### General Assembly
### Economic and `Social Council

# Advance unedited version

## Implementation of General Assembly resolution 79/226 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

### Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

As we near the United Nation's 80th anniversary, this report offers an opportunity to stocktake on progress in repositioning the United Nations development system to better support country efforts towards sustainable development. In 2024, the world came together through the Summit of the Future to agree how best to scale up efforts to close the gaps to achieve the sustainable development goals as we near our globally agreed targets for 2030. While the Pact for the Future remains a key tool to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, the global context has shifted further since its adoption, the world is on the precipice of a development emergency. Societies and economies are increasingly interconnected and reliant upon on another. With less than 5 years to go before 2030, it is around the shared aspirations for poverty reduction and sustainable development and through the essential support and mechanisms provided by the United Nations that the countries can come together to reach those furthest behind.

This report sets out how the United Nations development system has supported countries in their journey to achieve their sustainable development priorities. Through a more coherent, accountable and impactful response, the UN development system seeks to accelerate sustainable development in countries with the Resident Coordinator system as its heart. The transformative pathways[1] provide a framing for

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[1] The transformative pathways provide a path of directing the investments at country level to maximise impact across the Sustainable Development Goals and include food systems, energy transitions and access, digital connectivity, education and skills gaps, decent jobs and social protection, and climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

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the United Nations to direct resources and capacities in an integrated manner which maximizes the impact of the United Nations, to scale up the means of implementation in support of governments across the breadth of the goals, including in support for digital transformation and trade.

The report highlights the dividends yielded by development systems reforms for those we serve around the world, but also sets out the contours of what must be refined to fully embed the vision of a reformed United Nations development system. We intend to leverage the opportunities of UN 2.0 and focus on the areas of highest impact moving forward including i) strengthening the focus of country footprint around the key needs and priorities agreed with the host countries; ii) deepening the realisation of operational improvements so as to maximize the use of development resources allocated through the UN system; iii) convening Member States to support the identification of solutions and means of implementation for the SDGs, as well as a better use of the principles of their Funding Compact as a guiding light; and iv) enabling Member States to better guide the UN development system through improved data and better informed system wide evaluations.

The United Nations' development system will have to become increasingly targeted and focused on the areas in which countries need the most support. The report set out the ongoing efforts to further refine the policy expertise of the development system to best align with the needs of countries, and what more we can do to tailor the UN footprint in country to better align with the country context, including complex settings. This includes efforts to ensure optimal alignment of the Resident Coordinator system, as detailed in the Report of the UNSDG Chair on the Development Coordination Office. It draws on tangible examples to evidence the impact of the UN in country, and the areas in which we need to refine our support. We will also draw out the responsibilities of Member States in this respect.

Within the ever-evolving global environment, the United Nations is increasingly asked to do more with fewer resources, in a trajectory that is likely to be unsustainable. Total financial contributions to the UN development system in 2023 declined by 16% or $9 billion compared to 2022. Of this, core contributions remain unable to meet the needs of agencies nor the commitment made by Member States in the funding compact. It is clear that the funding compact to date has not had the impact desired on the allocation of resources. To resolve this enduring trend, the report explores the avenues before Member States to strengthen their adherence to their commitments. Accelerating the key components of the reform will be more important ever to ensure the system can remain impactful in an era of shrinking development budget.

The report sets out how the system can further realise the necessary structural and behavioural shifts across the system which contribute to enhancing the coherence, efficacy, efficiency and accountability of the United Nations. While the United Nations continues to demonstrate unyielding ambition in realising efficiencies with $596.2m reported in 2024, we will increasingly target our efforts in the areas that remain unrealised. These include enhancing our efforts on common back offices, global shared services and common premises. As part of the UN80 efforts [2] and reinvigorated efforts through the BIG, this work stream is anticipated to remain in the spotlight in 2025. This effort regains particular importance at a time where the system must strive to free up resources for development programming.

As part of our continual commitment to strengthen the oversight and accountability of the UN development system, we have reaped the benefits of the nascent System-

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[2] The UN80 initiative provides renewed impetus to complete existing reforms whilst assessing what more can be done on efficiencies, the implementation of existing mandates, and any necessary structural or programme realignments.

Wide Evaluation Office. The office has now established a UNSDG Policy for the work of the office and provided several evaluative reports including the synthesis of the system's delivery of the 2020 QCPR mandates. These reports are, for the first time, providing a comprehensive independent evaluation of how the entirety of the UN Sustainable Development Group is supporting delivery of Agenda 2030. Member states are invited to take the findings of the office's evaluations into account when they provide guidance to the system through all appropriate bodies, including the governing bodies of the UN development system entities.

In March 2025, the Secretary-General launched his initiative for UN80. Guided by the repositioning set out in A/Res/72/279, UN80 enables the system to undertake a comprehensive assessment for any stones left unturned on the development system reforms

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 79/226, provides an update on the system-wide implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and on the progress made in implementing the mandates of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system. The present report draws on a reservoir of data, including surveys[a], inputs from across the system and insights from evaluations, to provide evidence-based analysis on progress and challenges. Financial data were sourced primarily from the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. The report is intended to inform the discussions of the Economic and Social Council at its operational activities for development segment in May 2025, and of the General Assembly in October 2025.

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[a] Four surveys were conducted in late 2024 and early 2025 by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. They include a survey of host country Governments, which was completed by 75 per cent of countries, and a survey of Governments that make voluntary contributions to the United Nations development system, which received 71 responses. A survey of resident coordinators was completed by all 129 resident coordinators, while 1041 United Nations country team members from 52 entities took part in a survey of country teams. A survey of headquarters of United Nations development system entities drew responses from 30 organizations which account for 97 per cent of all spending on operational activities for development. The information management system administered by the Development Coordination Office was also used extensively as a source for the present report.

# I. Introduction

1.     Nine years into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are more relevant than ever. They provide a universally agreed guiding framework for the United Nations development system to support sustainable development efforts according to specific national priorities, leveraging global, regional and country-level expertise and resources.

2.     The Pact for the Future provides a recommitment to bold, ambitious, accelerated, just and transformative actions to achieve the SDGs. In this common pledge by the international community, the Pact seeks to redoubling of efforts to accelerate the sustainable development goals, including by addressing global financial gaps and reforming the international financial architecture. Further, it provides the impetus for the transformative pathways which enable the United Nation development system and Member States to design investment and direct expertise in a catalytic manner, with resounding impacts across all SDGs.

3.     The data in this report shows that the United Nations development system, through its reform, has become measurably more coherent, effective, responsive and efficient, while remaining closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and enabling support to national priorities. In 2024, the quadrennial comprehensive policy review noted the realization of the main elements of reforms and set a direction for continued progress. In a survey of 121 host country governments conducted for this report in 2024, 98 percent confirmed United Nations country teams effectively respond to their national priorities for SDG delivery. Governments gave high marks to joint support for policies and institutions that guide development, and to the system's capacity to tailor responses to diverse development contexts. These and many other achievements are the result of a new generation of United Nations country teams led by a reinvigorated resident coordinator system.

4.     The development system is consistently recognized in its efforts to reach those left furthest behind and for translating international agreements into concrete action on the ground. There are also areas for improvement including through better tailoring of our presence in country, enhanced information sharing, aligning programming by individual agencies around key national needs and priorities, and refining business models.

5.     Funding remains a core challenge for the UN development system. Current levels and types of funding limit its ability to deliver with the speed, scale and agility that countries need and demand. This report presents evidence of persistent structural funding flaws that are more pressing than ever. Left unaddressed, these will undermine the ability of the United Nations development system provide optimal support to countries. They include the overreliance on a small number of donors, limited contributions to pooled funds widespread preference for earmarked funds by funding partners

6.     In 2025, the United Nations development system is better suited to meet the current and future challenges - it is better coordinated and better equipped to address the broad spectrum of development challenges and on the intersections among them. While there is more we can do to improve, we are starting surefooted as we commence the last mile to 2030. The UN80 initiative launched by the Secretary-General offers renewed opportunities to ensure all expected benefits of the UN development system repositioning process are realized, in line with the guidance provided by the General Assembly in resolution 72/279.

## II. A repositioned United Nations Development System – A stronger partner for sustainable development

### A. Resident Coordinator System: the core for sustainable development

7.    It is now clear that the establishment of a reinvigorated coordination system for development was essential to enable a mor impactful and cohesive UN development system.  All data collected so far – including from independent evaluations – confirm that the Resident Coordinator system is delivering on the vision set out by Member States in 72/279.

