despite these limitations, these impact indicators are useful for monitoring long-term development progress. Overall, the CF implementation has remained on track concerning desired program outputs, with a strong emphasis on addressing gender-based needs and the requirements of marginalized and vulnerable groups. The CF has also made efforts to support data production, conduct research, and strengthen data governance systems across the country. The CF has made significant progress toward achieving its objectives, yet challenges remain. For Outcome 1.1, which focuses on integrating disadvantaged groups into the economy, targets have not been fully met due to structural economic issues and limited job opportunities. However, progress is evident in expanding Women Resource Centers (WRCs) and employment opportunities for women, farmers, and vulnerable groups, particularly in labor legislation affecting women. Outcome 2.1 has shown improvements in social protection, education, primary healthcare, and governance, although some policy changes are still pending. In Outcome 2.2, there has been an increase in the availability and quality of disaggregated data, supported by enhanced capacities for monitoring SDG indicators and the production of important data tools, such as MICS and population projections; however, much work remains to effectively inform decision-making. Under Outcome 3.1 some progress has been made in energy policies and good policy initiatives have been established in climate response and sustainable use of resources, laying the groundwork for advancing green growth after COP29. Outcome 4.1 has successfully supported women and girls, especially in conflict-affected areas, leading to some improvements in income and socio-economic participation.

Efficiency: The Cooperation Framework has effectively utilized government and UN resources to achieve its outcomes, though individual agency priorities sometimes hinder a unified approach. The reliance on earmarked funding and the need for immediate results can lead to an opportunistic approach, undermining long-term development goals and creating silos among agencies. Despite these challenges, the UNCT has successfully mobilized funds for some joint programmes, such as the Integrated National Financial Framework and a regional EU-funded programme. The establishment of an integrated financing framework or SDG Accelerator Fund has not yet occurred, with mixed opinions on its feasibility due to Azerbaijan's upper-middle-income status and the existing donor landscape. The CF has effectively reduced transaction costs for partners through increased UN coherence. Key informants noted that the UN has achieved results efficiently, with minimal waste and duplication. The UN has leveraged government resources and cost-sharing arrangements, exemplified by successful collaborations such as the Agro Credit and Development Agency's projects. The UN has maintained satisfactory budget delivery rates, with over 70% in all outcome areas. Administrative coordination, while creating additional costs for agency staff, has facilitated program delivery.

Coordination: The Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) has been pivotal in ensuring the effective planning and coordination of the Cooperation Framework (CF), facilitating Results Groups and thematic groups to align UN agency efforts and achieve output and outcome indicators. The RCO's technical support, expertise and networks are instrumental, especially for smaller agencies. The RC's diplomatic approach has been effective in engaging with the government and stakeholders, advancing policy dialogues, and addressing normative issues like gender equality. While the RC's role has been highly valued by donors and UN agencies for its inclusiveness and expertise, leveraging the full potential of a collective approach for CF implementation requires commitment and concerted efforts by all UNCT members. Despite

challenges, the RC has made significant strides in fostering a cooperative culture and enhancing UNCT coherence, though some issues remain in fully utilizing the reforms intended to boost joint efforts.

Orientation towards Impact: The UN's Cooperation Framework (CF) has made significant strides in advancing national priorities and the SDG agenda in Azerbaijan by establishing essential partnerships with the government, donors, the private sector, and civil society. This collaboration has facilitated the effective incorporation of SDG principles into national policies and budgeting processes, as well as the creation of a national data governance system. Despite having a relatively modest financial presence, the UN has played a catalytic role by offering strategic advice, which has been essential for progress in areas like employment rights, inclusive education, women empowerment, sustainable agriculture and use of natural resources and environmental policy. Nevertheless, while grassroots initiatives align well with CF objectives, there is a clear need for more defined strategies to scale up interventions and achieve systemic change. Recent initiatives to promote environmental resilience and green growth in preparation for COP29 highlight the UN's influential role in shaping national policy and engaging a diverse range of stakeholders.

Sustainability: The Cooperation Framework (CF) is designed with sustainability in mind, closely aligning with national strategies and benefiting from strong government ownership and commitment, which are crucial for its progress. The UNCT effectively combines technical assistance with capacity building at various levels, leveraging both international and national expertise to enhance local capabilities. Successful initiatives, such as the digitalization and delivery of social services via the 'single window, and inclusive education, exemplify the government's adoption of UN-supported efforts. However, while the UN's strategic approach generally promotes sustainability, some stakeholders have highlighted that there is potential for the UNCT to better support civil society and enhance public engagement in state policy formulation and implementation. The evaluation indicates that sustainability may be impacted by ongoing challenges, including a shift in government resources and priorities related with the reconstruction of regained territories.

Cross-cutting issues: The programming principles of gender equality, human rights, capacity building, Leave No One Behind, and environmental sustainability are recognized as being well-integrated into the Cooperation Framework (CF). However, assessing their outcomes is challenging due to the absence of effective indicators.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are addressed to the UNCT as the primary actor with the responsibility of formulating, designing, managing and implementing the next UN Cooperation Framework in Azerbaijan; as well as the Government of Azerbaijan.

Relevance and Adaptability: The UNCT should align the next CF with the highest development needs in the country, focusing on human capital development with a special focus on youth education and employment, health and social protection as well as green growth. The Great Return Programme and the Demining initiatives should be highly prioritized in the next CF, with an emphasis on resilience building, and mainstreaming of LNOB and HR principles.

Coherence: The UNCT should strengthen cross-sector integration and resource optimization in the next CF to boost synergies among interventions. This includes refining indicators and monitoring systems to

ensure programs remain adaptable to shifting priorities, and coordinating efforts across different outcome areas so that strategic goals and partner resources are used as effectively as possible.

Effectiveness: The UNCT should ensure that the next CF is based on a realistic Results Framework, with a soundly developed results chain that adequately represents the level and extent of UN interventions in the given sectors. The CF should prioritise areas where UN agencies have clear individual or joint comparative advantages.

The next CF should continue investment in national data eco-systems and support to the multidimensional integration of SDGs.

Efficiency: The UNCT and Government of Azerbaijan should continue to consolidate the work of the RGS and thematic groups to improve coordination during implementation and improve joint work-planning processes. Government and Agencies are called upon to acknowledge the importance of coordination and ensure continuity of membership and avoid loss of institutional memory.

The UNCT should explore the potential and partner interest to establish an integrated funding framework and one fund at the country level and actively explore joint programming opportunities as catalysts for better coherence and results for the country.

Coordination: Results groups and MEL should play a more active role on joint planning and the formulation of Joint workplans, to ensure that the latter consolidate and integrate the efforts of UNCT and serve as a vehicle to identify and leverage better synergies in implementation.

Sustainability and Impact: The UNCT should strategize on sustainability of interventions at design stage, with a clear logical flow of how beneficiary buy in, commitment and capacity is to be embedded in the programme. Approaches to support institution building and capacity development should be prioritised, alongside data governance and digital transformation.

Cross-cutting Issues: The UNCT should mainstream gender equality, human rights, LNOB not only at the RF, but at programme and project level and develop targeted needs assessments to inform better policy. The UNCT should continue to strengthen capacity building for and cooperation with civil society and the private sector for the implementation of the CF and leveraging their expertise and resources towards the achievement of the SDG agenda.

Lessons learnt

1. Importance of Joint Programming and Resource Mobilization for SDG Acceleration: Effective joint programming, where synergies are built and interventions are synchronized, is crucial for achieving targeted outcomes that not only deliver services but also build sustainable capacity. Such integrated approaches allow multiple UN agencies to address several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within a single program, thus accelerating progress.
2. Role of RCO for UNSDCF implementation and SDG integration: The RCO's dedication and support for the UN agencies has greatly improved coordination, not only among UN agencies but also with national and international stakeholders. The UNCT as a strategic and knowledge sharing platform should be fully utilised by all members.
3. Partnership building and consultations with national stakeholders at central and local level is an essential ingredient of success to ensure country ownership and commitment to achieve and sustain results. It is important that governmental authorities are on board to make financial contributions

for planned interventions through cost sharing modalities to ensure long-term commitment and sustainability.

4. **Need for Updated and Achievable Results Matrices:** A lack of sufficient data for tracking progress on indicators and outdated results matrices hinder the ability to fully assess the impact of UN interventions. Ensuring that the future UNSDCF results matrix is regularly updated and that indicators are clearly attributable to the UN Development System will allow for more accurate and actionable evaluations. Similarly, setting realistic goals within the five-year CF period will prevent over-ambition and improve the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes.
5. **Need for harmonisation of business and implementation practices:** The BOS Strategy is a good start to increase efficiency of operations, however further harmonisation of businesses and procedures should be addressed at the HQ level for the UNSDG system. The UNInfo database should be adequately utilised by all agencies to enable comprehensive and reliable information on implementation outcomes, achievements and budget plans and delivery.
6. **The importance of Joint Workplans:** Joint Work Plans should be more than administrative exercises; they need to serve as strategic, meaningful planning tools that guide the implementation of the UNSDCF. When effectively designed and aligned with the Cooperation Framework's outcomes, JWPs can ensure coordinated efforts across UN agencies, foster accountability, and provide a clear roadmap for achieving results. Strengthening the use of JAWPs as key planning instruments can enhance coherence, improve resource allocation, and support the timely achievement of shared development goals.

1 Introduction

This report presents the first draft findings of the independent evaluation of the United Nations and Government of Azerbaijan Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025¹. This Inception Report is based on the Evaluation Terms of Reference (see Annex 1).

The UNSDCF sets the strategic vision and direction for cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) for the period of 2021-2025. It is the result of a consultative process between the Government, the UNCT and its national and international partners. In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UNSDCF considers how to leverage the comparative advantages of the United Nations System to best support national priorities and align UN activities with the country's strategic outlook.

The Common Country Assessment carried out prior to the formulation of the UNSDCF, identified six major areas to scale up efforts to attain the SDGs: (i) the income-generating ability of young people and other groups such as women and small farmers, who remain vulnerable to economic shocks; (ii) the quality and reach of public services to the most vulnerable in society, including in the education, health, and justice sectors; (iii) environmental pollution and degradation; (iv) spatial and gender inequalities; (v) institutional capacity to design evidence-based development policies; and (vi) the enduring consequences of the Karabakh war, based on which a set of accelerators, or catalytic interventions were identified. The formulation of the UNSDCF was based in an extensive and inclusive process of consultations led by the Minister of Economy and the Resident Coordinator, culminating in the Strategic Prioritisation Workshop in Baku in January 2020, with the participation of UN, government, civil society, academia, private sector and international development partners. The vision that emerged from the CCA process and capacity gap analyses and the stakeholder consultations was narrowed down into four priority areas, five outcomes and 18 outputs for the UN development system to focus on over the period of 2021-2025, reflecting on how to leverage the comparative advantages of the UN Country Team to support national priorities and progress towards the country's strategic outlook and SDG agenda.

At the time of the formulation of the UNSDCF 2021 – 2025, the Azerbaijan Vision 2020 strategic framework was approaching the end of the implementation, and the new CF was closely aligned with government and other partners to contribute towards the emerging national vision for 2030 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2022, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan approved two important policy documents: the Socio-Economic Development Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2022-2026) and the State Programme for the Great Return to the Liberated Territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2022-2026). These documents guide the implementation of the vision set forth in Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development and the strong commitment from the Government to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Socio-Economic Development Strategy outlines five national priorities: 1) Sustainably growing competitive economy, 2) Dynamic, inclusive, and equitable society, 3) Competitive human capital and modern innovations; 4) The great return to the territories liberated from occupation and 5) Clean environment and “green growth” country.

The UNSDCF 2021 – 2025 builds around the following four priorities, with a focus on contributing to SDG targets to meet four strategic priority areas, as follows:

- Priority Area # 1: Inclusive growth that reduces vulnerability and builds resilience
- Priority Area # 2: Stronger institutions for better public and social services delivery

¹ https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Azerbaijan-UNSDCF-2021-2025_1.pdf

- Priority Area # 3: Protecting the environment and addressing climate change
- Priority Area # 4: A gender-equitable society that empowers women and girls

1.1 Evaluation purpose and objectives

An end of the cycle evaluation is to be conducted during the penultimate year of the CF implementation. The evaluation of the CF is a mandatory independent system-wide country evaluation to ensure accountability, support learning and inform decisions regarding the design of subsequent CF cycle, in line with UNEG guidelines and as outlined in the CF 2021 - 2025. The evaluation is expected to systematically assess the contributions of the CF by focusing on achieved development results, as well as internal and external gaps and overlaps in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The CF evaluation has two primary purposes:

- I. **Promote greater learning and operational improvement.** The evaluation will provide important information for strengthening programming and results at the country level, specifically informing the planning and decision-making for the next CF programme cycle and for improving UN coordination at the country level. The UNCT, host government and other CF stakeholders can learn from the process of documenting good practices and lessons learned, which can then be shared with DCO and used for the benefit of other countries.
- II. **Support greater accountability of the UNCT to CF stakeholders.** By objectively providing evidence of results achieved within the framework of the CF and assessing the effectiveness of the strategies and interventions used, the evaluation will enable the various stakeholders in the CF process, including national counterparts and donors, to hold the UNCT and other parties accountable for fulfilling their roles and commitments.

The objectives of the evaluation are to:

1. Assess the contribution of the CF to national development results through evidence-based judgements using evaluation criteria (accountability).
2. Identify factors that have affected the CF's contribution; answering the question of why the performance is as it is; and explaining the enabling factors and bottlenecks (learning).
3. Reach conclusions concerning the UN's contribution across the scope being examined.
4. Provide actionable recommendations for improving the CF's contribution, especially for incorporation into the new CF programming cycle. These recommendations should be logically linked to the conclusions and findings of the evaluation and should draw upon lessons learned identified through the evaluation.

1.2 Scope and key users of the evaluation

The evaluation covers the three years of CF implementation covering the period of March 2021-March 2024. The evaluation also analyses the scope of coverage of CF implementation across the country (desk review) taking into account the geographical reach achieved by CF interventions, probing whether the initiatives predominantly concentrated efforts in the capital city or demonstrated a more comprehensive geographical dispersion, encompassing regions beyond the primary urban centre.

The evaluation findings will be utilized to inform strategic planning, and future programming. Primary users of the evaluation include stakeholders involved in the implementation of the CF, including UNCT, governmental bodies, civil society organizations, contributing partners, and other relevant stakeholders while secondary users will encompass a broader audience, academic and research community, media and the general public.

The evaluation looks at the UNSDCF 2021-2025 as a whole and covers contributions of all sub-outputs by the UNCT including contributions of the non-resident agencies. It examines the cross-cutting issues and the global UN programming principles (e.g. leaving no one behind LNOB, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability and resilience, and accountability). The evaluation also takes into account emerging issues, such as, the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in both the evaluation contents (e.g. the UNCT's responsiveness, adaptation and reprioritization) and operation (e.g. methods for managing stakeholder participation and inclusiveness). It will not evaluate the individual programmes nor activities of UN agencies.

1.3 Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The evaluation follows the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidelines, norms and standards as well as the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria which comprise relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability; as well as coordination for the implementation of the UNSDCF.

The Terms of Reference outline eighteen suggested evaluation questions to guide this evaluation. The indicative evaluations questions have been slightly revised at Inception stage, based on discussions with the Evaluation Manager and preliminary findings from the Theory of Change Workshops. In addition, the total number of Evaluation Questions was reduced to a total of thirteen, in line with the UNEG guidance for UNSDCF Evaluations, to ensure that they would be manageable given the characteristics, objectives and scope of this evaluation.

Table 1 Evaluation Criteria and Questions

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions
<p>Relevance and adaptability IS THE CF DOING THE RIGHT THINGS AND ADAPTED WELL TO EMERGING NEEDS?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent are the CF objectives aligned and been consistent with the needs, priorities, and policies of the government (including alignment to national development goals and targets, national plans, strategies and frameworks). To what extent is the UNSDCF results-oriented? 2. How dynamic and responsive has the CF been to emerging and unforeseen needs, especially those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?
<p>Coherence HOW WELL DOES THE CF FIT?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. To what extent has the CF strengthened the coherence of support by the UN system and served as an effective partnership vehicle with government and other stakeholders? 4. Post UN reform, to what extent has the UN system promoted or supported policies that are consistent among each other and across sectors, and how effectively and meaningfully have UN agency programs and work plans been derived from the Cooperation Framework (CF) in both design and implementation? 5. To what extent is the UNSDCF aligned with the SDG agenda, the country's international commitments and UN programming principles?

<p>Effectiveness HAS THE CF ACHIEVED ITS OBJECTIVES? IS THE CF DOING IT RIGHT?</p>	<p>6. How effective has the CF been in achieving the results outlined in the results framework?</p> <p>7. To what extent has the CF contributed to the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment, human rights, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability. What have been the benefits for the people and institutions targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized population?</p>
<p>Efficiency HOW WELL HAVE RESOURCES BEEN USED?</p>	<p>8. Has the CF reduced transaction costs for partners through greater UN coherence?</p> <p>9. To what extent has the CF collectively prioritized activities based on the needs (demand side) rather than on the availability of resources (supply side), and reallocated resources according to the collective priorities and changing needs if/where necessary?</p>
<p>Coordination HOW WELL HAS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CF BEEN COORDINATED?</p>	<p>10. To what extent the planning and coordination of the CF (through the Results Groups with the RCO support) efficiently contributed to a coherent implementation and to the achievement of indicators’ targets (outputs and outcomes)?</p> <p>11. To what extent did the post reform Resident Coordinator office’s roles and responsibilities enable positive UNCT’s joint convening power and better coherence of the country team?</p>
<p>Orientation towards impact WHAT DIFFERENCE DO CF INTERVENTIONS MAKE?</p>	<p>12. To what extent have UN system activities articulated in the CF driven progress towards, or supported achievement of ToC outcomes? Were interventions scaled up to achieve impact?</p>
<p>Sustainability WILL THE BENEFITS LAST?</p>	<p>13. What mechanisms, if any, has the CF established to ensure socio-political, institutional, financial and environmental sustainability? What is the likelihood that progress towards the SDGs is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time?</p>

The evaluation criteria above and associated final evaluation questions and sub-questions have guided the evaluation of the UNSDCF 2021-2025. A detailed Evaluation Design Matrix, which will guide the data collection process to find specific evidence for each evaluation criterion and question, with indicators/success standards, data collection methods, and sources of information provided is available in Annex 2.

1.4 Country Context

Azerbaijan is a country of 10.1 million people located in the region of South Caucasus. The country became independent in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1992, the country became a member of the United Nations. Azerbaijan is a middle-income country with GDP per capita at \$USD 7,640 in 2024 (IMF, 2024²). Azerbaijan’s Human Development Index in 2022 was 0.760, putting the country in the high human development category (86th). Population growth in the country has dropped drastically, from 1.29 in 2013

² <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/profile/AZE>

to a negligible 0.4% in 2022. The share of the young population (0-14 years) is around 21.9% while the share of people between 15-64 is 69.6% (SSC). The median age in 2021 reached 34 and continues to increase. In 2024, 54.6% of the population of the country lived in urban areas. (SSC, 2024)

1.4.1 Political context

In the last decade Azerbaijan has experienced political stability and improved security. The country has recorded substantial gains in indicators measuring the state fragility, security situation as well as strength of state institution. Two major events have shaken the society and state in the last 4 years. First, pandemic COVID19 had huge impact on economic, social and political situation leading the closure of borders, curfews and economic downturn. Second, 44-day Karabakh War led to de-occupation of Azerbaijani territories, and the war claimed more than 3,000 people dead and several thousand wounded. In September 2023, after another military escalation, Azerbaijan established their territorial integrity. Azerbaijan has improved its position in several indicators including Fragility State Index (2023 – improved ranking by 2)³, Global Peace Index (2023 – improved ranking by 15)⁴. On February 7, 2024 incumbent president Ilham Aliyev won another presidential election, securing the presidential position for the next seven years. Parliamentary elections were held in September 2024, leading to a resounding victory for the governing party.

In general, the security apparatus of the country successfully contains all threats to internal stability. For the observed period there was no serious and significant security threat in the country related to terrorism and civil unrest. The security institutions of the country were also able to contain serious criminal factors such as organized and street crimes. The level of crime remained low, and the crime increase for the last three years has remained moderate. Police forces, as well as other security agencies, are considered to be professional and effective. Azerbaijan has also improved marginally in several measurements according to the World Governance Indicators. Thus, voice and accountability indicator that measures perception of people in freedom of expression, free media and association have improved in 2022. Other indicators either marginally worsened included control over corruption, rule of law, government effectiveness, and regulatory quality. (World Bank, 2023).

Geopolitically and geoeconomically, the South Caucasus region has become increasingly complex due to a confluence of interests of external regional and global actors and is not seen as being constrained by binary choice between powerful actors. The region neighbours the Middle East; Armenia and Azerbaijan share a border with Iran and Turkey. It also constitutes a part of a larger Black Sea region with two integration strategies of the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union. Russia and the European Union consider the South Caucasus region as part of their “neighbourhood” policy, with Russia being historically sensitive to any regional developments. The U.S. policy toward the region has gone through several phases of less, or more active engagement, especially given the South Caucasus countries’ proximity and ties with Iran. There are still uneasy relations with neighbouring Armenia due to several issues including peace agreement, the fate of enclaves and border delimitation. Recent trends including return of four Azerbaijani villages to Baku gave hope that Baku and Yerevan will sign long-awaited peace agreement.

Following the Karabakh war, the Government initiated the Great Return program, which envisages systematic measures for returning IDPs to their hometowns in the liberated lands. The “First State Program on the Great Return to the liberated territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan,” approved by the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, calls for the return of 10,270 families by 2025 and 34,500 families

³ <https://fragilestatesindex.org/excel/>

⁴ <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/GPI-2023-Web.pdf>

by 2026.⁵ To ensure the expansion of social and economic opportunities, improve the quality of life, and identify and address any potential issues relating to internally displaced people returning to liberated territories, the government seeks to facilitate the building of sustainable and resilient IDP communities in Karabakh region. This will facilitate the government's smooth and effective implementation of the return program. Baku plans to allocate around 10 bn USD to fund construction and recovery projects in Karabakh and East Zangazur. In total, 29.4% of the state budget's capital expenditure in these years is designed to be spent for these purposes. Demining, reconstruction, and the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) have remained among Azerbaijan's top priorities since 2020, following the three decades-long conflict which resulted in massive displacement of people and devastation.

One of the significant events of Azerbaijan in the international arena is hosting COP29 - UN Climate Change Conference that will take place in Baku between November 11 to 22, 2024. The Azerbaijani COP29 Presidency Team is engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to enhance ambition and enable action on climate action and climate financing. At the same time, Baku is committed to align climate action with sustainable development at the national level.

1.4.2 Key socio-economic challenges

Three main events in the last 4 years - 44-day Karabakh War, COVID19 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine – have great socio-economic impact on Azerbaijan. Ukraine and Russia are significant exporters of several agricultural products, such as grain and oil seeds, and the disruption of exports from these countries has already led to huge global increases in the prices of agricultural commodities. Consequences of price growth and supply chain disruptions are felt especially in the poorest and vulnerable segments of the country. Along with these, the pressure on the Ruble, banking restrictions on foreigners and — in the long run — the collapse of the labour market in Russia had economic and social impact on Azerbaijan. Perhaps, the war impacts everyone nevertheless, the poorest and vulnerable people are the ones who will suffer the most. Azerbaijani economy was adversely impacted by the war between Russia and Ukraine through potential loss of market for Azerbaijan's non-energy exports, access to vital imports, inflation, and the loss of assets (World Bank, 2022). By 2024, the country was able to adjust to external shocks and recover from COVID19. Massive investments into capital due to reconstruction has created some impact on consumption and revival of economy. Thus, GDP growth in the first 4 months of 2024 was around 4.3% compared to 0.1% growth last year. Non-oil GDP grew by almost 7.7%, thanks to transport, communication and agriculture sectors. Yet, Azerbaijani economy continues to depend a lot on oil sector and areas associated with it. Despite some developments in reinvigorating the non-oil sector, the country's economy is still dependent on oil and gas. This sector accounts for most of the foreign direct investment (FDI) flowing into the country. According to statistics, between 2000 and 2022, 72 percent of overall capital investments into the economy went to oil and gas sector. Construction and transport were the second and third sectors in terms of the size of the FDI. Agriculture, the largest employer in the country, received annually no more than 1 percent of total foreign capital. Meanwhile, the production sector constitutes 65.6% of the economy, while the service sector accounts for 34.4%. Around 90% of country's export is gas and oil. Furthermore, economy regionally skewed toward Baku where around 70-75% of GDP and around 85% of tax base is formed (SSC, 2023⁶).

⁵ Azərbaycan Respublikasının İşğaldan Azad Edilmiş Ərazilərinə Böyük Qayıdışa Dair I Dövlət Proqramı [The First State Program on "Great Return"]. (2022). 3.1.1. <https://e-qanun.az/framework/52757>

⁶ <https://www.stat.gov.az/menu/7/?lang=en>

Despite the positive macroeconomic trends and growing export of Azerbaijani hydrocarbons to Europe, the inflation and growth of consumer price index continued to be the scourge of the economy. In 2022 annual official inflation reached 14.4%, and in 2023 it was around 2.1%. Yet, the increasing prices of imported products is worrisome for the large segment of population. In other words, increased oil prices cannot offset the growth of prices felt by larger sectors of population. Some Azerbaijani exporters even suspended their activities, as they did not know how to build their pricing policy against the backdrop of noticeable fluctuations in the ruble exchange rate. (SSC, 2023). Despite GDP growth and solid fiscal buffers, Azerbaijan’s economic transition performance is lagging behind the regional average—especially in resilience and competitiveness⁷.

Despite efforts to improve social outcomes, inequalities persist, and women, youth, children, persons with disabilities, elderly persons, refugees, displaced communities, informal workers and rural populations remain the furthest left behind in access to some social services³. The Global Gender Gap Index 2023 stood at 0.692 ranking the country 97th out of 146 countries, and women’s representation in parliament is weak at 18.5 percent (legislature up to September 2024). Regional disparities are in place across a number of key socio-economic indicators, including the availability of pre-school facilities and secondary schools, healthcare facilities and health professionals, access to improved living conditions and access to finance.

1.4.3 Sustainable Development Goals

Azerbaijan has undertaken several measures to advance its progress towards achieving SDGs. Along with nationalizing 17 goals, 88 targets and 119 indicators, the country has implemented targeted policies and initiatives across various sectors. The National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development (NCCSD) was established that oversees and coordinates actions among various stakeholders, while the State Statistics Committee reports on the progress on SDGs annually through its [web platform](#) as well as annual reports on SDGs. In 2023, Azerbaijan has adopted its national SDG 18 on mine action focusing on the need of clearing landmines and other explosive remnants of war, supporting victims, and creating safe environments in post-conflict areas to ensure the safety and well-being of its citizens and contribute to regional stability. Several stand-alone initiatives are implemented to boost SDG financing, however, more coordinated actions under the umbrella of Integrated National Financing Framework for SDG financing could serve as catalytic. Across its three previous Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), Azerbaijan diligently documented its progress and acknowledged the challenges encountered in pursuing sustainable development. The country presented its fourth VNR in 2024, which is particularly opportune, coinciding with the evaluation of the CF. In 2024 Azerbaijan was one of the 26 countries to present its VNR. The 2021 VNR stated that the country has paid particular attention to raising awareness at all levels, regulating environmental issues, and enhancing private sector’s access to funding for SDGs. Furthermore, the government had tried to involve all stakeholders including parliament, civil society, academic and others to implementation of SDG and efforts were made to accelerate development and diversification of the and transformation to green economy.

1.4.4 The Azerbaijan UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

1.4.4.1 UNSDCF Outcome and Outputs

The UNSDCF 2021-2025 reflects the UN system’s collective approach in support of Azerbaijan’s priorities and needs, emphasising the need to ensure development cooperation, strengthen resilience to economic

⁷ Transition quality report of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

shocks by protecting the most vulnerable in society and by fulfilling their human rights and proposes a roadmap to ensure that Azerbaijan stays on track for the 2030 Agenda, using a human-centric rather than sector-oriented approach. This approach represents a fundamental shift in the way the UN system engages with government and national partners. Given the ambition of the 2030 Agenda and the urgency of its timeline, the UNSDCF establishes a much-needed focus, bearing down on fewer priorities that can maximize the UN’s impact. It guides the entire programme cycle as well as drives future planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation of collective UN support for achieving the 2030 Agenda. The UNSDCF is shaped by the central themes of the SDGs, with four interconnected strategic priorities, five outcomes and eighteen outputs.

The overall estimated budget to achieve the UNSDCF was approximately \$235 million out of which \$141 million was projected to be available with 40% funding gap. In the first two years of implementation \$58 million has been spent while \$32 million made available for 2023.

