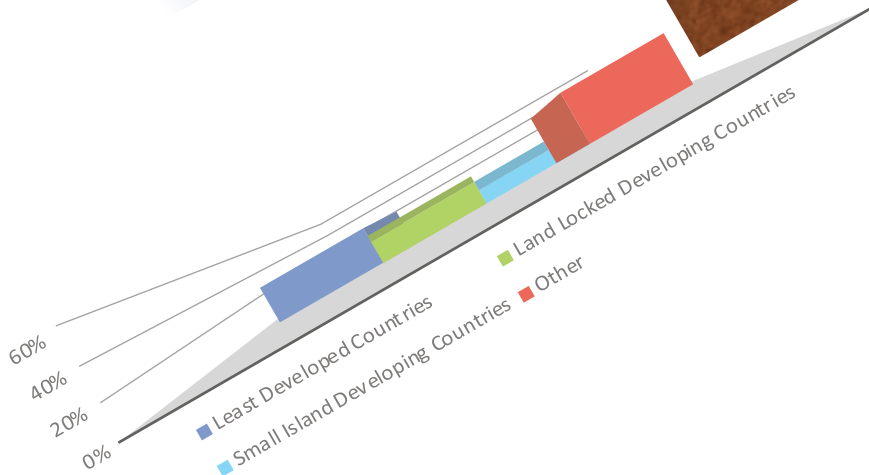# Synthesis Report of the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund (2016–2021)

Performances, Findings, and the Way Forward

United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund

Synthesis Report of the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund (2016–2021)

Performances, Findings, and the Way Forward

Disclaimers

Title: Synthesis Report of the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund (2016–2021): Performances, Findings, and the Way Forward

Contents

1. Executive Summary

Established in 2016, the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund (UNPDF) is funded by the Government of the People's Republic of China that pledged $200 million dollars[1] over a ten-year period. In September 2020, President Xi Jinping announced an additional five-year extension of the UNPDF until 2030.

The UNPDF aims to advance the goals and objectives of the United Nations Charter through projects and activities that support both peace and sustainable development. The projects are administered via the Secretary-General's Peace and Security Sub-Fund, which finances projects and activities related to the maintenance of international peace and security, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund, which finances activities in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Synthesis Report presents key achievements between 2016 and 2021, identifies good practices and lessons learned and offers recommendations for future strategy. The report considers institutional and operational or substantive achievements. Individual projects are analyzed for their impact in advancing the mandate to leave no one behind, overcoming bottlenecks to a better, common future, and enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of multilateral cooperation. Projects funded from both sub-funds are considered in each section. Operational achievements are included on the basis of a desk review of project materials, 11 interviews with project managers and 26 questionnaires completed by implementing entities.

Among institutional achievements, the report highlights the support to capacity building in the areas of international peace and security and to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as new multi-stakeholder partnerships and innovations in project budgeting and programming. In terms of operational achievements, the report notes that more than 90 projects have been implemented by the United Nations Secretariat in collaboration with other United Nations agencies and partners, providing guidelines for the use of frontier technologies to reducing poverty, combating climate change and improving the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel.

The report recognizes that, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising insecurity, conflicts, climate change, economic recession, poverty and inequality, remain the largest obstacles to realizing a common future. To overcome these challenges, the Trust Fund supported projects focusing on

(i)   mediating and preventing conflict;
(ii) mitigating violence and countering terrorism; and
(iii) catalyzing sustainable growth and structural transformation.

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1   All dollars are expressed in United States dollars unless otherwise indicated.

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Over the first five years, an overwhelming 74 per cent of the Trust Fund 's projects targeted the least developed countries and countries in special need. Prioritizing projects that improve the lives of people in the poorest and most vulnerable countries and communities, the Peace and Security Sub-Fund has a particular focus on Africa, with half of its 68 projects directly benefiting the local people. With poverty eradication at its core, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund focused on projects that strengthen capacities for sustainable development in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small-island developing states and on improving the lives and security of the furthest behind. UNPDF has enabled a series of projects that supported establishing and updating standards for United Nations support and enabling partnerships and learning across sectors and borders. Implementing entities interviewed for this report were appreciative of the UNPDF contribution in providing financing alternatives for their initiatives.

Among lessons learned, the report notes that the Trust Fund can be scaled up to support successful indigenous initiatives, innovations and technologies with its focus on the poorest countries and communities. The report positively notes the role of the UNPDF in advancing peace, security, and sustainable development by showcasing successful initiatives and seeking further support of Member States. The report recommends collecting quantifiable and measurable data and evidence of impact for projects that aim to strengthen the capacities of stakeholders and governments. Given the potential to build linkages between projects and other initiatives, particularly those being undertaken on the ground by United Nations country teams, the report recommends integrating Trust Fund initiatives into existing United Nations programming to ensure sustained results. The report advocates for intensive consultations with government counterparts and beneficiaries at the beginning of a project to ensure their buy-in and ownership, thereby increasing the likelihood of sustainability. Finally, the report appreciates the important role of the Trust fund in filling financing gaps, thus enabling and expanding the reach of timely and essential United Nations support in key areas.

The report notes the ability of the Trust Fund to address impacts of the pandemic; to assess emerging risks to peace and stability; to strengthen national and local capacities for strategic and effective use of development assistance; and to facilitate cross-border cooperation, learning and partnerships. The Trust Fund can help low-income and least developed countries leverage new technologies; advance digital connectivity; mobilize resources; restore global value chains; and strengthen capacities to deliver life-saving essential services and social protection to vulnerable communities. The UNPDF plays a vital role in advancing the SDGs by targeting its assistance to least developed countries and countries in special need. The Fund is able to direct resources to fill essential capacity gaps at local and national levels—a catalytic role that can enable local and national actors to deliver for the poorest populations. The role of the Fund can be enhanced by formulating new, relevant projects and programmes whose connection and targeting are explicit. This can be achieved by applying theories of change that elaborate how the initiative intends to make a difference for the poorest communities and people, and those left furthest behind, including women and girls.

To build durable and diverse partnerships that unite key actors at local, national, and global levels, the UNPDF should respond to changing realities on the ground, including ensuring local ownership and lessons learned. Guidelines might emphasize the need to secure government and stakeholder ownership early in the process and encourage the engagement of United Nations country teams in country selection and implementation.

It is recommended that the Trust Fund resources are applied with a strategic view to how they can affect change within and across countries. Initiatives under the Trust Fund must aim to maximize the ability to motivate actions at local, national and global levels. Local and national-level initiatives should seek to ground global discussions, demonstrate what works in practice, and motivate the

actions needed by Member States. The Trust Fund may consider providing "seed financing" for initiatives that are designed to attract co-financing and the participation of additional Member States. Lessons learned and impact stories might also be shared and showcased online to inform, inspire and encourage implementing entities to be strategic in linking their initiatives to global debates and ensuring sustainability.

In conclusion, the report notes that the UNPDF has become a strong platform for promoting multilateralism—in part, through supporting the United Nations in carrying out its mandates by contributing to peace and security and by advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Trust Fund has also enriched United Nations agencies' toolkits in support of Member States and has contributed to the implementation of major United Nations initiatives. The report assesses that the UNPDF is well positioned to integrate United Nations cross-pillar areas of work, tackle peace challenges while advancing sustainable development and reducing crises-related risks. The report notes the role of the UNPDF in helping Member States share experiences and strengthen collaboration between organizations, governments, community groups and beneficiaries to address the nexus of violence, conflict, poverty and inequality.

2. Introduction

To deliver on the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations peace and security mandate, the United Nations Secretary-General has asked countries to provide supplementary funding. In 2016, the People's Republic of China heeded the call, taking the initiative of establishing the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund (UNPDF).

The UNPDF aims to advance the goals and objectives of the United Nations Charter with the implementation of innovative, forward-looking and proactive projects and activities that support peace and sustainable development. The Trust Fund's projects are administered via two sub-funds: the Secretary-General's Peace and Security Sub-Fund and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund.

China funds the UNPDF through new, voluntary contributions of $20 million per year, in addition to its existing contributions to United Nations system entities. Over the past five years, the Fund has been a strong platform for promoting multilateralism, supporting the United Nations in carrying out its mandates by contributing to peace and security and by advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In September 2020, during the General Debate of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, the President of China, Xi Jinping, announced that UNPDF will be extended beyond its planned expiration in 2025 for an additional five years.

China recognizes the United Nations as the most universal and representative intergovernmental organization in the world, and the most important platform for the practice of multilateralism. The Trust Fund is a demonstration of the tangible political determination of China to defend the central role and leadership of the United Nations through concrete actions and results. As a reflection of this commitment, the Chinese Government has thus far contributed $120 million to the Trust Fund, supporting 95 projects in peace and security and development that have benefited more than 100 countries and regions in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear that the world is one community, with a shared future and common vulnerabilities. No one country can stand alone. Our well-being and prospects depend on the actions, health and capabilities of individuals, countries and communities around the world. The pandemic is more than a health crisis; it is also a socioeconomic, humanitarian and security crisis. Extreme poverty and inequality are on the rise as more people face hunger and the destabilizing impacts of scarce resources, governance failures and development setbacks. Solidarity and collaboration are essential if we are to avoid the worst outcomes, stem the wave of infections and meet the urgent needs

of people and communities, including those in least developed countries. The pandemic is a vivid illustration of the need for strong multilateralism. We will rise or fall together.

The United Nations Secretary-General has called on all countries to cease hostilities and work together to accelerate vaccinations and facilitate a recovery that will strengthen our resilience in the face of future crises, including the increasingly urgent global climate crisis. In March 2018, the Secretary-General launched the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, aimed at mobilizing all partners and stakeholders to support the great enterprise of United Nations peacekeeping. This initiative works to help countries achieve lasting peace, support political processes, protect civilians, and build national institutions. To date, 154 countries and 4 partner organizations have endorsed the Declaration of Shared Commitments on Peacekeeping Operations. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offers countries a blueprint for high-quality, people-centred development through elaborating goals and targets that aim to generate inclusive economic growth, eradicate poverty, curb inequality, facilitate peaceful communities and protect the planet on which we all live and depend. The corresponding Sustainable Development Goals are designed to improve the lives and prospects of all people—whether they live in rich, poor or middle-income countries. Recovering from the pandemic and achieving our shared goals is possible, but only through a new sense of solidarity and strong multilateral action. The Trust Fund is stepping up to the challenge by implementing projects with a renewed focus on peace, development, resilience, recovery and poverty eradication.