8.    As detailed in the accompanying report by the Chair of the UNSDG, feedback from Member States on the role played by resident coordinators remains positive. Perceptions of host country governments of the resident coordinator's authority and leadership, impartially, management skills and role driving common results continued to increase (88 per cent in 2024, an aggregate increase of 12 percent across all characteristics). Positive feedback was also provided on the resident coordinator's role in leveraging partnerships (90 per cent in 2024)

9.    Representatives of contributing country governments are similarly favourable, with 84 per cent of those surveyed in 2024 agreeing or strongly agreeing that resident coordinators have led to improved coherence and reduction in duplication in the work of the United Nations. 90 per cent of contributing countries agreed that the resident coordinator system had helped scale up collective action for the sustainable development goals.

10.    Improved procedures for the deployment of resident coordinators were put in place in 2024 and have helped expedite appointments and minimized vacancies. A strengthened performance management system has been developed for use starting with 2025 appraisals. Host countries continue to indicate this system is working with 88 per cent reporting that the resident coordinators have the right profile and skillsets. This is helped particularly by systematic consultations with host country governments early in the selection process, allowing tailoring of resident coordinator profiles to country needs. Resource constraints impacted capacities in the resident coordinator offices, required pausing of the intake of resident coordinator pool candidates in 2024, and reduced candidates sponsored for the resident coordinator assessment.

11.    Survey data shows improvements in perspectives of United Nations country team members of resident coordinators and their offices. In 2024, 88 per cent of United Nations country team members agreed that resident coordinators had successfully led cross-agency support for needed changes in national policies and regulatory frameworks, up from 84 per cent in 2023. There were also increases in the percentage of United Nations country team members who agreed or strongly agreed that resident coordinators had helped convene stakeholders on sustainable development financing (from 68% in 2023 to 76 per cent in 2024), and to facilitate a focus on national opportunities for public and private investment (from 60 per cent in 2023 to 73 per cent in 2024). In its 2024 audit on the role of resident coordinators in complex settings, the United Nations Office of Investigation and Oversight Services also noted that while resident coordinator leadership and support had contributed to more coherent United Nations programming in complex settings, there was insufficient capacity to meet demands and deliver against the number and scope of mandates and responsibilities.

### B. United Nations country team collaboration

12.    Successive reports highlight positive trend in the collaborations with United Nations country teams. In 2024 87 per cent of host country governments and 83 per cent of contributing country governments agreed that entities work more collaboratively together than before the reform. There was notable progress this year on information sharing while some areas such as joint resource mobilisation and the implementation of the Management and Accountability Framework require further improvements.

13.    We continue to see improvements in information-sharing between country team members and resident coordinators. Reporting on collective results is relatively strong, with 87 per cent of resident coordinators reporting that most or all country team members share information with them on results achieved. Further progress is required on entities reporting their outreach to funding partners to resident coordinators. 65 per cent of resident coordinators stated that few or no entities provide sufficient updates in this area which is critical to enable more coherent funding in country. While only 26 per cent of resident coordinators report that all country team members involve them in key stages of entity-specific strategic planning, it has doubled since 2023. Other areas of information sharing also require improvement, including on meetings and discussions with government and other partners, programme implementation, and entity-specific results.

14.    In line with the new funding compact, joint resource mobilization by country teams continues to prove critical to reducing competition and ensuring a funding approach that is strategically aligned to national priorities. Yet 51 per cent of resident coordinators report that joint resource mobilization by country teams has remained the same or decreased in 2024 relative to previous years. Likewise, 83 per cent of resident coordinators estimate that less than a quarter of Cooperation Framework budgets were allocated for joint programmes in 2024.  This is not surprising, given that UN entities' incentive and accountability structures, as well as business models, are geared towards delivering entity-specific rather than collective results. But there are some nascent examples of agencies making the necessary shifts, with UN Women asking their country offices to ensure 30 per cent of their programme portfolios are joint with other entities.

15.    More concerningly, progress on the implementation of the UNSDG Management and Accountability Framework has somewhat stalled. Outlining the working modalities and accountability lines of development coordination at all levels, this instrument remains essential in turning the provisions of the landmark resolution 72/279 into reality in all UNCTs. Various challenges have been identified. United Nations staff have varying levels of awareness of the framework, and some perceive the framework to be complex or allowing dual interpretations. Adherence to the framework is not standardized across entities, with some key areas of dual accountability – such as inviting resident coordinators to provide input on performance assessments of country representatives – not being fully realised.

16.    Against this bedrock, the UNSDG has initiated a review of the Management and Accountability Framework that will unfold throughout 2025. The review will draw on existing evidence and data, as well as the views and experience of staff, with an aim to simplify the Management and Accountability Framework, clarifying expectations and specific arrangements. Following the outcome of this review, and the release of a revised framework, I count on all governing bodies of United Nations development entities to ensure its full implementation.

C.    **Strategic alignment to countries' priorities and needs through Cooperation Frameworks and tailored UN country team programmes and configuration**

17.     Host governments continue to consider the priorities articulated in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks to be closely aligned with their country's development needs and priorities (98 per cent in 2024). But the picture is more complicated on the extent to which actual entity-specific activities and results are aligned with the Cooperation Frameworks. Resident coordinators estimate 79 per cent of entity-specific country programming instruments to be aligned with the Cooperation Framework. Yet, deeper analysis suggests that the "alignment" is often very soft, at broad level, and does not translate into genuine derivation into agency-specific plans.

18.     This is confirmed by the emerging results from the forthcoming system-wide evaluation on progress towards a new generation of United Nations country teams finds little evidence that the substance of these programmes is much affected by the Framework and its preparation process. "Derivation" remains largely an administrative exercise, in part due to the broad nature of Cooperation Framework documents, weak mechanisms for derivation, and an inconsistent role for the resident coordinator in entity strategic planning.

19.     The evaluation also finds use of the tools to support Cooperation Framework implementation by the entities has been weak (such as joint work plans, joint resource mobilization strategies, and coordination structures). Against this context, only 43 per cent of host governments rated the focus on common results by United Nations development entities to be fully adequate in 2024.

20.     Another area that requires careful reflection is the configuration of United Nations country teams, tailored to country priorities and needs. In 2024, all country teams that launched a new Cooperation Framework conducted an associated configuration exercise, up from 83 per cent in 2023. 89 per cent of host country governments agreed that country team configurations were suited to the specific country needs and challenges, compared to 87 per cent in 2023. The system-wide evaluation did find that country team configuration exercises had expanded the engagement of non-resident entities at country level. But preliminary findings of the evaluation indicate that these exercises have not been able to create a more tailored, needs-based country presences. The entities internal decisions on business models and staffing were disconnected from the configuration exercise.

21.     While the final evaluation report, and management response, are forthcoming, it is evident that dedicated efforts are required across the development system to ensure coherent tailored to support countries, which includes strengthened access to the full range of assets and expertise offered by the United Nations, including policy expertise. Guidance and accountabilities for delivery of the Cooperation Framework must be clear. With support and oversight of governing bodies, development entities must step up efforts to ensure their business models, policies and guidance provide the right incentive structures and capacities for system-wide responses. I trust that leaders across UN development entities will carefully consider the findings of this evaluation and take steps to address these issues as a matter of priority throughout 2025 and 2026, under the guidance of their governing bodies.

## D.   Leveraging regional cooperation, expertise and policy advice

22.     The Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs)[3] have been established as part of the repositioning of the United Nations development system to effectively pool

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[3] The Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs) are internal coordination mechanisms established under the UN development system reform to enhance system-wide coherence and collaboration at the regional level. Each RCP is chaired by the Deputy

system-wide regional expertise and ensure coordinated, coherent and efficient action to support specific national and transboundary needs in each region. The annual reports produced by the RCPs provide a comprehensive picture of their work.

23. In 2024, the RCP for Arab States hosted the Regional Food Systems Forum, which launched the Transformational Impact Partnership to catalyze innovative financing for agrifood projects. It secured policy commitments from thirteen countries through the "Learning to Earning" initiative, addressing youth unemployment and collaborating with the League of Arab States to embed commitments into their processes. To improve operational efficiency, the RCP established ten long-term agreements and promoted common premises and back-office solutions.

24. The RCP for Asia and the Pacific supported over twenty countries in updating their Nationally Determined Contributions to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change, through science-policy dialogues and technical assessments. By streamlining knowledge sharing and leveraging specialized expertise from the UN system, the RCP supported over forty countries in improving their technical capacity on decarbonization, reporting on greenhouse gas emissions, and integrating clean energy transitions into their national planning processes. The RCP convened over 1,800 stakeholders at the EWS4All Multi-Stakeholder Forum, advancing early warning systems across the region, resulting in more coordinated disaster preparedness. It also supported the provision of expertise to help Fiji develop the first national anticipatory action framework in the Pacific region with innovative parametric insurance solutions.