1.4.4.2 Key stakeholders of the UNSDCF

The UNSDCF was signed by 18 UN agencies, which have cumulatively contributed to the implementation of the current UNSDCF, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator: FAO, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UNDRR, UNECE, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOPS, UN Volunteers, UN Women, WHO. The UNSDCF reflects on partnerships and how UN will work in relations to others for each strategic priority area. The UN and the Government have signed a Declaration of Commitment to underpin the partnership approach to the implementation of the UNSDCF and towards its strategic priorities. Key government stakeholders for the implementation of the UNSDCF include:

Table 2 Key government stakeholders of the UNSDCF by strategic priority area

Strategic priority	Key government stakeholders
Strategic priority 1	Ministry of Economy, National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsperson), Ministry of Digital Development and Transport, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Youth and Sports, State Statistics Committee, ANAMA, State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations, Ministry of Science and Education, Ministry of Justice, State Committee for Family, Women and Children’s Affairs, State Committee for Refugees and IDPs, and State Committee on Work with the Azerbaijani Diaspora
Strategic priority 2	Ministry of Science and Education, Ministry of Health, State Agency for Mandatory Health Insurance, TABIB, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Digital Development and Transport, Ministry of Justice, State Statistics Committee, State Committee for Refugees and IDPs, State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations, Ministry of Economy, State Committee for Family, Women and Children’s Affairs and the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsperson).
Strategic priority 3	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, and including collaboration with the Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Digital Development and Transport, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Emergency

	Situations, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and State Agency for Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources under the Ministry of Energy, among other entities including the National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development (NCCSD).
Strategic priority 4	State Committee for Family, Children and Family Affairs, State Statistics Committee, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Youth and Sport and Ministry of Justice.

Other stakeholders include international development partners such as the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, USAID, European Union, private sector, academia and civil society.

1.4.4.3 UNSDCF governance

The four strategic priorities are jointly delivered by the Government (41 entities) and the UN system (18 UN agencies, funds and programmes) in partnership with the civil society, private sector, academia and other development partners.

Governance mechanisms and operational arrangements

The primary vehicle for overseeing implementation is the Joint Government-UN Steering Committee (JSC), under which five Results Groups have been established. The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Group, the Operations Management Team (OMT), and the Communication Group also act as key structures in the implementation of the CF. In addition to the Results Groups, the UNCT established thematic and operational groups to ensure UNCT programme and operation functions contribute to CF implementation. These include: Gender Thematic Group, Human Rights Thematic Group, Common Country Analysis Taskforce, Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Taskforce, Disability Inclusion Taskforce, Youth Inclusion Taskforce.

The JSC is co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator representing the UNCT and the Minister of Economy representing the Government of Azerbaijan. Senior government officials at the level of Deputy Ministers and Heads of UN agencies co-chair the five CF Result Groups.

Table 3 Governance structure of UNSDCF Result Groups

Result Groups	Co-chairs
Result Group One: Inclusive Growth	UNDP and Ministry of Economy
Result Group Two: Stronger Institutions	WHO and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population
Result Group Three: Data for Policies	Resident Coordinator's Office and State Statistics Committee
Result Group Four: Environment and Climate Change	FAO and Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources
Result Group Five: Gender-Equitable Society	UNFPA and State Committee for Women and Family Affairs

The CF is operationalized through the development of Joint Work Plans (JWPs) that present the planned programmatic sub-outputs and resource contributions of each UN entity to CF outputs, consistent with the Theory of Change. They are either unique to an agency or shared by two or more UNCT members.

The Joint Work Plans are discussed within and across Results Groups to ensure that gaps and overlaps, the potentials for synergy and joint programmes/joint programming are identified and streamlined. The Joint Work Plans are the basis for the Annual Performance Review, which feeds directly into the preparation of the Annual UN Country Results Report. All Joint Work Plans are endorsed by the JSC during its annual meeting, and published in UNINFO. Each year, a UN Country Results Report that comprehensively captures the UN development results (not activities) in support of the 2030 Agenda is developed.

During CF formulation, the UNCT and the Government acknowledged that data scarcity affects setting clear baselines for several indicators, which were also highlighted by the CCA findings. Thus, UNCT started several initiatives to help set baselines and track progress toward CF results, including a national Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). However, as the baselines and targets were not established for some of the indicators, the Result Groups proposed revision to the Results Matrix in 2021, which was endorsed by the JSC, and the Results Matrix was updated accordingly.

The United Nations Azerbaijan Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (CF) (2021-2025) represents the collective response of the UN development system to support Azerbaijan address national priorities and challenges in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

2 Methodology

2.1 Approach for the evaluation

The evaluation has used a **theory-based approach**, using the theory of change to draw conclusions about whether and how the CF has contributed to the observed results. The evaluation methodology was based on a careful analysis of the intervention logic, strategic issues underpinning programme design and contextual factors and adjustments during implementation (which may have affected the implementation of the CF interventions) and their potential to achieve the desired effects. The analysis of the CF's theory of change played a central role in the design of the evaluation, in the analysis of the data collected throughout the evaluation, in communicating results and in developing conclusions and recommendations - the contribution analysis was conducted through mapping pathways from interventions to results (cause and effect), recognizing that attributing results to interventions is generally complex and not always feasible.⁸ In this case, the evaluation seeks to determine whether at least a plausible case for the contribution and attribution can be made.

The evaluation was conducted using a **participatory and inclusive approach**, involving a wide range of partners and stakeholders. The evaluation team carried out a stakeholder mapping in order to identify

⁸ Mayne, John (2008); Contribution analysis: An approach to exploring cause and effect, ILAC Brief No 16.

the direct and indirect partners of the CF, specifically targeting United Nations organizations and representatives of the national government. Stakeholders mapping included civil society organizations (including organisations of persons with disabilities), the private sector, and other multilateral and bilateral cooperation organisations. The participatory approach focused on collective knowledge building and national ownership: Information and data was not just collected and analysed by the experts, but efforts were made for these to be shared, enhanced and validated through consultation and dialogue with the different stakeholders. This has included a stakeholder mapping process to ensure representation of all key stakeholders as well as views of users and beneficiaries. (Annex 4 and 5)

The **integration of quantitative and qualitative information**: Analysis was based on the secondary review of available and reliable quantitative data, as well as qualitative data collected during the field phase. Qualitative data collection approaches were applied to collect information from a range of purposively selected stakeholders. Data collected was validated through data triangulation (use of multiple sources).

2.2 Evaluation guidance and ethical considerations

The evaluation team has tried to ensure the evaluation follows the following specific evaluation guidance, mainly from the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG): the *UNEG Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework* (September 2021),⁹ and the 2016 *UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation*. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with UNEG Ethical Guidelines, observing the principles of integrity, accountability, respect and beneficence; and UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system, as well as the OECD/DAC evaluation principles, guidelines and quality standards.¹⁰ The evaluation also made use of guidelines for integration of Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations¹¹ to support the evaluation of cross-cutting issues.

2.3 Methodology for the evaluation

The evaluation methodology was based on a mixed method approach combining desk reviews and analysis of available quantitative secondary data; primary qualitative data collection through individual interviews with key informants and group discussions. The evaluation team developed the evaluation methodology in accordance with the evaluation approach and design tools to collect appropriate data and information as strong, evidence-based answers to answer the overall evaluation questions. The following data collection tools were used¹²:

- i. Documents review: CCA, CF and Joint Work Plans; mid-term progress reviews (where undertaken); annual reports and existing programme evaluation reports (notably those conducted by individual UN agencies,); national strategic documents; plans and policies; and related programme and project documents. Criteria for documents selection includes relevance to specific CF outcomes, and evaluation questions. Project documents that reflected regional activities were consulted, for example, data from projects supporting internally displaced persons

⁹ UNEG [Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework](#), United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), September 2021.

¹⁰ See in particular: the 2016 UNEG Norms and Standards (<http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914>), as well as the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system (<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>), the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (<http://www.unevaluation.org/ethicalguidelines>), and the UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports (www.uneval.org/document/detail/607).

¹¹ 2014 *UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation*, the 2018 UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator and its related scorecard, the 2015 *UN Women Evaluation Handbook on How to Manage Gender Responsive Evaluation*, and the 2018 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) *Guidance on Human Rights-Based Approach to Data*

¹² Please see Annex 3 for a detailed overview of data collection instruments.

(IDPs), rural development programs, and agricultural initiatives in various regions were analyzed to understand the context-specific impacts.

- ii. Self-assessment questionnaires for Results Groups and Thematic Groups: A structured questionnaire was designed to be shared electronically to strategic results group members drawn from the UN to elicit responses to evaluation questions. This questionnaire was expected to provide quantitative and qualitative data to complement the key informant interviews and documents review. In view of the limited time for the field mission, this was seen as an efficient way to gain first inputs from the Result and Thematic Groups, which were further validated during group meetings. A total of 18 responses to questionnaires were collected: one for each Result Group, 2 responses each from the private sector and Disability Inclusion Taskforce, respectively; 3 responses from the Human Right Thematic Group (HRTG), 1 response from the Gender Thematic Group (GTG) and 5 responses from the Youth Advisory taskforce.
- iii. Semi-structured key informant interviews and meetings, served to collect primary data from key informants. Key informants were purposively selected from a broader stakeholder mapping list based on their role in implementation of UNSDCF, nature of partnership with the UN and sector representation. Key informants are drawn from the government counterparts, civil society organisations, UNCT members and implementing partners. Stakeholders included those that have a strong collaboration with UN agencies; those representing vulnerable and marginalized groups, as well as those which play an important role in the different sectors. Targeting beneficiaries, efforts were made to ensure representation of the most vulnerable. In particular, efforts were made to include stakeholders representing key vulnerable populations (rights holders) such as CSOs in the field of gender equality and women empowerment, disability CSOs and those providing services to IDPs and other categories, as well as representatives of government institutions (duty bearers). The objectives of the meetings and list of questions were shared in advance with these actors to increase the efficiency of interactions and allow them to prepare their replies for successive meetings and interviews, and within their institutions.
- iv. Group meetings with Results Groups members from the UN and Government (separately) and Thematic Groups- Meetings were organized with each of the Results Groups to complement the information gathered through the questionnaires. These meetings served to validate and further probe issues raised in the questionnaires, as well as encourage the group members to formulate/refine findings and recommendations.

Due to time constraints, it was not possible to carry out field visits during this evaluation or visit stakeholders outside of the capital. The field mission was planned at a total of seven days, which was insufficient to engage with stakeholders at both the national and regional levels. However, the evaluation looked into the geographical dimension of CF implementation, the different needs and priorities at regional level and the way in which the CF responded to these throughout the implementation. Beyond a desk review of the geographical reach of the CF implementation, these issues were discussed with UN and government representatives and interviews with stakeholders who have first-hand knowledge of regional operations were held. A specific meeting with NGOs from the regions was also held.

2.4 Sampling approach

A purposive sampling approach was used to select target groups and stakeholders to be consulted. The purposive sampling technique used by the evaluation team aimed to ensure that selected stakeholders

adequately reflect the diversity of stakeholders implementing the UNSDCF, taking into account their level of involvement in the UNSDCF, and paying special attention to the inclusion, participation and non-discrimination of the most vulnerable stakeholders. The sampling approach also considered aspects of inclusion of women and men. It ensured that the selected stakeholders are involved in the five different outcome areas, and in diverse outcomes and outputs; that their work reflect the wealth of experiences and the chances of generating interesting lessons; that they have a strategic position in the country; that they have implemented cross-cutting strategies and used programming principles, such as the equity dimension, the rights approach and gender equality; and that they have been involved in strategic partnerships and inter-agency collaboration, among others. The selection was informed by the portfolio analysis and stakeholder mapping undertaken during the inception phase of the evaluation. The total exceeded 135 meeting participants, of which approximately 46% were women.

Table 4 Overview of meeting participants

Interviewees	Number	Method
UNCT members	53	18 KII and 15 group discussions
National stakeholders	52	11 KII and 8 group discussions
International partners	6	3 KII and 1 group discussions
Private sector and academia	4	KII
NGOs/CSOs	19	2 Group discussions (Capital and Regional – based CSOs)

A detailed overview of the sampling frame and the final sample for the evaluation is presented in Annex 4 and 5 of this report.

2.5 Data Analysis and Quality Assurance

The data collected was subjected to a review by the ETMT for validation purposes, using a variety of tools including triangulation of information sources and permanent exchange with the CF implementation entities at Country Office level. The evaluation did not collect primary quantitative data, but it relied on existing quantitative data to gauge progress towards the CF outcomes and SDG targets, i.e. official statistics, data produced by UN or other international organisations.

Data quality was ensured through the use of standardized data collection tools for the same type of stakeholder, and use of multiple data sources to allow comparison and ensure validity of evidence. Data collection instruments sought to ensure that disaggregation was made for HR and GE dimension, where possible.

Data analysis techniques included:

- A critical review of the UNSDCF theory of change; including an assessment of the underlying assumptions, the intervention strategies and how these were used to contribute to the UNSDCF outcomes.

- Assessment of planned against achieved outcome targets, using quantitative data to the extent available. As noted above, the evaluation team did not collect primary quantitative data, given time constraints. Secondary quantitative data from the UNSDCF Results Matrix and other sources were used to feed into the analysis of key results.
- Qualitative data analysis from the desk review, interviews and group meetings
- Focus on Programs with Regional Reach The evaluation explicitly examined programs with significant regional components, such as those targeting MSMEs in rural areas, Women Resource Centers (WRCs), and agricultural resilience initiatives. By engaging with national-level stakeholders responsible for overseeing regional programs and triangulating their insights with project reports, we ensured that regional dynamics were adequately reflected.
- Triangulation of data from various sources, to identify emerging findings and respective evidence. The evaluation team triangulated information for all the evaluation criteria and questions. Emphasis was given to ensuring that the information gathered is valid, reliable and sufficient to meet the objectives and scope of the evaluation, and that the analysis is logical, coherent and consistent. As such, the triangulation of the various data sources was essential to ensure maximum validity and reliability of the data analysis.
- The quality of the deliverables was be assessed in reference to the quality assurance checklist of the CF Evaluation Guidelines. The DCO will provide quality assurance and oversight of and throughout the entire evaluation process. DCO will quality assure the evaluation report at the end of the evaluation process to ensure the soundness, usefulness, and evidence-based elements of the final report.

3 Findings

3.1 Relevance and adaptability: Is the CF doing the right things?

EQ 1: To what extent are the CF objectives aligned and been consistent with the needs, priorities and policies of the government? To what extent is the UNSDCF result oriented?

The UNSDCF is largely aligned with Azerbaijan's socio-economic development priorities, particularly through its collaboration with the government and alignment with strategies like the "Azerbaijan 2030" plan. However, it lacks alignment with newer priorities such as the Great Return Programme for liberated territories. The UNSDCF is result-oriented, with clear objectives, performance indicators, and institutional responsibilities. However, the indicators are often formulated at a very high, strategic level and do not necessarily reflect the programmatic linkages with UN's interventions. Other challenges include the absence of baseline data, overly ambitious targets for certain sectors like MSMEs, and the lack of reliable, disaggregated data collection mechanisms.

In 2021, the UNCT and the Government of Azerbaijan adopted the UN – Azerbaijan Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021 – 2025, based on a broad process of consultations with the government and other stakeholders. In February 2021, the President of Azerbaijan adopted the “Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development”. The Social Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026 of the Republic of Azerbaijan followed the higher-level strategy, further detailing priorities and indicators for each priority area. Both documents are highly aligned with Cooperation Framework and with SDGs. Notwithstanding the time lag in the adoption of the national strategic framework, the UNSDCF is highly aligned with the national social and economic development priorities, due to a thorough process of consultations with key government counterparts and a sound analytical basis derived from the formulation of the Common Country Analysis in 2019.

Table 5 UNSDCF Azerbaijan 2021 – 2025 Outcome and output areas

National Socio-Economic Development Strategy	Strategic priority	Outcome	Output	Participating UN agencies
Sustainably growing competitive economy	Strategic priority 1 Inclusive growth that reduces vulnerability and builds resilience SDG 8	Outcome 1.1: People furthest behind participate in and benefit from a diverse and innovative economy encompassing future-oriented labour market transformation and access to decent work	Output 1.1.1 MSMEs and social enterprises, including women-owned businesses, are set up and sustained for the benefit of the furthest behind	UN Women, UNDP, UNIDO, ILO, FAO, UNECE, Un Habitat, IOM
			Output 1.1.2: Enhanced human capital and a skilled workforce are available in key sectors	UNICEF, UNDP, UNIDO, FAO, UNV, UNESCO

			Output 1.1.3 International standards regarding decent work, inclusion and the future of work are mainstreamed in policy and practice	<i>UNHCR, UNDP, UNIDO, ILO</i>
			Output 1.1.4 Rural populations are able to diversify their income sources and sustainably improve their livelihoods	<i>UNDP, ILO, FAO, UN Habitat, UNV</i>
Competitive human capital and modern innovations space	Strategic Priority 2: Stronger institutions for better public and social services delivery SDG1 SDG3 SDG4	Outcome 2.1 People furthest behind benefit from enhanced national capacities and governance structures for social protection and quality public and social services, in line with Azerbaijan’s international commitments	Output 2.1.1: The national education system is strengthened to ensure inclusive access to quality education and training	<i>OHCHR, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNDP, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO</i>
			Output 2.1.2 National primary healthcare and nutrition systems are strengthened to ensure universal coverage and quality, inclusive and high-impact interventions	<i>UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNDP, UNODC, UNOPS, WHO</i>
Dynamic, inclusive and equitable society	SDG5 SDG12 SDG16 SDG17		Output 2.1.3 Providers of public and social protection services have improved capacity to target the most vulnerable groups with quality, effective and innovative solutions	<i>UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, UNODC, ILO, FAO, UN-Habitat</i>
			Output 2.1.4: National policies and mechanisms are strengthened to promote and protect human rights, increase access to justice and participatory mechanisms, and sustain social cohesion	<i>OHCHR, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP, UNODC, ILO, UN-Habitat, WHO</i>
			Output 2.2.1 Institutional capacities are strengthened to improve monitoring and reporting on the SDGs and on the furthest behind persons	<i>UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP, UNODC, ILO, FAO, UNDRR, UNECE, Un Habitat, UNV, WHO, IOM</i>
		Outcome 2.2 Quality*, disaggregated and timely data is available and used to inform decision-making and policies that leave no one behind	Output 2.2.2 National capacities are enhanced to generate evidence – based policies and decisions	<i>UNDP, ILO, FAO, UNICEF, UNDRR</i>
Clean environment and "green	Strategic priority 3: Protecting the	Outcome 3.1: People including those left behind benefit from	Output 3.1.1 Institutional capacities to plan, track, and report on climate change and	<i>UNDP, UNIDO, FAO, UNECE, Un Habitat, WHO,</i>

growth country	environment and addressing climate change	climate strategies and environment protection policies that ensure natural resources are sustainably managed, livelihoods are protected and resilience strengthened	access climate finance and technologies are strengthened	<i>UNDRR, UNESCO</i>
	SDG 6 SDG 7 SDG 13 SDG 15		Output 3.1.2 Adaptive policies on land use, integration to the tourism value chain and water management are set up to enhance the resilience of the vulnerable communities	<i>UNDP, ILO, FAO, UNICEF, UNDRR, UNESCO</i>
			Output 3.1.3 Energy policies and solutions reduce emissions and save energy	<i>UNDP, FAO, UNECE, UN-Habitat, IOM</i>
			Output 3.1.4 Evidence-based policies, mechanisms and practices are adopted to reduce environmental hazards and pollution in urban and rural areas	<i>UNDP, FAO, UNECE, UN-Habitat, WHO</i>
<i>Cross-cutting</i>	Strategic priority 4: A gender-equitable society that empowers women and girls SDG3 SDG5 SDG8	Outcome 4.1 Women and girls, including those furthest behind, benefit from enhanced national mechanisms that ensure they are protected from discrimination and violence and empowered to participate in all spheres of life	Output 4.1.1 Costed action plans on gender equality are set up and implemented	<i>UNFPA, UNDP, UNODC, ILO, WHO</i>
			Output 4.1.2 Stereotypes of women and girls are reduced in public discourse	<i>OHCHR, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, UNODC, UNESCO</i>
			Output 4.1.3 Women and girls have skills and knowledge to enjoy equal rights and opportunities	<i>UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP, UNODC, ILO, FAO, UN-Habitat, UNESCO</i>
Great Return to de-occupied lands	<i>Cross-cutting</i>			

The Socioeconomic Development Strategy defines a set of clear outputs and activities and assigns institutional responsibilities for implementation in the 2022 – 2026 period, and is closely mapped to the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. It is operationalized through annual sector programmes for its implementation.

As noted above, the CF is highly aligned with the government's strategy, although the intervention logic of the CF slightly differs from the Socio-Economic Strategy, and sub-outcome/output objectives are not always directly mirrored between the two documents. The CF places a higher focus on the LNOB and GEWE principled and is developed with a people-centric approach, whereas the Socio-Economic Development Strategy places a strong focus on system-wide reforms, although it does identify women economic empowerment as one of the key development priorities under the inclusive and equitable society objective. Notably, the Socio-Economic Development Strategy places high importance on

increasing the quality and accessibility of education and improving lifelong learning opportunities, which features less prominently in the CF, but is silent on the need for further consolidation of healthcare services.

The State Program for the Great Return to the liberated territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2022 – 2026)¹³, was adopted in late 2022. The CF is not aligned with the Great Return programme, which has emerged as one of the foremost strategic priorities of the government. At the time of adoption of the UNSDCF in January 2021, it was too early to carry out a reliable assessment of the needs in the regained territories immediately following the military conflict of Autumn 2020. The reconstruction of regained territories is acknowledged in the CF. The Great Return Programme is one of Azerbaijan’s largest and perhaps most ambitious infrastructure projects, aiming at restoring the regained territories. The CF has not yet been able to formulate an integrated response to the development context in the newly regained areas; partially because of the resource intensive restoration stage –addressed by the government, and partially because of a need to better assess the needs for targeted support to the communities, people and their livelihoods. In 2023, the UN, under the leadership of the RC, together with the European Union (EU) and the World Bank (WB) initiated the Joint Recovery Needs Assessment process (JRNA). The JRNA identifies a set of holistic interventions and priorities to be tackled in the regained territories with a short-, medium- and long-term perspective. The JRNA report was officially submitted to the Government of Azerbaijan in the fall of 2023. Based on the response of the Government, the JRNA could serve as a good starting point to formulate an integrated programme in support of the local communities.

Other key state programmes of the Government of Azerbaijan include the Azerbaijan Youth Development Strategy (2015 – 2020) and the State Program on Socio Economic Development of Regions (2019-2023). The CF implicitly addressed issues of youth development and regional development disparities and has deployed its programmes across many regions of the country. However, about 65% of total available CF resources are deployed in programmes addressing national priorities or the Baku/Absheron peninsula area, with the remainder being deployed in other regions.¹⁴ Activities under Outcome 1 (Inclusive growth) have a broader geographic focus, beyond the Baku region, in particular with activities in support of MSMEs, rural populations and Women Resource Centres (WRCs). Geographic focus beyond the capital region is also important in agriculture and natural resource related outputs (outcome 3) as well as social services and support for the most left behind, in particular IDPs (Outcome 2).¹⁵

Based on document reviews and expert interviews, it is clear that the UNSDCF is results-oriented, with clear goals, performance indicators, targets, and responsible agencies for implementation and partnerships. However, several limitations were highlighted in both the documents and the interviews.

¹³ State Programme for the Great Return to the Liberated Territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2022-2026) sets out the following six priority areas: 1) Organization of safe living and state administration in the territories; 2) Construction of urban, settlement and rural areas and provision of infrastructure; 3) Returning the population and creating sustainable communities in the areas; 4) Construction of strategically important and comprehensive infrastructure supporting the development and reintegration of areas; 5) Integrating the economy of the territories into the local and foreign value chain for sustainable settlement; and 6) Improvement of the environment in the areas and application of environmentally friendly technologies.

¹⁴ Source: UNINFO Azerbaijan, May 2024. The information is only indicative, as some data may be inaccurately tagged at the geographical level in the UNINFO database.

¹⁵ Un Info Azerbaijan, May 2024.

One key issue is the level of definition of outcome and output indicators, which have been defined to align with the SDG framework, but do not necessarily reflect the type and level of CF interventions, especially at outcome level. For instance, one of the outcome targets for Inclusive growth is the share of MSMEs in the economy, or the average hourly earnings disaggregated by gender. However, at output level, indicator targets aim for less than 1000 MSMEs and people capacitated, over a five-year period, which can hardly have an impact on the outcome indicator, even if overachieved. Under Outcome 4, the outcome level target to reduce adolescent births from the baseline of 48% in 2020 to 35% by 2025 is perhaps realistic, but it would be hardly attributable to UN activities to reduce gender-based violence, increase women participation in education and public lives, pursued under Outcome 4.¹⁶

Another major issue is the lack of baseline and end-year data, virtually for the majority of output level targets, making it difficult to track progress. Some outputs lack indicators entirely, while others have detailed information. This inconsistency makes it easier to evaluate the performance of some agencies but leaves others difficult to assess. For example, the target of 500 MSMEs and social enterprises in lower-income communities by 2025, starting from zero in 2020, seems overly ambitious. The WRC programme over the last three years has only supported around 250 women in establishing businesses, not all of which are expected to survive. With no government program to support such enterprises, it's unrealistic to expect to meet these targets. In some cases, baseline data backdated to 2016 or 2019 further complicates meaningful comparisons.

Another key challenge is the lack of reliable, valid, and disaggregated data collection mechanisms, which hinders effective monitoring and evaluation. For example, monitoring gender equality indicators requires mass surveys, focus groups, or qualitative research, none of which are consistently conducted in Azerbaijan. One key gender empowerment indicator is the increased voice of women in family, community, and decision-making, but the necessary perception surveys to gather this data are rarely conducted, especially in rural regions. Research and assessments in the country are generally weak, and data on programs is hard to come by. While the UNDP's program "Empowering and Creating Equal Opportunities for Vulnerable, Conflict-Affected Women" met its outcome-level goals, the absence of regional surveys made it difficult to assess the program's broader impact. Furthermore, several indicators do not fully reflect the administrative structure in the country. For example, the goal of having local governments adopt and implement disaster risk reduction strategies is impractical in a highly centralized state where municipalities lack the capacity or authority to take such actions.

EQ2: How dynamic and responsive has the CF been to emerging and unforeseen needs, especially those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups

The CF demonstrated a level of flexibility but also encountered limitations. The conflict and the subsequent Great Return Programme presented new challenges, particularly for IDPs and government capacities. While the CF did not fully repurpose to support this programme, it did provide targeted assistance through project-level interventions and capacity-building efforts, such as support for demining operations. Notably,

¹⁶ Notably, the UN also works in the improvement of primary healthcare services and family planning under Outcome 2, but these changes usually require longer term to materialize in a sustainable way.

the UN, EU, and ANAMA launched a significant project to facilitate the safe return of IDPs. In addressing other shocks, such as the prolonged effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and falling global energy demand, the UNCT acted quickly. It continued its pandemic-related efforts from the previous cooperation cycle, effectively working with government and non-government partners to support the most vulnerable. However, the CF could further enhance its responsiveness by adopting more robust resilience-building and shock-responsive social protection measures to meet future challenges.

The most important change in the course of the implementation of the CF was the cessation of hostilities with Armenia, leading to the emergence of new needs in the framework of the Great Return Programme, and the potential to strain capacities of the government, leading to a slowdown of progress in traditional development priorities. Although the CF did not fully repurpose in support of the Great Return Programme – beyond the JRNA – it did provide targeted support at project and programme level to the new arising needs of the IDPs and capacity needs of government institutions. Notably, the UN mobilised to support the demining effort. In February 2023, The EU, UNDP and the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA) launched a new project to support the safe return of internally displaced people (IDP) in Azerbaijan, with a financial contribution of 4,25 million Euro. In November 2023, the first ever female deminers received their accreditation in Azerbaijan.

During the implementation of the CF, Azerbaijan faced a triple shock: the prolonged effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, a fall in global energy demand and prices, and the conflict with Armenia. The UNCT demonstrated agility by quickly mobilizing to support the government in managing the pandemic's aftermath during the previous cooperation cycle¹⁷, and these efforts were carried over into the current CF. Azerbaijan quickly introduced public health measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 and minimize the socio-economic impact of the crisis on its citizens. The UN was a key partner, supporting Azerbaijan with the design of the Country COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan, including technical advice on healthcare, risk communication, continuation of education services, provision of social welfare to vulnerable groups, procurement of vital medical supplies and vaccines and rollout of the Covid-19 vaccines, including through the COVAX modality. At the same time, these economic shocks further exacerbated vulnerabilities, and the UNCT, in collaboration with both government and non-government partners, worked effectively to provide support to the most vulnerable groups. However, as Azerbaijan continues to face evolving challenges, the UN must further strengthen its focus on resilience-building and adopt shock-responsive social protection approaches to ensure sustainable recovery and better preparedness for future crises. Finally, the UNCT has shown great agility and willingness to support the government in its preparations for the hosting of the COP29 in November 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

¹⁷ The WHO mobilized international expertise to provide assistance to the Ministry of Health and the Administration of Regional Medical Divisions (TABIB) for a national Covid 19 response plan already in March 2020; followed by support for training and a digital platform for healthcare workers. The EU-funded Solidarity for Health Initiative continued support for training; procurement of healthcare equipment and risk communication among population between 2020 and 2022. UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, IOM and other agencies supported socioeconomic assessments of the impact of the pandemic and tailored responses to support stimulus packages to the economy; public awareness and education; public services; education; and digital health.

UNSDCF Theory of Change

The Theory of Change analysis for the UNSDCF in Azerbaijan provides a clear depiction of the alignment between the UNSDCF outcomes and Azerbaijan's national development priorities as outlined in Vision 2030. This strategic alignment is designed to support the achievement of the SDGs through well-defined linkages between the strategic priorities of the country and the detailed outcomes and outputs of the UNSDCF.