Over the last five years, the Fund has focused on peacekeeping, preventive diplomacy, counter-terrorism, poverty reduction, refugees and migration, and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Fund has enriched United Nations agencies' toolkits to support States Members of the United Nations, and has contributed to the implementation of major United Nations initiatives. For example:

- The peacekeeping and counter-terrorism capacity-building projects have conducted training for more than 4,000 military, police and civilian personnel;
- Fast-track support has been provided to United Nations engagement in Colombia, Cyprus and Iraq, and to mediation efforts in Liberia and Nigeria by Secretary-General Envoy Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo;
- Advisory services and technical support have been provided to the African Union for four years to support African countries in implementing the Silencing the Guns initiative;
- Consultations between the United Nations and regional players on violence and conflict prevention have been further strengthened through the institutionalization of the Secretary-General's High-level Interactive Dialogue with Heads of Regional and Other Organizations;
- More than 25,000 of the most vulnerable Afghan refugees benefited from health insurance and newly constructed schools in Iran. In Pakistan, the refugees received vocational training;
- The number of Somali refugee children enrolled in school in Ethiopia was increased and the percentage of student dropouts fell from 8 to 0 per cent. The number and attendance of girls improved due to targeted education-awareness campaigns, tutorial classes, and girls club after-school activities;
- Policies and programmes for comprehensive HIV prevention for adolescent girls and young women were developed in Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Uganda, laying the foundation for coherent implementation;
- Officials and stakeholders in Fiji and the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic learned how to optimize their investments in sustainable development.

With a focus that encompasses peace, security and sustainable development, the Trust Fund is well positioned to integrate the cross-pillar areas of work identified by the United Nations, tackling peace challenges while advancing sustainable development, and working to reduce risks that result from

crises. Many of the projects go beyond the usual silos to advance both public security and people's well-being. For example, in rural Mali, a Trust Fund project has engaged more than 2,000 young people in training activities that help prepare them for the future, while working to preventing violent extremism; in Darfur, Sudan, the Fund is helping to address the root causes of conflict with initiatives that meet household needs for clean water and healthcare, while also bridging differences across communities and facilitating relationships between farmers and herders.

Given the inextricable link between violence, conflict and sustainable development, such integrated approaches are essential to realizing a more peaceful, secure and prosperous future. The nexus between peace and development is well understood. Conflict causes and compounds poverty in a number of ways: by depleting human resources; by destroying productive assets and financial capital; and, finally, by eroding the stability, trust and cooperation upon which strong political and economic systems depend. Likewise, global peace and security are threatened by the injustice and indignity of poverty and inequality. Poverty lowers resilience to conflict by weakening government institutions, stripping capacity for public services, and limiting the projection of authority. Poverty also compounds vulnerability to insurgency by lowering the opportunity cost of mobilizing for violence. High rates of unemployment and inequality, combined with low levels of education and development, soften the ground for recruitment by insurgents and provide motivation for potential recruits to fight.

The UNPDF is helping Member States to learn from experience and strengthen collaboration between organizations, governments, community groups and beneficiaries to address the interconnected root causes of violence, conflict, poverty and inequality. There is great potential to more fully draw on the experiences and examples that emanate from Trust Fund projects to demonstrate what works in practice. Concrete examples of good practice can be powerful drivers of action and advocacy, informing global, regional and national debates, and uniting partners to replicate and scale up what has been shown to work.

> Without peace, there can be no sustainable development
>
> Without sustainable development, there can be no peace
>
> —*The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

This Synthesis Report attempts to capture the Trust Fund's key achievements over the last five years, identify good practices and lessons learned, and make recommendations for the future strategy of the UNPDF. The findings are also intended to inform and inspire a broader audience, including concerned members of the public and practitioners interested in engaging the Fund going forward.

The Report considers the Trust Fund's institutional achievements first, followed by its operational (or substantive) achievements. The results of individual projects are discussed and analyzed for their impacts on

(i)   advancing the mandate to leave no one behind;
(ii) overcoming bottlenecks to a better common future; and
(iii) enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of multilateral cooperation.

Projects from the two sub-funds are considered in each of the sections, reflecting their overlapping impact in practice.

3. Achievements of the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund, 2016–2021

3.1 Institutional achievements

Further to the achievements of individual projects discussed in the next section of the Report, the UNPDF has realized several institutional achievements since its inception. Over the last five years of operations and day-to-day collaborations, the Trust Fund has developed innovations that have facilitated efficient budgeting and programming practices, forged a strong partnership between the United Nations System and China, and motivated new collaborations and multi-stakeholder partnerships. These achievements enable the effective delivery of results, facilitate learning and exchange across borders, and fortify the institutions and local organizations engaged in advancing peace and development

3.1.1 Forging a strong partnership between the United Nations system and China

From the start, the UNPDF has both necessitated and facilitated good cooperation between the United Nations and the Government and people of China.

The Trust Fund Steering Committee, composed of high-level officials from both the United Nations and the Chinese Government, is both a driver and an illustration of the growing partnership between the United Nations and China. The Steering Committee was established to advise the United Nations Secretary-General on the management and administration of the UNPDF, in accordance with United Nations rules and regulations. It is mandated to consider the priorities of the Trust Fund, maintain budget reserves, and oversee the monitoring and evaluation of the performance of projects. The Steering Committee's five members include the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General,

The Sustainable Development Goals on display at United Nations Headquarters, New York.

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the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, and the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations. Meeting regularly, the Steering Committee has deepened mutual understanding between the Chinese Government and United Nations Secretariat, facilitating collaborative partnerships in supporting the United Nations for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, such partnership has proven invaluable. The Steering Committee and managing teams were able to act swiftly, adjusting projects so they could meet the changing needs and context of beneficiaries and minimize the negative impacts on project outcomes. In support of the statements and goals of the Secretary-General, the Committee endorsed a new round of projects that were more fully developed to account for and respond to the pandemic.

Projects under the Trust Fund are implemented by a range of United Nations entities, often working in concert with one another, as well as government and local partners, including community and non-governmental organizations.

Through the Secretary-General's Peace and Security Sub-Fund, China is supporting the efforts of the Secretary-General towards the maintenance of international peace and security, including through support to mediation, preventive diplomacy, electoral assistance, and peacebuilding activities; support to international cooperation led by the United Nations in areas such as counter-terrorism; and support to United Nations entities in funding and conducting joint activities on international relations and related topics —including research and study—with Member States and regional and subregional organizations.

Meanwhile, China aims to support the 2030 Agenda, including through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and extending support to a greater number of developing countries. The essential spirit of the BRI—win-win cooperation, common development and prosperity, openness and inclusiveness, and mutual understanding and trust—conforms to the values of the United Nations Charter and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Efforts under the BRI can help boost poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth, including through the development of regional infrastructure networks and enhancing connectivity, and the construction of high-quality, resilient and sustainable infrastructure that takes the environment and climate change fully into account.

The United Nations and China are working in close partnership to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through various country-level projects funded by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund. Some projects under UNPDF also sought partnerships with BRI projects in order to increase beneficial impact on local populations, thereby maximizing the impact of the BRI in supporting the acceleration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To facilitate inclusive and sustainable economic structural transformations, Trust Fund projects focus on helping to ensure that countries have the capabilities, technology and partnerships to make the most of these investments. The partnership recognizes that to maximize impacts on the SDGs, efforts must go beyond investment in the public administration capacity of government, in trade and in infrastructure and seek to improve the health, education, job prospects and well-being of the people. People drive their economies and societies through innovation, initiative and work. Poverty, inequality and injustice are inconsistent with sustainable growth and development.

The Trust Fund extends the United Nations-China partnership and shares the Chinese experience with other developing countries—including their institutions and organizations—thus allowing them to draw on this experience and take advantage of lessons already learned. The result is mutual learning and a growing appreciation for the work of the United Nations and the role of multilateralism.

For example, the Trust Fund has enabled a fruitful and mutually beneficial partnership between the United Nations and the National Engineering Research Center of the Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University in China's Fujian Province. The United Nations and the University work together with governments, academia, local organizations and farmers' associations to apply the Juncao technology to help small-scale farmers and farming communities develop a low-cost, commercial-scale mushroom cultivation industry that boosts incomes and rural employment, improves nutrition, minimizes soil erosion and enables the production of renewable sources of energy. The University's experts work with countries to adapt the grasses to local environments, while the United Nations taps its local networks to ensure the project benefits the poorest and most vulnerable communities and also enables global visibility, learning and exchange.

Another example is the *Achieving SDGs and ending poverty through Universal Social Protection* project in Cambodia and Pakistan, two BRI countries, where the United Nations Secretariat, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and host country Governments are working together to expand social protection systems that improve the lives and prospects of all citizens, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable. This project draws on the very relevant Chinese experience in extending social security to all, including through improved coordination between central and provincial levels; one-stop shops that bring services close to the people; improved management information systems; and using inspection systems to increase compliance, etc.

3.1.2   Improving efficiency and facilitating collaboration

Each of the two sub-funds under the UNPDF is administered by a management team responsible for the delivery of all functional areas of programme and project management, including the development and setting of standard operating procedures and tools; quality assurance and monitoring of implementation; advisory services to implementing entities; analysis and reporting; and communication and Information-sharing.

Over the last five years, the management teams have arrived at a set of standardized templates and practices for project application, selection and reporting that were highly appreciated by the implementing entities interviewed for this report. These innovations have improved operational efficiency—which has reduced the time between the endorsement of proposals and the launch of projects—and improved the timely appropriation of funds. In 2019, 96 per cent of funds were disbursed on time.

Critically, project quality has also improved in response to clear guidelines and standardized templates, with projects demonstrating clearer overall strategies and budgetary discipline. There has also been a sizable increase in the proportion of multi-year projects that incorporate long-term planning, ensuring the sustainability of impacts after project completion.

Cognizant of the devastating impact of COVID-19, management teams' technical expertise and advisory support have proven critical to the continued implementation of 63 different projects at the regional, national and global levels. From the outset of the pandemic, the management teams mobilized early and comprehensively. For example, in early 2020, both sub-funds initiated a review by all project teams to gauge the relevance and potential for immediate response plans each entity could formulate within the existing operational framework to support Governments.

Further into the pandemic, all project managers were asked to conduct a thorough review to ensure that, to the extent possible, their projects

(i)   continued to deliver according to their strategic framework;

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(ii)   adapted to the new realities and demands from countries—most particularly, the aim to minimize the reversal of decades of progress in the fight against poverty and inequality; and

(iii)   fully adopted the Secretary-General's call to take prompt and concrete action in response to the pandemic and related crises.

Based on the analysis of collected information, the portfolio of projects remained relevant and vital in their respective contexts, despite the unprecedented and increased challenges facing developing countries. Nevertheless, adjustments were needed to integrate emergency and prevention programming in support of national systems and extend the implementation period without increases in the cost of activities.

Implementing entities highlighted the importance of the Administration's flexibility and advisory support in response to the pandemic. Of the 40 implementation managers consulted for this report, 34 volunteered that the timely support provided by the management teams to adapt their projects had been critical to ensuring project continuation and enhanced relevance.

Over its five years of operation, the Trust Fund's role in strengthening collaboration and building partnerships has been increasingly acknowledged and appreciated. Project guidelines have been updated to encourage multi-agency implementation, with clear expressions of the role and comparative advantage of each entity. The guidelines stress the importance of establishing durable multi-stakeholder partnerships within the context of project delivery, including both beneficiaries and government, in collaboration with relevant entities at the local, regional and global levels.

As a result, UNPDF projects play a vital role in increasing inter-agency collaboration within the United Nations system and establishing ongoing partnerships with and among outside entities. An evaluation of eight representative projects under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund found that facilitating partnerships was the most frequently achieved project purpose (figure I).