25. The RCP for Europe and Central Asia leveraged system-wide policy expertise to strengthen food systems in Kazakhstan and Türkiye through the Convergence Initiative, enabling countries to integrate national food systems transformation and climate action. The RCP also contributed to the enhancement of healthcare for refugees in Moldova, Ukraine, and Eastern Europe through the EU4Health migration project. Biodiversity and water management initiatives were implemented in Central Asia and the South Caucasus through the mapping and analysis of water-related programmes, identifying programmatic and policy entry points for joint UN action, while Uzbekistan, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina benefited from system-wide technical support to advance social protection reforms.

26. The RCP for Latin America and the Caribbean developed a strategy to enable Caribbean countries to access innovative financing and strengthen their economic resilience. In response to evolving mixed movements, the RCP provided country teams with critical migration and displacement data to guide more targeted policy and programmatic responses. It also launched an Inclusive Growth Tracker to enhance the ability of UNCTs to make better data-driven policy decisions. The RCP provided Resident Coordinators with actionable policy advice on SDG16 and prison reform and contributed to the Ibero-American Agreement on Access to Justice. The Regional Gender Equality Profile also bolstered United Nations responsiveness, programming, and stronger coordination on gender equality. The RCP also implemented efficiency measures, leading to savings of USD 8.4 million.

27. The RCP in Africa coordinated UN regional capacity and funding from the Joint SDG Fund in Central Sahel to provide cross-border strategic surge support to UNCTs, enabling the co-creation with governments of ten flagship programmes in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Additionally, the RCP facilitated regional expertise and

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Secretary-General and co-chaired by two Vice-Chairs — the Executive Secretary of the relevant regional economic commission and the UNDP Regional Director. The RCPs bring together regional directors of UN development entities to support collective action across the system.

supported the Liberian and South African Governments to align their development priorities for SDG acceleration.

28.    The potential of RCPs continues to be acknowledged by Resident Coordinators and country teams, albeit in many areas these mechanisms are still to live up to the expectations placed on them by Member States and UNCTs alike. The proportion of Resident Coordinators reporting RCPs as being efficient platforms for policy discussions and exchange of experience increased 16 percentage points to 49 per cent in 2024; however, further progress is needed to ensure that RCPs have not been able to meet requests by UNCTs for policy support or SURGE at the pace and quality required. Efforts to further calibrate the role of the RCPs should continue to draw on the region-specific expertise, institutional legitimacy and convening capacities of regional commissions, which continue to play a vital role in policy dialogue and regional consensus-building. The Chair of the Regional Collaborative Platforms will continue to work closely with respective vice-chairs (Regional Commission Executive Secretaries and UNDP Regional Director) to identify adjustments that could enhance the support provided by RCPs to the country teams.

## E.    Achieving efficiencies across business operations to maximize the impact of the United Nations system

29.    Stemming from my report on the repositioning (A/72/124-E-2018/3), the efficiency initiatives have been rooted in efforts to ensure more effective use of resources, strengthen accountability, and improve alignment to the 2030 Agenda to ultimately deliver in a more impactful manner for Member States. Efforts to enhance the efficiency of business operations across the UN development system remain a central focus, with the Efficiency Roadmap (2022-2024) guiding significant progress. In 2024, UNSDG entities reported $596.2 million in realized efficiency gains, exceeding the initial $310 million savings target outlined in the roadmap. This marks an increase of $42.6 million from the previous year and positions the system on track to meet the $620 million target set for 2028. Since 2022, the system has realized $958 million in efficiency gains. A substantial portion of these savings in 2024 came from entity-specific initiatives, such as the UN Booking Hub, which saved $5.7 million by providing shared mobility, accommodation, and medical services across 116 countries. While these gains are valuable, there is a growing need to focus on system-wide efforts, particularly common back offices, to realize further efficiencies.

30.    In 2024, 129 UN country teams reported efficiencies totaling $100.5 million, nearly matching the projected $105 million savings for the year. The majority of these efficiencies came from services like common premises management, travel, and conference services. The implementation of common back offices gained momentum with new initiatives launched in Brazil, Kenya, Tanzania, and Vietnam, which have already resulted in savings. For example, in Vietnam, the initial savings amounted to $0.5 million in 2024, and in Brazil, the common back office now provides 86 services to 15 UN entities, benefiting approximately 1,200 UN personnel. These efforts are being scaled up with additional common back offices planned for countries like Bangladesh, Colombia, Indonesia, and others.

31.    The UN development system has also increased its focus on optimizing common premises, with 32% of UN buildings now operating as common premises, up from 31% in 2023. This shift has helped reduce rental costs, generating $3.9 million in savings in 2024. Although challenges persist, including funding gaps and technical obstacles related to construction permits, ongoing initiatives in countries like Algeria, Egypt, and Senegal are helping to expand the number of common premises. In addition, there has been a concerted effort to increase ownership of business

operations strategies, with UNSDG entities taking on greater responsibility for monitoring, reporting, and quality assurance. The Development Coordination Office continues to support capacity building and data analytics to ensure successful implementation.

32. Looking ahead, the next phase of the Efficiency Roadmap will emphasize the systematization of 15 high-impact common services, such as travel, cleaning, and security services. The UN is also moving toward expanding Global Shared Services, consolidating ten new location-independent services, including recruitment and payroll. Leveraging data and analytics will be central to further optimizing global shared services, particularly with the introduction of low-emission vehicles and AI-driven improvements. In a time of financial constraints across many UN entities, streamlining business operations and reducing administrative costs is essential to freeing up additional resources for development programs. Consolidating back-office functions has the potential to significantly reduce system-wide administrative expenses, contributing to increased efficiency and better resource allocation for the SDGs.

Figure 1
**Efficiencies reported by year (as of 7 April 2025)**



Efficiencies reported by year (as of 7 April 2025)
All figures in US$ million
Source: UNSDG Business Innovation Group, 2024
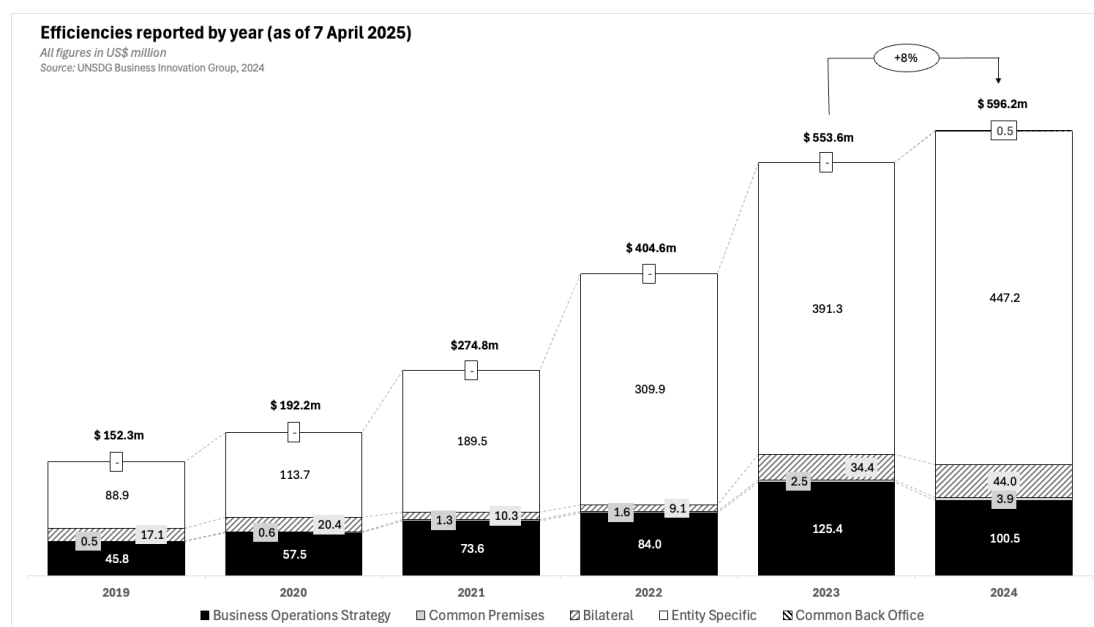
## III. Accelerated action for the Sustainable Development Goals

33. In September 2024, the adoption of the Pact for the Future reaffirmed global solidarity and commitment to sustainable development, peace, and human rights. The UN development system is building on this momentum to accelerate progress toward the SDGs, with a focus on closing investment gaps in critical areas.

34. The six transformative pathways—food systems transformation, energy transitions and access, digital connectivity, education and skills development, decent jobs and social protection, and addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change,

biodiversity loss and pollution — along with the four enablers offer clear entry points for scaling up for greater impact and results. Host country governments have rated the UN's support in these areas highly (86% rating supportive as effective), with an 11-percentage-point increase in satisfaction from 2023 to 2024. Areas like energy access and digital connectivity still require further attention – however efforts to scale up support were noted in 2024, and reflected in the survey results (figure 2).