The UNSDCF outcomes are robustly connected to specific joint work plan outputs, ensuring that each element of the strategy contributes effectively towards achieving broader development goals. The analysis demonstrates strong contributive links, particularly in the areas of inclusive growth, human capital development, social justice, and environmental sustainability. For example, outputs related to enhancing human capital are aligned with outcomes aimed at fostering inclusive economic growth, which in turn supports the national priority of building a competitive economy.

Despite the strategic coherence, the ToC analysis identifies potential overlaps and redundancies in the output targets across different outcomes. Some outputs, such as those aiming to strengthen human rights and social protection mechanisms, appear under multiple outcomes. This duplication could complicate the attribution of results and the assessment of impact. Additionally, the ambitious nature of some output targets may not fully account for structural challenges within the economy or the capacity constraints of implementing agencies.

Overall, the UNSDCF for Azerbaijan demonstrates a good alignment between its planned activities and the national development agenda. However, the evaluation reveals that to increase effectiveness and impact, there is a need for streamlining and refining the ToC. This includes clarifying overlapping outputs, ensuring that ambitious targets are realistic and achievable, and enhancing the integration of cross-cutting issues to prevent them from being sidelined.

3.2 Coherence: How well does the CF fit?

EQ 3: To what extent has the CF strengthened the coherence of support by the UN system and served as an effective partnership vehicle with government and other stakeholders?

The CF has effectively enhanced the coherence of UN support in Azerbaijan by fostering collaboration between the UN system, government, and other stakeholders through structured mechanisms such as the Joint Government-UN Steering Committee and various Results Groups. These frameworks have facilitated better alignment of priorities and minimized overlap in activities. The UN has also strengthened partnerships with non-governmental entities, including the private sector and civil society, though certain factors continue to affect the civil society's ability to fully engage in advocacy efforts. Overall, the CF has proven successful in creating a more integrated approach to development, although further efforts are needed to address ongoing barriers and enhance the impact of these collaborations

The UNSDCF was underpinned by a strategic focus to strengthen the coherence of UN development work, in line with the UN Development System (UNDS) reform agenda. The CF document was developed in close consultation with the Government of Azerbaijan and external partners, including the private sector, civil society and international partners. The UNSDCF was endorsed by the Government of Azerbaijan and the

governance structures; mandating joint planning, implementation and reporting were put into place. The majority of interviewees from the UN and government indicate that good progress has been achieved in strengthening the coherence of the UN system in the current cycle of cooperation; with a positive appreciation of the more intensive exchanges within the country team, providing an opportunity for government and other stakeholders to underline their priorities.

Key informant interviews from both government and the UN have highlighted periodic Result Group (RG) meetings as a useful venue to develop better mutual understanding of what each organization does and how they operate, which in some cases was useful to identify potential areas of cooperation and minimize overlaps. Respondents highlighted that the set up for the implementation of the CF (RGs, thematic groups) required investing additional efforts in coordination and added an administrative layer, in addition to agency specific procedures. Respondents from the smaller agencies were generally more likely to state that these additional efforts paid off in terms of better results, although the burden of coordination was higher on smaller agencies, due to their more limited resources. Respondents from bigger agencies¹⁸ did acknowledge the positive effect of coming together in RG and thematic workgroups to align priorities and approaches; but it would appear that they were more likely to participate given that this was now a requirement imposed also within their own agencies. The utility of RG meetings was also emphasized by government stakeholders, who benefitted from the participation to take stock of progress achieved and jointly programming future activities. At the same time, government stakeholders emphasized that RG meetings often served as a venue for exchanging information not only with UN, but also with peer government institutions and facilitating internal coordination.

The UN Resident Coordinator's Office has been pivotal in representing the UN system and enhancing coordination with the Government of Azerbaijan and other stakeholders such as international partners, private sector and civil society (KILs). The SDG implementation agenda, led by the RC and UN agencies have consistently brought together government and non-government partners in the SDG dialogue series, the Second Baku Forum on Sustainable Development and other policy dialogue initiatives. Under the CF, the UN started work to develop an Integrated National Financial Framework (INFF) as a tool to finance national priorities. The Azerbaijan SDG investor map was presented in November 2023, pinpointing ten investment opportunity areas within four key national priority sectors (infrastructure, renewable energy, food and beverages and services/tourism), based on the Integrated SDG Insights Analysis.

In 2023, the UN, EU, and the World Bank collaborated with government institutions on the Joint Recovery Needs Assessment (JRNA) for conflict-affected areas, highlighting short, medium, and long-term priorities. The CF has also strengthened partnerships with the private sector and civil society. The UN supported the development of the Mainstreaming Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) framework and the growth of the UN Global Compact in Azerbaijan. The private sector acknowledges the UN's role as an intermediary but calls for deeper engagement and support for businesses to adopt the ESG agenda, which could aid in transitioning to a more sustainable, non-oil dependent economy.

¹⁸ In this report, the term “big” or “large” agency is used to indicate UN agencies with bigger programmes in terms of financial portfolios and number of staff in the country, and the term “small” agency indicates relatively smaller sized programmes.

The UN has been a key partner for civil society organizations (CSOs) in Azerbaijan, working to facilitate their involvement in policy discourse despite a challenging environment. The UN's efforts include providing platforms for CSOs to participate in discussions and advocating for their inclusion in decision-making processes. However, the role and relevance of CSOs in the society has gradually shrunk and CSOs also indicate that they are increasingly being engaged as social service providers in the framework of the CF, and less often for advocacy and watchdog roles. CSOs indicate that they face significant barriers, such as a restrictive registration process and limited international assistance, which hinder their ability to operate effectively. The UN has made strides in addressing these issues by supporting capacity building and ensuring CSOs from all districts have a voice in major policy dialogues, such as those related to SDGs and human rights. Between 2020 and 2024 an EU funded project for capacity building of CSOs was implemented by UNDP, focusing on increasing CSO capacities to engage in policymaking and foster local development; as well as build the ecosystem for social entrepreneurship and social innovation. Since 2022 the UN Entered a close collaboration with the Agency for State Support to NGOs.¹⁹ The UN has provided several training and mentorship programmes for CSOs in areas ranging from climate change to policy analysis and advocacy; alliance building and human rights. The Agency for State Support to NGOs has replicated some of these programmes. In 2023, The UN, together with the Bar Association, CSOs and Baku State University's law faculty, developed recommendations to improve access to justice in civil cases. Four public discussions with 45 stakeholders (including judges, lawyers, members of the Parliament, Ministry of Justice, CSOs and academic institutions) were held to elaborate these recommendations. The UN SDG policy dialogues have continued to provide a platform for high-level discussions with Government stakeholders, academia, CSOs and media on gender equality, VNR and climate action. Despite this, CSO representatives state that there is a need for greater advocacy, more effective communication, and increased consultation with CSOs to ensure projects are contextually relevant and impactful. This issue is recognised by other stakeholders, including the UN and some international partners, who highlight the restrictions in national regulatory frameworks for NGO operations as the key underlying reasons. The UN's role is crucial in maintaining these issues on the agenda and fostering collaboration between CSOs and the government, but more consistent and meaningful engagement is needed to address the operational challenges faced by these organizations.

EQ 4: Post UN reform, to what extent has the UN system promoted or supported policies that are consistent among each other and across sectors, and how effectively and meaningfully have UN agency programs and work plans been derived from the Cooperation Framework (CF) in both design and implementation?

Summary finding: The Cooperation Framework (CF) aims to promote policy consistency across sectors by aligning UN agency programs with its strategic priorities, reflected in a structured Results Framework. While the CF's design and joint work plans (JWPs) generally show alignment with higher-level objectives,

¹⁹ 53 CSOs were trained on PSEA concepts; over 300 participants from CSOs were trained in human rights related issues; 80 CSOs were capacitated in designing and implementing projects on gender equality, climate action and social entrepreneurship; 50 CSOs were trained on climate change and community based climate policy projects; 15 NGOs in 15 NGOs in Baku, Ganja, Lankaran, and Guba districts were trained on combating human trafficking and violence; 148 lawyers and 144 representatives of 103 civil society organizations were capacitated on UN human rights treaties and CSO monitoring role and the WRCs in districts engaged 140 participants from eight NGOs specializing in disability, women's rights, and social rights, including youth organizations in HR events.

there is a noted disconnect at the sub-output level where specific agency activities sometimes do not fully converge with the CF's output level goals. The process of adapting projects to the JWP formats has led to inconsistencies, with a wide variation in project sizes and resource allocations. Despite these challenges, enhanced collaboration among UN agencies and regular coordination meetings have fostered a unified approach, although the number of joint programmes remains limited. The JWPs serve more as an internal coordination mechanism rather than a detailed work planning tool, with agency-specific work plans and government endorsement ensuring alignment with priorities.

The Cooperation Framework is a broad framework that reflects the common strategies of agencies in the UN Country Team to support the development agenda in Azerbaijan. The need for all agencies to be adequately represented in the CF and increase their own visibility leads to a broad definition of cooperation areas, which at the same time reflects the mandates of the different agencies and ensures compatibility and alignment with agency specific country programmes (where present).

The CF design has aimed at promoting and supporting policy consistency across sectors. The five outcome areas are divided into 18 outputs areas, each corresponding to the higher-level objective at the Outcome level. The formulation of joint workplans focuses on the achievement of a more cohesive policy approach by aligning agency programs with the CF's strategic priorities. Outcome and output indicators are defined in the Results Framework; which was streamlined in the second year of implementation to include only those indicators for which data could reliably and realistically be collected. A review of the CF and the Joint Workplans reveals that the outputs are generally well connected with the outcomes and there is a logical flow of the ToC between outcomes and outputs, the latter presenting the collectiveness of the UN system offer in one sector/area. However, at the level of the sub-outputs, which is detailed in the JWPs, this logical flow is not fully present.²⁰ The level of sub-outputs usually represents agency specific activities or projects and provides a clearer understanding of the actual work undertaken by the UN towards achieving the objectives. A disconnect between the higher-level output level objectives and the activity focus of the sub-outputs is sometimes evident. The process of formulation of the JWPs seems to be more of a retrofitting exercise, to adapt projects and activities in the pipeline to the required reporting formats. This exercise results at times in a mismatch between the activity (sub-output) level defined in the workplan and the output level objectives, as well as a significantly varying degree of the size of projects defined in the JWP at the project (sub-output) level, ranging from as little as a total of USD 11 thousand in required resources, to more than USD 6 million. The JWP has a total of more than 270 sub-outputs across its five outcomes and eighteen outputs, reflecting a large degree of diversity in the level and size of projects.

The perceived disconnect between activities and outputs – and outcome level as defined in the CF was also confirmed by some respondents from UN agencies and members of the Results Groups. However, there was no clear understanding of the decision-making process for the allocation of projects in the JWP; a process that was largely managed by the agencies themselves and their direct reporting in the UN INFO system. The large number of sub-outputs and scattered configuration of the allocation of sub-outputs may at times have been motivated by an incentive at agency level to maximise the number of outputs in

²⁰ See also EQ 1 – Relevance.

which it is visible. Notably, the JWP is adopted by the JSC and also Supported by monitoring mechanisms, such as the Results Groups (RGs), coordinated by the RCO and the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Group (MEL). These structures facilitate regular reviews and adjustments to ensure that programs remain consistent with the CF and are effectively addressing priority areas, but they refrain from going into the technical details of the configuration of the CF at the sub-output level. Several UN agencies and RG member indicated that they develop their own agency specific workplans with key government entities, which serve as the basis for monitoring and follow-up. At project level, project documents are carefully reviewed and endorsed by government entities, prior to kick off, which further ensures alignment with government priorities and their commitment during implementation (KIIs with RG members from the government). This indicates that JWPs serve more as an internal UN coordination mechanism, rather than as a regular work-planning tool – however they do represent the entirety of UN work and serve as a mutual accountability mechanism. Finally, the process of assigning gender markers does not seem to be conducted in a rigorous manner in the UN Info system. Several activities had been assigned a 0-gender marker (indicating irrelevance to gender outcomes), also in some activities on promotion of breastfeeding, or the Gender Equality for Women project (N/A score).

Enhanced collaboration among UN agencies has been a hallmark of post-reform efforts. Regular coordination meetings in results and thematic working groups, including those focused on human rights, gender equality, and sustainable development, have gradually created the demand for a unified approach to policy implementation and problem-solving. Overlaps of activities between the different agencies are not typical, as attested by RG members from both the UN and government, however the instances of joint implementation between more than one agency are few and far between. The joint programming efforts aim at harnessing the comparative advantages of individual agencies towards a common programme. In the current CF cycle, the number of joint programmes has been quite limited. Joint programmes are not only useful when more coherent, cross-sectoral approaches are needed, but often serve as a good process to get agencies to work together and join forces to produce catalytic change, even after the JP is completed.

EQ 5: To what extent is the UNSDCF aligned with the SDG agenda, the country's international commitments and UN programming principles?

Summary finding: The UNSDCF is closely aligned with the SDG agenda, the country's international commitments, and UN programming principles, as it integrates SDGs into national development priorities and establishes mechanisms for tracking their implementation. The CF supports the development of an integrated response to national development ambitions and emphasizes human rights, gender equality, and the principle of leaving no one behind (LNOB). However, despite these efforts, there are challenges in achieving full alignment, particularly due to resource constraints and the complexity of addressing systemic issues of exclusion. While the UNSDCF has implemented various mechanisms to support normative work, such as thematic groups and strategic partnerships, human rights and civil liberties remain topics of discussion in a context where civic space is evolving, accompanied by more complex regulatory frameworks for civil society organizations.

The SDG Agenda, the country's international commitments, and UN programming principles conceptually lie at the core of the UNSDCF design. The Theory of Change for the CF clearly articulates the need to integrate SDGs into national development priorities, including establishing a tracking system for SDG implementation by both the public and private sectors. Concurrently, the UNSDCF commits to supporting the development of an integrated response to the government's development ambitions, including through fostering partnerships and upholding the country's international commitments.

In relation to the SDG agenda, the development of the Common Country Analysis (CCA) provided a thorough and up-to-date analysis of social, economic, and environmental development issues, which informed the CF. The CCA identifies development challenges and provides an overview of their root causes, leading to the proposal of a set of synergies or accelerators: (i) decentralized service delivery, (ii) promoting evidence-based policy formulation, (iii) avoiding duplication of state functions and crowding out of the private sector, (iv) reducing overdependence on oil for growth and fiscal resources, (v) addressing perceptions of corruption, and (vi) recognizing limitations in legal enforcement and compliance. The CF addresses these challenges and commits to tackling them through integrated policy advice, including catalysing partnerships and bringing together government, the private sector, and other stakeholders. The strategic priorities in the CF are formulated comprehensively to reflect the mandates of different agencies. Key informants from both the UN and government confirm that their work's linkages with SDGs are clearly highlighted and pursued in programming and implementation. This includes intensive efforts to improve systems for collecting, monitoring, and tracking SDG targets, with targeted support to the SSC, the establishment of a joint UN-SSC taskforce, and support for data collection instruments (e.g., MICS survey, population projections).

However, based on the review of the UNSDCF and related documents, explicit interlinkages between streams of work supporting one or more SDGs, and exploiting synergies, trade-offs, or interdependencies between various SDGs, are not clearly formulated, or at least not to the extent required by UN guidance, which calls for a systems approach.²¹ Notably, the development of an integrated approach to tackle SDGs is complicated and requires both extensive analytical resources as well as political support and national buy-in. Azerbaijan – also with UN support – has made notable progress in aligning national development policy to the SDG framework. In June 2024, Azerbaijan presented its 4th Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the SDGs, and adopted an 18th national SDG on Mine Action, reflecting the importance of mine clearance for sustainable reconstruction and recovery.

Through the CF, the RCO and the UNCT have ensured that the SDG agenda remains relevant in national policy discourse and serves as a catalyst for the Azerbaijan Vision 2030 and Socio-Economic Development Plan. The SDG dialogue series, initiated in 2022 under the leadership of the National Council for Sustainable Economic Development and the Resident Coordinator, provides a unique opportunity to advance towards a more multi-dimensional approach in policy advice, supported by solid analytical work. The first SDG dialogues have brought together the government, UN, international partners, private sector, academia, and civil society to discuss pressing challenges and solutions on issues such as Green Growth,

²¹ UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance, 2022, <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UN%20Cooperation%20Framework%20Internal%20Guidance%20--%201%20June%202022.pdf>.

Social and Economic Inclusion, and the results of the Global SDGs Summit 2023 and the role of supreme financial control bodies in the implementation of the SDGs. All key informants highlighted the importance of the SDG dialogue series in shaping evidence-based national consensus on key development issues. Respondents from the private and civil society sectors also acknowledged the relevance of these policy discussions in maintaining the importance of SDG-related topics and as forums for exchange between government and other partners, calling for more similar consultation opportunities. The Integrated SDG Insight Analysis; the Azerbaijan SDG Investor Map in the framework of the Integrated National Financing Framework efforts also represent steps towards a more multidimensional approach in SDG integration.

The overall theory of change underlying the UNSDCF is that the SDGs can be achieved “*when people left behind are empowered to realize their rights through adequate institutional support and increased resilience*”. The SDG framework is closely intertwined with human rights and the LNOB principle and the UN is the main international body for the agreement on human rights and normative frameworks. The CF emphasizes programming principles that reflect both the SDG agenda and international human rights conventions.

The principles of LNOB, gender equality, and human rights are clearly articulated in the CF, with a focus on identifying and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. Outcome-level objectives are formulated with a people-centric approach, aiming to enhance resilience and accountability, particularly for the most vulnerable. However, implementation is often constrained by resource availability. While agencies actively pursue these principles beyond programming documents, their activities frequently focus on short-term results and immediate gains, rather than collectively and efficiently addressing the root causes of exclusion.

The CF has established several mechanisms to support normative work, including the Human Rights Theme Group (HRTG), the Gender Equality Thematic Group (GTG), and the recently activated Disability Inclusion Task Force (DITF). These groups have clear Terms of Reference for their operations and integration into the CF institutional framework. However, their effectiveness is often limited by insufficient resources. Few agencies have dedicated gender experts, although most have assigned gender focal points. Discussions with the GTG, HRTG, and DITF reveal that agency focal points must juggle these responsibilities with other duties, which can be overwhelming.

The GTG meets quarterly and contributes to the annual programming exercise, the CCA, joint submissions on international conventions (e.g., CEDAW), and updating the Gender Equality Scorecard SWAP. It also coordinates advocacy initiatives, such as the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. Despite these efforts, the GTG lacks the capacity to fully mainstream gender issues across all technical documents and research. The 2023 assessment initiated by the UN in 2023 indicated that 60 percent of the indicators in the RF (9 out of 15) met or exceeded minimum requirements as per the UNCT SWAO Gender Scorecard.

The HRTG, led by OHCHR, provides strategic advice and technical assistance for UN programming, including the design of indicators from a human rights perspective. The HRTG and OHCHR are essential for joint submissions of reports on international conventions and treaty bodies, such as UPR, CEDAW, CPRD, and the Committee on Social and Economic Rights. Under OHCHR’s leadership, the HRTG produces

monthly digests on human rights issues, summarizing developments related to human rights defenders, civil society, legislation, decisions, and mechanisms. In 2022, a joint working group was established between the UN HRTG and the Ombudsperson of Azerbaijan, which has been effective in coordinating agency activities based on an annual work plan and pooling resources for joint delivery, such as in the cooperation of UNHCR, OHCHR, and UNDP for legal aid activities. To bolster internal capacities for human rights, UN program staff received training on human rights-based approaches (HRBA) under UNDP's leadership, with OHCHR's technical assistance, and on hate speech under the RCO's auspices, with plans to extend this training to the Ombudsperson and civil society partners. The HRTG also engages in advocacy and communication campaigns, including the annual Human Rights Month in June and thematic meetings with RCO and civil society on issues such as women's rights, children's rights, and human rights defenders.

Discussions with thematic groups highlight the critical role of the RC and the RCO in advancing the normative agenda during CF implementation. Interviews with most heads of agencies confirm that the RC's support is crucial, not only through analytical work and RCO capacity but also in mainstreaming these principles across UN work and relations with the government. UN agencies with clear normative mandates appreciate the RC's role in providing a diplomatic platform to discuss positions on international commitments with government partners. At the country level, the CF focuses on constructive discussions aimed at increasing awareness and capacities of national institutions to uphold human rights and civil liberties, despite some obstacles, including the increasingly restrictive government procedures for the registration of grants received by civil society organizations.

3.3 Effectiveness: Is the CF achieving its objectives?

EQ 6: How effective has the CF been in achieving the objectives outlined in the RF

EQ7: To what extent has the CF contributed to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability. What have been the benefits for the people and institutions targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized population?

The CF has made notable strides in achieving its objectives, but several challenges persist. For Outcome 1.1, aimed at integrating disadvantaged groups into the economy, targets have not been fully met due to structural economic issues and limited job opportunities, but notable progress has been made with the expansion of WRCs and (self-)employment opportunities for women, farmers and vulnerable groups. Good progress has been recorded in labour legislation in particular as regards women. Outcome 2.1 has seen progress with enhanced social protection, education and primary healthcare and governance structures, though some policy changes are still pending. In Outcome 2.2, the availability and quality of disaggregated data has increased, including through support for the capacities of the SSC on SDG indicators and the production of important data instruments, such as MICS and population projections; although much remains to be accomplished to underpin effective decision-making and assistance. Outcome 3.1 faces difficulties with climate strategy goals, as many indicators lack baseline data, although some progress in agriculture production and energy policies is evident. Some good policy work has been consolidated through CF support, creating the preconditions for better progress towards green growth after the COP29. Outcome 4.1 has been successful in supporting women and girls, particularly in conflict-affected areas,

with significant improvements reported in income and socio-economic participation. Overall, while achievements are evident, challenges in data collection, policy implementation, and systemic issues continue. The Results Matrix high level indicators are not always representative of the logic of interventions under the CF. Performance cannot be fully and with confidence attributed to the role of the UN; although the degree of the relevance and effectiveness of their role towards the results can be attested.

The Azerbaijan CF result Framework is designed at outcome level with targets set against specific outcome indicators for each of the 5 outcomes and the 18 intermediate outcomes. To a large extent, the outcome indicators were drawn from the SDGs. The periodicity of measurement of these indicators is not frequent, which presents challenges for the tracking of progress at the outcome level. At the output level, some indicators have been linked with SDGs and others have been defined as process/ or intervention level output indicators. A portion of the indicators require gender-based disaggregation. The indicators in the results matrix are not updated regularly, due to challenges in data availability from official sources and constraints for measurement through primary data collection instruments. This presents a limitation for the contribution analysis of the effectiveness of the CF, which is informed by the theory of change underlying its development. The Results Matrix high level indicators, are not always representative of the logic of interventions under the CF. These indicators often represent the national vision and the contribution of the whole set of stakeholders. Hence, in the majority of cases, performance (either progress or regress) cannot be fully and with confidence attributed to the role of the UN; although the degree of the relevance and effectiveness of their role towards the results can be attested. Nevertheless, these types of impact indicators are useful to keep at a higher level, to track the country's progress over time and take stock of longer-term development strategies.

The Annual Joint workplans are a compilation of project or activity level interventions at specific agency level rather than a coordinated set of well-thought-out interventions that aspire to achieve value added towards the CF outcome objectives. In various cases, projects and activities (sub-outputs) assigned under one specific CF outputs would logically contribute better to other outputs (and outcomes) in the CF.

However, overall, the effectiveness of the CF implementation has been on track in conformity with desired programmes outputs. Due attention has been given to the inclusion of gender-based needs as well as the needs of marginalised and vulnerable group. The CF has made efforts to support the production of data and carry out studies, research to underpin its strategy of interventions as well as consolidate data governance systems in the country in general. Below is presented a short overview of the main outputs achieved by the CF in each of the five outcomes.

Outcome 1.1. People furthest behind participate in and benefit from a diverse and innovative economy encompassing future-oriented labour market transformation and access to decent work.

Theory of Change

Outcome 1.1 aligns well with the national priority of building a competitive economy as outlined in Vision 2030. It contributes directly to SDGs 2 (Zero Hunger), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and links to SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), especially through outputs aimed at supporting MSMEs and social enterprises, including women-owned businesses. This aligns with Azerbaijan's goal of fostering economic inclusivity and sustainable growth. There is a strong connection between this outcome and national priorities, particularly in addressing inequalities and promoting inclusive economic growth. The focus on women's participation in economic activities (e.g., Output 1.1.1) is a significant contribution to gender equality (SDG 5). However, the targets for MSMEs and social enterprises, especially the target of 500 enterprises by 2025, may be overly ambitious given the economic context and existing structural issues. The relatively short timeframe and capacity limitations in Azerbaijan pose a challenge to achieving these targets. The ToC could benefit from clearer linkages between supply-side and demand-side interventions. Stronger focus on enhancing investment in the private sector and scaling successful programs may be necessary to meet ambitious targets.

The UN made significant strides in supporting micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and women's empowerment. The number of Women Resource Centres (WRC) was expanded to 15 centres, including Community Resource Hubs, reaching 7,600 members in conflict-affected regions. Vocational training was provided to 926 rural women, with 46% now employed. Courses included hairdressing, tailoring, beekeeping, clerical work, and basic accounting. Following the Second Karabakh War, regions adjacent to the conflict zone, such as Tartar, Barda, and Aghjabadi, experienced significant trauma and economic upheaval. The situation was further exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, which led to a loss of remittances and an influx of refugees. The brunt of these hardships fell heavily on women and girls, particularly those in rural areas.

In response, the UNDP's program "Empowering and Creating Equal Opportunities for Vulnerable, Conflict-Affected Women in Azerbaijan" played a crucial role in addressing these challenges. The program aimed to overcome barriers to greater economic and social participation for these women and girls. Evaluation and monitoring of the program revealed that over 70% of women who received grants in Barda, Aghjabadi, and Tartar regions reported increased income, while 95% of grant recipients successfully established businesses.

The Women Resource Centres (WRCs) established by UNDP made a significant impact on the local communities. They contributed to income growth, improved business opportunities, reduced domestic violence, and enhanced the overall welfare and mobility of women. Additionally, 67% of women visiting the WRCs reported feeling empowered to influence decision-making related to socio-economic opportunities.

The UN supported the establishment of MSMEs, providing essential tools and equipment to 184 persons with disabilities and supporting 82 women-led businesses, including those led by survivors of gender-based violence and trafficking. Employment opportunities were and skills training were also provided to IDPs and refugees, while refugees were supported through cash assistance schemes (42% women). During 2021, the focus was on promoting new MSMEs and social enterprises to aid economic recovery. The UN enhanced the capacity of labour market institutions and supported rural livelihoods, emphasizing income diversification and sustainable development.

In the area of rural Livelihoods and Agriculture, capacity building was provided to farmers for enhanced expertise in potato and hazelnut value chains and livestock sectors. Efforts included disease-free seed potato production and improvements in livestock practices. Training on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) for hazelnut management was provided to almost 1,000 beneficiaries (30% women) and farmer field schools and six business schools for animal husbandry were introduced. The UN also supported the updated Fruit and Vegetables Value Chain database with 6,128 farmers registered, leading to 110 farmers forming cooperatives with processing companies.

The UN also revitalized the Youth Advisory Council and expanded the Basic Life Skills Education program to 15 Youth Development and Career Centres, reaching approximately 21,720 youth. The UpShift programme was launched to support social innovation among young people, and 630 individuals received training on various critical issues.

Outcome 2.1 People furthest behind benefit from enhanced national capacities and governance structures for social protection and quality public and social services, in line with Azerbaijan's international commitments.

Theory of Change

This outcome aligns with several SDGs, particularly SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), and 5 (Gender Equality). It strongly supports the national priority of building strong institutions for better public service delivery and improving social protection systems. The inclusion of human rights principles further strengthens the coherence between the UNSDCF and Azerbaijan's international commitments. The outcome reflects a comprehensive approach, targeting social protection, education, and health systems. It contributes to Azerbaijan's Vision 2030 by focusing on enhancing the capacities of institutions to deliver essential public services effectively. However, it includes a variety of sectors, from education to social protection and health, which could lead to diffusion of effort. To address these challenges, the ToC could be streamlined by focusing on a smaller set of high-priority areas with clearer and more realistic targets. The evaluation also recommends strengthening the links between outputs related to capacity building and those focused on service delivery to ensure better coordination and impact.

Under this Outcome, the UN focused on several tracks of intervention: education, health, social protection, e-governance, and access to justice. The UN also ensured that baselines and achievements are guided by international human rights standards – including international labour standards - under the ICESCR, CRC, CRPD and CEDAW regarding accessibility, quality and adequacy

The UN significantly advanced its support for Azerbaijan's national priorities, focusing on several key areas. One of the main achievements was the continuation of mine action efforts in collaboration with the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA). Over 90,000 explosive devices and 869 unexploded ordnances were disposed of between 2020 and 2023. The adoption of the national SDG 18 on Mine Action and the hosting of the Second International Conference on Mine Action in Baku highlighted the country's commitment to this issue. Additionally, 7,557 internally displaced persons (IDPs), 48% of whom were women, benefited from micro-projects aimed at improving basic services like water supply and road infrastructure.