Figure I:
Achievement of project purpose
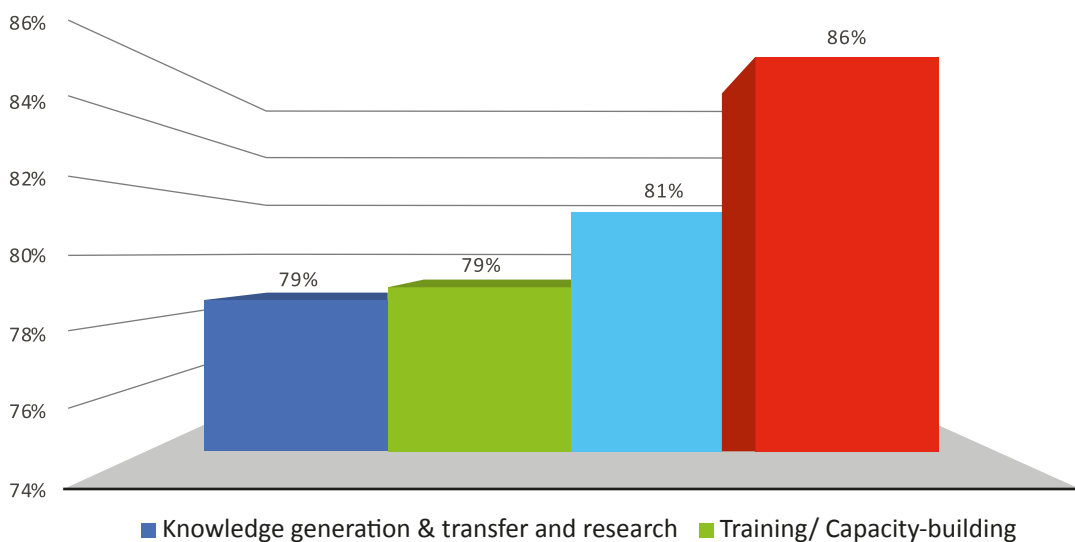
Source: UN DESA.

More than half of the project managers interviewed for this report noted improved relationships and new partnerships as a key achievement of their project. One project manager explained how his Trust Fund project had established a range of action-oriented, multi-stakeholder partnerships to implement the Secretary-General's call for universal access to sustainable energy. He stressed that the resulting formal and informal collaboration between the Government of Spain, the ILO, the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, and a range of global and academic organizations, among others, continues to have an important impact in expanding access to energy by integrating measures in policies and programmes focused on health, clean water, jobs and displaced persons.

3.2   Operational achievements

The UNPDF has enabled more than 90 projects that support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and advance peace and security. The projects are implemented by the United Nations Secretariat in collaboration with other United Nations agencies and partners.

Achievements range from enabling the United Nations to determine guidelines for the use of frontier technologies to reducing poverty, combating climate change, and improving the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel. For the purposes of this report, project results are analyzed for their contributions to three areas of achievement:

(i)   Overcoming bottlenecks to a better common future;
(ii)   Leaving no one behind; and
(iii) Improving the relevance and effectiveness of multilateral cooperation.

Indicative project achievements are explained in each of the 3 categories, drawn from a desk review of project materials, 11 interviews with project managers and 26 questionnaires completed by implementing entities for the purposes of this Report. The complete list of the contributing projects is included in Annex I and Annex II.

3.2.1   Overcoming bottlenecks to a better common future

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations Secretary-General recognizes rising insecurity and ongoing conflicts, climate change, economic recession, increasing poverty and widening inequality as our largest collective obstacles to realizing a better common future. The Trust Fund works to help countries overcome these bottlenecks with projects focused on

(i)   mediating and preventing conflict;
(ii)   mitigating violence and countering terrorism; and
(iii) catalyzing sustainable growth and structural transformation.

3.2.1.1 Mediating and preventing conflict

In March 2020, the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres issued an urgent appeal for a global ceasefire in all corners of the world so that we might focus together on the true fight: defeating COVID-19.

Silencing the guns can not only support the fight against COVID-19, but also create opportunities for life-saving aid, open windows for diplomacy, and bring hope to people suffering in conflict zones who are particularly vulnerable to the pandemic and the corresponding setbacks in development. Since March 2021, 180 countries, the United Nations Security Council, regional organizations, civil society groups, peace advocates and millions of global citizens have endorsed the Secretary-General's ceasefire call.

At the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations in September 2020, world leaders—meeting in an unprecedented virtual opening of the General-Assembly—welcomed the global ceasefire and noted that the diplomatic toolbox of the United Nations Charter must be used to its full potential, including preventive diplomacy and mediation. They called on the Secretary-General to enhance this toolbox to prevent the outbreak, escalation and recurrence of hostilities, noting that ongoing armed conflicts and threats against international peace and security must be urgently resolved through peaceful means.

Mediation and conflict prevention are priority areas under the UNPDF. As such, a range of Fund projects have sought to enhance the toolbox of diplomacy and mediation to prevent hostilities, as Member States requested.

The Trust Fund has been a key instrument in enabling the Secretary-General's surge in diplomacy. Projects under the Trust Fund have enabled the United Nations to

- Maintain a rapid response system. Mediation processes can be started on short notice as tensions are beginning to build. The system draws on a group of experts on standby, including specialists on power-sharing, natural resources and conflict, constitution-making, ceasefires and other security arrangements. The project enables quick deployment of experts and mediators, advance planning, and ready resources, all of which are key to effective mediation. Started in 2017, the project has responded to 25 requests for rapid response mediation from missions, with 60 per cent of the personnel deployed in Africa;
- Grant flexible funding to support urgent peace and security activities. Results have enabled the Secretary-General and senior United Nations officials to engage in peace processes in Colombia, Cyprus and Iraq, and in mediation efforts in Liberia and Nigeria;
- Proactively deploy members of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Board on Mediation. Members work to implement the global ceasefire, and prevent or resolve conflicts by engaging religious leaders, national and regional actors and organizations and heads of Government. The Trust Fund has enabled Board Members to respond to the need for heightened prevention, by making the most of opportunities where diplomatic engagement can be supported or discreetly pursued through formal or inform channels, including purposefully drawing on leader-to-leader relationships;
- Strengthen the capacity of 11 countries in Central Africa to implement and follow up on the Silence the Guns in Africa programme. This project worked with governments and stakeholders in Central Africa to promote ratification and implementation of the Kinshasa Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons. As a result, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Equatorial Guinea took steps to ratify the Kinshasa Convention, and several beneficiary countries established National Commissions. All participating countries benefited from guidelines and training on how to establish national legislative frameworks to control small arms and light weapons;
- Address the root causes of conflict in Darfur, Sudan. Working through the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)—and the continuing peacekeeping efforts since the Mission's close—the Trust Fund has enabled efforts to establish peaceful co-existence committees and ease tensions in hot spots in South and West Darfur, including by strengthening the relationship between farmers and herders. Water catchments, handpumps and wells are also being constructed to address the resource scarcity that is driving tensions.

A significant number of projects focus on strengthening capacities for peace. Over the course of four years, UNPDF has provided training to more than 5,000 personnel from over 60 countries. Projects under the Trust Fund also work to enhance the strategic planning of peace operations, including by training senior leadership and enabling the development of common strategic, situational and

operational analyses across regions, including West Africa and the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa.

Of note are the achievements of the ongoing project to strengthen peacekeeping capacity, with a focus on Africa. This ongoing project has, since 2016, effectively tripled the reach of United Nations efforts to train and better equip uniformed peacekeeping personnel (box I).

Box I: Strengthening peacekeeping capacity with a focus on Africa

Infantry Battalion Commanders Course, Beijing, China, November 2019

Peacekeeping helps to prevent the spread of violence as well as keep the peace once violence has ended. With more and better-equipped peacekeepers, there are fewer civilian and military deaths and less sexual and gender-based violence during conflict. The presence of peacekeepers has also been shown to help countries to develop stronger and more effective post-conflict institutions.

With seven deployments on the African continent, United Nations peacekeeping plays a critical role in fostering sustainable peace in the region. This impact is strengthened wherever United Nations peacekeepers are in place around the globe, enhancing both the legitimacy and flexibility of peacekeeping missions. The United Nations thus strives to ensure a globally representative mix of personnel. Contributions from African nations themselves—over 65,000 peacekeeping personnel—have become increasingly indispensable.

With personnel from 121 contributing countries and a rapid rate of turnover, training is not only essential, but also a constant challenge. As pointed out by the United Nations Security Council, the ability of peacekeepers to confront evolving challenges and meet United Nations standards depends on adequate training and equipment as well as the development of highly skilled and specialized officers and police units. Specialized staff officers, formed police units and women peacekeepers have been in short supply.

In this context, the United Nations Peace and Development Fund has financed the *Strengthening peacekeeping capacity with a focus on Africa* project, with the aim of strengthening the capacity and management of peacekeeping personnel in Africa and newly emerging contributing countries. Thanks to this project, the United Nations has tripled the reach of its efforts to train and better equip uniformed peacekeeping personnel. The results have improved performance and saved lives.

Trainers who received the support are better equipped to develop and deliver training plans that remain in line with United Nations peacekeeping policies and standards, including in conduct and discipline, when they return home. The project also enabled the development of a United Nations national planners' course which provides essential information on the higher-level planning and preparation requirements needed for peacekeeping. This has proven effective in promoting relevant United Nations standards among government planners responsible for deploying, rotating and sustaining contingents in peacekeeping operations. With reinforced national systems capabilities, new and emerging trainers are better able to streamline their practices and improve troop performance.

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3.2.1.2 Mitigating violence and countering terrorism

The threat of terrorism and violent crime are threats to global peace, preventing people from fulfilling the basic human need for safety and security. What results is an erosion of the social trust needed to establish strong political and economic systems. Adding the perils of COVID-19 to these underlying threats has increased and complicated the challenges in conflict prevention and peacekeeping efforts at the heart of United Nations work. Trust Fund projects designed to mitigate violence and counter terrorism have been able to do so by strengthening responsible institutions and working with countries to establish the rule of law, among other strategies.

For example, the *Supporting Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) countries to strengthen rule of law-based criminal justice response for preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism* project provided much needed expertise to national counter-terrorism and criminal justice officials in Southern African countries, most of which are facing the threat of terrorism for the first time. The project effectively raised awareness and built knowledge among criminal justice officials through training on detecting, investigating and countering terrorism incidents, and preventing terrorism financing and the spread of violent extremist messaging. The project led to the advancement of a national counter-terrorism strategy in Lesotho; the review of counter-terrorism legislation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and peer learning from South African investigators and prosecutors with specialized knowledge in preventing terrorist use of social media. Mozambique benefited from an especially timely establishment of a cadre of well-trained and better-equipped investigators, prosecutors and judges. A counter-terrorism unit was also established within Mozambique's investigative service, and a detailed legislative analysis of the country's counter-terrorism legal framework was conducted, identifying gaps and areas for further legislative revision.

The project established trust and partnerships between national officials in the region and the United Nations. These officials now feel comfortable actively reaching out to the Organization for informal guidance and technical advice in dealing with the complex issues that terrorism presents.