Figure 2
**Government ratings of the effectiveness of United Nations country teams on the six transformative pathways**
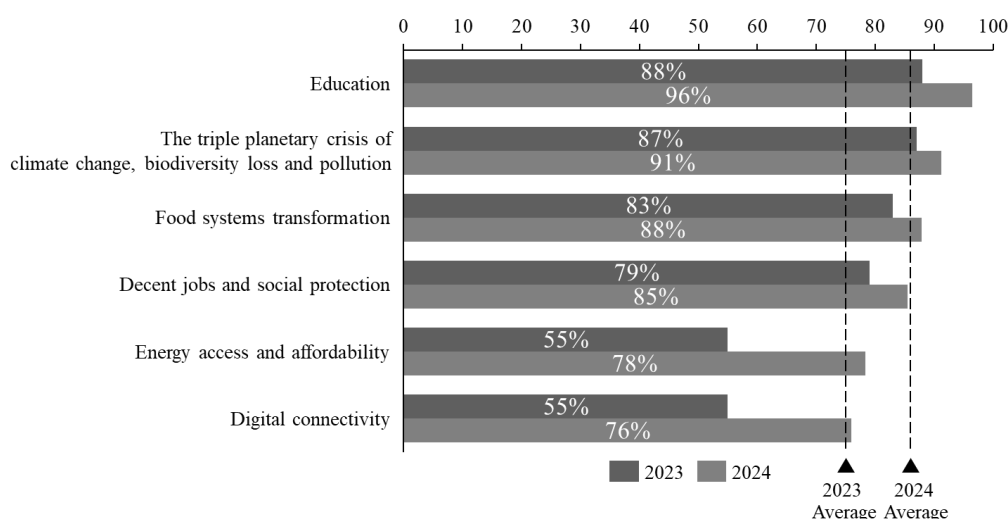


*Source*: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, various years.

## 1. Food systems

35.    Food systems transformation is crucial for the overall achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Member States in the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review made a new request for the United Nations development system to provide coherent support to help build sustainable food systems. UN Entities are already playing a pivotal role; in 2024, 85 per cent reported providing direct support to countries in this area. At the country level, resident coordinators play a key role in supporting Member States to prepare for the upcoming Second United Nations Food Systems Summit Stocktaking Moment in Addis Ababa in July 2025.

36.    Progress on ending hunger and food insecurity, more generally, has stalled since 2021, initially due to the COVID-19 pandemic and later compounded by climate crisis and geopolitical tensions. The global food security crisis remains a critical challenge, with an estimated 713 million to 757 million people facing hunger, 2.33 billion experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity and 193 million malnourished children.

37.    United Nations efforts to combat food insecurity and malnutrition reached over 150 million people in 2024. The World Food Programme's largest programme on food assistance, cash-based transfers and capacity strengthening reached 107 million people. The School Meals Coalition, launched during the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit, has gained the backing of 98 Member States and 129 partners, reinforcing global commitments to stopping malnutrition and providing every child

with nutritious school meals by 2030. United Nations country teams played an active role in its implementation; for example, in Guatemala, the United Nations country team worked with national actors and the National School Feeding Programme to provide nutritious meals to children, and advance sustainable agriculture by integrating key actors including small-scale farmers and the private sector into the food supply chain.

38.    The United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub is at the centre of the system-wide response. supporting over 55 countries in 2024. It launched the Convergence Initiative at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to advance the objectives of the United Arab Emirates Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action. The hub has engaged with the private sector in support of the Secretary-General's Call to Action for accelerated Food System Transformation. The initiative assists countries through groups supported by resident coordinators to align multisectoral policies on food systems transformation pathways with nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and national climate adaptation plans (NAPs) ahead of COP30 to be held in Brazil in November 2025.

39.    Entities have scaled up initiatives to improve the tracking of food system transformation. The Food Systems Countdown Initiative, led by FAO and UNSDG partners, has built a science-based system to assess global food system performance, offering country-specific guidance and evidence.

40.    Innovative financing mechanisms have been supporting food systems transformation.  In 2024, the Joint SDG Fund created the Food Systems Window to invest in integrated programming through joint programmes in 18 countries, paired with national efforts to leverage a multiplier effect of up to five times the initial funding. The Financing for Food Systems tool – spearheaded by IFAD and the World Bank – was scaled up to 12 countries in 2024 from its pilot (3 countries) in 2023. The tool empowers governments and donors with financial intelligence on food finance—insights, data, and trends—to inform decisions, anticipate challenges and minimize risk, with a focus on private sector flows.

41.    To better respond to climate change, related disasters, and unsustainable agricultural practices exacerbating food insecurity, the United Nations development system has enhanced its response through forecasting technologies, early warning, early action systems and more robust data to inform action. In 2024, cash-based transfers and insurance mechanisms supported 9.2 million people in mitigating climate shocks and adapting to increasingly volatile conditions. Financial shortfalls limit the ability of developing countries to scale up food security programmes and invest in sustainable farming practices, while climate change continues to disrupt agricultural production.

42.    At the country level, the United Nations development system continues to integrate food insecurity and sustainable food system transitions into United Nations cooperation frameworks aligned to national priorities. In 2024, 88 per cent of host country Government survey respondents found United Nations country teams effective in supporting food system transitions, a 5-percentage-point improvement from the previous year. The United Nations Food Systems Summit Stocktake taking place in Addis Ababa in July 2025 presents an opportunity to learn from progress, track commitments, foster partnerships, and unlock further investment opportunities. The United Nations development system will build on the outcomes of the stocktake to bolster support to countries, strengthen financing, and refine monitoring frameworks to accelerate the transformation towards sustainable food systems.

2. **Energy transitions and access**

43.     Energy affordability and access are critical for countries' development pathways. The 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review noted, in particular, the need to scale up assistance to achieve universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all in Africa. However, global challenges, coupled with limited technical support and social protection measures, have impacted countries' sustainable energy transitions unevenly, with marked gaps visible in renewable energy investments and employment particularly in Africa.  While barriers to electricity access and clean energy infrastructure remain across developing regions investments in renewable energy have increased in several emerging and developing economies. The International Energy Agency expects global clean energy investment to exceed USD 2 trillion for the first time in 2024.

44.     In 2022, the number of people without electricity rose for the first time in over a decade, reaching 685.2 million, with no gains in the global access rate of 91 per cent. Those lacking energy access are heavily concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and the least developed countries, many of which are challenged by the protracted impacts of global crises, fragility and conflict. If current trends persist, an estimated 660 million people will remain without electricity by 2030. Moreover, 2.1 billion people worldwide still lack access to clean cooking fuels, and under current trends, one in five people will still be without clean cooking solutions by 2030, falling far short of universal access.

45.     UN-Energy has facilitated United Nations system-wide support on energy and played a key role in accelerating national energy transitions to fuel sustainable development pathways. It continues to facilitate Energy Compacts, a key initiative, with financial pledges totalling over $1.4 trillion through 2024, compared to $400 billion in 2021. From 2021–2024, Energy Compact actions garnered more than $201 billion, with two thirds of the total invested in 2024, indicating that demonstrating how achieving Goal 7 brings tangible benefits, generating decent work, economic growth and climate action, while also improving access to health, food systems, sustainable urban development and transport.   As a member of UN-Energy, Sustainable Energy For All has offered technical and financial support to countries in setting energy transition and investment plans to build energy systems that support socio-economic development and achieve net-zero emissions. The process is country led using analytics, engagement, and capacity building to facilitate investment plans to help countries engage with investors and development institutions.

46.     Mission 300, a private-public collaboration between the World Bank, African Development Bank and SE4All, among others, can de-risk investments and mobilize capital to support distributed renewable energy, grid infrastructure, and cross-border energy trade. Building on current momentum, UN-Energy has intensified support through inter-agency collaboration and worked closely with Member States to deploy shared resources and expertise. In 2024, over 78 per cent of host country Governments rated energy-related support from United Nations country teams as effective – up from 55 per cent in 2023. Since 2022, 55 million people have gained access to clean, affordable, sustainable energy through efforts supported by the United Nations development system.

47.     Fully achieving universal energy access and meeting Goal 7 by 2030 calls for partnerships, innovative financing and further support to address persistent gaps in energy access and guide a just transition that includes the most vulnerable populations. Decentralized but distributed renewable energy solutions can extend vital electricity services to remote, unserved communities. The United Nations development system supports developing countries to strengthen cross-sectoral partnerships and financing models to lower capital costs and attract clean energy

investment. Through United Nations Country Teams and Resident Coordinators, there has been more support to review, assess and develop adequate regulatory frameworks that de-risk energy transition investments. For the least developed countries, this support should go hand-in-hand with capacity building, mobilizing international public finance for energy to build infrastructure, and narrow the access gap in the clean energy transition.