The UN also promoted inclusive education, expanding the number of inclusive schools from 22 to 40, and enrolling 250 children with disabilities. To address labour market needs, vocational education capacities were enhanced, and public-private partnerships were established, benefiting 570 people, including graduates of dual vocational education and training programs. The number of inclusive schools for children with disabilities increased from 22 to 40, enrolling over 250 children. Vocational education capacity was expanded, with 570 stakeholders trained and 150 graduates gaining employment in dual VET programs.

In health, the Universal-Progressive Home Visiting (UPHV) programme was extended to 10 additional regions, benefiting nearly 67,000 children and 12,000 pregnant women, using a gender-responsive approach. The UN also strengthened Azerbaijan's primary health care system, particularly in emergency response and immunization, addressing challenges in vaccination coverage through targeted campaigns and training for health workers. The UN supported learning recovery, mental health care, and training for healthcare workers in infection prevention in the aftermath of the pandemic. During 2021, the UN in Azerbaijan implemented interventions to systematically redress these inequalities and access constraints as part of the COVID-19 and post-conflict recovery efforts, with the aim to enhance access to quality public and social services. Interventions focused on achieving stronger governance structures and frontline service delivery, allowing vulnerable groups to benefit from social protection, inclusion as well as undisrupted access to these services. Emphasis was placed on expanding people's knowledge of and access to the ICT infrastructure to enhance e-governance and ensure that public and social services are available and accessible online.

The Child Safeguarding system expanded to 51 schools, providing protection to over 52,000 children and handling 422 safeguarding cases. The UN also made strides in promoting the rights of vulnerable groups, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, and continued efforts to advance gender equality, disability inclusion, and human rights. Social protection for vulnerable groups continued, including free legal aid for nearly 4,500 individuals and resources for 20,000 young people on career and personal development.

These efforts demonstrate the UN's broad impact in supporting Azerbaijan's development goals, focusing on inclusivity, health, education, and the protection of vulnerable populations.

Outcome 2.2 Quality*, disaggregated and timely data is available and used to inform decision-making and policies that leave no one behind.

Theory of Change

This outcome supports the need for improved data and monitoring systems to ensure that no one is left behind, which directly contributes to SDGs 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Accurate and timely data is crucial for evidence-based decision-making, particularly in ensuring that vulnerable populations benefit from development programs. The integration of data collection and analysis into policy-making processes is a critical component for advancing national development priorities. Strengthening monitoring and reporting systems is vital for both governance and achieving SDG targets. While the outcome emphasizes the importance of disaggregated data, the lack of reliable, valid data collection mechanisms in Azerbaijan remains a significant challenge. This can impede the effectiveness of policy implementation and hinder the ability to track progress against targets. Stronger focus on the capacity-building of national data institutions and improving the integration of data into everyday policy and decision-making processes. Further strengthening of the data collection infrastructure, particularly at regional levels, is needed.

Under this outcome, initiatives have enhanced Azerbaijan's ability to produce and utilize reliable, disaggregated data, informing more effective and inclusive policy decisions that address the needs of the most vulnerable populations. The UN bolstered Azerbaijan's institutional capacities for monitoring and reporting on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This involved enhancing the State Statistics Committee's ability to collect and analyse data on key SDG indicators and supporting the Digital AgriCensus. Notably, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) was revived after 23 years, extending its coverage to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. This comprehensive survey gathered data on 137 indicators related to health, nutrition, education, and other vital areas from over 12,320 households and will be published within 2024, providing disaggregated data for more than 18 SDG indicators.

The UN facilitated the integration of 10 new sex-disaggregated indicators into the national statistics database, improving the availability of detailed data for evidence-based policymaking. Capacity-building efforts included training 56 state officials on urban data production using the Degree of Urbanisation (DEGURBA) framework and providing recommendations on National Transfer Accounts to guide reforms in pensions, health, education, and taxes, particularly in response to demographic changes like decreasing fertility and an aging population. The UN also supported the development of population projections to support demographic as well as social and economic policies, in addition to the Active Aging index developed in 2021. The focus on vulnerable groups was strengthened through improved data collection and analysis, aligning with human rights standards and responding to recommendations from Human Rights Mechanisms. Efforts also included analysis of child poverty, and assessment of social protection mechanisms, setting the stage for better adaptation of systems to socio-economic shocks.

Outcome 3.1: People including those left behind benefit from climate strategies and environment protection policies that ensure natural resources are sustainably managed, livelihoods are protected and resilience strengthened.

Theory of Change

This outcome is aligned with Azerbaijan's national priority of ensuring environmental sustainability, as articulated in Vision 2030. It contributes directly to SDGs 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 13 (Climate Action), and 15 (Life on Land). The outcome emphasizes both environmental protection and adaptation strategies, such as land use and water management policies.

The inclusion of climate change strategies and resilience-building initiatives directly supports Azerbaijan's environmental goals. Outputs focusing on climate finance and adaptive policies are essential for strengthening Azerbaijan's capacity to address climate challenges. Interventions are often at a lower impact level. There is a need for a more strategic and integrated approach to leverage the UN's comparative advantage fully. To improve impact, the ToC should focus on high-level, systemic changes rather than lower-level interventions. Enhanced coordination with regional stakeholders and leveraging international partnerships will be essential to address the broader environmental and climate change challenges effectively.

The UN's support has aimed at improving Azerbaijan's capacity to address climate change, manage water resources, enhance energy efficiency, and protect biodiversity. These efforts contribute to sustainable development and resilience in the face of environmental challenges. In 2023, the UN played a critical role in enhancing Azerbaijan's climate action strategies. The Government submitted its revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) in October 2023, committing to a 40% reduction in emissions by 2050 from 1990 levels, with specific mitigation measures across various sectors including energy, agriculture, and waste. The UN supported the development of a comprehensive NDC Finance Strategy and Investment Plan, smart climate investment tools, and a legal framework for climate adaptation. A Climate Web Portal was also launched to centralize climate data and improve communication among government entities.

On regional cooperation, training was provided to 75 staff on regional climate challenges, and a meeting was held to address Caspian Sea level fluctuations, enhancing regional cooperation and awareness. Efforts also included sensitizing 175 farmers on climate adaptation and holding 15 demonstration activities for 324 stakeholders. The UN supported improved water governance by preparing reports on water resource management and introducing the AquaCrop model to optimize crop-water productivity.

The UN advanced biodiversity conservation in Hirkan and Shirvan National Parks, developed an Ecosystem-based Monitoring Framework, and launched a spatial conservation plan for the Caucasus ecoregion. Guidelines for nature-based solutions in forestry and forest management for pollinators were also developed, and training for sustainable forest management was provided to 90 stakeholders. It also assisted in preparing Azerbaijan's ratification of the Rotterdam Convention and developed technical guidelines for the disposal of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). Awareness sessions on environmental assessments and health care waste management were held, and 220 tons of liquid POPs were safely managed.

Two Resource-Efficient and Cleaner Production (RECP) clubs were established, 15 RECP assessments completed, and over 30 business cases developed. Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) practices were introduced, and a national strategic program on wheat rust control was developed.

In 2021, IOM won the Global Energy Award for rehabilitating *Kahriz*²² systems, and initiatives included incorporating *Kahriz* Engineering Courses into university curricula and developing a bilingual National Atlas on *Kahrizes*. Six traditional *Kahrizes* were rehabilitated, benefiting 190 households, and 270 farmers were trained in efficient water use.

It is worth noting that this is one of the most challenging outcomes in the CF, not only because climate action is a cross-sectorial effort and benefits materialise over the longer term, but in terms of CF monitoring and follow up, the majority of outputs and indicators lack baseline data and end targets.

²² Kahriz is a traditional, sustainable water supply system that is built on topographical features (slopes) and fed through subterranean water, which does not require any fossil fuel or electricity for maintenance. Some amount of surface water and precipitation are drained through less water-resistant soil structures and gathered on more water-resistant layers. Through this cycle, it accumulates subterranean water and creates an aquifer.

Outcome 4.1 Women and girls, including those furthest behind, benefit from enhanced national mechanisms that ensure they are protected from discrimination and violence and empowered to participate in all spheres of life.

Theory of Change

This outcome aligns with SDGs 5 (Gender Equality) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), supporting the national priority of creating an inclusive, dynamic society based on social justice. The outcome emphasizes gender equality and women's empowerment as core components of national development, particularly through the establishment of costed action plans on gender equality and strategies to reduce stereotypes of women in public discourse. While it is well-aligned with Azerbaijan's national goals, there are concerns about the limited scope of interventions related to women's economic empowerment, particularly in rural areas – the majority of these interventions occur under other outcomes.

In 2023, Azerbaijan recorded a slight improvement in the Global Gender Gap Index, where it ranked 97 out of 146 countries with a score of 0.692. The UN continued to work with local partners to tackle gender-based discrimination and ensure equal opportunities across the board. Efforts to combat gender-based violence (GBV) included supporting policy sustainability, strengthening local monitoring groups, and maintaining a national hotline that assisted nearly 300 people. The UN also provided legal support and developed a case management system for GBV. Women Resource Centres played a critical role in supporting survivors, organizing informative seminars, and involving them in capacity-building events. Annual observances like International Women's Day and International Girl Child Day were used to raise awareness about GBV prevention.

To address discriminatory gender norms, the UN organized training for mentors, school personnel, and content developers, and piloted gender-responsive interventions in ten secondary schools. Over 6,800 adolescent girls participated in sessions on violence prevention and reproductive health, while awareness activities reached 2,547 people across five districts, focusing on promoting the value of girls and addressing issues like GBV and early marriage.

The UN also promoted responsible fatherhood and gender equality through the Papa School program with support from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, which reached 333 young fathers and fathers-to-be. Special Family Rooms were established in three health care institutions to encourage male involvement in antenatal and childcare services. Additionally, 400 healthcare workers were trained, and 1,500 informative materials were disseminated. Advocacy efforts included pushing for paid paternity leave policies and running the "Breaking the Ads" campaign, which engaged over 50 influencers and reached 1.5 million people.

In the realm of STEM, the UN supported the participation of young women and girls by benefiting 125 adolescent girls through STEM programs and developing an online course to raise awareness of STEM careers. The Women In STEM program paired over 150 girls with mentors, and the HeForShe educational program in southern Azerbaijan reached over 200 girls and their fathers.

The UN's efforts aimed to counteract discrimination, challenge gender role stereotypes, and enhance women's representation in various spheres. UN collaborative efforts 2021 led to the development of action plans on gender equality, legislative advocacy, and initiatives to eliminate stigmatizing narratives. Between 2019 and 2022, the UN implemented a regional project on Gender Based Sex Selection, which led to the adoption of a National Action Plan to combat the phenomenon. The UN's work continues to empower women and girls, particularly those from marginalized communities and conflict-affected areas, helping them acquire new skills and participate meaningfully in economic and political life

After the Second Karabakh War several adjacent regions to the war zone such as Tartar, Barda and Aghjabadi has suffered a lot from the trauma and economic turmoil. In addition, war in Ukraine has also contributed to the exacerbating the situation with lose of remittances and influx of people running away from war. Majority of the hardship fell on women and girls especially those living in rural areas. CF through its program was doing extremely helpful work. Thus, UNDP program Empowering and creating equal opportunities for vulnerable, conflict affected women in Azerbaijan to overcome barriers towards greater economic and social participation is one of the good cases of how program helped those vulnerable females and girls to get empowered. Evaluation and monitoring of this program showed that more than 70% of women who received grants in Barda, Aghjabadi and Tartar regions from UNDP had reported increased income while 95% of grantees established businesses. Women Resource Centres established by UNDP had significantly helped the local community in various areas including growth of income, better business opportunities, reduction in domestic violence, increasing welfare and mobility of women. Moreover, 67% of women visiting WRC feel they have a voice in influencing decision-making regarding socio economic opportunities.

3.4 Efficiency: How well have resources been used?

EQ 8: Has the CF reduced transaction costs for partners through greater UN coherence?

The Cooperation Framework (CF) has effectively reduced transaction costs for partners through increased UN coherence. Key informants noted that the UN has achieved results efficiently, with minimal waste and duplication. The UN has leveraged government resources and cost-sharing arrangements, exemplified by successful collaborations such as the Agro Credit and Development Agency's projects. Despite a 20% funding gap in the CF, the UN has maintained satisfactory budget delivery rates, with over 70% in all outcome areas. Administrative coordination, while creating additional costs for agency staff, has facilitated program delivery. The Business Operations Strategy (BOS 2.0) has further reduced transaction costs through shared services and streamlined procedures, though limitations in Long Term Agreements (LTAs) due to differing agency mandates persist.

Efficiency involves achieving CF results in an economical manner with minimal transaction costs. Although it's challenging to quantify efficiency conventionally, key informants from government and donor organizations noted that the UN has achieved results without significant waste or duplication. Stakeholders highlighted the UN's flexibility and adaptability during both planning and implementation phases.

The UN has effectively utilized government resources and capacity for UNSDCF activities, exemplified by the increasing number of cost-sharing programs with the Government of Azerbaijan. This collaboration has seen the UN providing expertise while the government funds the programs, such as innovative models and processes supported by the Agro Credit and Development Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture.

“We welcome the expertise of the UN ... We have the money, but we need people and innovative ideas...”
- government key informant

“The UN has the right people in the right place and could engage in issues where we could not. They provided value for money” – Donor key informant

Table 6 Budget delivery rates by outcome area, 2021 - 2023

Outcome area	Total required resources	Total available resources	Funding gap	Available resources 2021 - 2023	Expenditure 2021 - 2023	Execution rate
Outcome 1.1 - Inclusive growth	51,0	42,7	16%	30,9	23,42	76%
Outcome 2.1 - Stronger institutions	90,1	72,2	20%	60,2	52,84	88%
Outcome 2.2 - Quality data	9,2	6,9	25%	5,5	4,00	73%
Outcome 3.1 - Environment and climate change	20,1	15,0	25%	11,2	8,85	79%
Outcome 4.1 - Gender equitable society	7,4	4,9	34%	3,2	2,93	92%
(blank)						
Grand Total (mln USD)	177,79	141,68	20,3%	110,97	92,04	82,9%

Source: UN INFO Azerbaijan, May 2024. Data in million USD.

The UN INFO portal shows that the total planned budget for the CF exceeds USD \$177 million, with USD \$141.6 million available as of May 2024, creating a funding gap of USD \$36 million (20% of the total). The Government of Azerbaijan, along with the UN and the EU, is a key funding partner, reflecting the perceived value for money of UN operations. IN 2023, the UN succeeded to mobilise around 1 million USD from the Joint SDG Fund to support the Government in developing the Integrated National Financing Framework.

Budget execution rates have been satisfactory, with rates above 70% in all outcome areas. Despite some challenges in post-conflict environments, the UN has maintained support to key development areas. Administrative coordination efforts, while creating higher transaction costs for individual agency staff, have positively impacted program delivery.

To reduce transaction costs and enhance UN coherence, the UNCT developed a Business Operations Strategy (BOS 2.0). This strategy has led to significant savings through shared facilities like the UN House, mutual recognition of partner assessment procedures, and common services such as translation and transport. However, Long Term Agreements (LTAs) with service providers are not always feasible for all agencies due to varying HQ procedures and mandates.

EQ 9: To what extent has the CF collectively prioritized activities based on the needs (demand side) rather than on the availability of resources (supply side), and reallocated resources according to the collective priorities and changing needs if/where necessary?

The Cooperation Framework (CF) has effectively utilized government and UN resources to achieve its outcomes, though individual agency priorities sometimes hinder a unified approach. The reliance on earmarked funding and the need for immediate results can lead to an opportunistic approach, undermining long-term development goals and creating silos among agencies. Despite these challenges, the UNCT has successfully mobilized funds for some joint programmes, such as the Integrated National Financial Framework (INFF) and a regional EU-funded programme. The establishment of an integrated financing framework or SDG Accelerator Fund has not yet occurred, with mixed opinions on its feasibility due to Azerbaijan's upper-middle-income status and the existing donor landscape.

The UN effectively leveraged government capacity and resources to implement CF activities and thus contribute to the CF outcomes. The UNCT was effective in mobilizing its own internal and donor resources towards the achievement of the CF outcomes. However, country team members are often driven by the need to raise the profile of their individual agencies, which at times undermines a more coherent approach in delivery. Agencies often feel constrained by the national government's needs and priorities, as well as donor mandates.

Most respondents indicated that there is minimal competition for resources within the UNCT, as project-based financing is clearly delineated and donors tend to maintain traditional partnerships. However, competition occasionally arises for better access to national partners to secure commitment to specific project objectives, potentially crowding out other partners working in complementary areas.

Funding patterns present a significant challenge to stronger coordination and coherence. The CF relies on earmarked funding, and development partners are more likely to approach individual agencies with specific project work opportunities. This reliance on earmarked funding and the need for quick, visible results may lead to an opportunistic approach to development, potentially undermining a long-term vision for addressing root causes of development issues and achieving greater impact. Additionally, UN agencies are often held accountable to their own headquarters for resource mobilization targets, and joint resource mobilization achievements are not always equally recognized at the HQ level. This project-based approach can result in agencies working in silos. Despite the requirement for coordination, it is often limited to avoiding overlaps rather than exploring synergies and creating multiplier effects through joint delivery. Respondents from the international donor community appreciated the UN's expertise and agility as implementing partners but were more likely to continue working with traditional partners rather than engage in non-earmarked or multi-agency programmes due to perceived higher transaction costs. However, donors indicated they are willing to support joint programmes when the rationale for joint work and the potential to add value for the government and beneficiaries are clearly evident.

The CF has not been very successful in mobilizing pooled funds for joint programmes. Azerbaijan's status as an upper-middle-income country makes accessing resources from funds like the SDG Fund more challenging compared to UNCTs in less developed countries. Nonetheless, the UNCT has successfully mobilized funding from the Joint SDG Fund for the implementation of the Integrated National Financial Framework (INFF) with UNDP and UNFPA and has executed a larger regional joint programme funded by the EU (EU4Gender Equality with UN Women and UNFPA). A One Health Joint Programme initiative put

forward by WHO, FAO and UNEP to the Covid 19 Response and Recovery Fund was not successful. Additionally, the CF has implemented several regional transboundary programmes and initiatives funded through the UN's vertical funds.

An integrated financing framework or a country-level SDG Accelerator Fund has not yet been established in the current cooperation cycle, despite being highlighted as opportunities in the CF. UNCT members have differing views on the feasibility of such a fund. While there is consensus on the theoretical benefits of an SDG Accelerator Fund, some key respondents believe that the current funding patterns and donor landscape in Azerbaijan—with few donors and limited financing portfolios—make the establishment of this fund unrealistic. Others remain optimistic and highlight its potential to strengthen joint programming and innovation in the UN.

3.5 Coordination: How well has implementation of the CF been coordinated?

EQ 10: To what extent the planning and coordination of the CF (through the Results Groups with the RCO support) efficiently contributed to a coherent implementation and to the achievement of indicators' targets (outputs and outcomes)?

EQ 11: To what extent did the post reform Resident Coordinator office's roles and responsibilities enable positive UNCT's joint convening power and better coherence of the country team?

The Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) has been pivotal in ensuring the effective planning and coordination of the Cooperation Framework (CF), facilitating Results Groups and thematic groups to align UN agency efforts and achieve output and outcome indicators. The RCO's technical support, expertise and networks are instrumental, especially for smaller agencies. The RC's diplomatic approach has been effective in engaging with the government and stakeholders, advancing policy dialogues, and addressing normative issues like gender equality. While the RC's role has been highly valued by donors and UN agencies for its inclusiveness and expertise, leveraging the full potential of a collective approach for CF implementation requires commitment and concerted efforts by all UNCT members. Despite these challenges, the RC has made significant strides in fostering a cooperative culture and enhancing UNCT coherence, though some issues remain in collectively utilizing the reforms intended to boost joint efforts.

The Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) has played a pivotal role in ensuring the effective planning and coordination of the Cooperation Framework (CF). The RCO's facilitation of the Results Groups and thematic groups has been crucial in aligning UN agency efforts and ensuring a unified approach to CF implementation. The RCO's support has enabled these groups to work cohesively towards shared goals, thus contributing significantly to the achievement of output and outcome indicators. This coordination is central to achieving the CF's targets for outputs and outcomes.

Key functions of the RCO include coordinating the technical support provided to various UN agencies, which is especially valued by smaller agencies that rely on the RCO for analysis, insights, and strategic direction. This support extends to the joint communication strategy and the UN Communication Group (UNCG), ensuring that advocacy efforts are streamlined and effective. Additionally, the RCO's oversight of

the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) group underscores its central role in tracking progress and ensuring that targets are met.

The efficiency of this coordination is evident in the smooth operation of the Results Groups, which have facilitated the integration of diverse agency contributions into a coherent CF implementation strategy. The RCO's involvement has helped to bridge gaps between different UN entities, ensuring that all efforts are directed towards common objectives and that progress is monitored systematically.

RG members indicate that the RCO's role has been indispensable in maintaining the coherence of CF implementation and in driving the achievement of its targets. Without the RCO's facilitation and support, the joint programming efforts of the UN system would face significant challenges in achieving their desired outcomes. However, UN agencies recognise that corporate incentives to engage in collective work are not strong, which leads to agencies prioritising their individual mandates in both programming and fundraising activities. Joint resource mobilisation may require additional transaction costs and agencies are more likely to focus on project-based delivery based on earmarked funding. Furthermore, one respondent noted that they may choose not to involve the RCO in their events, as they are concerned it could overshadow their own visibility and dilute their agency's branding.

The post-reform Resident Coordinators has significantly enhanced the joint convening power and coherence of the UN Country Team (UNCT). The Resident Coordinator (RC) is recognized for their effective engagement with the government and other key stakeholders, which has been critical in advancing high-level policy dialogues and raising the profile of important issues such as gender equality and human rights.

One of the RC's key strengths lies in their diplomatic approach. By maintaining a balanced and impartial stance, the RC has successfully navigated complex political environments, enabling productive interactions with the government and other partners. This approach has been instrumental in elevating the SDG agenda and fostering collaboration on various initiatives, including COP29 coordination. The RC's ability to convene diverse stakeholders, including women's civil society organizations (CSOs), has been particularly notable in addressing sensitive topics and advancing discussions on gender issues.

Donors and UN agencies appreciate the RC's role for their inclusiveness and the valuable expertise they bring to the table. The RC's network and diplomatic skills are seen as essential for reaching diverse audiences and facilitating a cooperative culture within the UNCT. However, some UN agencies have indicated that they would appreciate a stronger collective UN effort in addressing sensitive issues.

The UN reform agenda envisioned a more empowered RC with greater responsibilities to drive coherence and effectiveness across the UN system. While the RC has made strides in fostering a cooperative culture and enhancing UNCT's overall coherence, some challenges remain. The RC's role has been significantly impactful in diplomatic and facilitative capacities and good efforts have been made to enhance a cooperation culture within the UNCT and fully leveraging the reforms intended to enhance joint efforts.

3.6 Orientation towards impact: What difference do CF Interventions make?

EQ 12: To what extent have UN system activities articulated in the CF driven progress towards, or supported achievement of ToC outcomes? Were interventions scaled up to achieve impact?

The UN's Cooperation Framework (CF) has significantly advanced national priorities and the SDG agenda in Azerbaijan by fostering key partnerships with government, donors, private sector, and civil society. This collaboration has led to effective integration of SDG principles into national policies and budgeting processes, as well as the development of a national data governance system. Despite the UN's relatively small financial footprint, its catalytic role in providing strategic advice and leveraging additional resources has been crucial for developments in areas such as employment rights, inclusive education, and environmental policy. However, while grassroots activities are well-aligned with CF objectives, there is a noted need for clearer strategies to scale up interventions and achieve systemic change. Recent efforts to support environmental resilience and green growth in anticipation of COP29 underscore the UN's influential role in shaping national policy and mobilizing diverse stakeholders.

The CF contributed to the achievement of the national priorities and the SDG agenda. To encourage synergies and increase the impact of its work in Azerbaijan, the UN has initiated partnerships with the government, local communities, donors, private sector, CSOs, and technical and development partners. The orientation towards impact is most clearly visible in the efforts to integrate the SDG agenda in the national policy discourse, at all sectors and grassroots levels. The UN has supported the integration of the SDG agenda in the national budgeting framework (SDG tagging) and the development of a national data eco-system to support evidence-based policy making as well as better accountability for results. The UN has successfully integrated and continued without leaving anyone behind, human rights, sustainable development, and the principles and goals of gender equality, as well as environmental sustainability to achieve the government's vision for “a powerful state with exemplary welfare”.

The UN's development footprint in Azerbaijan is relatively small in terms of size of financing, however government respondents have highlighted their importance in maintaining relevance of key development topics and their catalytic role in providing strategic advice and leverage government's own resources as well as those from other development partners towards achieving impact. The UN's work is based on a multi-year incremental approach in development, which has already yielded results in several areas, such as advancements in employment rights and labour laws, the mainstreaming of inclusive education policy and practices in Azerbaijani schools, increasing awareness and public support for the rights of women and vulnerable people, the development of national policy for environmental protection and climate change (NDC), etc.

While recognizing the important role played by the UN in shaping national policy and conducting advocacy for rights-holders, some respondents from the UN and international donors highlight that their work has at times focused at the grassroots level, without a clear orientation towards impact in the short to medium term. These activities are well aligned with the CF's broader outcome objectives, and several UN agencies have focused on the development of small-scale pilots and direct service delivery that may be highly effective at the individual or small community level, but do not yet have the potential to work towards achieving systemic change. Under the Outcome area 1 – Inclusive growth, the UN's collective work has focused on providing direct support for the establishment of micro-and small enterprises, with a focus on women, rural population and IDPs, but there is no clear strategy to scale up interventions towards the higher goal of a diversified economy. Similarly, support to the development of labour markets, addressing the mismatch in labour supply and demand and increasing the quality of the vocational education system – key areas that will support the development of a diversified, non oil-dependent economy, has been fragmented across multiple UN agencies that do not proactively join forces to achieve synergies.

Support to environmental resilience and countering the impacts of climate change have achieved more prominence in the recent months to support Azerbaijan's hosting of the COP29. The UN is playing a crucial role in supporting the government of Azerbaijan and mobilizing partners from various spheres of the economy and society, and concurrently help shape the national policy towards green growth objectives.

3.7 Sustainability: Will the benefits last?

EQ 13: What mechanisms, if any, has the CF established to ensure socio-political, institutional, financial and environmental sustainability? What is the likelihood that progress towards the SDGs is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time?

The Cooperation Framework (CF) was designed with sustainability in mind, aligning closely with national strategies and benefiting from strong government ownership and commitment, which has been crucial for its progress. The UNCT has effectively combined technical assistance with capacity building at various levels, utilizing both international and national expertise to enhance local capabilities. Successful examples include the government's adoption of several UN-supported initiatives, such as expanding social services and inclusive education. However, while the UN's strategic approach is generally conducive to sustainability, some stakeholders have reported mixed results in areas like human rights and gender equality. The UNCT is viewed as having potential to better support civil society and support greater public engagement and participation in state policy formulation and implementation.

Sustainability was a key consideration during the design of the Cooperation Framework (CF), ensuring alignment with national strategies. The strong commitment and ownership of the national government, reflected in the collaborative development and approval of CF workplans, have led to substantial investment by the Government of Azerbaijan in the CF's outcomes. The UN Country Team (UNCT) and the Resident Coordinator (RC) have established a robust partnership with the government, fostering ongoing high-level dialogue through initiatives like the SDG dialogue series and the annual high-level forum. This government ownership and commitment, bolstered by trust in the UN as a neutral and longstanding partner, are crucial factors in advancing progress.

The CF's intervention logic combines technical assistance with capacity building at both national and subnational levels. The UN is recognized for providing high-quality support, utilizing both international and national expertise to enhance local capacities. The UN's long-term strategy focuses on institutional development, policy framework enhancement, and capacity building while engaging with communities and civil society to raise awareness and demand for rights and services. The UNCT's efforts have been expanded or adopted by the government to ensure broader impact. While the UN generally targets systemic improvements, some interventions may appear as isolated projects. Notable examples of sustainable models and associated challenges include:

- Several UN-supported initiatives, such as the gradual transfer of Women Resource Centres, increased funding for social services, the expansion of inclusive education, and the consolidation of primary healthcare, have been adopted by the government.
- Building institutional and capacity development for national officials is essential for transferring knowledge and replicating successful models. Azerbaijani officials highly value efforts to enhance public service efficiency and innovation in the public sector.

- Support for evidence-based policymaking, including strengthening the State Statistical Committee's capabilities, exemplifies interventions with potential for widespread sustainable impact.
- This diverse strategy is likely to foster an environment conducive to sustainability. However, some stakeholders, particularly within UN members and civil society focusing on human rights and gender equality, have reported mixed results despite ongoing support. The UNCT is seen as having the potential to enhance its role in supporting civil society, raising awareness among rights-holders, promoting cooperation between public, private and civil society sectors and support public advocacy and participation.