Another project enabled by the Trust Fund, *Strengthen conflict prevention, regional analysis and coordination in the Sahel*, has helped transform the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) into a research-based decision-making entity, benefiting the five countries that constitute the coordination body. Through the project, the Planning Advisor to the rotational presidency of the G5 Sahel was trained, ensuring the effective transfer of institutional memory. This in turn enabled a level of uniformity in planning, efficiency and consistency.

Thanks to this project, detailed analyses were produced on issues such as education in the context of counter-terrorism. An advocacy paper—Caring for Children Deprived of Education as a Result of Conflict—urged stakeholders to assist the estimated 600,000 children and schoolteachers affected by terrorist groups' specific targeting of schools in the region. A network of strategic research centres was established to coordinate and prioritize relevant research to enable evidence-based and informed responses there. Agreement was reached on research gaps, standards and publication. The project is also enabling a mapping of armed groups in the Sahel with an analysis of their characteristics and nature. The result is expected to assist Governments in the Sahel and the G5 Joint Force in avoiding exacerbation of political conflict in the region.

Another Trust Fund project, *Preventing conflict in the Great Lakes region through strengthening the rule of law*, succeeded in enabling countries in Africa's Great Lakes region to enhance the political commitment of Governments to fight impunity, a core cause of the area's conflict and instability. Drawing on the convening power of the United Nations, countries in the Great Lakes region met in early 2019 and resolved to jointly push for quick extradition of perpetrators of

transnational crimes who find refuge there. Lawyers, magistrates, prosecutors and other judicial officers from the 12 partner States of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region set the platform for establishing common legal mechanisms and strengthening judicial cooperation in fighting transnational crimes and impunity. Officials in the countries also cooperated in identifying priority cases for prosecution—with a particular focus on those related to natural resources and corruption—and exchanged good practices on investigating and prosecuting. The project advanced the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance in the region and, in a marked change with the past, helped build on the positive momentum to progressively focus on longer-term development objectives.

In Djibouti, the Trust Fund financed the *Strengthen forensic science capacity for Djiboutian law enforcement entities to bring terrorists to justice* project, which helped law enforcement in charge of terrorism cases to make use of a new set of investigative techniques aimed at collecting and analyzing forensic evidence such as DNA. The result has improved the quality and accuracy of criminal investigations and worked to facilitate a shift to an investigative culture that increasingly relies on real evidence. Following a needs assessment conducted by experts on the Counter-Terrorism Committee working closely with local authorities, the project combined training sessions with support in acquiring equipment and the establishment of new working tools, such as databases and criminal analysis software. To ensure sustainability, certain beneficiaries were trained and tasked with transferring what they learned to colleagues. Djibouti officials are now making use of their training and forensic tools as cases arise that benefit from DNA collection and analysis. The project has thus successfully strengthened the rule of law in Djibouti, providing a tool to combat terrorism, crime and injustice.

The Trust Fund has also worked to mitigate violence and counterterrorism with projects that strategically focus on local communities, working to improve the lives and prospects of people, particularly young people in hotspots for terrorism and violence. Such projects, together with targeted support to governments, work to enhance cooperation and promote the nexus between peace and development.

3.2.1.3 Catalyzing sustainable growth and structural transformation

Priorities under UNPDF include eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity through economic growth, quality education, health care, decent employment, social protection, trade promotion, connectivity, and infrastructure building. At the same time, the Trust Fund seeks to foster environmental protection and combat climate change.

The global economic slowdown and the faltering of aid and trade brought about by the pandemic have refocused project efforts on the opportunity to generate a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive recovery. Growing environmental threats and climate-related challenges—including natural disasters, drought, food shortages, water scarcity and wildfires—reinforce the urgency of advancing an innovative, coordinated, green and shared development that strengthens resilience to climate impacts and can put countries on sustainable trajectories.

One long-term project under the Trust Fund in particular has seen the demand and importance of its efforts grow during the pandemic. The project—*Enhancing national capacities for unleashing full potentials of micro, small and medium-enterprises (MSMEs) in achieving sustainable development goals in developing countries*—works to enable countries to learn from good practices, focus interventions on the poorest entrepreneurs, and strengthen the capacity of Governments to achieve policy coherence. Using a national, demand-driven approach, the project has rolled out a series of activities(e.g., skills training and education, technology, financing investment in micro, small and

Box II: Enabling small businesses

How "HoliCOW" survivedCOVID-19 pandemic lockdown

Ms. Kae Batiquin is a young woman entrepreneur with a small business in the Philippines named Holistic Coalition of the Willing (HoliCOW). Under her leadership, HoliCOW became a social enterprise, advancing sustainability through the design and manufacturing of furniture products. With supply chains rooted in local communities, HoliCOW is a source of employment and income for poor and vulnerable people. Unique designs and a dynamic inventory had enabled HoliCOW to prosper, but the COVID-19 pandemic hit the business hard, causing disruptions in supply chains and reduced cashflow.

Supported and advised by the MSME project, Batiquin endeavored to enhance the resilience of her business. With thanks to the support received, she was able to streamline operations, reduce overhead, broaden distribution channels, and diversify products.

Despite a lockdown, Batiquin reports, "We focused on (a) consolidating our assembly line, moving many components to the city,(b) activating the communities we could reach, (c) implementing safety rules in our production areas, and (d) maximizing the profit we could, via online transactions and cashless payment.

"We were able to relaunch our website to make it easier for e-commerce, streaming products on Instagram and tightening our logistics so we can reach clients all over the country, as well as internationally. We came up with product lines and corresponding marketing campaigns that promoted 'soft products' that translate better on the digital scale."

medium-sized business (MSMEs), among others), with a view, ultimately, to improving national policies and programmes in

(i)   supporting the growth of MSMEs,
(ii) mitigating impacts of the pandemic and
(iii) promoting environmental sustainability, social inclusion and climate resilience.

The Governments of ten countries recently requested support under this project to strengthen national capacities for enhancing MSMEs to recover from the pandemic.

The MSME project works with governments, business associations and local entrepreneurs, particularly in the informal sector, where the poorest people often struggle to make a living, without access to finance or government assistance. In Cambodia, the project established easy-to-use, nationally tailored guidelines for entrepreneurs on how to register their informal businesses, offering simple steps as well as required forms and documents. The guidelines were widely distributed through networks of micro and small businesses and local labour associations.

Trust is a key challenge to bringing micro and small enterprises into the formal sector. It is crucial for governments to establish clear and enforced policies that proactively seek to facilitate and incentivize formalization. The project arranges study tours for key government officials, so they may better understand the challenges of supporting the informal sector. The Kenyan Director-General for Micro and Small Business Affairs, for example, undertook a study tour in Spain to learn from their experience, including their "one-stop" system, whereby services to enable and support small businesses are co-located and easy to access in local communities. The study tour's peer learning and advisory services informed the development of the Kenyan national policy on enabling micro and small businesses.

Despite their vulnerabilities, micro and small businesses frequently miss out on government efforts to provide economic stimulus and relief in times of crisis. Assessments of private sector needs, including in the pandemic, typically focus on the formal economy where data is more easily available. The MSME project enabled the Gambia to break the mold and assess the impact of the pandemic on the informal sector. The resulting assessment provided the Government with a detailed analysis of the impact of the pandemic among 500 MSMEs in the poultry, fishery, horticulture and second-hand clothing sectors, all of which are typically informal and largely managed by women and young people. Data and information derived from the report were used to respond to the pandemic.

A country's policies directly influence the decisions of investors, be they small or large, domestic or foreign. It has become clear that where countries lack environmental, social and governance standards or considerations, investment decisions result in unintended negative impacts on human development. Hence, there is a need for enhanced knowledge on environmental, social and governance aspects of investment policy.

In Ethiopia, the pilot project *Promoting Sustainable Investments* sought to enhance the capacity of Ethiopian stakeholders to incorporate environmental, social and governance standards in their policies and decision-making. The project facilitates the Government, private sector, chamber of commerce, development agencies and think tanks to jointly discuss, identify and tackle sustainable investment bottlenecks through business and policy dialogues, investment promotion events, and knowledge-exchange programmes. This included a Sustainable Investment Promotion event in Beijing, where private sector and government officials discussed the potential for sustainable investment in Ethiopia's pharmaceutical, agro-processing, leather, textile, information and communications technology (ICT), tourism, and mining sectors.

Timely information dissemination to promote sustainable investment is key to attracting viable investments to Ethiopia—especially investments that will address the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. To facilitate this, a Sustainable Investment Promotion information platform was established under the pilot project to maximize outreach and impact on sustainable investment promotion and cope with the digitalization trend in the post-COVID-19 era.

Based on the outcomes of the series of dialogues, diagnostic studies were conducted that focused on two thematic areas:

(i) garment, horticulture, leather and leather products, and agro-processing, including sugar-related industries; and
(ii) infrastructure investments, energy and ceramics.

The diagnostic studies provided to the Government helped to

- Develop a more complete environmental, social and governance (ESG) framework for use by the Ethiopian Investment Commission;
- Determine shortfalls in select companies in priority sectors and reveal the status of companies' ESG performance; and
- Identify policy coordination challenges and recommendations, including building a multilevel intergovernmental policy exchange and communication mechanism.

At the onset of the pandemic in 2020, the project was able to access funds and maintain operations while enhancing the protection of Ethiopian nationals with protective gear and transportation in accordance with health safety and guidelines.

3.2.2   Leaving no one behind

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 193 United Nations Member States pledged to ensure "no one will be left behind" and to "endeavour to reach the furthest behind first". In practice, this means taking explicit action to end extreme poverty, curb inequalities, confront discrimination and fast-track progress for "the furthest behind".[2]

Impressive development gains over the last few decades have improved the lives of many millions of people. However, hundreds of millions of people were left behind, unable to fully participate in or benefit from human development, innovation, economic growth or globalization. They are overwhelmingly among the world's poorest and most marginalized people. Many endure diseases, deprivations and indignities that have long been solved elsewhere. As a result, we continue to live in

Figure II:
Percentage of projects benifiting least developed and vulnerable countries

Source: UN DESA.
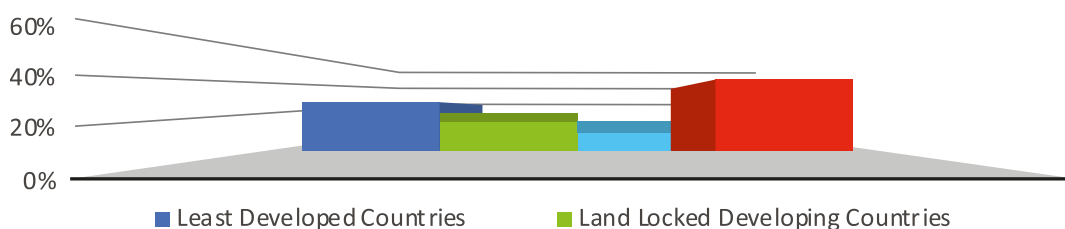
- Least Developed Countries
- Land Locked Developing Countries
- Small Island Developing Countries
- Other

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2   General Assembly resolution 70/1, para. 4.

world in which one person in nine is hungry; one in three is malnourished; about800 million people struggle to survive on less than $1.90 a day; and one in every three women experiences physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. The COVID-19 pandemic is widely expected to increase extreme poverty and is aggravating inequalities within and between countries.