### 3. Digital connectivity

48. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review tasks the United Nations development system with scaling up integrated policy support for host countries to improve digital connectivity. This includes assistance on investing in digital public infrastructure and harnessing artificial intelligence, alongside scaled-up international cooperation and financing for digital readiness.

49. In the Global Digital Compact, [4] Member States also recognized digital connectivity as crucial to fast-track progress on over 70 per cent of SDG targets, [5] eradicate poverty and leave no one behind. Yet 2.6 billion people still lack Internet access, particularly in low-income countries where only an estimated one in four persons (27 per cent) is online. The United Nations development system is taking steps to better support countries through integrated policy advice, facilitating capacity building and technology transfer on digital connectivity, while ensuring rights-based approaches and adapting to emerging digital societies. This complements United Nations global efforts to close the digital divide, including emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, and to ensure that countries and people/communities are not left behind as the frontier expands.

50. The Digital Compact reaffirms the importance of universal digital connectivity and the safety of digital spaces. The new United Nations Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies, established by the General Assembly on 1 January 2025, will support the system-wide follow-up and implementation of the compact. The United Nations released the Universal Digital Public Infrastructure Safeguards Framework in 2024, [6] aimed at safety and inclusion in digital public infrastructure in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. The final report of the High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence [7] calls for increased capacity to manage this technology and its vast implications, including through the United Nations playing a key role in steering new global standards, based on a coordinated, system-wide response.

51. The Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund catalyzes action by UN country teams through its digital transformation window, securing over $66 million for joint programmes since 2022, with almost 40 per cent co-funded by partners. To date, 22 joint programmes have been approved, with a third of the portfolio for programmes in least developed or landlocked developing countries.
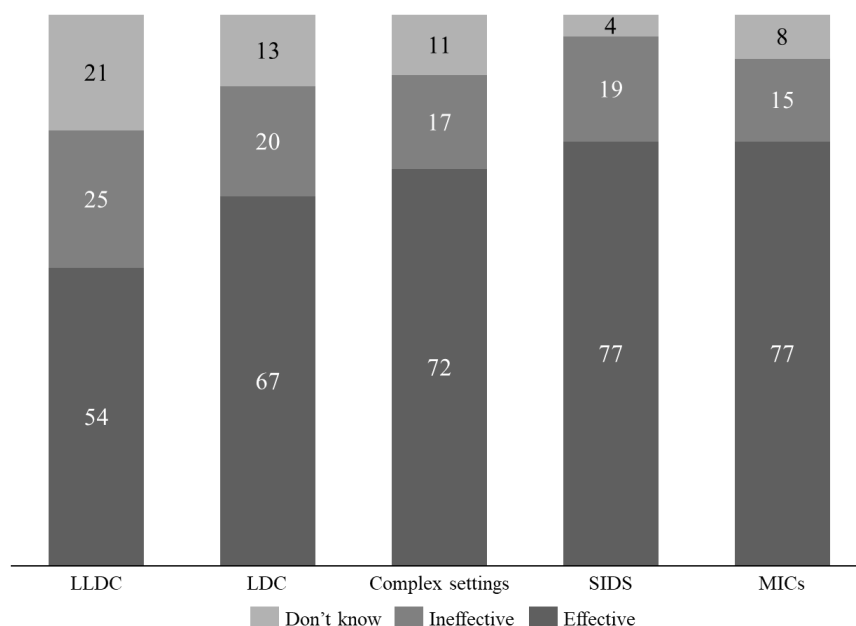
Figure 3

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[4] A/RES/79/1
[5] https://www.sdg-digital.org/accelerationagenda
[6] https://www.dpi-safeguards.org/
[7] https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/governing_ai_for_humanity_final_report_en.pdf

**Government feedback on the effectiveness of United Nations country team support for digital connectivity, by country group**



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, 2024

52.    A large majority of host country Governments (78 per cent) considered United Nations development system support to improve digital inclusion and close the digital divide as effective, similar to 2023 rates (see figure 4). Rates were lower on governing the development and use of artificial intelligence. Less than half of countries found the UN support effective, although nearly 40 per cent of Government respondents did not have enough information to respond. One such example, the ITU-led Partner2Connect Digital Coalition mobilised over 1,000 pledges from 466 entities totaling approximately $60 billion in new partnerships and commitments to achieving universal connectivity.

Figure 4

**Government feedback on the effectiveness of United Nations country team support on digital technology and cooperation**

| | Effective | Ineffective | Don't know |
|---|---|---|---|
| Improving digital inclusion and closing the digital divide 2023 | 79% | 18% | 3% |
| Improving digital inclusion and closing the digital divide 2024 | 78% | 10% | 12% |
| Safeguarding online spaces to be open and safe for everyone 2023 | 61% | 20% | 19% |
| Safeguarding online spaces to be open and safe for everyone 2024 | 57% | 15% | 28% |
| Governing the development and use of Artificial intelligence 2023 | 42% | 27% | 31% |
| Governing the development and use of Artificial intelligence 2024 | 39% | 22% | 39% |

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, various years

53.    Over half of resident coordinators (61 per cent) reported benefitting from United Nations entities' headquarters support for digital transition, continuing a trend observed since 2021 but there is room to improve upon these challenges.

54.    During the 2024 quadrennial review cycle, the United Nations development system will intensify efforts to support Governments facing emerging challenges and opportunities in the digital domain. This includes leveraging where possible the vision set out in the Global Digital Compact, absorbing and adapting to frontier and disruptive technologies, improving digital infrastructure, increasing digital literacy and opening access to new technologies. United Nations support can be scaled up at the country level and refocused to meet policymaker demands for standards and norms to manage security and information integrity risks.[8] Attention must be given to preventing a new and exacerbating the current digital divide through artificial intelligence.[9]

### 4.    Education and skills gaps

55.    Since 2019, Goal 4 has been consistently ranked by host country Governments as among the top five areas where the United Nations contribution has been most significant. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review calls upon the United

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[8] Source: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/governing_ai_for_humanity_final_report_en.pdf p28

[9] Source : https://www.un.org/digital-emerging-technologies/sites/www.un.org.techenvoy/files/MindtheAIDivide.pdf foreword

Nations development system to continue improving its support to Member States in expanding access to inclusive, safe and equitable quality education.  Yet, Goal 4 remains severely off track. Progress is slow with 251 million children and children out of school and disparities persisting across regions. Increased investment is urgently needed.

56.    Based on host country Government surveys in 2024, on average, over 70 per cent of Governments rated United Nations country team support for education effective across seven priority areas (see Figure 5). Rates were highest for United Nations support in ensuring equal access to education and reflect significant increases in effectiveness of improving digital literacy (19 percentage points from the previous year).

Figure 5
**Areas in which Governments rated education support from the United Nations country team as effective**
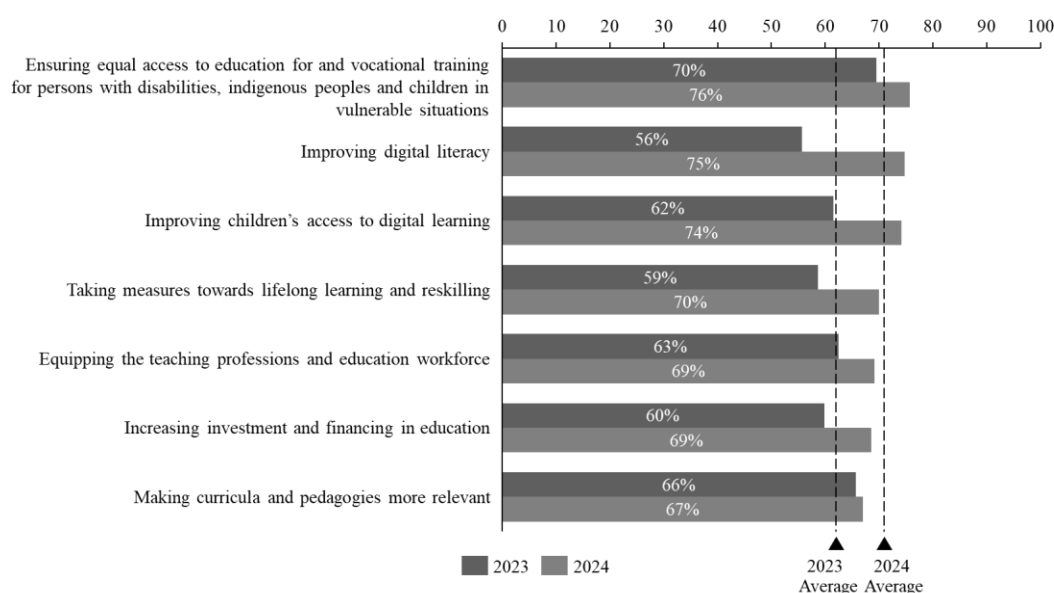


*Source*: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, various years.