4 Conclusions

Based on the findings of the evaluation the evaluation team developed the following conclusions:

4.1 Relevance and Adaptability

The 2021 – 2025 United Nations Sustainable Cooperation Framework in Azerbaijan is broadly relevant to the development context of the country. The Outcomes of the CF are well aligned with key national priorities as outlined in "Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development". However, the CF exhibits several critical gaps and challenges. The framework successfully incorporates strategic goals and clear performance indicators, but struggles with high-level, non-specific indicators that do not fully align with the practical realities of UN interventions or the government's evolving needs. Specifically, the CF's alignment with the Great Return Programme and other emerging priorities is limited, indicating a need for more adaptive and responsive strategies. The CF's design and intervention logic are hindered by inadequate baseline data, ambitious targets, and inconsistent data collection mechanisms, which in turn constrain the CFs overall effectiveness. Despite its responsiveness to some immediate challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and economic shocks, the CF must enhance its adaptability and resilience-building measures to address unforeseen needs and support the most vulnerable more effectively. Future adjustments should focus on integrating new priorities, improving data reliability, and refining outcome indicators to better reflect the impact of interventions.

4.2 Coherence

The CF's planning and implementation processes have largely maintained coherence through structured coordination mechanisms, including the Results Groups and thematic groups. These mechanisms have facilitated a unified approach to achieving CF outcomes and aligning with national strategies. Despite overall coherence, some inconsistencies between CF objectives and implementation strategies exist, particularly in specific outcome areas such as Inclusive Growth, due to a project-focus approach adopted by UN agencies and donors. Coherence is stronger at the programming stage but is not always transmitted into the implementation stage, with missed opportunities for cross-fertilisation of results. This highlights the need for better definition of CF priorities with realistic targets, toward which contribution of the UN system can clearly be attested. Cross-cutting issues, such as gender equality, have been addressed with varying degrees of success. While there are efforts to integrate these issues, more systematic approaches are needed to ensure that gender considerations are consistently incorporated into all aspects of CF implementation.

4.3 Effectiveness

The CF has been effective in coordinating and leveraging UN expertise for SDG advocacy and implementation, as evidenced by the high degree of alignment of national priorities with the SDG agenda. The CF has been effective in catalysing government resources and supporting the development of policy frameworks and models for service delivery in sectors ranging from education and health, labour rights, gender-based violence, to farming and environmental sustainability. CF implementation often happens in siloed approaches, with agencies demonstrating resistance to change.

4.4 Efficiency

The CF coordination structures successfully reduced transaction cost, minimised duplication and enhanced UN system coherence, leading to strong budget execution rates across all outcome areas. Strategic cost-sharing arrangements with the government allowed for efficient resource utilisation. However, limited integration across outcomes and outputs hindered full optimisation of results. Furthermore, while administrative coordination has increased workload for agency staff, it has ultimately enhanced program delivery. In light of shifting donor priorities and funding patterns, a more robust resource mobilization strategy is essential to sustain and scale these achievements.

4.5 Coordination

The RCO has been a key facilitator in ensuring coordination among UN agencies and stakeholders, which has been crucial for the implementation of the CF. The RC has showed leadership and fostered an atmosphere of cooperation within the UNCT, despite resistance to change due to reverse corporate incentives and legacy. The RCO's role in engaging with partnerships, promoting the SDG and normative agenda and managing the joint communication strategy and coordinating advocacy efforts has enhanced overall coherence and the relevance of SDGs in the policy dialogue in the country.

4.6 Impact

The UN's Cooperation Framework (CF) in Azerbaijan has significantly advanced national priorities and the SDG agenda through strategic partnerships with government, donors, the private sector, and civil society. It has successfully integrated SDG principles into national policies, budgeting, and data governance systems, despite the UN's relatively small financial footprint. The UN's catalytic role in providing strategic advice has been crucial in areas such as employment rights, inclusive education, and environmental policy. However, while grassroots activities align well with CF objectives, there is a need for clearer strategies to scale up interventions for systemic change. Recent efforts in environmental resilience, particularly in preparation for COP29, underscore the UN's ongoing influence in shaping national policies and mobilizing diverse stakeholders for sustainable development.

4.7 Sustainability

The Cooperation Framework (CF) has been designed with sustainability as a core principle, aligning closely with national strategies and benefiting from strong government ownership. This commitment has been pivotal in advancing key initiatives, with the UN Country Team (UNCT) combining technical assistance and capacity building to enhance local capacities. Successful examples include the government's adoption of UN-supported initiatives in social services and inclusive education. However, while the CF's approach generally supports sustainable outcomes, mixed results in areas such as human rights and gender equality suggest the need for the UN to further strengthen its engagement with civil society and promote a broader public demand for increased civic space.

5 Recommendations

The recommendations below are based on findings and conclusions of the evaluation.

Recommendation 1: The UNCT should strengthen cross-sector integration and resource optimization in the next CF to boost synergies among interventions. This includes refining indicators and monitoring systems to ensure programs remain adaptable to shifting priorities, and coordinating efforts across different outcome areas so that strategic goals and partner resources are used as effectively as possible.

Priority: **High**

Audience: **UNCT, UNRC, Government of Azerbaijan**

Based on: Coherence EQ 3, EQ 5 and Orientation Towards Impact EQ 12, Conclusion 4.1 and 4.6

Recommendation 2: The UNCT should align the next CF with the highest development needs in the country, focusing on human capital development with a special focus on youth education and employment, health and social protection as well as green growth. The Great Return Programme and the Demining initiatives should be highly prioritized in the next CF, with an emphasis on resilience building, and mainstreaming of LNOB and HR principles.

Priority: **High**

Audience: **UNCT, UNRC, Government of Azerbaijan**

Based on: Relevance and Adaptability EQ 1, 2 and Conclusion 4.1

Recommendation 3: Ensure that the next CF is based on a realistic Results Framework, with a soundly developed results chain that adequately represents the level and extent of UN interventions in the given sectors. The CF should prioritise areas where UN agencies have clear individual or joint comparative advantages.

Priority: **High**

Audience: **UNCT, UNRCO, MEL**

Based on: Effectiveness EQ 6 and EQ 7, Conclusion 4.3

Recommendation 4: The next CF should continue investment in national data eco-systems and support to the multidimensional integration of SDGs.

Priority: **High**

Audience: **UNCT, UNRC, UNDP, MEL**

Based on Effectiveness EQ 6 and EQ 7, Coherence EQ 5. Conclusions 4.2. 4.3 and 4.6

Recommendation 5: The UNCT and Government of Azerbaijan should continue to consolidate the work of the RGs and thematic groups to improve coordination during implementation and improve joint work-planning processes. Government and Agencies are called upon to acknowledge the importance of coordination and ensure continuity of membership and avoid loss of institutional memory.

Priority: **Medium**

Audience: **UNCT, Government of Azerbaijan, RGs**

Based on Coherence EQ 3; Efficiency EQ 9; Coordination EQ 10, Conclusion 4.2; 4.5

Recommendation 6: The UNCT should explore the potential and partner interest to establish an integrated funding framework and one fund at the country level, and actively explore joint programming opportunities as catalysts for better coherence and results for the country.

Audience: **UNCT, UNRC, Government of Azerbaijan**

Priority: **Medium**

Based on Coherence EQ 3; Efficiency EQ 9; Conclusion 5.4

Recommendation 7: The UNCT should strategize on sustainability of interventions at design stage, with a clear logical flow of how beneficiary buy in, commitment and capacity is to be embedded in the programme. Approaches to support institution building and capacity development should be prioritised, alongside data governance and digital transformation.

Audience: **UNCT**

Priority: **Medium**

Based on Sustainability EQ 13; Conclusion 5.7

Recommendation 8: The UNCT should mainstream gender equality, human rights, LNOB not only at the RF, but at programme and project level and develop targeted needs assessments to inform better policy. The UNCT should continue to strengthen capacity building for and cooperation with civil society and the private sector for the implementation of the CF and leveraging their expertise and resources towards the achievement of the SDG agenda.

Audience **UNCT, GTG, HRTG**

Priority: **High**

Based on Effectiveness EQ 7, Conclusion 5.3

Recommendation 9: Results groups and MEL should play a more active role on joint planning and the formulation of Joint workplans, to ensure that the latter consolidate and integrate the efforts of UNCT and serve as a vehicle to identify and leverage better synergies in implementation.

Audience: **UNCT**, Priority: **Medium**

6 Limitations and Lessons Learned

Limitations during the evaluation

The major limitation encountered during the evaluation is the availability of data and full information that would allow attribution of development outcomes to the work of the UNCT with confidence. The observed results are likely influenced by multiple external factors beyond the CF's control, making it difficult to isolate the specific contribution of CF-supported activities to the overall higher-level outcomes. As underlined in the report, there is a need to better align the CF's activities with its higher-level results/targets. This has limited the ability of the evaluation to draw conclusions on the extent of the CF's impact on broader developmental goals and attributing systemic change to CF interventions. The evaluation was based on contribution analysis. Secondly, there was a limited number of evaluations carried out for projects and/or programmes implemented under the current CF. This was addressed by relying on primary data through face-to-face interviews and the review of a number of reports and documents. Data availability is a key issue for the CF evaluation. The UNSDCF has worked extensively for data for policies and the RF was updated in 2021 to include updated baseline and target indicators, but data availability posed limitations for the HR and GE dimensions, given the scarcity of disaggregated data. Finally, during the CF implementation there were frequent changes in the composition of the UNCT, with about twenty different agency heads in six of the largest UN agencies. This may have to some extent undermined institutional memory as regards in particular strategic issues.

Lessons learnt:

1. Importance of Joint Programming and Resource Mobilization for SDG Acceleration: Lesson: Effective joint programming, where synergies are built and interventions are synchronized, is crucial for achieving targeted outcomes that not only deliver services but also build sustainable capacity. Such integrated approaches allow multiple UN agencies to address several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within a single program, thus accelerating progress.
2. Role of RCO for UNSDCF implementation and SDG integration: The RCO's dedication and support for the UN agencies has greatly improved coordination, not only among UN agencies but also with national and international stakeholders. The UNCT as a strategic and knowledge sharing platform should be fully utilised by all members.
3. Lesson 3: Partnership building and consultations with national stakeholders at central and local level is an essential ingredient of success to ensure country ownership and commitment to achieve and sustain results. It is important that governmental authorities are on board to make financial contributions for planned interventions through cost sharing modalities to ensure long-term commitment and sustainability.
4. Need for Updated and Achievable Results Matrices: A lack of sufficient data for tracking progress on indicators and outdated results matrices hinder the ability to fully assess the impact of UN interventions. Ensuring that the future UNSDCF results matrix is regularly updated and that indicators are clearly attributable to the UN Development System will allow for more accurate and actionable evaluations. Similarly, setting realistic goals within the five-year CF period will prevent over-ambition and improve the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes.
5. Need for harmonisation of business and implementation practices: The BOS Strategy is a good start to increase efficiency of operations, however further harmonisation of businesses and procedures should be addressed at the HQ level for the UNSDG system. The UNINFO database should be

adequately utilised by all agencies to enable comprehensive and reliable information on implementation outcomes, achievements and budget plans and delivery.

6. The importance of Joint Workplans: Joint Work Plans should be more than administrative exercises; they need to serve as strategic, meaningful planning tools that guide the implementation of the UNSDCF. When effectively designed and aligned with the Cooperation Framework's outcomes, JWPs can ensure coordinated efforts across UN agencies, foster accountability, and provide a clear roadmap for achieving results. Strengthening the use of JAWPs as key planning instruments can enhance coherence, improve resource allocation, and support the timely achievement of shared development goals.

7 Annexes

1. Annex 1: Terms of Reference for the Evaluation

TERMS OF REFERENCE UNSDCF EVALUATION Azerbaijan (2024)

1. Introduction

The United Nations Azerbaijan Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (CF) (2021-2025) represents the collective response of the UN development system to support Azerbaijan address national priorities and challenges in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

As outlined on the CF 2021-2025, an end of the cycle evaluation will be conducted during the penultimate year of the CF implementation. The evaluation of the CF is a mandatory independent system-wide country evaluation to ensure accountability, support learning and inform decisions regarding the design of subsequent CF cycle. It systematically assesses the contributions of the CF by focusing on achieved development results, as well as internal and external gaps and overlaps in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The CF evaluation should adhere to [UNEG's Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#) (2016), as well as follow guidance on gender equality and human rights²³. It must be credible and grounded on independence, impartiality and a rigorous methodology. The process should be transparent and inclusive (involving relevant stakeholders) with robust quality assurance. Evaluation results and recommendations should derive from - and be informed by - the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the best available, objective, reliable and valid data, **as well as the accurate analysis of evidence.**

The key audience of the CF Evaluation is the UNCT, the Government, the development partners and the general public.

2. Background – Country Context and the CF Highlights

Azerbaijan is a politically stable unitary state with a citizenry of around 10 million, growing approximately 100,000 each year. It is an upper Middle-Income Country with a US\$ 7,736 per capita GDP income and an HDI that ranks it 91th globally. Azerbaijan's economy remains heavily dependent on oil revenues, and the Government is committed to diversifying revenues while improving the efficiency of public spending. Despite GDP growth and solid fiscal buffers, Azerbaijan's economic transition performance is lagging behind the regional average—especially in resilience and competitiveness²⁴. Demining, reconstruction, and the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) have remained among Azerbaijan's top priorities since 2020, following the three decades-long conflict with Armenia which resulted in massive displacement of people and devastation. The Government has initiated a range of institutional mechanisms, extensive land use planning, physical reconstruction, and engagement with IDPs and the business sector for integrated recovery, and rehabilitation of conflict-affected districts and return of people. UNCT continued supporting national response efforts in partnership with the European Union (EU), and the World Bank (WB) Group through a comprehensive Joint Recovery Needs Assessment (JRNA), the findings and recommendations of which provides a platform for coordinated, transparent and coherent implementation and financing of post-conflict recovery and reconstruction efforts by national and international partners.

In 2022, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan approved two important policy documents: the Socio-Economic Development Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2022-2026) and the State Programme for the Great Return to the Liberated Territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2022-2026). These documents guide the implementation of the vision set forth in Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development and the strong commitment from the Government to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Socio-Economic Development Strategy outlines five national priorities:

²³ UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations (2014); UN Women Evaluation Handbook on how to Manage Gender-Responsive Evaluation (2015); UN SWAP EPI Technical Note and Scorecard (2018); and UNEG Good Practices for Integrating Gender Equality and Human Rights in Evaluation (2017).

²⁴ Transition quality report of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

1. Sustainably growing competitive economy
2. Dynamic, inclusive, and equitable society
3. Competitive human capital and modern innovations
4. The great return to the territories liberated from occupation.
5. Clean environment and “green growth” country

Azerbaijan has undertaken several measures to advance its progress towards achieving SDGs. Along with nationalizing 17 goals, 88 targets and 119 indicators, the country has implemented targeted policies and initiatives across various sectors. The National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development (NCCSD) was established that oversees and coordinates actions among various stakeholders, while the State Statistics Committee reports on the progress on SDGs annually through its [web platform](#) as well as annual reports on SDGs. In 2023, Azerbaijan has adopted its national SDG 18 on mine action focusing on the need of clearing landmines and other explosive remnants of war, supporting victims, and creating safe environments in post-conflict areas to ensure the safety and well-being of its citizens and contribute to regional stability. Several stand-alone initiatives are implemented to boost SDG financing, however, more coordinated actions under the umbrella of Integrated National Financing Framework for SDG financing could serve as catalytic. Across its three previous Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), Azerbaijan diligently documented its progress and acknowledged the challenges encountered in pursuing sustainable development. The country gears up to present its fourth VNR in 2024, which is particularly opportune, coinciding with the evaluation of the CF. 2024 will also see the early presidential elections in February.

Despite efforts to improve social outcomes, inequalities persist, and women, youth, children, persons with disabilities, elderly persons, refugees, displaced communities, informal workers and rural populations remain the furthest left behind in access to some social services²⁵. The Global Gender Gap Index 2023 stood at 0.692 ranking country 97th out of 146 countries, and women’s representation in parliament is weak at 18.5 percent. 4. Regional disparities are in place across a number of key socio-economic indicators, including the availability of pre-school facilities and secondary schools, healthcare facilities and health professionals, access to improved living conditions and access to finance. The digital divide also prevents people in rural areas and urban populations living in poverty from enjoying the benefits of digitalized public services. As well, efforts are needed to enhance the accountability and transparency of public institutions, promote the rule of law, and further engage civil society actors in institutional oversight.

In the field of environmental protection, Azerbaijan has done significant work over the past few years. Nevertheless, integrated action is required to maintain the ecological balance. Climate change has already made a negative impact on Azerbaijan, with the water sector exposed to the most severe implications. Many parts of Azerbaijan are increasingly prone to flooding, resulting in landslides and mudslides through its mountainous terrain, and prolonged summer droughts. Land degradation is further attributable to overexploitation of land (including overgrazing), deforestation, and poor irrigation methods. A promising development has been the Government’s stepped-up efforts to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy. Two new laws on the use of energy resources and energy efficiency were adopted in 2021 and a target has been set to increase the installed capacity of renewable energy to 30% in the country’s overall energy balance by 2030. Hosting COP29, the 29th Conference of the Parties is a momentous occasion for the country in 2024 to showcase its commitment to environmental sustainability and contribute to global conversations on climate action.

Cooperation Framework Formulation, Theory of Change, Strategy and Approach, Key Priorities and Outcomes

The CF came at a pivotal time when the Government was about to embark on a new national development cycle – envisioned towards 2030 – while also addressing the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating consequences of the conflict. Thus, the CF focused on key national priorities and challenges to achieving the SDGs in this turbulent context. The prioritization of actions and theory of change were shaped by evidence generated through the Common Country Analysis (CCA), with strategic priorities being established at the national

²⁵ Common Country Analysis 2019, its subsequent updates in 2022 and 2023

Strategic Prioritization Workshop (SPW) by bringing together the comparative advantages of United Nations entities, the Government, development institutions, the private sector, and civil society. The CCA identified six major areas to scale up efforts to attain the SDGs: (i) the income-generating ability of young people and other groups such as women and small farmers, who remain vulnerable to economic shocks; (ii) the quality and reach of public services to the most vulnerable in society, including in the education, health, and justice sectors; (iii) environmental pollution and degradation; (iv) spatial and gender inequalities; (v) institutional capacity to design evidence-based development policies; and (vi) the enduring consequences of the Karabakh war.

Using the results of the CCA, the UNCT identified accelerators, or catalytic interventions that address bottlenecks impeding progress. The vision that emerged from the CCA process and capacity gap analyses was narrowed down into four priority areas, five outcomes and 18 outputs for the UN development system to focus on over the period of 2021-2025.

Priority Area # 1: Inclusive growth that reduces vulnerability and builds resilience

Priority area one focuses on strengthening the inclusive growth agenda to reduce vulnerability and build more resilient markets, communities, and households. By 2025, people furthest behind will participate in and benefit from a diverse and innovative economy encompassing future-oriented labor market transformation and access to decent work. The aim here is to advance equitable opportunities for economic participation and realization of the right to work, a process that will yield benefits for every section of society. Investment in this priority area includes linkages with the macroeconomic and microeconomic determinants of growth, implying a focus on micro, small to medium enterprises (MSMEs) across agricultural and other value chains, as well as improving conditions for equitable labor markets.

Priority Area # 2: Stronger institutions for better public and social services delivery

Priority area two aims to support the Government in building stronger institutions for public and social services delivery, including in the areas of education, health, and access to information and justice. By 2025, people furthest behind will benefit from enhanced national capacities and governance structures, strengthening both access and quality of services in those areas. Using Azerbaijan's international human rights commitments as a baseline, pathways are explored to enable a policy shift that improves frontline services, removes spatial (urban/rural) and gender inequalities, supports digitization, promotes decentralized service delivery, and engages civil society. To ensure that these policy changes are backed up by evidence that no one has been excluded, this priority area stresses the need to increase national capacity to identify and target the most vulnerable in society. Thus, by 2025, quality, disaggregated and timely data will be available and used to inform decision-making and policies that leave no one behind.

Priority Area # 3: Protecting the environment and addressing climate change

Priority area three promotes an environmentally conscious economic recovery, recognizing that energy transition is seen as a tool to balance energy security, economic development, and environmental protection. As the impact of climate change on water resources becomes more pronounced, the protection of the environment, especially water resources, the improvement of drinking water supply, and the sustainability of wastewater management are key considerations in the areas of food and health. To ensure Azerbaijan meets its climate action goals, a green route to recovery and to building back better that benefits people who are most exposed to the adverse effects of climate change is proposed. The long-term goal is to increase the share of renewable energy in installed electricity capacity to 30 percent before 2030. In the medium term, all people, particularly those left furthest behind, will have benefited by 2025 from climate strategies and environment protection policies that ensure natural resources are sustainably managed, livelihoods are protected, and resilience is strengthened.

Priority Area # 4: A gender-equitable society that empowers women and girls

Priority area four invests towards a gender-equitable society that empowers women and girls across political, economic and social domains. Although a gender lens applies to all priority areas, the UNSDCF suggests that concrete changes in policy and practice must be sought to address the root causes of inequality and promote the full participation of women and girls in decisions affecting their lives. Efforts must also be made to ensure that the elimination of gender-based violence is recognized as a prerequisite for achieving the full range of SDGs, as it influences the underlying attitudes, decisions and practices towards sustainable development. By 2025, women and girls will benefit from enhanced national mechanisms that ensure they are protected from discrimination and violence and empowered to participate in all spheres of life.

Participating UN agencies, partners, and resources

The four strategic priorities are jointly delivered by the Government (41 entities) and the UN system (18 UN agencies, funds and programmes) in partnership with the civil society, private sector, academia and other development partners. The overall estimated budget to achieve the UNSDCF was approximately \$235 million out of which \$141 million was projected to be available with 40% funding gap. In the first two years of implementation \$58 million has been spent while \$32 million made available for 2023.

Governance mechanisms and operational arrangements

The primary vehicle for overseeing implementation is the Joint Government-UN Steering Committee (JSC), under which five Results Groups have been established. The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Group, the Operations Management Team (OMT), and the Communication Group also act as key structures in the implementation of the CF. In addition to the Results Groups, the UNCT established thematic and operational groups to ensure UNCT programme and operation functions contribute to CF implementation. These include: Gender Thematic Group, Human Rights Thematic Group, Common Country Analysis Taskforce, Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Taskforce, Disability Inclusion Taskforce.

The JSC is co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator representing the UNCT and the Minister of Economy representing the Government of Azerbaijan. Senior government officials at the level of Deputy Ministers and Heads of UN agencies co-chair the five CF Result Groups.

Result Groups	Co-chairs
Result Group One: Inclusive Growth	UNDP and Ministry of Economy
Result Group Two: Stronger Institutions	WHO and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population
Result Group Three: Data for Policies	Resident Coordinator’s Office and State Statistics Committee
Result Group Four: Environment and Climate Change	FAO and Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources
Result Group Five: Gender-Equitable Society	UNFPA and State Committee for Women and Family Affairs

The CF is operationalized through the development of Joint Work Plans (JWPs) that present the planned programmatic sub-outputs and resource contributions of each UN entity to CF outputs, consistent with the Theory of Change. They are either unique to an agency or shared by two or more UNCT members.

The Joint Work Plans are discussed within and across Results Groups to ensure that gaps and overlaps, the potentials for synergy and joint programmes/joint programming are identified and streamlined. The Joint Work Plans are the basis for the Annual Performance Review, which feeds directly into the preparation of the Annual UN Country Results Report. All Joint Work Plans are endorsed by the JSC during its annual meeting, and published in UNINFO Each year,

a UN Country Results Report that comprehensively captures the UN development results (not activities) in support of the 2030 Agenda is developed.

During CF formulation, the UNCT and the Government acknowledged that data scarcity affects setting clear baselines for several indicators, which were also highlighted by the CCA findings. Thus, UNCT started several initiatives to help set baselines and track progress toward CF results, including a national Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). However, as the baselines and targets were not established for some of the indicators, the Result Groups proposed revision to the Results Matrix in 2021, which was endorsed by the JSC, and the Results Matrix was updated accordingly.

6. Purpose and Objectives

The CF evaluation has two primary purposes:

- I. **Promote greater learning and operational improvement.** The evaluation will provide important information for strengthening programming and results at the country level, specifically informing the planning and decision-making for the next CF programme cycle and for improving UN coordination at the country level. The UNCT, host government and other CF stakeholders can learn from the process of documenting good practices and lessons learned, which can then be shared with DCO and used for the benefit of other countries.
- II. **Support greater accountability of the UNCT to CF stakeholders.** By objectively providing evidence of results achieved within the framework of the CF and assessing the effectiveness of the strategies and interventions used, the evaluation will enable the various stakeholders in the CF process, including national counterparts and donors, to hold the UNCT and other parties accountable for fulfilling their roles and commitments.

The objectives of the evaluation are to:

1. Assess the contribution of the CF to national development results through evidence-based judgements using evaluation criteria (accountability).
2. Identify factors that have affected the CF's contribution; answering the question of why the performance is as it is; and explaining the enabling factors and bottlenecks (learning).
3. Reach conclusions concerning the UN's contribution across the scope being examined.
4. Provide actionable recommendations for improving the CF's contribution, especially for incorporation into the new CF programming cycle. These recommendations should be logically linked to the conclusions and findings of the evaluation and should draw upon lessons learned identified through the evaluation.

7. Scope

The evaluation will cover the three years of CF implementation covering the period of March 2021-March 2024.

The evaluation will also analyze the scope of coverage of CF implementation across the country (desk review) assessing the geographical reach achieved by CF interventions, probing whether the initiatives predominantly concentrated efforts in the capital city or demonstrated a more comprehensive geographical dispersion, encompassing regions beyond the primary urban center.

The evaluation findings will be utilized to inform strategic planning, and future programming. Primary users of the evaluation will include stakeholders involved in the implementation of the CF, including UNCT, governmental bodies, civil society organizations, contributing partners, and other relevant stakeholders while secondary users will encompass a broader audience, academic and research community, media and the general public.

It will look at the UNSDCF 2021-2025 as a whole and cover contributions of all sub-outputs by the UNCT including contributions of the non-resident agencies. It will also examine the cross-cutting issues and the global UN programming principles (e.g. leaving no one behind LNOB, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability and resilience, and accountability). The evaluation will also take into account emerging issues, such as, the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in both the evaluation contents (e.g. the UNCT's responsiveness, adaptation and reprioritization) and operation (e.g. methods

for managing stakeholder participation and inclusiveness). It will not evaluate the individual programmes nor activities of UN agencies. However, the evaluation team could suggest any specific thematic areas for specific review, if necessary, after consultation with stakeholders.

8. Evaluation Criteria and Questions

Below are the initial suggested evaluation questions and the evaluation criteria, which includes OECD-DAC evaluation criteria (relevance and adaptability⁸, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability) as well as coordination which is a criterion specific to DCO considering the one UN spirit and the multiagency nature of the CFs. The final evaluation questions and the evaluation matrix will be finalized by the evaluation team in the inception report.

Criteria	Some examples of potential evaluation questions
Relevance and adaptability 7.1.1.1 IS THE CF DOING THE RIGHT THINGS AND ADAPTED WELL TO EMERGING NEEDS? 7.1.1.2	1. To what extent are the CF objectives aligned and been consistent with the needs, priorities, and policies of the government (including alignment to national development goals and targets, national plans, strategies and frameworks). 2. How dynamic and responsive has the CF been to emerging and unforeseen needs, especially those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups? 3. To what extent did the CF build on a sound gender and human rights analysis? 4. To what extent did the implementation of the CF (joint workplan and agencies programmes) adjust to emerging issues faced by the country during the implementation?
Coherence 7.1.1.3 HOW WELL DOES THE CF FIT?	5. To what extent has the CF strengthened the position, credibility and reliability of the UN system as a partner for the government and other actors, and has served as an effective partnership vehicle? 6. To what extent has the UN system promoted or supported policies that are consistent among each other and across sectors, given the multi-sectoral nature of social and economic development and inclusive of gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability issues?
7.1.1.4 Effectiveness 7.1.1.5 HAS THE CF ACHIEVED ITS OBJECTIVES? IS THE CF DOING IT RIGHT?	7. How effective has the CF been in achieving the results outlined in the results framework? What have been the benefits for the people and institutions targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized population? 8. To what extent has the CF contributed to key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes that are critical for catalysing progress towards the CF desired impact? 9. To what extent has the CF contributed to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability.
Efficiency 7.1.1.6 HOW WELL HAVE RESOURCES BEEN USED?	10. Has the CF reduced transaction costs for partners through greater UN coherence? 11. To what extent has the CF collectively prioritized activities based on the needs (demand side) rather than on the availability of resources (supply side), and reallocated resources according to the collective priorities and changing needs if/where necessary? 12. How adequate has the CF been in facilitating the effective reallocation of resources to emerging needs and priorities?
Coordination HOW WELL HAS IMPLEMENTATION OF	13. To what extent has the different UN agencies contributed to the functioning and consolidation of UNCT coordination mechanisms keeping in mind the spirit of the UN reform and adhering to it?