Despite the heightened need for development assistance in the world's poorest countries, however, the proportion of assistance targeting least developed countries (LDCs) has declined over the past ten years. Development assistance to LDCs as a share of gross national income has not changed since 2017, remaining at 0.09 per cent—well below the 0.15 per cent commitment called for in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Moreover, LDCs received just 4 per cent of other official financial flows in 2018 and benefited from 13 per cent of the private sector financing mobilized by donor countries.[3]

The UNPDF takes a proactive approach to leaving no one behind. Over its first five years, it has targeted least developed countries and countries in special need, with an overwhelming 74 per cent of its projects being directed to them.

Both sub-funds prioritize projects that improve the lives of people in the poorest and most vulnerable countries and communities. The Secretary-General's Peace and Security Sub-Fund has a particular focus on Africa, with about half of its 68 projects directly benefiting African countries. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund has the goal of poverty eradication at its core, with a strong focus on strengthening capacities for sustainable development in LDCs, landlocked countries and small-island developing States.

3.2.2.1 Empowering the least developed and vulnerable countries

A considerable proportion of Trust Fund projects seek to strengthen the capacities of governments and stakeholders in least developed countries and countries in special need. These projects are designed to enable and empower officials with tools and evidence to develop and implement sound policies for sustainable development, peace and security; mobilize and attract development financing; and participate effectively in regional and global forums.

One such project—*Implementing Agenda 2030: strengthening capacities of developing countries in integrating economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection for sustainable development*—made significant strides by focusing on strengthening capacities to follow up and review progress in implementing the SDGs. Governments have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review. The United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF) is tasked with overseeing these processes. A central feature of the HLPF are voluntary national reviews (VNRs), whereby developed and developing countries report on national progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

In a range of countries, national reviews of progress have proven effective in raising the profile of the SDGs, rallying support and generating partnerships to accelerate implementation, and more fully integrating goals and targets in national development plans and policies. Virtually all countries, however, have found it challenging to integrate the SDGs in national policies, priorities, programmes and budgets; mobilize financial resources for implementation; and access appropriate data. These and other challenges present especially steep hurdles to SDG implementation in least developed countries and countries in special need, where capacities are particularly lacking in the following areas:

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[3]   See Bosch, Cerabino, and Elgar (2021). ODA as a collective effort: latest trends. OECD Library.

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- Analyzing policy synergies and trade-offs between different SDGs and targets for effective prioritization;
- Ensuring coordination at the inter-ministerial level and between different levels of government and society to promote policy coherence and ownership;
- Mapping vulnerable groups;
- Aligning the SDGs with other international obligations to reduce the reporting burden; and
- Creating effective, evidence-based national monitoring and evaluation systems.

Least developed countries have the most to gain from effective SDG planning and implementation, but often have the least resources and capacity to dedicate. Governments in LDCs undertaking the VNR process are often confronted with multiple capacity shortfalls. The project *Strengthening the capacity of least developed countries to develop evidence-based, coherent and well financed strategies to implement the 2030 Agenda* supported Bangladesh, Ethiopia, the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic and the United Republic of Tanzania to address hurdles and maximize the VNR process as a vehicle for accelerating sustainable development.

An in-depth needs assessment was undertaken in each of the target countries, followed by intensive training activities and advisory services to be provided to a range of stakeholders. Training to promote policy coherence and effective service delivery focused on strengthening capacity to apply integrated SDG policy guidance (e.g., to develop links between different sectors);understand and use quantitative tools (models) to analyze interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs between policy options; and develop or strengthen inter-ministerial, multisectoral, and multi-stakeholder institutional arrangements and coordination (whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches).

Nationally tailored training and e-learning courses were developed together with national partners, to build the capacity of public servants and other stakeholders on different aspects of SDG implementation. The courses were designed with national partners (e.g., universities or think tanks) that agreed to deliver them on a regular basis following the end of the project.

In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the project helped to reinforce the Government's network of SDG focal points, including line ministries. Aside from bringing together this larger network, it developed a small pool of facilitators in the Government who can lead the SDG focal points network and engage stakeholders in the national planning process. The result facilitates coordination, inclusion and accountability.

Activities in the United Republic of Tanzania strengthened stakeholder engagement in its VNR process, an issue that was highlighted in the country's presentation at the United Nations HLPF. The mechanisms put in place by the project will be used to include stakeholders in future planning and reporting processes. The project also strengthened the country's capacity to apply credible, non-traditional data sources for tracking progress on reaching SDGs, with support for new statistical legislation, regulations and statistical systems.

3.2.2.1.1   Landlocked developing countries
A distinctive feature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is its emphasis on reaching the most vulnerable and its recognition that landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) face particularly steep challenges that deserve special attention from development partners.

Transportation connectivity, both within and between developing countries, is essential for trade, growth, poverty reduction and the structural transformation of economies. It is particularly important for the LLDCs who lack direct access to the sea and are often marginalized from major transportation and services networks. LLDCs frequently depend to a great extent on transit routes

across their neighboring country territories for transportation of their exports and imports. The transportation networks within LLDCs and their neighbours, however, is frequently inadequate. As a result, the LLDCs face high trade costs. To make trade an effective means of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in LLDCs, specific and directed actions are needed to improve their connectivity to global markets, including improvements in transportation infrastructure and connectivity.

The gap between what is now invested in transport infrastructure in LLDCs and what is needed could be, on average, more than 2.3 per cent of gross domestic product. Closing this gap will require not only enhanced resources from the public and private sectors and international development partners, but also new sources of financing and better use of existing resources through improved regulatory systems, policies and governance.

Project

Strengthening the capacity of landlocked developing countries under the Belt and Road Initiative to design and implement policies that promote transport connectivity for the achievement of the SDGs

There is huge potential for LLDCs to leverage the knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources made available under the Belt and Road Initiative to build quality, sustainable and resilient transportation infrastructure and the supportive legal framework needed to enhance connectivity. This project aimed to strengthen the capacity of LLDCs to make the most of this opportunity to increase their connectivity and to enhance South-South Cooperation.

In the context of preparing for the midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, the project financed a series of regional consultations and training workshops.

The trainings brought together relevant officials from LLDCs and transit (i.e., neighbouring) countries to learn how to prepare viable or "bankable" transport infrastructure projects that are sustainable and resilient, attract private investment in infrastructure, efficiently use resources for infrastructure development and maintenance, and establish public-private partnerships and legal and regulatory frameworks for transit countries. The enthusiastic participation in the training events suggests a large demand for capacity-building in this area. Botswana and Mongolia continued to work with the United Nations to develop bankable infrastructure projects in identified priority areas.

The project also contributed to the success of the High-level Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action. The 146 countries in attendance—more than expected—endorsed specific recommendations on priorities for transport connectivity. A global report was prepared, providing an overview of the status and priority needs of LLDCs to improve transport connectivity and build resilient transport infrastructure to support accelerated progress of the SDGs.

3.2.2.2 Improving the lives and security of the furthest behind

A significant proportion of Trust Fund projects are designed to directly benefit the poorest and furthest behind communities and people with targeted, on-the-ground initiatives. Three projects in particular illustrate this focus.

3.2.2.2.1   Construction of youth training and community centres in Gao and Mopti, Mali
Thanks to this Trust Fund project, two youth community training centres were established in the Mopti and Gao regions of Mali in support of government efforts to combat the scourge of violent extremism and terrorism. The centres are located in strategic communities, designed to facilitate catalytic change for the capacity-building of vulnerable youth, men and women, and to help them

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avoid recruitment by armed elements or militia terrorist groups operating in the centre (Mopti) and the northern (Gao) regions of Mali. The community training centres are equipped with computer equipment, office furniture and Internet connection for 70–100 participants, as well as dormitory accommodation for teachers.

This project works to improve the employability and capacity for entrepreneurship among young women and men, using the centres to provide vocational training and build skills in line with the national policy for prevention of violent extremism and terrorism. The project supported training activities for over 2,200 beneficiaries, including government employees, young people, religious leaders, local authorities, teachers, women and civil society actors.

Training centres in Mopti (left) and Gao (right), Mali

3.2.2.2.2 Strengthening capacity to achieve sustainable agriculture through the transfer of Juncao technology

Despite progress in reducing the prevalence of undernourishment in recent decades, people living in rural areas have been left behind, with many continuing to face grinding poverty and hunger. Smallholder and subsistence farmers make up the vast majority of the world's poorest people. Many are consigned to remote and mountainous areas and face increasing climate-change related challenges, including more frequent and severe floods, droughts and natural disasters. The COVID-19 pandemic, land degradation, and desertification have compounded the challenges. As a result, in many developing countries growing crops and making a living in rural areas have become even harder and less secure, increasing the prospects for extreme poverty and hunger.

Juncao technology is an easily adaptable agricultural method developed by the National Engineering Research Center of the Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University in China. The Research Center discovered that, dried and chopped, the Juncao grass allows for rapid and low-cost production of nutritious mushrooms. This environmentally friendly technology is helping small-scale farmers and farming communities to develop a commercial-scale mushroom cultivation industry that provides sustainable livelihood options for family farmers and rural entrepreneurs along agri-food value chains. In some countries, the technology is also being used to minimize soil erosion, produce cattle feed, and/or generate methane gas as a renewable source of energy.

In 2016, the United Nations partnered with the China Research Center to expand the reach of the Juncao initiative and maximize its potential to boost the incomes and nutrition of the world's poorest people through two Trust Fund projects: *Enhancing capacity of developing countries to achieve sustainable agriculture through the transfer of Juncao technology for alleviating poverty and promoting productive employment* (phase I) and *Strengthening capacity of developing countries to achieve sustainable agriculture through the transfer of Juncao Technology and analyzing and disseminating best practices and lessons learned for alleviating poverty and promoting productive employment* (phase II). The United Nations uses its local networks and convening power to organize

Box III: Using Juncao to help my family:

Heqoa's experience in rural Lesotho

Tshepo Heqoa's family was struggling to make ends meet amid a growing number of climate-related woes, such as drought, floods, pests and extreme temperatures.

The 29-year-old lives in Koalabata, a small village in the Berea district of Lesotho in southern Africa, where farmers like him rely on cultivating soybeans, sugar beans, maize and wheat for a living. His mother was the sole bread winner.

Heqoa was introduced to growing mushrooms in 2014 by his peers. But he found the technology difficult to grasp and had only occasional success. With thanks to the Trust Fund project, he was able to join a knowledge-sharing tour in 2018, organized by the Chinese Government. In China he was trained in Juncao technology, at the National Engineering Research Center of the Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University in Fujian province.