57.    Following the Transforming Education Summit in 2022, 140 countries put forward national commitments aimed at addressing the learning crisis and increasing investment. The Fortaleza Declaration, adopted at the 2024 Global Education Meeting in Brazil and supported by UNESCO, reaffirmed national commitments to equitable and inclusive education with a particular emphasis on critical levers (such as equity and access). Reaching those in the most vulnerable groups remains a core priority, including in conflict settings, refugees, internally displaced persons, girls and persons with disabilities.

58.    UNICEF's Foundational Learning Action Tracker 2024 has shown progress in learning assessments and defining learning outcomes across the 123 low- and middle-income countries covered. Tangible results are also emerging in ensuring safe education environments. The End School-Related Gender-Based Violence programme in Sierra Leone expanded from 21 to 617 schools, reaching 147,246 adolescents, 54 per cent of whom were girls. The programme has yielded significant returns in increased safety and positive gender attitudes while reports of sexual violence among adolescents have declined.

59.    United Nations country teams are working with Member States to implement the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession to address the 44 million global teacher shortage.[10] The advocacy around the recommendations resulted in notable policy improvements. In Mongolia, this resulted in an increase of up to 30 per cent in teacher salaries and a growth in funding for education. In Indonesia, over one million teachers have been given permanent contracts offering job security and improved working conditions. The United Nations development system will continue working with stakeholders to promote long term reforms, including high-quality teacher training and development.

60.    Initiatives supported by UN entities such as the Global Partnership for Education and the GIGA Alliance continue to be instrumental in enhancing education access and quality. The Gateways to Public Digital Learning initiative now includes 17 countries. In Bhutan, the country team played a pivotal role in advancing digital education, ensuring that every school has Internet connectivity, surpassing the global average.

61.    Closing the annual $97 billion education financing gap is critical. Low-income countries invested only $55 per learner in 2022 compared to $8,543 in high-income countries.[11] 3.3 billion people live in countries that spend more on debt interest payments than on education.[12] The 2025 Conference on Financing for Development and the World Social Summit will be key opportunities to address the education financing gap and scale up solutions to transform education.

### 5.    Decent jobs and social protection

62.    The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review called for continued United Nations support in developing social protection systems for all. Indeed, decent jobs and social protection transformation are essential to breaking the cycle of extreme poverty for over 712 million people worldwide.[13] For the first time ever, over half (52.4 per cent) of the global population is covered by at least one social protection benefit, but 3.8 billion people still lack any form of social protection, including more than 9 in 10 people in low-income countries.[14]

63.    In the 2024 survey, most host country Governments found United Nations country team support effective in implementing national social protection systems and improving social protection policy, administration and delivery. The share was slightly lower for support in mobilizing resources for social protection (see figure 6).

Figure 6

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[10] UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030. 2024. Global Report on Teachers: Addressing teacher shortages and transforming the profession. Paris.

[11] The World Bank and UNESCO. 2024. Education Finance Watch 2024. Washington D.C., World Bank; Paris, UNESCO

[12] *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2024*, p. 9.

[13] UN 2024, https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal1#progress_and_info

[14] International Labour Organization. 2024. World Social Protection Report 2024-2026. Universal social protection for climate action and a just transition.

**Areas in which Governments rated United Nations country team support as effective**
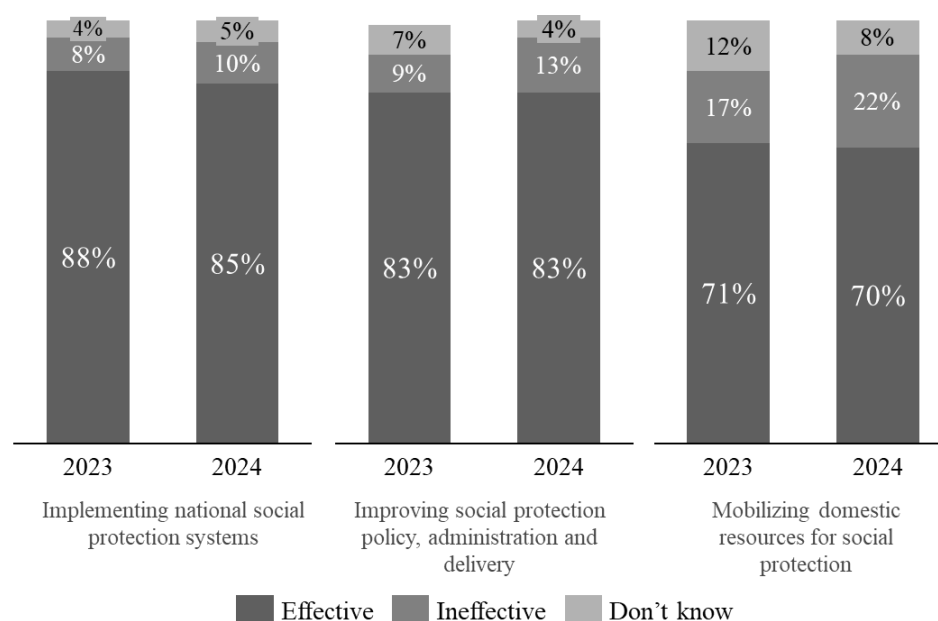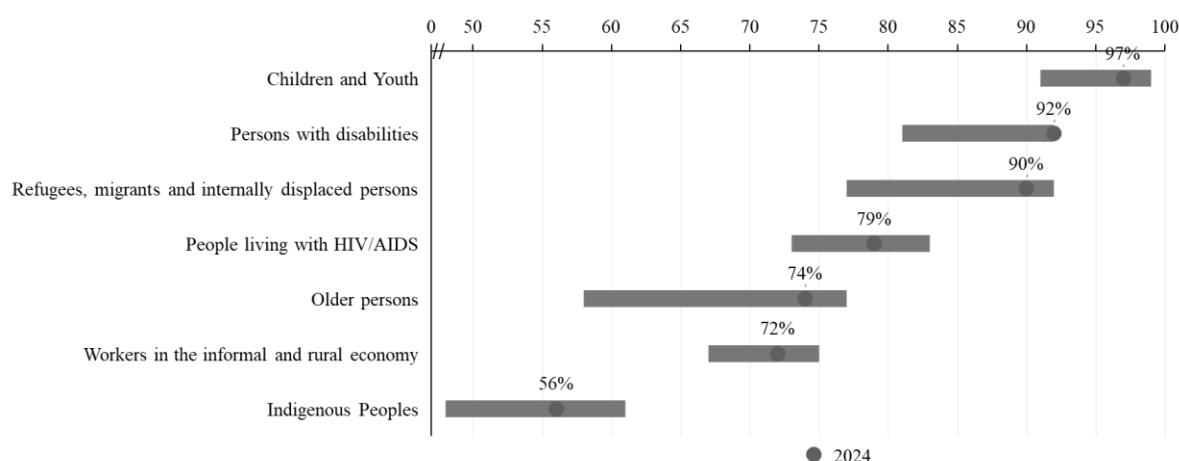


*Source*: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, various years.

64.    System-wide support focuses on comprehensive, sustainable and inclusive social protection systems aligned with the International Labour Organization (ILO) standards. For example, United Nations country teams supported the development of national social protection or national care policies in Brazil, Kenya, Sri Lanka and Zambia, inter alia. In Malaysia, the United Nations supported the extension of social protection to all workers, regardless of nationality, covering workplace injury, unemployment, disability and death.

65.    We have a good foundation on which to build. Seventy per cent of host Governments considered United Nations country teams effective in mobilizing domestic resources for social protection. More than 90 per cent of host governments rated United Nations assistance as effective for groups including children, youth, persons with disabilities, refugees, migrants and internally displaced people (see figure 7).

Figure 7
**Government ratings of the effectiveness of United Nations country team support for expanding targeted social protection policies and programmes, by population group**

*Source*: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, various years.
*Note*: The range corresponds minimum and maximum values between 2021-2024.

66. The effectiveness of United Nations support for social protection for older persons has increased in the past year, although rates lagged in other groups, including for informal and rural workers and Indigenous peoples. In Brazil, the ILO convened the first Global Dialogue on Just Transition with Indigenous Peoples in December 2024 to include their perspectives in Government efforts to realize a just transition.