<p>THE CF BEEN COORDINATED?</p>	<p>14. To what extent the planning and coordination of the CF (through the Results Groups with the RCO support) efficiently contributed to a coherent implementation and to the achievement of indicators' targets (outputs and outcomes)?</p> <p>15. How well was the RCO able to successfully coordinate responses to national and global emerging issues during the implementation of the CF?</p>
<p>Orientation towards impact</p> <p>7.1.1.7 WHAT DIFFERENCE DO CF INTERVENTIONS MAKE?</p>	<p>16. To what extent have UN system activities articulated in the CF driven progress towards, or supported achievement of ToC outcomes?</p>
<p>Sustainability</p> <p>7.1.1.8 WILL THE BENEFITS LAST?</p>	<p>17. What mechanisms, if any, has the CF established to ensure socio-political, institutional, financial and environmental sustainability?</p> <p>18. What is the likelihood that progress towards the SDGs is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time?</p>

9. Evaluation Approach and Methodology

The evaluation will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including document reviews, analysis of quantitative secondary data, individual interviews with key informants and focus groups or other types of discussion to collect data. The Independent External Evaluators shall be guided by Annex 1 (standard methodology section) of Appendix 2 (Terms of reference) of the [UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines - Engl - Revised July 2022](#) to develop the evaluation methodology. They shall also develop the necessary tools to collect data and information to answer the overall evaluation questions.

The CF evaluation should adhere to and be guided by the UNEG Norms and Standards (2016) and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines (2020) at every stage of the evaluation process including but not limited to informed consent of participants, privacy, and confidentiality considerations. The relevant ethical standards will be identified and the mechanisms and measures to ensure that standards will be maintained during the CF evaluation process should be provided in the inception report. Each Evaluation Team member will also be provided with and sign off on the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators, which provides ethical guidelines for the conduct of evaluations.

10. Management Arrangements

This section provides a summary of responsibilities for the conduct of the Evaluation while the detailed description of roles can be found in the annex B of UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines.

The Resident Coordinator/ Resident Coordinator’s Office (RCO) is responsible to initiate the CF evaluation, designate the Evaluation Manager, support the Evaluation Steering Committee during the various stages of evaluation.

Evaluation Manager oversees the whole process, collaborates with UNCT and other partners, ensures quality control, facilitates dissemination, and leads the development of the management response.

Evaluation Technical Management Team, comprising current M&E group representatives offers routine technical support to the Evaluation Manager throughout the evaluation.

Evaluation Steering Committee, comprising Result Group co-chairs, assists the evaluation process, guides the Evaluation Team, facilitates stakeholder consultations, reviews evaluation deliverables, prepares a management response, and ensures dissemination of results.

Development Coordination Office (DCO) supports RCO/UNCT, assists in selecting the Evaluation Manager and Team, participates in Evaluation Steering Committee meetings, reviews and approves TOR, oversees evaluation

independence and quality, leads dissemination efforts, ensures accountability mechanisms, and synthesizes findings for feedback.

Composition of the evaluation team

The Evaluation Team is made up of an independent external evaluator (a Team Leader) with extensive evaluation expertise and a national evaluator with strong expertise on LNOB and cross-cutting issues. The evaluation team needs to be balanced in terms of gender.

The Evaluation Team Leader leads the entire evaluation process, working closely with team members. He/she will conduct the evaluation process in a timely manner and communicate with the Evaluation Manager on a regular basis and highlight progress made/challenges encountered. The Evaluation Team Leader will be responsible for producing the inception report and the draft and final evaluation reports.

The national team member contributes to the evaluation process substantively through data collection and analysis. He/she will share responsibilities for conducting desk review and interviews and conduct field visits identified and collect data. He/she will provide substantive inputs to the inception report, the presentation of preliminary findings as well as to the draft and final reports.

Deliverables	Estimated working days for the international expert	Estimated working days for the National expert
Initial desk review	7 days	5 days
TOC meeting	1 day	1 day
Inception report	10 days	7 days
Secondary desk review	3 days	2 days
Filed phase data collection	7 days	7 days
Data analysis	5 days	3 days
Preliminary findings presentation	1 day	1 day
First draft	15 days	12 days
Second draft	5 days	3 days
Final draft	5 days	3 days
Stakeholder workshop	1 day	1 day
Total	60 days	45 days

11. Evaluation Process and Timeline

This section presents the key stages of the evaluation process and an indicative timeframe, including milestones and deadlines. The evaluation timeframe will be further detailed in the inception report, following consultations with key stakeholders.

Steps	lead	supervised	Timeline
Development of the CF evaluation roadmap	RCO	RC	September 2023
Clearance of the roadmap	UNCT	RC	September 2023
Nomination of the evaluation manager (EM)	RC	UNCT	September 2023
Constitution of the Evaluation Steering Committee	EM	RC/UNCT	October 2023
Development of TOR for CF evaluation	EM	RC/UNCT	December 2023
Review and clearance of ToR by ESC	EM	RC/UNCT	December 2023
Quality assurance of ToR by regional bodies (UN evaluation network; RO-DCO) for review and clearance	EM	RC/ESC/UNCT	December 2023
Quality assurance and approval of ToR by DCO-HQ	EM	RC/ESC/UNCT	December 2023
Draft TOR is translated (if necessary)			
Extraction of ToR for RFP for the recruitment of international evaluator	RCO	EM	January 2024
Extraction of ToR for RFP for recruitment of national consultant	RCO	EM	January 2024

Steps	lead	supervised	Timeline
Publication of RFPs for IC & NCs and distribution to identified evaluators	EM	DCO	January 2024
Consultants' recruitment process	EM	RC/ESC	February 2024
Review panel constituted	EM	RC/ESC	February 2024
Assessment of CVs report submitted to RCO	EM	RC/ESC	February 2024
Assessment report submitted to DCO-HQ with CVs of proposed consultants for pre-qualification	EM/RC	RC/ESC	February 2024
Pre-qualification of DCO-HQ	DCO		February 2024
Contracting of Evaluation Team	RCO	EM	March 2024
Onboarding of evaluation team	RCO	EM	March 2024
Compilation of documents for desk review	EM	ESC	March 2024
Initial desk review by evaluation team (ET)	ET	EM	April 2024
ToC technical meeting with UNCT and ESC (analysis of the ToC and possible reconstruction) (online?)	ET	EM	April 2024
Development of inception report	ET	EM	April 2024
Updating the operational workplan with details on field phase	ET	EM	April 2024
Submission of draft inception report	ET	EM	April 2024
Quality assurance and clearance of IR by UNCT	EM	ESC	May 2024
Review and finalization of the IR	ET	EM	May 2024
Quality assurance and clearance of IR by DCO-HQ	RB ²⁶	DCO-HQ	May 2024
Secondary desk review	ET	EM	May 2024
IC's arrival in the country	RCO	EM	June 2024
Data collection	ET	EM	June 2024
Data mining, validation and analysis	ET	EM	June 2024
Preliminary findings presented to RCO/UNCT and comments	ET	EM	June 2024
Preliminary findings presented to ESC	ET	EM	June 2024
Submission of first draft of the report	ET	EM	June 2024
Quality assurance on the draft report	EM	ESC/UNCT/RC	July 2024
Submission of final draft report	ET	EM	July 2024
Evaluation quality assessment on the report by regional bodies	EM	DCO-HQ	July 2024
Approval of final report	EM	RC/UNCT/ESC	August 2024
Stakeholders workshop for presentation of findings	ET	EM	September 2024
Management response development	EM	ESC/UNCT	September 2024
Submission of management response to PPB-HQ (Inter agency programming section)	EM	ESC	October 2024
DCO internal dissemination	DCO		November 2024
Report distributed to in-country stakeholders	EM	ESC	November 2024
Uploading of final evaluation report with MR on DCO Evaluation Database by PPB	DCO		December 2024

²⁶ Regional evaluation bodies/consultants

12. Evaluation Deliverables

The key deliverables that the CF Evaluation Team is expected to produce are as below. The Team should utilize the templates provided by the CF Evaluation Guidelines.

Inception Report , containing a preliminary analysis of the CF ToC or, in its absence, reconstruction of the CF ToC; an elaboration of the evaluation approach and methods, including the evaluation design matrix ; and a detailed evaluation plan and timeline, including a tentative list of interviews to be arranged or plans for field visits.	First draft -April 2024 Final draft -May 2024
Preliminary findings report or presentation , in a template to be agreed with the Evaluation Manager.	June 2024
Draft and final CF Evaluation Report , including the annexes.	First draft-June 2024 Second draft-July 2024 Final draft-August 2024

The Evaluation Steering Committee is engaged from the outset together with the Evaluation Manager to guide the whole evaluation process. The Committee ensures the technical and factual quality of the data, analysis and findings. The quality of the deliverables will be assessed in reference to the quality assurance checklist of the CF Evaluation Guidelines. The DCO will provide quality assurance and oversight of and throughout the entire evaluation process. DCO will quality assure the evaluation report at the end of the evaluation process to ensure the soundness, usefulness, and evidence-based elements of the final report.

13. Qualification of Evaluation Team

International Team Leader

Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced University Degree (Masters or PhD) in political science, public administration, development studies, law, human rights or other relevant field
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum ten years of experience in designing and leading evaluations of UNDAF/CF or UN agency Country Programme, or major bilateral donor Country Programmes, Extensive knowledge of, and experience in applying, qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods; and familiarity with UNEG Norms and Standards and Ethical Guidelines. Strong experience and knowledge in the UN programming principles including leaving no one behind LNOB, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, disability inclusion, environmental sustainability and resilience, and accountability. Previous experience of working in Europe and Central Asia is strongly preferred
Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent timely delivery and time management. Demonstrated managerial competence and experience in organizing, leading and coordinating evaluation teams at the international level. Knowledge of UN role, UN reform process and UN programming at the country level, particularly UNSDCF;
Language Requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent command of English.

National Team Member

Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced University Degree (Master or PhD) in the field of political science, governance, public administration, development studies, law, human rights or other relevant field;
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Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum five years of relevant professional experience. • Strong data collection and analysis skills; Prior experience in working with multilateral agencies. • Strong experience and knowledge in the UN programming principles including leaving no one behind LNOB, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, disability inclusion, environmental sustainability and resilience, and accountability. • In-depth knowledge and strong research record of country socio-economic development and environment context
Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent timely delivery and time management. • Process management skills such as facilitation skills and ability to negotiate with a wide range of stakeholders. • Technical competence in undertaking complex evaluations which involve the use of mixed methods. • Knowledge of UN role, UN reform process and UN programming at the country level, particularly UNSDCF. • Experience in translation and interpretation.
Language Requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent command of English and Azerbaijani

14. Application

Interested candidates shall submit documentations demonstrating why they are the best-suited to carry out the above task. This should include:

International Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latest CV and sample of previous works. • Statement of Suitability for the Assignment (A brief outline of the strengths and expertise highlighting directly relevant experiences to the assignment, including experience and knowledge in the UN programming principles (LNOB, human rights, GEWE, environmental sustainability and resilience, and accountability) • Approach to work/suggested methodology and work-plan • Financial Proposal (inclusive of expenses related to travels and DSA)
National Team member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latest CV and sample of previous works. • Statement of Suitability for the Assignment (A brief outline of the strengths and expertise highlighting directly relevant experiences to the assignment, including experience and knowledge in the UN programming principles (LNOB, human rights, GEWE, environmental sustainability and resilience, and accountability) • Financial Proposal

15. Payments

Payments are tied to deliverables upon approval of the Evaluation Manager on satisfactory completion and will be as follows:

No.	Deliverables/Outputs	Target Due Dates	Payment
1	Contract signed	March 2024	20 %
2	Approval of the inception report	May 2024	30 %
3	Submission of the draft evaluation report	June 2024	20 %
4	Approval of the final evaluation report	August 2024	30 %

16. Administrative Issues

The international consultant will be responsible for own travel arrangements cross-country. No additional costs outside of the scope of this TOR will be covered. The consultants will have to possess their own laptop and other technical equipment to complete the assignment. The documents produced during the period of this consultancy will be treated strictly confidential and the rights of distribution and/or publication shall solely reside with the UN.

17. Reference materials

The evaluation managers will collect all relevant documents to share with the Evaluation Team. The key documents will include:

- UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines - Engl - Revised July 2022
- UNEG Norms and Standards (2016) and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines (2020)
- UNSDCF Azerbaijan 2021-2025
- Joint Work Plans
- Annual Results Reports
- UNINFO data
- Steering Committee meeting reports
- CF Result Matrix Monitoring document
- Common Country Analysis Documents
- Information Management Survey Reports
- Socio-Economic Development Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2022-2026)
- State Programme for the Great Return to the Liberated Territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2022-2026).
- Joint Recovery Needs Assessment
- Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development
- Evaluation reports (programmes and projects) from UNCT

Other documents as relevant

2. Annex 2 Evaluation Design Matrix

This Evaluation Design Matrix has guided the evaluation. It is derived from the criteria and list of questions and assists the evaluation team, the Evaluation Management Team, the Evaluation Steering Committee and the UNCT to understand the main evaluative arguments. The matrix shows the evaluation criteria and questions, the data collection methods, the sources of information, and the indicators and means of verification, in line with the template provided by the EM.

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent are the CF objectives aligned and been consistent with the needs, priorities, and policies of the government (including alignment to national development goals and targets, national plans, strategies and frameworks). To what extent is the UNSDCF results-oriented?			
Assumptions ²⁷ to be assessed	Indicators	Sources of Information	Methods and tools for data collection
<p>Government priorities, including national development goals and targets, are clearly articulated and documented in official plans and strategies.</p> <p>There is a documented process of engagement between the CF and government stakeholders to ensure alignment.</p> <p>The CF results framework is logical, results-oriented, and the data used to align CF objectives with government priorities are recent, reliable, and relevant.</p> <p>The government supports the CF objectives through policy endorsement, resource allocation, and collaborative efforts.</p>	<p>Identification of national priorities and expected results in the CF</p> <p>Understanding of theory of change for how UN plans to make a contribution</p> <p>Identification of potential or actual complementarities or divergences between the CF national priorities</p> <p>Common understanding of stakeholders on links between the CF and national development agenda</p>	<p>UNSDCF document and progress reports 2021-2023</p> <p>National strategies</p> <p>UN – Govt Consultations, JSC minutes, minutes from other for a of discussions</p> <p>RC’s Annual Reports 2021 - 2023</p> <p>Joint Work Plans 2021-2023</p> <p>Agency evaluations and MTR reports</p> <p>CCA</p> <p>Questionnaire for Results Groups; KIIs</p>	<p>Identification of national priorities and expected results in the CF</p> <p>Understanding of theory of change for how UN plans to make a contribution</p> <p>Identification of potential or actual complementarities or divergences between the CF and national strategic documents (as evolved)</p> <p>Sources of data in CF are relevant</p> <p>Evidence of government support in policy documents, budget allocations, and joint initiatives.</p>

²⁷ Assumptions are interfaces between the evaluation question and the data sources. It narrows the evaluation question further by specifying what evaluators should focus on and what they should check precisely when attempting to answer the question.

Evaluation Question 2: How dynamic and responsive has the CF been to emerging and unforeseen needs, especially those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

Assumptions to be assessed	Indicators	Sources of Information	Methods and tools for data collection
The CF has established mechanisms to regularly identify and assess emerging and unforeseen needs.	Effectiveness of needs assessment tools, early warning systems, and stakeholder consultations to identify emerging needs	Needs assessment reports, early warning system documentation, stakeholder consultation records.	UNSDCF address normative standards and recommendations of international treaties and other commitments Programme has been informed by gender analysis. Identification of gender relevant contributions and mainstreaming in design, planning, implementation and monitoring
The CF's program design allows for flexibility and adaptability in response to changing circumstances and new information.	Stakeholders confirm flexibility and agility of CF, recall adaptation	Program design documents, records of changes, records, decision-making	Stakeholder perceptions on the degree of alignment of interventions and resources with the CF delivery targets
CF resources can be reallocated quickly to address new and unforeseen needs, especially for vulnerable groups.		Budget reports, financial records, reallocation documentation. UNSDCF document and progress reports 2021-2023 National strategies UN – Govt Consultations, JSC minutes, minutes from other for a of discussions RC's Annual Reports 2021 - 2023 Joint Work Plans 2021-2023 Agency evaluations and MTR reports Questionnaire for Results Groups; KIIs RF indicators	Stakeholders identify convergence with specific international human rights commitments

Evaluation Question 3: To what extent has the CF strengthened the coherence of support by the UN system and served as an effective partnership vehicle with government and other stakeholders?

Assumptions to be assessed	Indicators	Sources of Information	Methods and tools for data collection
<p>There are established mechanisms for coordination and collaboration among UN agencies to ensure coherent support.</p> <p>The CF has established and maintained effective partnership mechanisms with government and other stakeholders.</p>	<p>Presence and effectiveness of inter-agency coordination structures and processes.</p> <p>information-sharing platforms, and stakeholder feedback on communication effectiveness.</p> <p>Stakeholders in and outside the UN system confirm partnership building and synergies</p>	<p>UNSDCF document and progress reports 2021-2023</p> <p>National strategies</p> <p>UN – Govt Consultations, JSC minutes, minutes from other for a of discussions</p> <p>RC’s Annual Reports 2021 - 2023</p> <p>Joint Work Plans 2021-2023</p> <p>Agency evaluations and MTR reports</p> <p>CCA</p> <p>Questionnaire for Results Groups; KIIIs</p> <p>Other partner reports, strategies</p>	<p>Existence of inter-agency coordination frameworks, stakeholder satisfaction with coordination mechanisms</p> <p>Degree of alignment between CF objectives and stakeholder priorities, stakeholder feedback on alignment, documentation of strategic alignment processes.</p> <p>records of collaborative activities, stakeholder satisfaction with joint planning processes.</p>

Evaluation Question 4: Post UN reform, to what extent has the UN system promoted or supported policies that are consistent among each other and across sectors, and how effectively and meaningfully have UN agency programs and work plans been derived from the Cooperation Framework (CF) in both design and implementation?

Assumptions to be assessed	Indicators	Sources of Information	Methods and tools for data collection
<p>There is joint planning and implementation of initiatives between the UN system, government, and other stakeholders under the CF. There is a clear strategy linking CF objectives with specific program and work plan outcomes.</p> <p>There are effective information-sharing and communication channels among the UN system, government, and other stakeholders.</p> <p>The UN system engages with a diverse range of stakeholders to ensure multi-sectoral perspectives are considered in policy development and support.</p>	<p>Presence and effectiveness of inter-agency coordination structures and processes.</p> <p>information-sharing platforms, and stakeholder feedback on communication effectiveness.</p> <p>Stakeholders in and outside the UN system</p>	<p>UNSDCF document and progress reports 2021-2023</p> <p>National strategies</p> <p>UN – Govt Consultations, JSC minutes, minutes from other for a of discussions</p> <p>RC’s Annual Reports 2021 - 2023</p> <p>Joint Work Plans 2021-2023</p> <p>Agency evaluations and MTR reports</p> <p>CCA</p> <p>Questionnaire for Results Groups; KIIIs</p>	<p>Existence of inter-agency coordination frameworks, stakeholder satisfaction with coordination mechanisms</p> <p>Stakeholder feedback on policy consistency</p> <p>Number of stakeholder consultations, diversity of stakeholders engaged, stakeholder satisfaction with engagement processes.</p> <p>Review of joint workplans and degree of coherence</p>

<p>UN agency programs and work plans are designed to align with the priorities and goals outlined in the CF</p> <p>Relevant stakeholders, including government entities, civil society organizations, and beneficiaries, are actively involved in both policy formulation and program design and implementation.</p> <p>Resource allocation decisions are made with consideration of CF priorities and multi-sectoral needs.</p>	<p>confirm partnership building and synergies</p> <p>UN agency programs and work plans that explicitly reference CF priorities and goals/linked to CF outcomes</p>	<p>Other partner reports, strategies</p>	
<p>Evaluation Question 5: To what extent is the UNSDCF aligned with the SDG agenda, the country's international commitments and UN programming principles?</p>			
Assumptions to be assessed	Indicators	Sources of Information	Methods and tools for data collection
<p>The UNSDCF objectives and activities are explicitly linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).</p>	<p>Alignment of UNSDCF objectives with specific SDGs and corresponding targets.</p> <p>Stakeholders identify convergence with specific international human rights commitments</p> <p>Inclusion of UN programming principles in UNSDCF documents, extent of implementation of these principles</p>	<p>UNSDCF document and progress reports 2021-2023</p> <p>National strategies</p> <p>UN – Govt Consultations, JSC minutes, minutes from other for a of discussions</p> <p>RC's Annual Reports 2021 - 2023</p> <p>Joint Work Plans 2021-2023</p> <p>Agency evaluations and MTR reports</p> <p>CCA</p> <p>Questionnaire for Results Groups; KIIs</p> <p>Other partner reports, strategies</p>	<p>Extent to which SDG targets are reflected in UNSDCF activities, stakeholder feedback on SDG alignment.</p> <p>Programme has been informed by gender and HR/LNB analysis. Identification of gender relevant contributions and mainstreaming in design, planning, implementation and monitoring</p> <p>CF addresses normative standards and recommendations of international treaties and other commitments</p>

		UPR and other reports	
Evaluation Question 6: How effective has the CF been in achieving the results outlined in the results framework?			
Assumptions to be assessed	Indicators	Sources of Information	Methods and tools for data collection
<p>The results framework is clear, specific, and measurable, allowing for effective tracking of progress and achievements. M&E systems are in place to track progress, measure outcomes, and assess the effectiveness of the CF in achieving its results.</p> <p>The CF has effectively implemented planned activities that contribute to the achievement of the results outlined in the framework.</p>	<p>Clarity of objectives, specificity of indicators and targets, stakeholder feedback on the results framework.</p> <p>Interventions implemented versus planned, quality and timeliness</p> <p>Stakeholder feedback on implementation and results.</p> <p>Progress in measurable indicators</p>	<p>UNSDCF document and progress reports 2021-2023</p> <p>National strategies</p> <p>UN – Govt Consultations, JSC minutes, minutes from other for a of discussions</p> <p>RC’s Annual Reports 2021 - 2023</p> <p>Joint Work Plans 2021-2023</p> <p>Agency evaluations and MTR reports</p> <p>CCA</p> <p>Questionnaire for Results Groups; KIIs</p> <p>Other partner reports, strategies</p> <p>UPR and other reports</p>	<p>Review of outputs against original workplans</p> <p>Results Groups provide a clear overview of causal links between outputs/interventions and outcomes</p> <p>Positive trends in output/outcome indicators of the Results Framework</p> <p>Evidence of specific CF results and strategies related to data collection and analysis</p> <p>Evidence that capacity assessments and understanding of context and constraints of partners informs interventions</p> <p>Existence of capacity development plans; delivery and making use of national capacity</p> <p>Stakeholder perceptions about the level of engagement and success in national capacity development under the CF</p> <p>External and internal stakeholders provide examples of UN contributions towards results; stories for how systems or approaches have changed or been influenced by programme</p>

			Positive stakeholder perceptions about the role and credibility of the UN as a partner for the government and other actors
Evaluation Question 7: To what extent has the CF contributed to the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment, human rights, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability. What have been the benefits for the people and institutions targeted by the interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized population?			
Assumptions to be assessed	Indicators	Sources of Information	Methods and tools for data collection
<p>The CF has integrated gender equality and women’s empowerment objectives; promotes and protects human rights through its interventions; CF includes specific measures to ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities in its programs and activities. The CF incorporates environmental sustainability principles into its interventions.</p> <p>The CF has contributed to institutional, behavioural and legislative changes that are critical for catalysing progress towards the CF desired impact including the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment, human rights, and disability inclusion</p> <p>The CF’s interventions provide significant benefits to the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized populations.</p>	<p>Clarity of objectives, specificity of indicators and targets, stakeholder feedback on the results framework.</p> <p>Interventions implemented versus planned, quality and timeliness</p> <p>Progress in measurable indicators</p> <p>Existence of capacity development plans; delivery and making use of national capacity</p> <p>Stakeholder perceptions about the level of engagement and success in national</p>	<p>UNSDCF document and progress reports 2021-2023</p> <p>National strategies</p> <p>UN – Govt Consultations, JSC minutes, minutes from other for a of discussions</p> <p>RC’s Annual Reports 2021 - 2023</p> <p>Joint Work Plans 2021-2023</p> <p>Agency evaluations and MTR reports</p> <p>CCA</p> <p>Questionnaire for Results Groups; KIIs</p> <p>Other partner reports, strategies</p> <p>UPR, CEDAW and other reports</p>	<p>Review of outputs against original workplans</p> <p>Results Groups provide a clear overview of causal links between outputs/interventions and outcomes</p> <p>Positive trends in output/outcome indicators of the Results Framework</p> <p>Evidence of specific CF results and strategies related to data collection and analysis</p> <p>Evidence that capacity assessments and understanding of context and constraints of partners informs interventions</p> <p>Existence of capacity development plans; delivery and making use of national capacity</p>

	<p>capacity development under the CF</p> <p>External and internal stakeholders provide examples of UN contributions towards results; stories for how systems or approaches have changed or been influenced by programme</p>		<p>Stakeholder perceptions about the level of engagement and success in national capacity development under the CF</p> <p>External and internal stakeholders provide examples of UN contributions towards results; stories for how systems or approaches have changed or been influenced by programme</p> <p>Stakeholder feedback on implementation and results. Positive stakeholder perceptions about the role and credibility of the UN as a partner for the government and other actors</p>
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Evaluation Question 8: Has the CF reduced transaction costs for partners through greater UN coherence?

Assumptions to be assessed	Indicators	Sources of Information	Methods and tools for data collection
<p>Greater coherence among UN agencies has led to more streamlined processes and reduced duplication of efforts.</p> <p>Effective coordination mechanisms have been established, facilitating easier interaction and communication between partners and the UN system.</p> <p>The CF has increased the predictability and reliability of UN support, making it easier for partners to plan and execute their activities.</p>	<p>Evidence and perceptions about how the CF and its management arrangements affected transaction costs for UN agencies and government partners</p> <p>Evidence and perception of reduced transaction costs (including time and actual cost saved)</p>	<p>UNSDCF document and progress reports 2021-2023</p> <p>National strategies</p> <p>UN – Govt Consultations, JSC minutes, minutes from other for a of discussions</p> <p>RC’s Annual Reports 2021 - 2023</p> <p>Joint Work Plans 2021-2023</p> <p>Agency evaluations and MTR reports</p>	<p>Stakeholder perceptions on functioning and effectiveness of UN coordination mechanisms</p> <p>Perceptions about the benefits of the CF and a ‘one programme’ approach for greater coherence and collaboration by UN agencies and GoA partners</p>

	among UN staff, OMT and government Evidence/examples of pooling of resources (including expertise)/ allocative efficiency of resources / repurposing of resources to achieve collective priorities or common agenda	Questionnaire from Results Groups; KILs Other partner reports, strategies	
Evaluation Question 9: To what extent has the CF collectively prioritized activities based on the needs (demand side) rather than on the availability of resources (supply side), and reallocated resources according to the collective priorities and changing needs if/where necessary?			
Assumptions to be assessed	Indicators	Sources of Information	Methods and tools for data collection
Activities are influenced by both demand-side and supply-side factors. Resource availability may limit full alignment with needs.	Proportion of activities aligned with identified needs (demand). Allocation of resources compared to initial plans based on needs assessment. Evidence of resource reallocation in response to changing needs. Planned budgets and activities are realistic and in line with RF targets	UNSDCF document and progress reports 2021-2023 National strategies UN – Govt Consultations, JSC minutes, minutes from other for a of discussions RC’s Annual Reports 2021 - 2023 Joint Work Plans 2021-2023 Agency evaluations and MTR reports Budget allocations, reports.	Stakeholder perceptions on alignment and responsiveness. Positive perceptions about the timeliness and quality of new products and services delivered under CF Case Studies: Instances of resource reallocation and outcomes

		KIIs. Stakeholders involved in decision-making.	
Evaluation Question 10: To what extent the planning and coordination of the CF (through the Results Groups with the RCO support) efficiently contributed to a coherent implementation and to the achievement of indicators' targets (outputs and outcomes)?			
Assumptions to be assessed	Indicators	Sources of Information	Methods and tools for data collection
<p>Effective planning and coordination by Results Groups, supported by the RCO, are crucial for achieving coherence and target attainment.</p> <p>Adequate resources and stakeholder commitment are essential for successful coordination.</p>	<p>Coherence of activities across Results Groups towards common goals.</p> <p>Stakeholder perceptions of planning and coordination effectiveness.</p>	<p>UNSDCF document and progress reports 2021-2023</p> <p>National strategies</p> <p>UN – Govt Consultations, JSC minutes, minutes from other for a of discussions</p> <p>RC's Annual Reports 2021 - 2023</p> <p>Joint Work Plans 2021-2023</p> <p>Agency evaluations and MTR reports</p> <p>Budget allocations, reports.</p> <p>KIIs. Stakeholders involved in decision-making.</p>	<p>Identification of key links between specific interventions and ways of working together/partnerships leading to results</p> <p>Clear examples of the way agencies work together with the Government and other stakeholders</p> <p>Triangulation of perceptions about the benefits of the CF and a 'one programme' approach for greater coherence and collaboration by UN agencies and RGC partners</p> <p>Perceptions of effectiveness and efficiency of joint programming processes by UN and partners (planning, implementation including information and monitoring/reporting)</p>
Evaluation Question 11: To what extent have the roles and responsibilities of the post-reform Resident Coordinator (RC) Office enabled the UN Country Team (UNCT) to enhance its joint convening power and improve coherence?			
Assumptions to be assessed	Indicators	Sources of Information	Methods and tools for data collection

<p>The RC office has clearly defined roles and responsibilities post-reform. These roles and responsibilities are well understood and accepted by all members of the UNCT.</p> <p>The RC office has the authority and capacity to bring together different UN agencies and partners effectively. The RC office's convening power contributes to more coordinated and collaborative efforts among UN agencies.</p> <p>The reform has led to better alignment and integration of the UNCT's activities and initiatives. There is a strategic coherence in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of UNCT programs.</p> <p>The RC office has adequate resources and support to fulfill its enhanced roles and responsibilities. Resources are allocated in a manner that supports joint initiatives and coherent action.</p>	<p>Degree of clarity in the RC office's roles and responsibilities as perceived by UNCT members</p> <p>Level of acceptance and support for the RC office's leadership and coordination role among UNCT members.</p> <p>Instances where the RC office successfully facilitated cross-agency collaboration and joint actions.</p> <p>Degree of coordination among relevant stakeholders in responding to development issues.</p> <p>Number of joint programs and initiatives that reflect integrated and coherent planning and implementation.</p>	<p>UNSDCF document and progress reports 2021-2023</p> <p>National strategies</p> <p>UN – Govt Consultations, JSC minutes, minutes from other for a of discussions</p> <p>RC's Annual Reports 2021 - 2023</p> <p>Joint Work Plans 2021-2023</p> <p>Agency evaluations and MTR reports</p> <p>Budget allocations, reports.</p> <p>KIIs. Stakeholders involved in decision-making.</p>	<p>Perceptions of effectiveness and efficiency of joint programming processes by UN and partners (planning, implementation including information and monitoring/reporting)</p> <p>Review of UNCT plans, meeting minutes, and coordination reports to assess the RC office's roles and the extent of joint initiatives/programmes and programming.</p> <p>Analysis of resource allocation documents to evaluate the support provided to the RC office.</p> <p>Triangulation of perceptions about the identification and use of complementarities and level of collaboration between UN agencies and implementing partners</p> <p>Expected and actual performance in resource mobilization Review of CF/outcome budgets and sources</p> <p>Case studies of specific joint initiatives or programs led by the RC office to illustrate successful coordination and enhanced coherence.</p>
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Evaluation Question 12: To what extent have UN system activities articulated in the CF driven progress towards, or supported achievement of ToC outcomes? Were interventions scaled up to achieve impact?