Inspired by the technology, and with assistance from project personnel, Heqoa expanded his business from growing mushrooms to producing mushroom spawn—the substance that, like a seed, causes mushroom growth. The result greatly increased the income and stability of his family, enabling him to generate revenue of about $1,500 in four months, a considerable amount in a country with a per capita GDP of $1,118 in 2019.

local, regional and national workshops that bring together farmers' associations, local researchers and government officials. The Research Center then adapts the Juncao technology so that it works to meet local needs and conditions. The project has enabled international study tours, regional workshops, national policymakers and farmers workshops on the Juncao technology in the Central African Republic, Fiji, the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Madagascar, Papua New Guinea and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The beneficiaries of the project are smallholder farmers, people living in poverty, women and youth, rural entrepreneurs along agri-food value chains, agriculture experts, relevant line ministries and government agencies, and other stakeholders equipped with the technology.

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Through an agricultural extension system—one that connects demonstration centres, farmers' associations/cooperatives and individual farmers—smallholder farmers are supported to produce Juncao, lowering the technical threshold and cost of production. In Rwanda, this approach has enabled the Juncao industry to take shape, with more than 3,500 farmers and over 50 companies/ cooperatives actively participating. Rwanda effectively developed a local market for the mushrooms, including by inviting community supermarkets to sell the local produce.

In Papua New Guinea's Eastern Highlands Province, Juncao has been regarded as one of the pillars of the local economy. In 2017, the country's yield of the Juncao grass set a world record of 854 tons per hectare. The harvest per hectare can feed 400–500 sheep or help grow 100 tons of fresh mushrooms. In Fiji, the Ministry of Agriculture set out to optimize the use of Juncao grass to enhance livestock production. Since 2019, local livestock companies and farmers have planted Juncao grass as a way to help solve the shortage of green feed in the dry season.

With phase two of the project, the United Nations aims to train agricultural experts in developing-country universities to work with and adapt Juncao technology, which will strengthen indigenous know-how and facilitate sustainability. Project managers are also working to create a link to the UNPDF Small Business project in order to offer services alongside the Juncao technology, to enhance business, marketing and entrepreneurial skills for agricultural products from small-scale producers— focusing particularly on women and youth, who tend to have less access to these resources.

3.2.2.2.3   Achieving SDGs and ending poverty through Universal Social Protection

Social protection plays a key role in achieving sustainable development: it promotes social justice; reduces poverty and vulnerability across the life cycle; supports inclusive and sustainable growth by raising household incomes; fosters productivity and human development; boosts domestic demand; facilitates structural transformation of the economy; and promotes decent work. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda has identified delivering social protection and essential public services for all[4] as the first of seven cross-cutting areas that will build synergies to help achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. More and more developing countries have actively taken measures to develop and extend their social protection systems to progressively achieve universal coverage.

Under the Trust Fund, this project set out to enable the people of Cambodia and Pakistan to benefit from social protection. The project focused on strengthening the capacity of the Governments to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate national social security schemes.

Specifically, the project is supporting the Government of Cambodia in the design of its pension scheme. Training courses are planned to broaden and deepen the collective knowledge on how to better steer, manage and monitor the operation of national social security systems. Education campaigns are also underway to raise awareness on social protection rights and obligations, targeting workers' and employers' organizations and their members.

The project is supporting the Government in developing a nationwide and uniformed management and information system for pensions, including a database. Additionally, a study tour to China is planned for 10 members of the Government so that officials may observe how social security schemes are effectively and efficiently governed and monitored.

In Pakistan, the project is enabling the Government to develop a coordination mechanism for social security schemes at the national level and also in one province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). Training

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4   Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.I.7), p. 6.

courses are designed specifically for those involved in the coordination mechanism. Assistance is being provided for Pakistan to create a nationwide social security database with information from the existing social security schemes and the consolidated results accessible by all social protection schemes. Well maintained, such single-entry information systems enable the use of data for multiple programmes, and at lower administrative cost, providing a consolidated source of information on the assistance households receive. The result can improve the delivery of timely benefits, enable government coordination, and reduce and prevent duplication, fraud and corruption.

3.2.3   Enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of multilateral cooperation

United Nations Secretariat, New York

Multilateralism not only offers better opportunities for dealing with complex tasks; it is also better able to legitimize the results achieved and thus tends to make them more sustainable, since they emerge from joint efforts. This is particularly true if participation is considered representative—that is, if all important interests and positions are represented. The United Nations was established to enable countries to realize the opportunities of multilateralism. In the words of the United Nations Charter, the United Nations was established as a forum that could be "a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations".[5]

The world of today is very different from what it was when the United Nations was established 76 years ago. There are more countries, more people, more—and more complex—challenges, but also more solutions. Today's challenges require cooperation, not only across borders but also across societies. To ensure an effective response to our common challenges, the United Nations must be more inclusive and engage with all relevant stakeholders; its working methods must also keep pace and adapt to rapidly changing realities.

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5   United Nations Charter, Article I.

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The ongoing reforms by the Secretary-General aim to create a more agile, effective and accountable organization that can deliver better in the field and adapt to global challenges. A proportion of projects under the Trust Fund aims to facilitate these reforms and keep the United Nations "ahead of the curve," including by establishing and updating standards for United Nations support and enabling partnerships and learning across sectors and borders. Of the implementing entities interviewed for this report, project managers in this category were especially appreciative, with many noting that without Trust Fund resources, they would likely be unable to accomplish their mandate due to a lack of financing alternatives.

3.2.3.1 Establishing standards that enable United Nations support

3.2.3.1.1 Peacekeeping safety and security

Peacekeeping is a vital and risky activity. A certain number of casualties may occur even if all necessary preventive measures are taken. But from 2008 to 2013, casualties spiked. A total of 195 personnel in United Nations peacekeeping missions were killed by acts of violence, more than during any other five-year period in history. These numbers went beyond a normal or acceptable level of risk, and they are likely to rise even higher. Something needed to change to reverse the trend.

With thanks to China's leadership, and the consensus and initiatives generated through a 2016 UNPDF project, the trend has reversed. The *Improving safety and security peacekeeping* project funded the creation of the flagship Cruz Report, which caught the attention of Member States and recommended clear standards for safety and security in peacekeeping operations. An action plan was developed by Member States and a series of projects funded by the UNPDF have helped turn the standards and plans into changes and initiatives that have saved lives and prevented a crisis in peacekeeping.

Following the Cruz Report, more than 10 projects aimed at improving the safety of peacekeepers have been funded by the UNPDF. The total amount of these projects exceeds $2.7 million. These projects include

- Adapting peace operations to complex conflict environments;
- Stress testing mission plans;
- Revision of United Nations Military Unit Manuals;
- Revising United Nations Engineer Unit and Counter-explosive Threat Search and Detect Manual;
- Conducting health risk assessment for the identified high-risk missions; and
- Providing first aid training to peacekeeping and civilian officials.

In order to further improve security of United Nations peacekeepers, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2518 (S/RES/2518, 2020) in March 2020, which provides detailed guidance on measures to be taken by Member States and the Secretariat to enhance the safety of peacekeepers.

3.2.3.1.2 New technologies

The Trust Fund enabled the United Nations to develop standards and establish norms in using new technologies to advance SDG implementation, including through two projects:

Norm-setting and the application of frontier technologies

Through system-wide and expert consultations, this project identified entry points and modalities through which United Nations system organizations can support Member States in addressing the normative and regulatory challenges arising from rapidly evolving technologies (i.e., artificial

intelligence, biotechnology/genetics and robotics/automation) and maximizing application of these technologies to advance the SDGs. The resulting recommendations, put forward by the Secretary-General and Executive Heads, identified concrete channels by which the Organization can enhance the ability of Member States to apply emerging technologies for sustainable development.The project laid the foundation for the development of the Secretary-General's Strategy on New Technology[6] and Roadmap for digital cooperation (A/74/821). Individual United Nations agencies also built on the initiative to incorporate new technologies in their plans and programmes. The International Telecommunications Union and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), for example, have proposed recommendations on artificial intelligence ethics to be endorsed by their governance bodies.

Strengthening national geospatial information management capacities towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Given the challenges of monitoring progress on the SDGs—particularly in least developed countries—many are seeking to tap geospatial information to better identify needs and challenges. This project developed guidelines, norms and approaches that United Nations entities are now applying to assist countries in strengthening nationally integrated geospatial information management towards producing, disseminating and applying geospatial information for SDG implementation.

Project

Strengthening UN DESA capacity for policy analysis and knowledge production: support to the High-Level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs

To meet the Secretary-General's call for the United Nations to be at the forefront of sustainable development policy at the global level, this Trust Fund project established a High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs, composed of 15 prominent persons in the economic and social fields. The Board meets twice yearly to advise the Secretary-General, United Nations experts and senior officials on all aspects of sustainable economic and social issues, including frontier issues, emerging trends and issues associated with countries in special need. Advisors provide ongoing guidance for the research and policy analysis work of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), including recommendations that shape flagship publications. For example, the Advisory Board informed the theme and direction of the 2021 *World Social Report*, which focused on rural development.

Facing a lack of operating resources, a Trust Fund project has enabled the Advisory Board to continue.

The Board has proven an invaluable, ongoing resource to enable and motivate bold and swift United Nations messaging on emerging and frontier issues. In the face of the rapid onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, a large amount of work on sustainable development, peace and security was put into a state of suspension. The world and all familiar parameters had suddenly changed. In this context, the Advisory Board encouraged the Secretary-General to come out early with a call for a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery, guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With this early, clear and strong message, the United Nations maximized its influence and helped to inform and shape the debates, policies and approaches in countries around the world. The Board also advised the Secretary-General to come out early in favour of waiving patents for the COVID-19 vaccine.

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6   United Nations (2018).United Nations Secretary-General's Strategy on New Technology.

Chapter 3

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3.2.3.2 Enabling partnerships and learning across borders and sectors

Project

The future of global partnership: forward-looking, youth-driven global dialogues in 2020 marked 75 years of the United Nations

In the lead up to the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations in 2020, the Trust Fund made possible a series of worldwide, in-person and virtual consultations that engaged more than 1.5 million people in a discussion on the future of multilateralism and implementation of the SDGs. The initiative was aligned with the General Assembly's plans to commemorate the anniversary under the theme "The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism". In the face of waning support, the project sought to draw the world's attention to global cooperation and how it is essential to building peace, security and progress. Using a global dialogue, the project was designed to renew people's commitment to collective action to secure the world we want in time for the Organization's 100th anniversary. The funding made possible the creation of the UN75 toolkit, including the development of an online survey, a guideline for UN75 dialogues available online, and a feedback form that helped collect dialogue summaries.

The UN75 toolkit was designed to empower diverse groups and citizens to convene their own conversations worldwide. A communication strategy was developed around the toolkit with clearly defined overall messaging, relevant across all regions and target groups. The online UN75 toolkit provided the guidance, tools, resources and inspiration needed to convene citizens and encourage them to voice their concerns and consider how to act positively on their concerns. Every effort was made to capture as many voices as possible, with strategies for different stakeholders, including youth, Member States, civil society, media and technology platforms, business and labour, academia, think tanks and educational institutions.

The UN75 initiative succeeded in mobilizing over 1.5 million people to participate in the UN75 survey and generated over 3,500 dialogues across the world using the dialogue toolkit. Media engagement totaled several thousand in print and online. The survey itself was translated in over 50 languages to ensure widespread dissemination.