67. The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions is bringing together stakeholders including 9 new pathfinder countries in 2024.[15] The first funding round, totaling EUR 21 million, supported 24 country projects, with an additional $22.8 million mobilized for the second funding round in 2025. The Accelerator has developed resources, including an informality dashboard and a macroeconomic diagnostics tool, which enable enhanced design of projects and policies and social and economic impact assessments.

**Global health**

68. Universal health coverage is a critical element of social protection, contributing to a healthy workforce, greater productivity and reduced economic vulnerabilities. Yet it remains an unmet global commitment.

69. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review underscores the need for development system support to promote partnerships for primary healthcare, work towards equitable access and embed analytical tools in national health policy to develop countermeasures to health emergencies. Currently, more than half the world's population still lacks access to essential health services. High out-of-pocket costs continue to push millions into poverty. Despite legal provisions for social health protection covering 83.7 per cent of the global population, only 60.1 per cent are effectively protected.

70. In 2024, 53 per cent of surveyed host country Governments indicated Goal 3 as a top priority area for United Nations support over the next two years. Government feedback on United Nations support in strengthening health systems has been positive. It was especially high for universal health coverage strategies (82 per cent)

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[15] The Pathfinder countries include Albania, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Indonesia, Malawi, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

and coverage of essential, quality and affordable health services (90 per cent), with each up over 8 percentage points from 2023 (see Figure 8).

Figure 8
**Government ratings of the effectiveness of United Nations country team support for healthcare, by type of assistance**
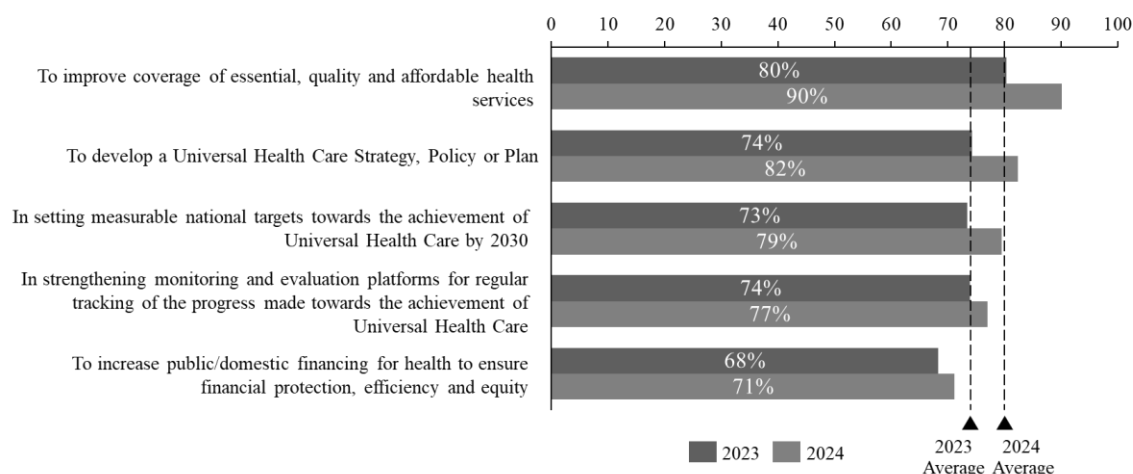


*Source*: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, various years.

71.    Developing countries remain deeply exposed to stark global inequities in access to life-saving interventions, including vaccines, diagnostics and medical countermeasures for public health emergencies. Highlighting the need for stronger preparedness, the Pandemic Fund in 2024 allocated $885 million to enhance pandemic prevention and response capacities in vulnerable countries.

72.    Access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene remains a fundamental determinant of public health. The United Nations has been working in over 100 countries to expand climate-resilient services, supporting millions in accessing safe water and sanitation.

73.    Shortfalls in health financing remain a pressing concern. Host country governments indicate it is an area where the United Nations development system can step up support. Many countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, spend more on debt servicing than on health, limiting the ability to provide essential services. Several countries have managed to obtain debt for development swaps that convert debt repayments into health services investments through the Debt2Health programme. Such initiatives could be scaled up with United Nations country team support in facilitating country partnerships with international financial institutions to boost support for health systems. The upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development offers a pivotal moment to find solutions that alleviate debt burdens and mobilize resources for primary healthcare.

**Demographic shifts**

74.    The quadrennial comprehensive policy review requested the United Nations development system to support Member States in responding to demographic trends. Accordingly, the United Nations development system is enhancing data and policy frameworks. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has published a manual on National Inclusion Accounts to improve age-disaggregated

economic data. Regional commissions provide tailored policy and capacity-building support to countries. The UNFPA Demographic Resilience Programme helps countries develop rights-based responses to demographic shifts, including those related to labour markets, social protection and human capital development.

75. It is essential that United Nations country teams integrate demographic analysis into common country analyses and cooperation frameworks, recognizing the profound impact of demographic trends on sustainable development.

### 6. Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution

76. A transformative green and blue economy resilient pathway to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda is rooted in low carbon, bio-diversity friendly and pollution free actions. These actions seek to slow climate change, halt biodiversity loss and reduce pollution. Effectively tackling the triple planetary crisis – of climate change biodiversity and loss and pollution - requires a profound transformation in existing socioeconomic systems. Climate adaptation and resilience require urgent scaled up action to prevent losses and protect lives and livelihoods.

77. The decade since the Sustainable Development Goals were agreed has been the warmest ever recorded. Current projections suggest a temperature rise of 2.6°C–3.1°C by the end of this century, exceeding the 1.5°C limit stipulated in the Paris Agreement on climate change and reaffirmed by the Pact for the Future. Despite global efforts and an escalating transition to renewable energy, the response to climate change and biodiversity loss remains insufficient to secure a liveable planet.

78. The United Nations development system is supporting countries to plan and implement more ambitious nationally determined contributions (NDCs) which serve as opportunities to integrate economy wide commitments into broader climate and development efforts, and support efforts to reach $1.3 trillion in climate finance for developing countries as agreed at the twenty-ninth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

79. The 2024 host country Government survey confirmed that United Nations support for climate action policies is increasingly effective and includes more integrated delivery (see figure 9).

Figure 9

**Governments rate support on climate action policies as increasingly effective**
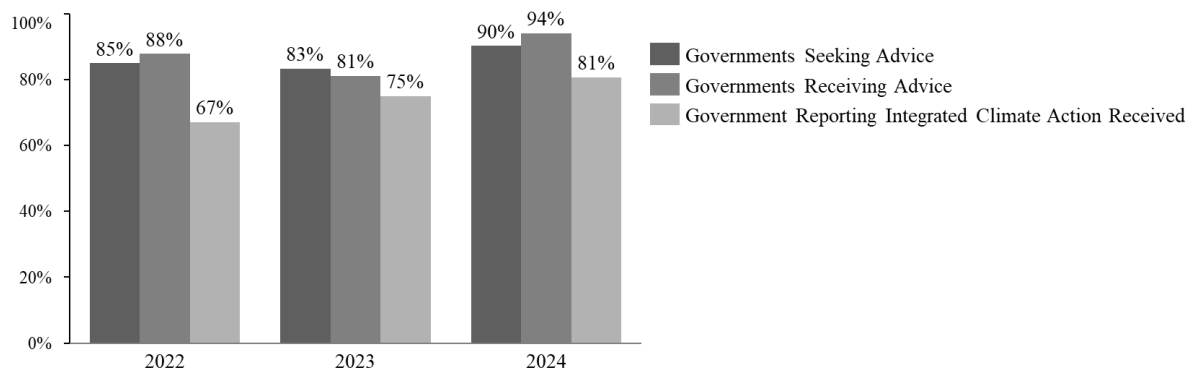


*Source*: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, various years.

80.     Examples of support for national climate action include UNEP assistance to over 30 countries to implement NDCs and to 64 nations to issue their first biennial transparency reports. Since UNDP launched the Climate Promise partnership in 2019, it has supported more than 125 developing countries in developing second-generation nationally determined contributions with increasingly ambitious targets. The United Nations development system is now coordinating support for an even more ambitious third generation of nationally determined contributions due in 2025.

81.     In 2024, the United Nations development system supported communities in 50 countries in adapting to droughts and rising sea levels, benefiting 3.5 million people and restoring 241,000 hectares of land. In small island developing States like Niue, Palau and Timor-Leste, the United Nations backed collaborative action on early warning systems, enhancing climate disaster preparedness in vulnerable regions.

82.     At the United Nations Biodiversity Conference in 2024, Parties to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework emphasized the need to empower Indigenous Peoples and local communities in conservation efforts and highlighted the urgency of closing an annual biodiversity finance gap exceeding $700 billion. In response, the United Nations development system expanded its support for addressing biodiversity loss and pollution. This enabled the United Nations to support 108 countries conserve and restore ecosystems and empower Indigenous Peoples, covering over 1.6 million hectares and benefitting nearly 900,000 people.