Assumptions to be assessed	Indicators	Sources of Information	Methods and tools for data collection
<p>The RCO plays a pivotal role in coordinating responses to emerging issues. Effective coordination requires timely information sharing, stakeholder engagement, and adaptability to changing circumstances.</p>	<p>Evidence of progress towards ToC outcomes is attributed to UN system activities.</p> <p>Instances where interventions were successfully scaled up to achieve a broader impact.</p> <p>Evidence of changes in laws, policies, regulations, and plans that can sustain CF results and strategies</p> <p>Evidence of allocation of national budgets and/or other partner resources towards CF results</p>	<p>UNSDCF document and progress reports 2021-2023</p> <p>National strategies</p> <p>UN – Govt Consultations, JSC minutes, minutes from other for a of discussions</p> <p>RC’s Annual Reports 2021 - 2023</p> <p>Joint Work Plans 2021-2023</p> <p>Agency evaluations and MTR reports</p> <p>Budget allocations, reports.</p> <p>KIIs. Stakeholders involved in decision-making.</p>	<p>Perceptions of effectiveness and efficiency of joint programming processes by UN and partners (planning, implementation including information and monitoring/reporting)</p> <p>Evidence that the UNCT and JSC were open and responsive to requests to adapt CF design</p> <p>Evidence of new partnerships or alliances related to CF programming and advocacy</p> <p>Triangulation of perceptions about the identification and use of complementarities and level of collaboration between UN agencies and implementing partners</p> <p>Expected and actual performance in resource mobilization Review of CF/outcome budgets and sources</p>
<p>Evaluation Question 13: What mechanisms, if any, has the CF established to ensure socio-political, institutional, financial and environmental sustainability? What is the likelihood that progress towards the SDGs is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time?</p>			
Assumptions to be assessed	Indicators	Sources of Information	Methods and tools for data collection
<p>Effective mechanisms within the CF are crucial for long-term sustainability across various dimensions. Sustainability requires integrated approaches, stakeholder engagement and national ownership</p>	<p>Mechanisms for socio-political sustainability (e.g., stakeholder engagement, policy integration).</p>	<p>UNSDCF document and progress reports 2021-2023</p> <p>National strategies</p>	<p>Evidence of changes in laws, policies, regulations, and plans that can sustain CF results and strategies</p>

	<p>Institutional sustainability mechanisms (e.g., capacity building, governance structures).</p> <p>Financial sustainability mechanisms (e.g., resource mobilization, funding diversification).</p> <p>Environmental sustainability mechanisms (e.g., impact mitigation, green practices).</p> <p>Level of national ownership and commitment towards SDG implementation.</p> <p>Institutional capacity of national partners and stakeholders to continue SDG-related activities.</p> <p>Evidence of sustained progress towards SDGs over time.</p>	<p>UN – Govt Consultations, JSC minutes, minutes from other for a of discussions</p> <p>RC’s Annual Reports 2021 - 2023</p> <p>Joint Work Plans 2021-2023</p> <p>Agency evaluations and MTR reports</p> <p>Budget allocations, reports.</p> <p>KIIs. Stakeholders involved in decision-making.</p>	<p>Evidence of allocation of national budgets and/or other partner resources towards CF results</p> <p>Adoption of good practices; scaling up pilot initiatives</p> <p>Stakeholders provide examples about how results are being sustained</p> <p>Triangulation of perceptions on national ownership and sustainability of CF results</p> <p>Progress/achievement/on-track towards key SDG indicators that measure impact</p>
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3. Annex 3 Data collection instruments

Annex 3.1 Self-Assessment Questionnaire for Result Groups – UN members

The questionnaires contain a simplified list of the evaluation questions. It should be filled out by all members of the RG from the UN system. The Results Groups' members may try to reach a consensus on their replies; however, they are welcome to express diverse opinions in response to the questions. The evaluation team requests that the Results Groups Chairs and Co-chairs provide quality assurance in the finalization of the questionnaire replies to ensure accurate representation of the group's responses, including any points of disagreement or divergence among group members.

Please provide brief answers and examples; including reference to the UNSDCF Annual Progress Reports and the Results Framework if key issues are mentioned therein. The answers to this questionnaire will be validated and further probed during the ET field mission in Baku in the second week of July.

Outcome Group:	
Entity:	
Contact person:	
E-mail:	

Relevance and adaptability

1. To what extent Are the UNSDCF objectives aligned with needs and priorities of the government as stated in national policy documents. Does the UNSDCF Result Framework and its indicators adequately capture the scope of activities undertaken in this outcome area? Please provide a few examples.
2. Have any unforeseen needs emerged over the course of the implementation of the UNSDCF 2021 - 2025? If yes, did you make adjustment to cater to these emerging needs? Please provide one or two examples of significant adjustments you have had to make, in particular for the most vulnerable.

Coherence of the UN system support

3. How are interventions in this result group linked with other outcome area interventions? Are there any other development partners working in areas that are complementary or overlapping with your interventions? Please provide one or two significant examples, if applicable.
4. To what extent do interventions under this outcome area align with international commitments and UN programming principles? Please illustrate briefly.

Effectiveness

5. Please highlight the key achievements of the RG towards the outcome and output targets since the start of the current UNCDSF cycle. Please provide quantitative data if available, or reference to the relevant RF indicators when updated.
6. What have been the key enabling factors for these results? Have there been any significant obstacles impeding progress?

Efficiency

7. To what extent have the UN organisations harmonized procedures in order to reduce transaction costs (for UN agencies and government partners) and to enhance results?
8. To what extent has the UN collectively prioritized activities based on the needs (demand side) rather than on the availability of resources (supply side), and reallocated resources according to the collective priorities and changing needs if/where necessary?

Coordination

9. To what extent has the Result Group contributed to a coherent and increased synergy (for example through joint programming) accelerating progress towards the SDG Agenda? Please provide examples of good practices or bottlenecks.

Sustainability

10. What is the likelihood that progress towards the SDGs (within your result group) is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time? Can you identify some critical factors?

Orientation toward impact

11. Are there any actions which would improve prospects for the impact & sustainability of ongoing assistance? What are the key lessons from your result group in implementing the UNSDCF?

Annex 3.2: Self-Assessment Questionnaire for Thematic Working Groups

Gender Thematic Work Group:	
Entity:	
Contact person:	
E-mail:	
Date:	

1. How has the participation of women and girls in the implementation of the UNSDCF been ensured?
2. How has the principle of gender equality and women's empowerment been addressed in UNSDCF implementation? How has it been mainstreamed?
3. How has the Gender Thematic Group helped mainstream GEWE in the UNSDCF?
4. Has the UNSDCF contributed to the design of policies, initiatives, projects, advocacy in public policy dialogues or processes, capacity building, combating violence and discrimination, which promoted gender equality and women's empowerment?
5. What has been the dynamic of working with the Results Groups? What contributions made by GTG have been the most effective in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment? What could have been done differently to achieve better results? Were the necessary economic and human resources available to carry out the activities?
6. Have national/institutional capacities been developed to ensure sustainability of gender mainstreaming in public policies?
7. What do you suggest strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment in the design and implementation of the new UNSDCF?

Human Rights Theme Group:	
Entity:	
Contact person:	
E-mail:	
Date:	

1. To what extent has the UN succeeded in strengthening data collection and analysis capacities to incorporate indicators with a human rights approach by the State and disaggregation of data disaggregated by race, sex, geographic location, etc., to identify the situation of those in situations of vulnerability, poverty and discrimination?
2. How have the observations and recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and human rights mechanisms (global) been referred to in the UNSDCF document and progress reports, and have they been used during UNSDCF implementation?
3. How has the UN addressed national capacity gaps of duty-bearers? For example, has the UNSDCF contributed to the design of policies, initiatives or projects that promote human rights in the country? Did it address the root causes of inequalities, vulnerability and discrimination?
4. How has the UN contributed to reducing the capacity gaps of rights-holders?
5. Have groups in situations of vulnerability, poverty and suffering from discrimination benefited from priority attention? How have these populations benefited from the UN in order to leave no one behind? For example: persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, old people, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, low-income families, persons with HIV, LGBTI persons, etc.)
6. What have been the dynamics of working with the Results Groups in relation to HRBA? How was mainstreaming ensured or not ensured in each of the Results Groups? Were the necessary economic and human resources available to carry out the activities?
7. How has the participation of groups in situations of vulnerability in the implementation of the UNSDCF been ensured? What accountability mechanism has been established to disseminate the human rights contributions of the UNSDCF?

8. What suggestions do you have for strengthening the Human Rights Based Approach in the design and implementation of the new UNSDCF?

Disability Inclusion Task Force:

Entity:	
Contact person:	
E-mail:	
Date:	

1. How have the observations and recommendations of the UNCRPD, UPR and human rights mechanisms (global) been referred to in the UNSDCF document and progress reports, and have they been used during its implementation?
2. How has the UN addressed national capacity gaps of duty-bearers? For example, has the UNSDCF contributed to the design of policies, initiatives or projects that promote disability inclusion in the country?
3. How has the UN contributed to reducing the capacity gaps of rights-holders?
4. Have people with disabilities benefited from priority attention? How have these populations benefited from the UN in order to leave no one behind?
5. What have been the dynamics of working with the Results Groups in relation to disability inclusion? How was mainstreaming ensured or not ensured in each of the Results Groups? Were the necessary economic and human resources available to carry out the activities?
6. How has the participation of PWD in the implementation of the UNSDCF been ensured?
7. What suggestions do you have for strengthening the disability inclusion approach in the design and implementation of the new UNSDCF?

Annex 3.3 Interview Guide for Government Stakeholders

Relevance and adaptability

1. To what extent are the UNSDCF strategic priorities consistent with the country's needs, national development priorities, other sectoral strategies and the country's international and regional commitments?
2. To what extent has the UN system addressed key issues and development challenges in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the country's international human rights commitments?
3. How resilient, responsive and strategic has the UN been in addressing emerging needs, especially those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups and to reprioritise/adapt its support to provide timely support to the country and to ensure the achievement of the UNSDCF results?
4. Are there any areas where you feel the focus of the next UNSDCF should change? Can you provide some examples?

Effectiveness

5. What have been the benefits for the people and institutions targeted by the UN's interventions, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized population?
6. To what extent has the UN contributed to key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes that are critical for catalysing progress towards the UNSDCF desired impact including the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, and disability inclusion? Which are the areas where UNSDCF's contributions have been critical?
7. How could the UN's contributions to results and effectiveness be improved in the next United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDCF)?

Coherence of the UN system support

8. To what extent has the UN sought partnerships with government counterparts to enhance the achievement of results?
9. How has the UN facilitated the coherence of UN's interventions with partners? How well were the internal synergies between various UN agencies exploited and was there any value added and/or missed opportunities?
10. To what extent was the UNSDCF designed and delivered in line with international and national programming principles?

Coordination

11. To what extent has the UNSDCF coordination structure contributed to ensure ownership and engagement by national counterparts? What are the lessons learned and key conclusions you draw from the implementation of the UNSDCF? What will be the comparative advantages of the UN in the country, in the next programme cycle?

Sustainability

12. To what extent has the UN system support extended in such a way to build national and local capacities and ensure long-term gains? What is the likelihood that progress towards the SDGs is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time?

Orientation toward impacts

13. Is the UNSDCF oriented towards having a real impact on people? What difference does the UNSDCF make towards protecting the rights of people and their living environment?

Annex 3.4 Interview Guide for Development Partners

1. What have been the main areas of collaboration and cooperation between your entity and the UN, in particular in the framework of the UNSDCF? What are the main results achieved, and what are the factors that have facilitated or limited such collaboration and cooperation?
2. To what extent do the comparative advantages and specific mandates of UN agencies help strengthen their position, credibility and reliability as a partner of the Government and other actors in the efforts to achieve the SDGs in the country?
3. To what extent have the UNSDCF strategic areas remained consistent with the country's needs, national priorities, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda?
4. From your perspective, to what extent has the UN, in the framework of the UNSDCF, succeeded in promoting and contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment (e.g., advocacy in public policy dialogues or processes, capacity building, combating violence and discrimination)?
5. From your perspective, to what extent has the UNSDCF contributed to the design of policies, initiatives or projects that promote or institutionalize the Human Rights-Based Approach (e.g., advocacy in public policy dialogues or processes, capacity building)?
6. From your perspective, to what extent has the UNSDCF had an impact on groups in situations of vulnerability, poverty or suffering discrimination in the country, in order to leave no one behind? For example: people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, old people, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, low-income families, people living with HIV, LGBTIs, etc.
7. From your perspective, to what extent has the UNSDCF contributed to addressing sustainability, resilience and interconnections among issues related to development, the environment, human rights, conflict and vulnerability?
8. From your perspective, how effective has the UNCDF been in creating partnerships with government and non-government stakeholders and leveraging their comparative advantage towards sustainable results, including resource mobilisation?
9. How should the next Cooperation Framework strengthen the work and cooperation between the UN and your entity or other development partners?
10. What should be the priorities for the next Cooperation Framework? Should they be the same areas of intervention or different? And what areas do you identify as priorities for the UN to focus on in particular?

Annex 3.5 Interview Guide for national non-government stakeholders

Civil Society

Relevance and adaptability

1. Has the UN's work been strategically positioned with respect to civil society organisations' own strategies and goals? Does the UN promote effective partnerships and strategic alliances with civil society organisations?
2. What are the UN's key advantages? What are its strengths and weaknesses? What do you feel are the key areas the next UNSDCF cycle should focus on?

Effectiveness

3. Did the UN succeed in strengthening NGOs capacities and their work?
4. To what extent has the UN contributed to key institutional, behavioural and legislative changes that are critical for catalysing progress towards the UNSDCF desired impact including the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, and disability inclusion?

Coherence of the UN system support

5. To what extent is UN's work coherent? How well are the various interventions and various UN agencies working together towards expected results?
6. To what extent was the UNSDCF designed and delivered in line with international and national programming principles?
7. Does the UN coordinate well with CSOs?

Coordination

8. To what extent has the UN sought partnerships with CSOs to enhance the achievement of results?
9. What are the barriers/challenges in having partnership with the UN? What should be done to improve the collaboration between the UN and CSOs to help address the people's needs?

Sustainability

10. What is the likelihood that progress towards the SDGs is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time?
11. To what extent has institutional strengthening and capacity building taken place in human rights, LNB and gender equality terms? Have national capacities been enhanced overall?

Interview Guide for Research Institutes

Relevance and adaptability

1. What are UN's involvements in supporting the strategic or policy research in Azerbaijan?
2. From a research perspective, how are UN's projects or strategies relevant to Azerbaijan's national development priorities?
3. To what extent have the UN's strategies promoted more development/policy orientated research?

Effectiveness

4. To what extent has UN engaged in building the strategic positions of research institutes in contributing to UN and/or national policy formulation and program implementation?

Coherence of the UN system support

5. From a research perspective, to what extent is UN's work coherent? How well are the various interventions and various UN agencies working together towards expected results?
6. To what extent was the UNSDCF or UN's programs designed and delivered in line with international and national programming principles?

Coordination

7. To what extent has the UN sought partnerships with research institutions to enhance the achievement of results of UN's programs?
8. What are the barriers/challenges in having partnership with the UN? What should be done to improve the collaboration between the UN and research institutions?

Sustainability

9. What is the likelihood that progress towards the SDGs is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time?
10. To what extent has institutional strengthening and capacity building taken place in human rights, LNB and gender equality terms? Have national capacities been enhanced overall?

Interview Guide for the Private Sector

1. What do you see as the role of the private sector in the sustainable development of the country?
2. Does the private sector have a role in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals? If so, what is it?
3. Has your organization or company been involved in the design and implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), 2021-2025?
4. To what extent has the UN system engaged with the private sector in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?
5. What could have been done differently to better engage the private sector in the UNSDCF (2021-2025)?
6. What strategies or mechanisms could be implemented to enable the UNSDCF to facilitate the identification and access to new partners in terms of funding sources or areas of joint collaboration with the private sector?
7. Have national/institutional capacities been developed or strengthened in collaboration with the private sector, to enable the sustainability of the interventions envisaged under the UNSDCF?
8. What do you suggest to strengthen the role of the private sector in sustainable development, in collaboration with UN agencies, in the design and implementation of the next UNSDCF?

Annex 3.6 Interview Guide for Resident Coordinator and Heads of UN Agencies

Relevance and adaptability

1. Reflections on the degree of UNSDCF alignment with the country's needs, national priorities, the country's international and regional commitments, including SDGs and programming principles.
2. How dynamic and responsive has the CF been to emerging and unforeseen needs, especially those of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

Coherence of the UN system support

3. Reflections on the state of partnership with the Government of Azerbaijan and other stakeholders (with civil society/private sector/ government / academia, research institutions/ international development partners) to enhance achievement of results? What are the barriers in partnerships with different key players such as Government, CSOs, academia and private sector?
4. To what extent was the UNSDCF designed and delivered in line with international and national programming principles?
5. Post UN reform, to what extent has the UN system promoted or supported policies that are consistent among each other and across sectors, and how effectively and meaningfully have UN agency programs and work plans been derived from the Cooperation Framework (CF) in both design and implementation?

Effectiveness

6. How effective has the UNSDCF been in achieving the results outlined in the results framework and gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability.

Efficiency

7. To what extent has the UNSDCF collectively prioritized activities based on the needs (demand side) rather than on the availability of resources (supply side), and reallocated resources according to the collective priorities and changing needs if/where necessary?
8. Was the UNSDCF supported by an integrated funding framework and by adequate funding instruments? What were the gaps, if any? Have resources been allocated efficiently?

Coordination

9. To what extent does the planning and coordination of the CF (through the Results Groups with the RCO support) efficiently contributed to a coherent implementation and to the achievement of indicators' targets (outputs and outcomes)? Has it managed to secure national ownership?
10. To what extent did the post reform Resident Coordinator office's roles and responsibilities enable positive UNCT's joint convening power and better coherence of the country team?

Sustainability

11. What mechanisms, if any, have the UNSDCF established to ensure socio-political, institutional, financial and environmental sustainability?

Annex 4: Stakeholder analysis matrix

Evaluation stakeholders are individuals who have an interest in the intervention to be evaluated and/or in the evaluation findings. A stakeholder analysis is the most effective tool to help identify who the different groups in an intervention are and why, how and when they should be included in the evaluation process. It serves to define a subset of targeted users and aids in the identification of the stakes each one has in the evaluation, as well as in prioritizing and balancing the information received from stakeholders. Involving stakeholders directly affected or concerned by an intervention in the design, planning and implementation of its evaluation is a fundamental principle of this evaluation.

To make the evaluation Human Rights and Gender Equality (HR & GE) responsive, stakeholders identified need to include duty bearers and rights holders, men and women. UNEG Norms and Standards explicitly mandate transparency and consultation with the intervention's major stakeholders (Norm 10.1; Standard 4.10). Integrating HR & GE in an evaluation stakeholder analysis involves the consideration of five main types of stakeholders:

- Duty bearers who have decision-making authority over the UNSDCF;
- Duty bearers who have direct responsibility for the UNSDCF, such as programme managers;
- Secondary duty bearers, such as the private sector or parents;
- Rights holders (individually or through the civil society organizations acting on their behalf); who are the intended and unintended beneficiaries of the UNSDCF; and
- Rights holders (individually or through the civil society organizations acting on their behalf), who should be represented in the intervention but are not, or who may be negatively affected by the UNSDCF.

When conducting a stakeholder analysis, identifying the evaluation's likely users among the various stakeholders first helps evaluation managers and evaluators to decide the extent to which different groups will be involved in the process. Next, the stakeholders should be disaggregated into the five main types above, so managers are sure they include as many key stakeholder groups as possible. This is a critical factor in ensuring inclusiveness by not treating people as a uniform group (e.g., beneficiaries) but understanding and acknowledging that different groups exist and are affected by an intervention in different ways.

The degree and level of stakeholder participation in this UNSDCF evaluation process varies and the different challenges posed – institutional, budgetary and time – need to be taken into consideration. The evaluators, the evaluation manager, and the Evaluation Steering Committee will need to weigh the level of stakeholder participation against the benefits and constraints.

The stakeholder analysis is also a helpful tool to address the possible bias in this evaluation. This exercise helps to carefully balance the desire to be inclusive against the challenge of managing the evaluation process efficiently. An analysis of stakeholders that includes a HR & GE lens facilitates enhanced participation and inclusiveness throughout the evaluation process – from developing the Inception Report, selecting appropriate methods for data collection, and conducting the evaluation.

The stakeholder analysis matrix is a tool developed by UNEG in the *Guidelines for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation*²⁸ and the UNEG Guidelines for the UNSDCF Evaluations to assist evaluators in identifying the stakeholders and helping evaluation stakeholders in deciding who should be involved in the evaluation process and in what ways, with the explicit consideration of HR & GE.

The following table provides a mapping of the stakeholders involved in the UNSDCF and their roles and interest in the evaluation.

²⁸ UNEG (2014) Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations, available at <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616>

Who (stakeholders, disaggregated as appropriate)	What (their role in the intervention)	Why (purpose of involvement in the evaluation)	Priority (how important to be part of the evaluation process)	When (stage of the evaluation to engage them)	How (ways and capacities in which stakeholders will participate)
<p>Duty bearers with the authority to make decisions related to the intervention Example: Senior Government officials; UN Organizations’ senior officials: UNCT; Members of Evaluation Management Team (EMT); Development Partners; National Gender Equality Machinery, National Human Rights Institutions</p>	<p>Decision-makers</p>	<p>Consult: Keep the stakeholder informed of the evaluation’s progress and findings, listen to them, and provide feedback on how the stakeholder’s input influenced the evaluation</p>	<p>High level of relevance to the evaluation</p>	<p>Preparation (e.g., preparation of ToR including setting of scope) Management response</p>	<p>Interviews or meetings</p>
<p>Duty bearers who have direct responsibility for the intervention Example: Government and programme managers; UN Agencies’ staff; Implementing Partners; Civil Society Organisations</p>	<p>Duty bearers Implementing partners</p>	<p>Collaborate: Work with the stakeholder to ensure that their concerns are considered when reviewing various evaluation options; make sure that they have the opportunity to review and comment on options and provide feedback on how their input was used in the evaluation. Empower: Transfer power for the evaluation over to the stakeholder: it is their evaluation. The evaluation team will offer options and advice to inform their decisions. Decision-making power</p>	<p>High level of relevance to the evaluation</p>	<p>Inception and primary research (e.g., development of evaluation design, framing evaluation questions and criteria) Data collection and analysis Report preparation</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews Group meetings</p>

		ultimately rests with this stakeholder, whose decisions will be supported, informed and facilitated by the evaluation team			
Secondary duty bearers Example: local authorities; civil servants; schools; medical institutions; child and family support centers; employers	Duty bearers	Inform: Keep the stakeholder informed of the evaluation's progress and findings	Low level of relevance to the evaluation	Dissemination	Will be informed of the evaluation results, as appropriate
Rights holders who one way or another benefit from the intervention or, most likely, CSOs who represent them Example: women; men; girls; boys; students; adolescents; youth; vulnerable groups; job seekers; workers	Secondary beneficiary and rights holders	Collaborate: Incorporate the stakeholder's advice and concerns to the greatest degree possible, and provide opportunities for meaningful involvement in the evaluation process	Medium level of relevance to the evaluation Rights holders High level	Data collection and analysis Dissemination	Will be informed of the evaluation results, as appropriate
Other interest groups who are not directly participating in the intervention Example: other development agencies working in the area; civil society organizations; other organizations; private businesses, non-state actors	Secondary beneficiary and rights holders	Inform: Keep the stakeholder informed of the evaluation's progress and findings	Medium level of relevance	Dissemination	Interviews or meetings

Annex 5: Stakeholder matrix – purposive sampling

The UNSDCF evaluation was conducted in a participatory manner, ensuring the participation and involvement of UN agencies and key stakeholders (government officials, CSOs, private sector, academia and development partners) in the different phases of the evaluation. To ensure this participation, the evaluation team used questionnaires for, and meetings and interviews with, relevant internal and external stakeholder groups to involve key stakeholders in the evaluation.

The process used by the evaluation team, the RCO and UN agencies to decide who will participate to the data collection process, was straightforward to avoid delays. Given the quantity of stakeholders in the implementation of the UNSDCF, the RCO provided the evaluation team with an initial comprehensive list of stakeholders, for the consultants' consideration, based on suggestions and identification of respective roles by all UN Agencies.

The evaluation team, in consultation with the evaluation managers, selected the key stakeholders that will be invited to participate in the data collection, and prepared this preliminary list. In addition to their names, the exact names and contact information of the selected interviewees were gathered, in view of contacting them by email or formal letters, in advance. This list of stakeholders selected is indicated below.

The purposive sampling technique used by the evaluation team aimed to ensure that selected stakeholders adequately reflect the diversity of stakeholders implementing the UNSDCF, taking into account their level of involvement in the UNSDCF, and its interest in the CF, and paying special attention to the inclusion, participation and non-discrimination of the most vulnerable stakeholders. It ensured that the selected stakeholders are involved in the five different outcome areas, and in diverse outcomes and intermediary outcomes and programmes, projects or activities; that their work reflect the wealth of experiences and the chances of generating interesting lessons; that they have a strategic position in the country; that they have implemented cross-cutting strategies and used programming principles, such as the equity dimension, the rights approach and gender equality; and that they have been involved in strategic partnerships and inter-agency collaboration, among others.

Comprehensive Stakeholder Mapping



Final sample for field mission



Annex 6: Theory of Change, UNSDCF 2021-2025 – Graphic representation by Outcomes

PRIORITY AREAS	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	SDGS TARGETED
PRIORITY AREA 1 Inclusive Growth that Reduces Vulnerability and Builds Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11.1 MSMEs and social enterprises, including women-owned businesses, are set up and sustained for the benefit of the furthest behind 11.2 Enhanced human capital and a skilled workforce are available in key sectors 11.3 International standards regarding decent work, inclusion and the future of the work are mainstreamed in policy and in practice 11.4 Rural populations are able to diversify their income sources and sustainably improve livelihoods 	11 People furthest behind participate in and benefit from a diverse and innovative economy encompassing future-oriented labor market transformation and access to decent work	SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)
PRIORITY AREA 2 Stronger Institutions for Better Public and Social Services Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1.1 The national education system is strengthened to ensure inclusive access to quality education and training 2.1.2 National primary health care and nutrition systems are strengthened to ensure universal coverage and quality, inclusive and high-impact interventions 2.1.3 Providers of public and social protections services have improved capacity to target the most vulnerable groups with quality, effective and innovative solutions 2.1.4 National policies and mechanisms are strengthened to promote and protect human rights increase access to justice and participatory mechanisms, and sustain social cohesion 2.1.5 Institutional capacity are enhanced to effectively develop and implement governance programmes, public service delivery, youth engagement and modernization of services to bridge the digital divide 2.2.1 Institutional capacities are strengthened to improve monitoring and reporting on the SDGs and on furthest behind persons 2.2.2 National capacities are enhanced to generate evidence-based policies and decisions 	<p>2.1 People furthest behind benefit from enhanced national capacities and governance structures for social protection and quality public and social services in line with Azerbaijan's international commitments</p> <p>2.2 Quality, disaggregated and timely data is available and used to inform decision-making and policies that leave no one behind</p>	SDG 1 (No Poverty) SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) SDG 4 (Quality Education) SDG 5 (Gender Equality) SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)
PRIORITY AREA 3 Protecting the Environment & Addressing Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1.1 Institutional capacities to plan track and report on climate change, and to access climate finance and technologies, are strengthened 3.1.2 Adaptive policies on land use integration to the tourism value chain and water management are set up to enhance the resilience of vulnerable communities 3.1.3 Energy policies and solutions reduce emissions and save energy 3.1.4 Evidence-based policies mechanisms and practices are adopted to reduce environmental hazards and pollution in urban and rural areas 	3.1 People including those left behind benefit from climate strategies and environment protection policies that ensure natural resource are sustainably managed, livelihood are protected, and resilience strengthened	SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) SDG 13 (Climate Action) SDG 15 (Life on Land)
PRIORITY AREA 4 A Gender Equitable Society that Empowers Woman and Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1.1 Costed action plans on gender equality are set up and implemented 4.1.2 Stereotypes of women and girls are reduced in public discourse 4.1.3 Women and girls have skills and knowledge to enjoy equal rights and opportunities 	4.1 Woman and girls including those furthest behind, benefit from enhanced national mechanisms that ensure they are protected from discrimination and violence and empowered to participate in all spheres of life	SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) SDG 5 (Gender Equality) SDG 8 (Decent work and Economic Growth)

Cross-cutting Strands: Conflict Sensitivity & Inclusion • Gender Equality • Human Rights • Environment/ Natural Resource Management • Climate Resilience

Annex 7: Analysis of the Theory of Change

This table provides an analysis of the soundness of the UNSDCF's result chain (contributive links between Outputs, Outcomes Strategic priorities and National Development Priorities), based on the assumption that:

1. The UNSDCF was aligned to national government's emerging Azerbaijan 2030 Vision, and based on extensive consultations with government, non-government stakeholders and international partners as well as building on the results of the CCA analysis.
2. The UNSDCF serves as a **mutual accountability framework** between the Government and UN system agencies.