The findings were disseminated to policymakers, stakeholders and the public throughout 2020 through closed-door briefings, update reports and public events. This included keeping senior United Nations leadership informed of findings and progress as well as regular engagement with Member States, including the co-facilitators of the UN75 Declaration. Interim results were released in April to inform negotiations on the Declaration. The main results were presented to world leaders in September 2020. Many Member States speaking at the anniversary event cited the findings in their remarks. The resulting data platform and research mapping can be used on an ongoing basis to improve the flow of ideas into the Organization, and better connect the United Nations with communities globally.

Project

Multi-year project to strengthen United Nations partnerships and prepare the Secretary-General's biennial high-level interactive dialogue with heads of regional and other organizations

With the support of the Trust Fund, two interactive dialogues between the United Nations Secretary-General and regional organizations were held in 2018 and 2020. The dialogues involved 19 regional and other organizations and 11 members of the United Nations Senior Management Group, including heads of departments, funds and programmes, also participated. The high-level participation demonstrated the shared interest in strengthening partnerships between the United Nations and regional actors.

This initiative provided an opportunity for frank and informal exchanges, with the aim of strengthening strategic and operational cooperation in international peace and security. Under the overall topic of prevention, discussions also covered items including transnational and emerging threats, early warning and early action, and opportunities for closer operational cooperation. Participants agreed to renewed commitment to multilateralism and greater investment in conflict prevention.

This project further facilitated a shared understanding of today's international peace and security challenges and the comparative advantages of the United Nations and its partners; it also identified the way forward for closer cooperation, particularly in the field. In that respect, participants identified key action points to implement in support of global prevention efforts and enhanced cooperation and coordination between their respective organizations. The Secretary-General, in a number of briefings and reports to the General Assembly and Security Council, made reference to this initiative as an example of United Nations engagement to foster multilateral cooperation. Examples include his reports on Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations (A/73/328–S/2018/592) and on Overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions (A/73/337).

Additionally, all 34 field-based peacekeeping operations and special political missions were engaged before and after the high-level interactive dialogue, encouraging them to further enhance partnerships with regional and subregional organizations in implementing their respective mandates, as appropriate.

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Project

South-South integration and the SDGs: enhancing structural transformation in key partner countries of the Belt and Road Initiative

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and maintaining results over the long term are inextricably linked with the process of structural transformation. The *South-South integration and the SDGs* project took an innovative South-South approach to capacity-building by distilling lessons from countries, including China, that have had first-hand experience in the transformation process. Despite the development potential from the Belt and Road Initiative, limitations in government capacity constrain the potential transformative impact of the Initiative (and that of foreign direct investment, more generally).There is often, for example, little consideration of the specific institutional capabilities needed to effectively plan, build, finance, manage and maintain infrastructure facilities (and other production assets).The South-South integration project addresses this oversight by facilitating the exchange of knowledge, skills, processes and tools within the global South to foster coherent institutional capabilities that drive structural transformation and underpin the broad achievement of the SDGs.

This project gave countries a deeper understanding of China's past and current policy reform experiences—experiences which allowed China to achieve the predecessor of the Sustainable Development Goals: the Millennium Development Goals. Partner Governments were able to better appreciate the underlying lessons from China's reform, allowing for the selective adaptation of these lessons to more accurately reflect their own national development objectives.

Under the project, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) worked with the project's pilot countries—Ethiopia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka—to produce policy scoping papers that analyze institutional mechanisms in two key policy areas of structural transformation: industrial diversification and upgrading, and financial mobilization.

The papers also drew from experiences and lessons learned through China's engagement with the international trading system and global production chains, which blended export promotion and import replacement, and detailed China's policies related to promoting next-generation technologies and the digital economy. The evolution of the banking sector and the role of national development banks in China were also analyzed.

National-level consultations were held in each pilot country to share lessons learned in the two policy areas and explore the potential of adapting policy recommendations from the scoping papers to pilot country conditions and objectives. Country-specific reports were then produced, offering ideas on how policy lessons may be adapted to address barriers to structural transformation (considering national debt levels and economic projections, trade, technology and digital industrial policies, for example). A second round of national-level consultations was then held to discuss the recommendations with appropriate government agencies, industry associations, academic institutes and international organizations. The second consultation proved particularly fruitful as national stakeholders debated the relevance and implementation of recommendations.

The results have established ongoing relationships between pilot-country Governments and China, as well as informing legislation in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The final compilation of analysis and lessons learned from structural transformation in China and Indonesia has proven a valued resource beyond pilot countries, with additional countries engaging UNCTAD in adapting the resulting recommendations.

4.   Good practices and lessons learned

The Trust Fund's achievements are diverse and many. The questionnaires and interviews undertaken for this report provide an opportunity to look across the varied achievements to identify what has worked and what has been learned. This section offers an indicative but not exhaustive sampling of good practices and lessons learned, selected for their potential to help inform Trust Fund programming over the next five years.

GOOD PRACTICE: The project on transport connectivity was designed to inform and build momentum towards the Mid-term Review of the Vienna Convention on Landlocked Developing Countries. The result maximized policy leverage by building momentum and establishing concrete, bankable projects and priorities on transportation infrastructure that can be supported by Member States.

LESSON LEARNED: The Trust Fund can be applied to scale up indigenous initiatives, innovations and technologies that are working on the ground. The Fund plays a valuable role as it ensures a focus on the poorest countries and communities and showcases what is possible in intergovernmental forums. It can increasingly be a catalyst by concretely demonstrating what works to advance peace, security and sustainable development, and by inviting Member States' support. Projects under the Trust Fund can seek to strategically inform and facilitate global policy debates and attract co-financing, by introducing tangible recommendations and demonstrations of impact.

GOOD PRACTICE: The project on strengthening national capacity for HIV prevention brought a much-needed focus on young women and adolescent girls to Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Uganda. The project successfully linked activities at the global, national and community levels to maximize impact. The project convened policymakers, United Nations experts, and young women leaders in a series of community-level training events focused on their countries' implementation of the Global HIV Prevention Coalition Road Map. The result had a direct, positive impact on the young women leaders' ability to engage with the Government and the United Nations country team, ensuring ongoing support for their work. Global-level monitoring and accountability tools and programming approaches were used to strengthen local and national capacities and enable community leaders to share their experiences worldwide.

LESSON LEARNED: UNPDF projects can continue to be powerful catalysts of change, by increasing evidence of impact. However, as most projects aim to strengthen the capacities of stakeholders and governments, meaningful evidence of impact can be difficult to glean.

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GOOD PRACTICE: To complement formal metrics, some project managers instituted a system of feedback from beneficiaries (be they governments or local communities). The Mali counter-terrorism project, for example, collected testimonials from persons trained in the youth centres. The Juncao project similarly collected feedback from participants in national and local workshops, and also monitored follow-through on participant's intentions to apply the technology.

LESSON LEARNED: There is great potential to build linkages between the projects under the Trust Fund and other initiatives, particularly those being undertaken on the ground by United Nations country teams. Impact can be maximized by taking a comprehensive approach that starts with the perspective of target beneficiaries. Trust Fund initiatives can be integrated into existing United Nations programming to ensure results are sustained.

In linking two UNPDF projects—on Juncao technology and MSMEs, for example—the impact on smallholder farmers and government capacity can be maximized. Local markets and trade opportunities can be generated that further boost the prospects and income of poor rural communities applying Juncao technology. Projects and programmes under the Trust Fund can be a more powerful driver of integration and coordination when they by-pass silos and reflect the integrated nature of the challenges to peace and sustainable development.

GOOD PRACTICE: The Cruz Report on Peacekeeping Safety and Security, funded by the UNPDF in 2016, had reverberations that, taken together, have successfully reversed the trend of increasing peacekeeping fatalities, potentially averting a crisis in the ability of the United Nations to carry out its most basic mission. The report was bold and offered clear recommendations. It also came at time when the Secretary-General was calling for action to address the increasing fatalities. By capturing the attention of Member States, the report successfully rallied a response. The Peacekeeping Safety and Security Action Plan includes 10 initiatives funded by UNPDF.

LESSONS LEARNED: The Trust Fund has played an important role in setting standards and supporting the work of the United Nations system, where projects are designed to confront emerging challenges and respond to clear demands.

Another good example of Trust Fund impact is the United Nations guidance on frontier technologies in 2017. This timely initiative raised awareness and understanding of the ethical and development challenges and opportunities arising from "fourth wave technologies" including artificial intelligence, biotechnology/genetics, and robotics/automation. Through system-wide consultations, the initiative established a range of concrete recommendations for United Nations support and action to address regulatory challenges and maximize the opportunity for inclusive sustainable development. The range of relevant initiatives and strategies subsequently adopted by the Secretary-General, United Nations system and United Nations funds and programmes suggests that the project was successful in bringing the United Nations out in front of new challenges, enhancing the relevance of support to Member States.

GOOD PRACTICE: The *Strengthen forensic science capacity for Djiboutian law enforcement* project of 2017 ensured the sustainability of its training activities by undertaking extensive consultations with national officials and employing a trusted implementing entity. The project addressed needs identified during an assessment visit conducted by the experts on behalf of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee, in dialogue with national authorities. The identified needs were then discussed in-depth with national authorities and drafted with the inputs of key officials. Djibouti's presidency then decided to put its weight behind the project. Trainings were supplemented by support to acquire the necessary equipment and ensure the adoption of new working tools such as databases and criminal analysis software. Select beneficiaries were equipped to transfer what they

learned to colleagues after the project's completion and on an ongoing basis. The relationship of trust between the implementing entity (the University of New Haven) and Djiboutian authorities was another key factor. They had been working together on security matters for years before the project, and thus knew and trusted each other.

LESSON LEARNED: Capacity-building interventions are most effective when they are needs-based, contextualized and locally owned. It is important to conduct intensive consultations with government counterparts and beneficiaries at the beginning of the project to ensure their buy-in and ownership, thereby increasing the likelihood of sustainability. The success of capacity-building initiatives can also depend on securing not just formal buy-in but also genuine interest from beneficiaries. Projects can then be shaped to solve problems and issues they express an interest in addressing. Where projects are implemented with or through United Nations country teams who also feel they have a stake in the outcome, impacts may be more sustainable as ongoing support is ensured.

LESSON LEARNED: The Trust Fund plays a valued role in filling financing gaps, which enables both the provision and expanded reach of timely and essential United Nations support in key areas. Project managers emphasized, for example, the role of the Trust Fund in enabling vital services for refugees in Ethiopia, Iran and Pakistan; in providing indispensable training for peacekeepers; and in the deployment of rapid-response conflict prevention experts.

5. The way forward

In September 2020, during the General Debate of the seventy-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly, the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, announced that China will extend the Peace and Development Trust Fund beyond its planned expiration in 2025 for an additional five years. The following four recommendations are elaborated to help inform the Trust Fund's work going forward in the short and medium term.

5.1   Prioritize initiatives that respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

More than two years ago—and over a timespan of only weeks—the COVID-19 pandemic became the largest global challenge in the history of the United Nations. It continues to reverberate around our world with no definitive end point. It has not only caused death and serious illness, but also global economic recession, rising levels of poverty, inequality, anxiety and fear. It has put enormous pressure on our societies, economies and health systems. While none have been left untouched, people in vulnerable situations and the most vulnerable countries have been hit the hardest.

Going forward, a clear priority will be to mitigate the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly on the poorest countries and communities, and lay the ground for an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable recovery, guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To this end, the UNPDF can help low-income and least developed countries leverage new technologies (including digital technology), advance digital connectivity, mobilize resources, restore global industrial and value chains, and strengthen capacities to deliver life-saving essential services and social protection to vulnerable communities. The Trust Fund is well placed to help low-income countries better understand and address the varied impacts of the pandemic; assess new and potential risks to peace and stability; strengthen national and local capacities to make strategic and effective use of development assistance; and facilitate cross-border cooperation, learning and partnerships aimed at mitigating and recovering from the pandemic.

5.2   Ensure a focus on the communities and countries still left behind

Our world is plagued by growing inequality, poverty, hunger, terrorism, insecurity and climate change. People in different corners of the world are forced to make dangerous journeys in search of refuge and safety. The least developed countries are falling behind, with less ability to recover from the pandemic, adapt to the climate crisis, adopt new technologies and participate in the global economy.

The World Bank estimates that the COVID-19 pandemic pushed 90 million additional people into extreme poverty in 2020. The pandemic also has the potential to increase inequality in almost every country.[7] The pandemic revealed our fragility and exacerbated our divisions, while demonstrating the importance of government action to enable the safety and well-being of people and protect livelihoods.

The Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved without unlocking the potential of all people to solve problems, contribute to their communities, and adapt creatively to new realities. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, all Member States have pledged to leave no one behind. The pledge is a commitment to end extreme poverty in all its forms and to act explicitly to ensure that those who have been left behind can catch up. Despite this, most development efforts today fail to improve the lives of the poorest and most disadvantaged people, citing the expense, capacity constraints or other challenges.

The Trust Fund can increasingly be a catalyst for reversing this trend. As demonstrated in this Synthesis Report, the Fund already plays a vital role, targeting its assistance to least developed countries and countries in special need. The Fund is able to direct resources to fill essential capacity gaps at local and national levels, a catalytic role that can enable local and national actors to deliver for the poorest populations.

The role of the Fund can be enhanced by asking new, relevant projects and programmes to ensure that their connection and targeting are explicit. This can be achieved by applying theories of change that elaborate how the initiative intends to make a difference for the poorest and furthest behind communities and people, including women and girls.

5.3   Enhance the Trust Fund's ability to adapt to lessons learned and changing realities on the ground

Some of the global challenges currently facing international politics may be of existential importance—from climate change to destructions in our ecosphere, from the opportunities and risks of new technologies to the danger of new pandemics. At the same time, many of those challenges place extraordinarily high demands on the United Nations. Decisive progress often appears possible only when many actors work together in broad coalitions bringing together not only States, but also non-State actors, such as international organizations, civil society actors or companies. The influence of even the largest powers alone are not sufficient.

In this context, it is crucial that the Trust Fund seek to build durable and diverse partnerships that unite key actors at local, national and global levels. It is also important for its initiatives to be able to respond to changing realities on the ground, including ensuring local ownership and reflecting lessons learned in practice.

To this end, flexibility may be allowed so that projects can be adjusted in practice, particularly where they require stakeholder ownership. Additional time and resources might be built in to enable coordination when delivering in a new area of work and with new partners. Guidelines might emphasize the need to secure government and stakeholder ownership early in the process and encourage the engagement of United Nations country teams in country selection and implementation.

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7   See Berkhout and others (2021). The Inequality Virus: Bringing together a world torn apart by coronavirus through a fair, just and sustainable economy.

5.4 Leverage the Trust Fund to motivate actions by United Nations Member States

Given the scale of the challenges facing countries today, Trust Fund resources should be applied with a strategic view to how they can affect change within and across countries. In this respect, initiatives under the Trust Fund should seek to maximize the ability to motivate actions at local, national and global levels. Rather than taking a piecemeal approach, local- and national-level initiatives should be unified and coordinated, seeking to keep global discussions grounded in local concerns, demonstrate what works in practice and motivate the actions needed by Member States.

To this end, it is important to apply thoughtful theories of change and to time projects so their impacts might attract global attention and ensure compelling evidence of impact. Demonstrating how capacity-strengthening activities make a tangible impact is famously challenging. A simple but effective way to improve evidence of impact is to periodically send key target beneficiaries a short list of two to three questions following an intervention, inquiring if they have applied the know-how acquired, and, if so, how.

It may be further helpful to encourage new proposals to include possible ways to scale or fund the initiative beyond the project timeline. In this sense, the Trust Fund can provide "seed financing" for initiatives that are designed to attract co-financing and the participation of additional Member States.

Lessons learned and impact stories might also be shared and showcased online to inform, inspire and encourage implementing entities to be strategic in linking their initiatives to global debates and ensuring sustainability.

6.   Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us in the most powerful way that we are closely and always interconnected and only as strong as our weakest link. Only by working together and in solidarity can we end the pandemic and effectively tackle its consequences. Multilateralism is a necessity—not an option—as countries look to recover from the pandemic in a way that facilitates resilience to future crises and builds a better, more equal and sustainable world. The United Nations must be at the centre of these efforts.

Strengthening international cooperation is in the interest of all nations and all people. The United Nations has come a long way in its 75 years towards strengthening this cooperation, but much more remains to be done. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a powerful tool, providing the road map forward for enhancing cooperation and effecting enormous and positive; its implementation is indeed a necessity for survival and shows the way forward to enhancing the urgent efforts required to ensure the future we want and the United Nations we need. The United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund has made important contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving our shared goals. It can increasingly do so over the next five critical years through building on its achievements and learning from its work. For the UNPDF to expand its impact and make a greater contribution, it should further improve its operational efficiency and regularize its operations in accordance with United Nations rules and regulations - an achievable goal.

As an old Chinese saying goes, "When people are of one mind, they can move Mount Tai". And in the words of an old African proverb, "Many hands make light work." United, there is nothing we cannot achieve.

Annex I

Interviews conducted for the Synthesis Report

Interviews were conducted with the project leads for the following projects:

1. Enhancing national capacities for unleashing full potentials of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in achieving sustainable development goals in developing countries (UN DESA, 2016), Ke Liu and Armin Plum
2. Peacekeeping Safety and Security ("Cruz Report") and other follow-up projects (DPO, 2016) Marcia Dawes
3. Enhancing capacity of developing countries to achieve sustainable agriculture through the transfer of Juncao technology for alleviating poverty and promoting productive employment (UN DESA, 2017), Amson Sibanda, Ang Chen and Armin Plum
4. Peacekeeping capacity-building with a focus on Africa (DPO,2017), Mark Pedersen
5. South-South integration and the SDGs: enhancing structural transformation in key partner countries of the Belt and Road Initiative (UNCTAD, 2018), Rashmi Banga
6. Strengthening UN DESA capacity for policy analysis and knowledge production: support to the High-Level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs, (UN DESA, 2018) Lin Yang
7. Achieving SDGs and ending poverty through Universal Social Protection (ILO-UN DESA, 2018), Jean-Louis Lambeau
8. Deployments of the Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Board on Mediation (DPPA, 2018), Silva Armani
9. Strengthening the capacity of landlocked developing countries (LLDCS) under the Belt and Road Initiative to design and implement policies that promote transport connectivity for the achievement of the SDGs, (OHRLLS, 2018), Gladys Bindura Mutangadura
10. The future of global partnership: forward-looking, youth-driven global dialogues in 2020 to mark 75 years of the United Nations (DOS, 2019), Michaela Winter
11. Strengthen conflict prevention, regional analysis and coordination in the Sahel (DPPA, 2019), Claudia Hargarten

Annex II

Questionnaires completed for the Synthesis Report

Questionnaires were completed for this Report by the project managers of the following United Nations Peace and Development Fund projects:

1. The construction of women social centre and child garden in Bamako (MINUSMA, 2018)
2. Implementing Agenda 2030: strengthening capacities of developing countries in integrating economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection for sustainable development (UNDESA, 2016)
3. The construction of youth training and community centres in Gao and Mopti, Mali (MINUSMA, 2018)
4. Promoting youth empowerment for Afghan refugees and host communities in Pakistan through continued involvement of children to education and provision of skills training for livelihoods (UNHCR, 2016)
5. Enhancing service delivery in health and education for refugees in Iran by supporting their incorporation into public services provided by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (UNHCR, 2016)
6. Identifying pathways for United Nations system organizations to facilitate norm-setting for and application of frontier technologies to support Member States in addressing development challenges and promoting the achievement of the SDGs at all levels (CEB, 2017)
7. Integrating landlocked commodity dependent developing countries into regional and global value chains (UNCTAD, 2017)
8. Strengthening productive capacity in least developed countries (LDCs) through providing an enabling environment for investment in sustainable energy development in support of graduation (UN DESA, 2017)
9. Improved Access to secondary education opportunities for the population in the protracted Somali refugee situation in Jijiga Refugee Camps, North East Ethiopia(UNHCR, 2016).
10. Working for health: health employment and inclusive economic growth (WHO, 2017)
11. Strengthening national geospatial information management capacities towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development(UN DESA, 2018)
12. Developing a public-private partnerships (PPP) and infrastructure financing network in Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP, 2018)
13. Strengthening local capacities to address intercommunal violence and to find sustainable solutions to its root causes in Darfur, Sudan (UNAMID, 2018)
14. Integrating migration into national development plans: towards policy coherence and the achievement of SDGs at national and global levels (IOM, 2016)
15. Strengthening national policy capacities for jointly building the Belt and Road towards the Sustainable Development Goals (UN DESA, 2016)
16. Strengthening the capacity of African Countries to design and implement policies that promote the nexus between peace, security and development for an accelerated implementation of the SDGs (UN OSAA, 2019)
17. Preventing conflict in the Great Lakes region through strengthening the rule of law (UN OSE, 2019)
18. Strengthening the capacity of least developed countries to develop evidence based, coherent and well financed strategies to implement the 2030 Agenda (UN DESA, 2018)
19. Supporting Southern Africa Development Community countries to strengthen rule of law-based criminal justice response for preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism (UNODC, 2017)

20. Strengthen forensic science capacity for Djiboutian law enforcement entities to bring terrorists to justice (CTED, 2017)
21. Supporting African States in achieving the AU vision of Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 (ODA, 2017)
22. Design and develop a system-wide integrated planning training curriculum for United Nations peace operations (EOSG, 2016)
23. United Nations Smart Camp: development of prototype and piloting in mission (OICT, 2019)
24. Strengthening the UN-AU partnership and supporting the African Union's initiative Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 (DPPA, 2017)
25. Leadership Partnering Initiative: strengthening leadership support to the Heads and Deputy Heads of United Nations Peace Operations (DPO, 2019)
26. Support to the Secretary-General's Prevention Agenda and His Integrated Prevention Platform through Regional and Country levels Consultations (EOSG, 2018)

**United Nations
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