Common principles underlying the ToC:

- Change that enables structural solutions
- Improving resilience and reducing vulnerability
- Strengthening recovery efforts
- Improving evidence to strengthen public policy and investment
- Strengthening human capital within the existing system
- Innovative practices including new financing modalities
- Enabling interdependent changes
- Establishing national platforms to improve public policy dialogue

The guiding questions for the analysis of the ToC were as follows:

1. How did strategies and activities under Outputs contribute to the achievement of this Outcome?
2. During the implementation, were there any shifts to outputs, in terms of revision of formulation, change of activities; or to address emerging issues or other reasons; etc?
3. Taking stock of the implementation experience, do you think outputs strategies and activities could have been shifted to better contribute to the achievement of the outcome? If yes, how

Pillars of the National Development Strategy	UNSDCF Outcomes In this column, from the UNSDCF's results framework, link UNSDCF outcomes with the specific pillars or SDGs they are contributing to. (the outcomes I entered here are just as example)	Joint workplan outputs (2023/2024) In this column, link each joint workplan outputs with the outcomes they are contributing to	Evaluation team		
			Theoretical analysis of the evaluation team members to establish contributive links (A)	Intervention strategy	Conclusions of the evaluation team members on the alignment between Outputs and outcomes and between outcomes and pillars. (A)+(B)
<p>Azerbaijan Vision 2030: Priority 1 (a steadily growing, competitive economy) and Priority 2 (a dynamic, inclusive society built on social justice)</p> <p>I. UNSDCF Strategic Priority 1: Inclusive Growth that reduces vulnerability and builds resilience</p>	<p>1.1 People furthest behind participate in and benefit from a diverse and innovative economy encompassing future oriented labour market transformation and access to decent work</p> <p>SDG 2 SDG 8</p>	<p>1.1.1 MSMEs and social enterprises, including women own businesses, are set up and sustained for the benefit of the furthest behind</p>	<p>SDG 2 SDG 8 (Links discernible also with SDG 1 and 10/ poverty and inequalities and SDG 5 - GE)</p> <p>Strong contributive links between Outcome 1.1; Outcome 2.1 and Outcome 4.1 as well as strong linkages with national development strategy.</p> <p>Strong linkages between Outputs 1.1.2 (human capital and skilled workforce); output 1.1.3 (Decent work) with Outputs 2.1.1 (education and training) and Output 2.1.4 (human rights, including labour rights</p>	<p>No changes were made to this Outcome or the relevant outputs.</p> <p>The Results framework and Outcome and output indicators were slightly revised to better reflect data availability.</p>	<p>The Evaluation Team concludes that for this Outcome there has been a good alignment in the UNSDCF between outputs and the outcome and with national development priorities. During implementation, there were no changes at the output level.</p> <p>Results/targets are perhaps very ambitious given the level of UNSDCF interventions and structural issues in the economy, for impact at the result level to be tangible over a relatively short period of time.</p> <p>The output targets are conflates with output in other Outcome areas, will make attribution analysis more difficult. However, stronger supply side focus in this</p>
		<p>Output 1.1.2: Enhanced human capital and a skilled workforce are available in key sectors</p>			
		<p>Output 1.1.3: Agency reports International standards* regarding decent work, inclusion and the future of work are mainstreamed in policy and in practice</p>			
		<p>Output 1.1.4 Rural populations are able to diversify their income sources, and</p>			

Pillars of the National Development Strategy	UNSDCF Outcomes In this column, from the UNSDCF's results framework, link UNSDCF outcomes with the specific pillars or SDGs they are contributing to. (the outcomes I entered here are just as example)	Joint workplan outputs (2023/2024) In this column, link each joint workplan outputs with the outcomes they are contributing to	Evaluation team		
			Theoretical analysis of the evaluation team members to establish contributive links (A)	Intervention strategy	Conclusions of the evaluation team members on the alignment between Outputs and outcomes and between outcomes and pillars. (A)+(B)
		sustainably improve their livelihoods	and Output 4.1.3 Women and girls have skills		outcome, stronger demand side focus in other Outcomes.
Azerbaijan Vision 2030: Priority 1 (a steadily growing, competitive economy) and Priority 2 (a dynamic, inclusive society built on social justice), Priority 3 (human capital and modern innovations) and Priority 4 (the Great Return to the territories liberated from occupation) II. UNSDCF Strategic Priority 2: Stronger Institutions for Better Public and Social Services Delivery	2.1 People furthest behind benefit from enhanced national capacities and governance structures for social protection and quality public and social services, in line with Azerbaijan's international commitments* (*including Human Rights and ILO standards)	2.1.1 The national education system is strengthened to ensure inclusive access to quality education and training. Output 2.1.2: National primary health care and nutrition systems are strengthened to ensure universal coverage and quality, inclusive and high impact interventions. Output 2.1.3: Providers of public and social protection services have improved capacity to	SDG 1 No Poverty: 1.3; 1.a SDG 3 Good Health and Wellbeing: 3.4; 3.7; 3.8 SDG 4 Quality Education: 4.3 SDG 5 Gender Equality: 5.6; SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production: 12.7 SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions:16.6;16.7; 16.10 SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals:17.18 Strong links with Outcome 1 outputs and strong contributive links of outputs 2.1.1 and	No changes were made to this Outcome or the relevant outputs. The Results framework and Outcome and output indicators were slightly revised to better reflect data availability. Under Output 2.1.5, the Joint Recovery Needs Assessment, activity was added to reflect national priorities for the Great Return	The Evaluation Team concludes that for this Outcome there has been a good alignment in the UNSDCF between outputs and the outcome and with national development priorities. During implementation, there were no changes at the output level. This outcome area has the highest budget of all Outcome areas of the UNSDCF.

Pillars of the National Development Strategy	UNSDCF Outcomes In this column, from the UNSDCF's results framework, link UNSDCF outcomes with the specific pillars or SDGs they are contributing to. (the outcomes I entered here are just as example)	Joint workplan outputs (2023/2024) In this column, link each joint workplan outputs with the outcomes they are contributing to	Evaluation team		
			Theoretical analysis of the evaluation team members to establish contributive links (A)	Intervention strategy	Conclusions of the evaluation team members on the alignment between Outputs and outcomes and between outcomes and pillars. (A)+(B)
		target the most vulnerable groups with quality, effective and innovative solutions	2.2.2 (education, health) with Outcome 5 – Gender Equality. Output 4.1.3 (Women and. Girls have knowledge to enjoy equal rights and opportunities) and Output 2.1.3 (social services) with Outcome 5 – GBV interventions.	Strategy, under output targeting public service delivery.	
		Output 2.1.4 National policies and mechanisms are strengthened to promote and protect human rights, increase access to justice and participatory mechanisms, and sustain social cohesion.			
		Output 2.1.5. Institutional capacities are enhanced to effectively develop and implement governance programmes, public service delivery, youth engagement			

Pillars of the National Development Strategy	UNSDCF Outcomes In this column, from the UNSDCF's results framework, link UNSDCF outcomes with the specific pillars or SDGs they are contributing to. (the outcomes I entered here are just as example)	Joint workplan outputs (2023/2024) In this column, link each joint workplan outputs with the outcomes they are contributing to	Evaluation team		
			Theoretical analysis of the evaluation team members to establish contributive links (A)	Intervention strategy	Conclusions of the evaluation team members on the alignment between Outputs and outcomes and between outcomes and pillars. (A)+(B)
	2.2 Quality*, disaggregated and timely data is available and used to inform decision-making and policies that leave no one behind (* up-to-date, accurate, collected and analyzed in line with internationally accepted methodology)	and modernization of services to bridge the digital divide	This outcome is horizontal in nature, serving better achievement and M&E across all other result areas, hence strong contributive links visible with all SDGs, outcomes and outputs. Decision to keep as separate outcome area motivated by high perceived importance for the policy making agenda and relevance to UN comparative advantage.	No changes were made to this Outcome or the relevant outputs. Multiple agencies providing capacity and methodological support. Work proceeds as planned, but capacity gaps as well as institutional resistance to change contribute to the need to sustain this outcome as relevant in the medium term (not necessarily as	The Evaluation Team concludes that for this Outcome there has been a good alignment in the UNSDCF between outputs and the outcome and with national development priorities. During implementation, there were no changes at the output level.
Output 2.2.1: Institutional capacities are strengthened to improve monitoring and reporting on the SDGs and on furthest behind persons					
Output 2.2.2: National capacities are enhanced to generate evidence-based policies and decisions					

Pillars of the National Development Strategy	UNSDCF Outcomes In this column, from the UNSDCF's results framework, link UNSDCF outcomes with the specific pillars or SDGs they are contributing to. (the outcomes I entered here are just as example)	Joint workplan outputs (2023/2024) In this column, link each joint workplan outputs with the outcomes they are contributing to	Evaluation team		
			Theoretical analysis of the evaluation team members to establish contributive links (A)	Intervention strategy	Conclusions of the evaluation team members on the alignment between Outputs and outcomes and between outcomes and pillars. (A)+(B)
				an outcome, but as a policy objective definitively).	
<p>Azerbaijan Vision 2030: Priority 5 (a clean environment and country of green growth)</p> <p>III. UNSDCF Strategic Priority Area 3: Protecting the Environment & Addressing Climate Change</p>	<p>3.1 People including those left behind benefit from climate strategies and environment protection policies that ensure natural resources are sustainably managed, livelihoods are protected, and resilience strengthened.</p>	<p>Output 3.1.1: Institutional capacities to plan, track and report on climate change, and to access climate finance and technologies, are strengthened</p> <p>Output 3.1.2: Adaptive policies on land use, integration to the tourism value chain and water management are set up to enhance the resilience of vulnerable communities</p> <p>Output 3.1.3: Energy policies and solutions reduce</p>	<p>SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation: 6.4 SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy: 7.3 SDG 13 Climate Action: 13.1; 13.2 SDG 15 Life on Land: 15.3</p> <p>Contributive links identified between this outcome Output 3.1.2 (resilience of vulnerable communities) and Output 1.1.1 (MSMEs). At Result level, ToC recognizes linkages between inclusive (sustainable growth) and environment and resilience</p>		<p>The evaluation team concludes that for this Outcome there has been a good alignment in the UNSDCF between Outcomes and Outputs and national strategy.</p> <p>During the implementation, there were no changes in the Intermediate Outcomes. The interventions strategy has however not managed to fully leverage UN comparative advantages to the highest level and most interventions are at lower level. Orientation towards high level impact likely lower.</p>

Pillars of the National Development Strategy	UNSDCF Outcomes In this column, from the UNSDCF's results framework, link UNSDCF outcomes with the specific pillars or SDGs they are contributing to. (the outcomes I entered here are just as example)	Joint workplan outputs (2023/2024) In this column, link each joint workplan outputs with the outcomes they are contributing to	Evaluation team		
			Theoretical analysis of the evaluation team members to establish contributive links (A)	Intervention strategy	Conclusions of the evaluation team members on the alignment between Outputs and outcomes and between outcomes and pillars. (A)+(B)
		emissions and save energy Output 3.1.4: Evidence-based policies, mechanisms and practices are adopted to reduce environmental hazards and pollution in urban and rural areas			
Azerbaijan Vision 2030: Priority 2 (a dynamic inclusive society based on social justice) and IV. UNSDCF Strategic Priority IV: A Gender-Equitable Society that Empowers Women and Girls	4.1 Women and girls, including those furthest behind, benefit from enhanced national mechanisms that ensure they are protected from discrimination and violence and empowered to participate in all spheres of life	Output 4.1.1: Costed action plans on gender equality are set up and implemented Output 4.1.2: Stereotypes of women and girls are reduced in public discourse Output 4.1.3 Women and girls have skills and knowledge to enjoy	SDG 3 Good Health and Wellbeing: 3.7 SDG 5 Gender Equality: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 5.a, 5.c SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth: 8.5 String contributive links with Outcome 1 and Outcome 2.1, where gender and LNB principals mainstreamed and outputs emphasize women participation.	Decision to keep Ge and WEE as separate outcome based on assumption that that a conscious policy that counters discrimination and challenges stereotypes on gender roles is required for sustainable development outcomes to work	The evaluation team concludes that for this Outcome there has been a good alignment in the UNSDCF between Outcomes and Outputs and national strategy. No major changes or shifts have occurred interbally or extrenally tha twould warrant shifting outputs/outcomes; although government attention has slightly shifted due to the prioritisation of reconstruction/reintegration of new territories and perhaps slower than anticipated

Pillars of the National Development Strategy	UNSDCF Outcomes In this column, from the UNSDCF's results framework, link UNSDCF outcomes with the specific pillars or SDGs they are contributing to. (the outcomes I entered here are just as example)	Joint workplan outputs (2023/2024) In this column, link each joint workplan outputs with the outcomes they are contributing to	Evaluation team		
			Theoretical analysis of the evaluation team members to establish contributive links (A)	Intervention strategy	Conclusions of the evaluation team members on the alignment between Outputs and outcomes and between outcomes and pillars. (A)+(B)
		equal rights and opportunities		for all. CCA identified gender inequality as a sustainable development challenge because of the need to acknowledge and address the specific prejudice suffered by women that prevents their full participation in public and private life. Thus, the analysis recommended that gender inequality should not just be integrated into the UNSDCF's response to development challenges (for example, in the choice of	progress due to lower budgets and emphasis

Pillars of the National Development Strategy	UNSDCF Outcomes In this column, from the UNSDCF's results framework, link UNSDCF outcomes with the specific pillars or SDGs they are contributing to. (the outcomes I entered here are just as example)	Joint workplan outputs (2023/2024) In this column, link each joint workplan outputs with the outcomes they are contributing to	Evaluation team		
			Theoretical analysis of the evaluation team members to establish contributive links (A)	Intervention strategy	Conclusions of the evaluation team members on the alignment between Outputs and outcomes and between outcomes and pillars. (A)+(B)
				indicators) but tackled with a dedicated result and vision of change.	

Annex 8: List of Documents Consulted

1. Government of Azerbaijan 2021 “Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development” <https://president.az/en/articles/view/50474>
2. Government of Azerbaijan 2022 ‘Republic of Azerbaijan Socio-Economic Strategy for 2022-2026,’ approved on July 21, 2022
https://static.president.az/upload/Files/2022/07/22/5478ed13955fb35f0715325d7f76a8ea_3699216.pdf.
3. Government of Azerbaijan 2022 “State Programme for the Great Return to the Liberated Territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2022-2026)”.
4. Azerbaijan Youth Strategy 2015-2025 - <https://president.az/az/articles/view/14132>
5. UNSDCF Azerbaijan 2021-2025
 - Joint Work Plans
 - Annual Results Reports
 - UNINFO data
 - Steering Committee meeting reports
 - CF Result Matrix Monitoring document
 - Common Country Analysis Documents
 - Information Management Survey Reports.
 - Joint Recovery Needs Assessment
 - Evaluation reports (programmes and projects) from UNCT
6. UNICEF Country programme document Azerbaijan 2021 – 2025
7. UNFPA Country Programme document for Azerbaijan 2021 – 2025
8. UNDP Country programme document for Azerbaijan 2021 - 2025
9. [Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework](#), United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), September 2021.
10. OECD/DAC evaluation principles, guidelines and quality standards.
11. Better Criteria for Better Evaluation, Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use, OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, December 2019.
12. 2016 UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914>
13. UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system:
<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>
14. UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (<http://www.unevaluation.org/ethicalguidelines>)
15. 2014 UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation:
<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616>
16. 2018 UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator Technical Note (and related scorecard):
[file:///C:/Users/Dell/Documents/GENERIC/Gender/Revised%20UN%20SWAP%20EPI%20Technical%20Note%20and%20Scorecard April 2018.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Dell/Documents/GENERIC/Gender/Revised%20UN%20SWAP%20EPI%20Technical%20Note%20and%20Scorecard%20April%202018.pdf)
17. 2015 UN Women Evaluation Handbook on How to Manage Gender Responsive Evaluation:
www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/4/un-women-evaluation-handbook-how-to-manage-gender-responsive-evaluation).
18. 2018 OHCHR Guidance on Human Rights-Based Approach to Data.
19. UNSDCF Guidance, UNSDG, 2019
20. UNSDCF Companion Package, UNSDG, 2020
21. UNSDG 2021 Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/management-and-accountability-framework-un-development-and-resident-coordinator-system>
22. Gheorge, C., 2020, Formative Evaluation of the School Readiness Programme, Final Evaluation Report UNICEF Azerbaijan
23. Republic of Azerbaijan, 2020, Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Children for 2020-2030

24. Republic of Azerbaijan, 2020, Action Plan for 2020-2025 for the implementation of the Strategy on Children
25. Vasseur, T, Aliyeva, S.. 2021, Formative Evaluation of the Project “Modelling Integrated Social Services”
26. European Commission, 2021, MULTI-ANNUAL INDICATIVE PROGRAMME (2021-2027) FOR AZERBAIJAN
27. Niyazmetov A., 2023, Labor Law and Gender Review, Azerbaijan Rapid Technical Assistance Facility (AZTAF): Strengthening women's human capital for their better labor market outcomes: 2023-2024, ILO (Draft)
28. Allahverdiyev G., 2023, Mapping social welfare services in the Republic of Azerbaijan, ILO (Draft)
29. Bajraktari, E., Efendiyev, J., 2021, Nationally appropriate mitigation actions for low carbon end users in Azerbaijan, Terminal Evaluation Report, UNDP Azerbaijan
30. Hurst F., Nazarov, K., 2022, UNDP GEF Project Conservation and Sustainable Use of Globally Important Agrobiodiversity, Terminal Evaluation Report, UJNDP Azerbaijan
31. UNDP Azerbaijan, Evaluation of UNDP/ANAMA Mine Action Projects, 2017 – 2021
32. Turrall , S., Borisova M., Evaluation of the Every Girl Counts Programme (December 2019-October 2023), UNFPA
33. Calibrate, 2023, Final Evaluation Report EU 4 Gender Equality: Together Against Gender Stereotypes And Gender-Based Violence Programme, UNFPA
34. Lemke, S., 2023, Assessment report on the effectiveness and efficiency of legal aid mechanisms in the fields of civil law and administrative law for vulnerable groups of the population (in light of UN and Council of Europe standards)

Annex 9: List of People Met

	Name	Position	Organization
	National stakeholders		
1	Yalchin Rafiyev	Deputy Minister	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2	Anar Karimov	Deputy Minister, RG co-chair	Ministry of Social Protection
3	Nadir Zeynalov	Deputy Minister	Ministry of Health
4	Rauf Hajiyev	Deputy Minister, RG co-chair	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources
5	Sadagat Gahramanova	Deputy Chairwoman, RG co-chair	State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs
6	Rauf Salimov	Deputy Chairman, RG co-chair	State Statistical Committee
7	Leyla Jabbarli	Deputy Chairman	Agrarian Credit and Development Agency (AKIA) Ministry of Agriculture
8	Anar Azimov	Deputy Chairman	Agrarian Service Agency
9	Rashid Rumzade	Deputy Chairwoman	Ombudsperson's Office
10	Gahraman Hagverdiyev	Director	Public Health and Reforms Centre of the Ministry of Health
11	Tarlan Solmanov	Deputy Director	State Border Service
12	Huseyn Huseynov	Head of Department for Sustainable Development and social policy	Ministry of Economy, Secretary of NCCSD
13	Abutab Abbasova	Head of Innovation Education Department	Institute of Education
14	Fuad Mardiyev	Head of International Relations Department	Food Safety Agency
15	Malahat Hajiyeva	Head of Department	Institute of Economics of the Ministry of Science and Education
16	Parviz Aliyev	Head of the Research Department	Agrarian Research Center (ATM)
17	Babek Huseynov	Head of Division	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population
18	Elchin Haji	Head of Division	State Statistics Committee
19	Anar Mirzazada	Head of Division	Ministry of Science and Education
20	Kamran Aghamaliyev	Head of division	State Committee for the Affairs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons
21	Khidir Kazimov	Head of Division	State Committee on Work with Diaspora
22	Aytan Tarverdiyeva	Head of Division	Ombudspersons's Office
23	Emil Mammadov	Head of Division	State Statistical Committee
24	Firuddin Tagiyev	Head of Division	Agro Economics Research Center
25	Jamila Bagirova	Head of Division	State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs
26	Nemat Khudazada	Head of Division	State Statistical Committee
27	Rovshan Mammadov	Head of Division	State Statistical Committee

28	Ruslan Nuriyev	Head of Division	Ministry of Health
29	Rza Allahverdiyev	Head of Division	State Statistical Committee
30	Tarana Khalilova	Head of Division	Ministry of Health
31	Nailya Verdiyeva	Head of Sector	Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population
32	Famil Najafzada	Deputy Head of Division	State Statistical Committee
33	Javid Najafov	Deputy Head of Division	Ministry of Economy
34	Gulnar Bashirova	Leading Specialist	Agro Economics Research Center
35	Gunel Mustafayeva	Leading Specialist	Innovation and Digital Development Agency
36	Hajiaga Hashimov	Leading Specialist	Social Services Agency
37	Nigar Khidirova	Leading Specialist	Agrarian Innovation Center
38	Aydan Samadova	Leading Specialist	ASAN service
39	Aytekin Suleymanli	Leading specialist	Ministry of Agriculture
40	Gafur Hasanli	Leading Specialist	Ministry of Emergency Situations
41	Jala Isgandarova	Leading Specialist	ASAN Service
42	Javanshir Babazada	Leading Specialist	Food Safety Agency
43	Rafiq Hasanov	Leading Specialist	Ministry of Emergency Situations
44	Tunzala Muradova	Leading Specialist	Agro Economics Research Center
45	Zaur Ismiyev	Leading Specialist	Ministry of Finance
46	Nuri Fidan	Specialist	Ministry of Justice
47	Amirkhan Safarov	Specialist	State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs
48	Ali Movlayev	Inspector	Ministry of Internal Affairs
49		Representative	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources
	UNCT		
50	Vladanka Andreeva	Resident Coordinator	UN in Azerbaijan
51	Alessandra Roccasalvo	Resident Representative	UNDP
52	Bik Lum	Representative	UNHCR
53	Hande Harmanci	Representative	WHO
54	Kaori Ishikawa	Representative - Regional office	UN Women
55	Saja Abdulah	Representative	UNICEF
56	Nassar Hayat	Representative	FAO
57	Farid Babayev	Head of Country Office	UNFPA
58	Anna Soave	Head of Country Programme	UN Habitat
59	Amr Taha	Senior Regional Liaison and Policy Officer	IOM
60	Solomiya Omelyan	Chief of the Regional Bureau for Europe and Central Asia	UNIDO

61	Yashar Hamzayev	National Coordinator	ILO
62	Kamran Baghirov	National Human Rights Officer	OHCHR
63	Samir Mammadov	Country Manager	United Nations Global Compact
64	Kanako Mabuchi	Head of RCO	RCO
65	Hurshid Rustamov	Economist	RCO
66	Gular Fatali	Data Management, Results Monitoring and Reporting Officer	RCO
67	Elgun Taghiyev	DPPA	RCO
68	Nicola Scarrone	SDG Analyst	RCO
69	Ulviyya Akbarova	Partnership Officer	RCO
70	Rashad Huseynov	Former Head of UNIC	UNIC
71	Amalya Jalalova	Executive Associate	RCO
72	Khadija Ahmedova	Administrative Assistant	RCO
73	Jeyhun Mirzayev	Operations Manager	UNICEF
74	Aytan Shirinova	National Team Leader	FAO
75	Elmaddin Namazov	National Programme Coordinator	FAO
76	Bahija Aliyeva	Programme Analyst	UNFPA
77	Leyla Fathi	Programme Analyst	UNDP
78	Narmina Melikova	Programme Analyst (PDS)	UNFPA
79	Elnur Khalilov	Programme Analyst	UNDP
80	Parvana Bayramova	Programme Specialist	UN Women
81	Polina Tarshis	Programme Management Officer	UNECE
82	Tohfa Jamilova	Health and Nutrition Specialist	UNICEF
83	Irada Gharakhanova	Field Programme and Operations Specialist	FAO
84	Ainur Seyid Yusif	Partnership and Operations Specialist	FAO
85	Nina Sorokopud	Communications and Partnership Specialist	UNICEF
86	Fanara Bunyadzada	NPO in Risk Communication & Community Engagement	WHO
87	Jeyhun Alakbarov	Communications Associate	UNDP
88	Elsevar Aghayev	External Relations Associate	UNHCR
89	Nigar Nasrullayeva	Youth and Adolescent Development Officer	UNICEF
90	Ayshah Ahmadova	Program associate, M&E Specialist	UNDP
91	Narmin Osmanli	Assistant Programme Officer	UNHCR
92	Rashad Aliyev	Project Officer	OHCHR
93	Anar Iskandarov	Senior Project Associate	IOM

94	Bakhtiyar Salimov	Emergency Officer	UNICEF
95	Kamran Aliyev	Communications Officer	UNFPA
96	Shahin Huseynzade	Communication Associate	FAO
97	Ilqar Khudiyev	Communication Officer	IOM
98	Samira Hasanli	Environmental Health Consultant	UNICEF
99	Ilham Kazimov	Procurement/Logistics Coordinator	IOM
100	Fatima Agazade	Administrative Assistant	OHCHR
101	Mushvig Mammadov	Finance Assistant	IOM
102	Naila Shahbazova	Assistant Admin Officer	UNHCR
	International Partners		
103	Candice Mcdeigan	Country Director	ADB
104	Steffi Stallmeister	Country Manager	WB
105	Michael Nehrbass	Mission Director	USAID
106	Edward Evans	Deputy Head of Mission, Azerbaijan	UK Embassy
107	Viktor Bojkov	Head of Cooperation Section	EUD
108	Ziya Alili	Principal Banker	EBRD
	Private Sector and Academia		
109	Jehyun Atayev	Head of Corporate Communications	Access Bank
110	Gurban Karimbayli	ESG Advisor	Port of Baku
111	Fariz Ismailzade	Vice-rector, Member of Parliament	ADA University
	NGOs		
112	Arzu Guliyeva	Representative	Social Welfare of Refugees and IDPs PU
113	Davud Rahimli	Representative	Union of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (UDPO)
114	Fakhri _____	Representative	Azerbaijan Children Public Union
115	Fariz Akbarov	Representative	Legal-Social Assistance and Awareness Public Union
116	Gulbaniz Ganbarova	Representative	ARWA Azerbaijani Rural Women Association
117	Gunel Alekberova	Representative	Gunel NGO Sumqayit
118	Ilkin Ibrahimov	Representative	SOS Villages
119	John Ayomide	Senior program officer	International Eurasia Press Fund (IEPF)

120	Kamala Ashumova	Representative	Reliable Future Social Initiatives Public Association
121	Kubra Alakbarova	Representative	TAMAS Regional Development Public Union
122	Mahluga Rahimova	Representative	Society of Women with Disabilities Public Union
125	Maryam Majidova	Co-founder and ex-president	Gender Hub
126	Mehriban Zeynalova	Representative	Clean World Public Union
127	Narmin Qaniyeva	Head of board of directors	Third Spring Public Union
128	Shahla Ismayil	Representative	Women's Association for Rational Development
130	Umud Mirzayev	President	International Eurasia Press Fund (IEPF)
131	Vugar Huseynov	Chairperson	Civic Initiative for Public Interest PU
132	Zaur Ibrahimli	Representative	Constitution Research Foundation
133	Zemfira Mustafayeva	Representative	Women's Initiative and Assistance to Social Problems Public Union
134	_____	Representative	National Assembly of Youth Organizations