83.     Challenges persist in mobilizing resources and strengthening monitoring frameworks, although some efforts are underway to address these. In May 2024, the Kunming Biodiversity Fund, co-launched with China, committed $230 million to biodiversity projects in 15 countries. The United Nations development system in 2024 supported 35 developing countries in securing grant funding from the Global Environment Facility and assisted 60 countries with emissions tracking and environmental data systems as a basis for developing policies and steering progress.

84.     Looking ahead, scaling up country-level technical assistance, expanding access to sustainable finance and enhancing integrated monitoring systems will be critical to accelerate action on climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The 2025 United Nations Climate Change Conference, hosted by Brazil, presents a pivotal opportunity to address these three interconnected priorities.

**Managing climate and environmental risks**

85.     The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review underlines the continued need for the United Nations development system to support Governments and emphasizes key areas to expand, including in disaster risk governance and resilience. The system supports countries to close persistent gaps in disaster data, financing and systemic risk analysis that can jeopardize the climate, biodiversity and pollution transformation path.

86.     In 2024, 95 per cent of host country Governments indicated that United Nations country teams effectively strengthened their capacity to build resilience against crises, disasters and extreme climate events, and to integrate policy approaches to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The results of the Resident coordinator survey confirm these findings (see figure 10).

Figure 10

**Government and resident coordinator ratings of the effectiveness of United Nations country teams in building climate and environmental resilience**

| | 2023 | 2024 |
|---|---|---|
| Strengthening the capacity of the host country to build resilience to crisis, disasters and extreme climate events | 98% / 97% | 91% / 94% |
| Implementing integrated policy approaches to mitigate and adapt to climate change | 95% / 95% | 91% / 96% |

■ 2023  ■ 2024
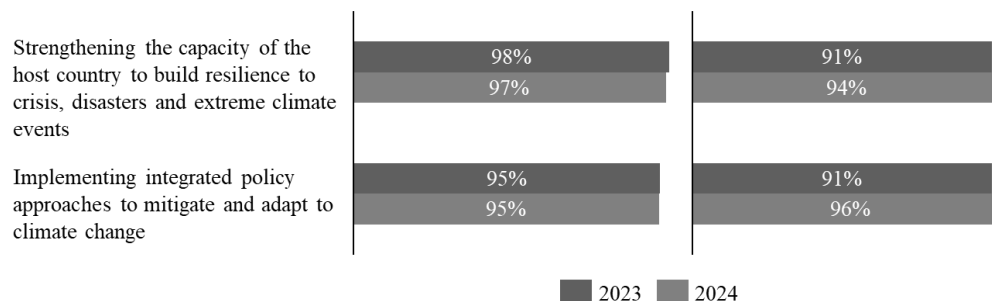
Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments; Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Resident Coordinators, various years.

87. The United Nations development system supported disaster risk reduction efforts by reinforcing national and local resilience, demonstrating tangible progress towards risk-informed development. A joint initiative – Early Warnings for All – strengthened national ownership of multi-hazard early warning systems with tailored resources to improve warning systems in 26 least developed countries and small island developing States in 2024. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction provided technical support to integrate disaster risk reduction and environment management into national policies in 11 least developed countries and 22 small island developing States. Local action has advanced through initiatives such as the Making Cities Resilient 2030 programme. Over 1,750 cities across 91 countries are participating with targeted support helping576 cities to implement disaster risk reduction and climate actions.

## IV. Scaling up our ambition, convening and support as countries accelerate action for sustainable development

### A. Convening to help countries mobilize means of implementation

88. Strengthening the means of implementation—particularly in finance, trade, capacity building, and science, technology, and innovation—remains central to the work of the United Nations development system. Resident Coordinators play a pivotal role in convening stakeholders, with 90% of host governments recognizing their contributions. In 2024, collaboration among UN country teams improved, with 64% reporting a shared approach to partnerships (up from 55% in 2023), and 74% considering Resident Coordinators effective in partnership and resource mobilization efforts. These partnerships span a wide range of actors—from bilateral donors and international financial institutions to civil society—demonstrated by the 92% of Resident Coordinators promoting meaningful civil society participation in planning and programming.

89. Efforts to engage the private sector have also strengthened, with 79% of host governments confirming meaningful engagement, particularly in digital transformation. Initiatives like the AI Hub for Sustainable Development, launched in 2024 as part of the G7 Presidency, are helping catalyze local AI ecosystems in partnership with the private sector. Meanwhile, South-South and triangular cooperation continue to complement traditional development aid, with 66% of Resident Coordinators incorporating such approaches into their frameworks. The UNOSSC Solutions Lab and nearly $20 million in contributions to its trust funds reflect growing, diverse support for scalable, innovative solutions across countries of all development levels.

## B.  Strengthening frameworks, institutions and capacities

90.   The 2030 Agenda underscores the importance of strong national policy, legal, and regulatory frameworks for driving sustainable development. The 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review called on the UN development system to enhance its support for national and subnational institutional capacities. Survey results from 2024 reflect strong recognition of this work: 93% of host governments positively rated the UN's support in advancing policy and regulatory reforms, up from 86% in 2023. Satisfaction was consistently high across country groups, with 100% of African and landlocked developing countries affirming the value of this support, along with strong ratings from least developed countries, middle-income countries, and those facing humanitarian emergencies.

91.   Resident Coordinators are increasingly seen as effective leaders in this area, with 88% of UN country teams affirming their leadership in supporting policy change. However, the proportion of Resident Coordinators who felt their country teams were contributing effectively to this work declined slightly, from 93% in 2023 to 86% in 2024. In line with the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, the UN development system is emphasizing locally led approaches, using thematic portfolio models to support governance and development solutions tailored to national contexts. For example, in Indonesia, this approach has enhanced local planning and budgeting, while in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, it has supported community resilience and integrated humanitarian planning. This work will remain a priority throughout the current quadrennial cycle.

## C.  Financing national opportunities through innovative partnerships

### Seizing national opportunities for public and private investments at scale

92.   The 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) underscores the UN's critical role in mobilizing diverse funding sources and building partnerships, with a focus on enhancing digital capacity and readiness. Since the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda, significant progress has been made, with 86 countries implementing Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs). In 2024, 79% of host governments acknowledged the adequacy of UN support in this area, reflecting the UN's vital contribution to financing the SDGs. By 2024, the most advanced reforms in 17 countries had generated $16 billion in new finance and applied $32 billion in existing finance to make greater impacts on the sustainable development goals.

93.   Entities like UNDP have demonstrated accelerated progress in financing, with the Sustainable Finance Hub helping 30 countries mobilize $28 billion through thematic bonds. Over 50 countries have also received support in digital and AI assessments, attracting investments for digital infrastructure. Additionally, UN DESA's Financing for Small Island Developing States (FINS) initiative has helped small island nations align financing with their priorities, showcasing the UN's tailored support for diverse national contexts.

94.   Looking ahead, the 2025 Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development presents a pivotal opportunity to reform the global financial system and mobilize the stimulus needed to support developing countries' sustainable development. This includes fostering private investment, mobilizing low-cost capital, and reforming the international financial architecture to ensure developing countries are fully represented in decision-making. As the UN enters the next quadrennial cycle, it is well-positioned to intensify its efforts to help countries meet their commitments to the SDGs.

## D. Science, technology and innovation and the data dividend

95. The 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) emphasized the importance of United Nations support to strengthening cooperation, promoting an open, fair, inclusive, and non-discriminatory environment. It also reiterated the need to enhance country support and research capacities, including expertise in data. Currently, 68% of UN entities integrate digital methodologies into their programming, and over 90% of host countries recognize the system's contribution to building national data capacities. For example, the Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries has completed 13 technology needs assessments, with three more in progress, and its 2025-2027 strategic plan aims to deliver policy advisory, technical assistance, and capacity-building across 44 countries.

96. Despite these advancements, there are ongoing challenges in meeting the increasing demands for data expertise. A 2024 survey showed that while 82% of host country governments reported strengthened cooperation in science, technology, and innovation (STI) (6 per cent higher than 2023), there are significant gaps in data-driven decision-making. Among the top 10 areas ranked as most strategic—such as data visualization and advanced analytics—55 to 75% of country teams reported insufficient capacity. Additionally, 67% identified unmet needs in data-driven policymaking. As UN country teams continue to address these gaps, initiatives like the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data work to bolster national data ecosystems, improving evidence for decision-making and facilitating new investments to bridge data gaps in tracking the SDGs.

## E. Supporting economic growth through trade

97. The 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) emphasizes the importance of a strong economic environment—trade, tax, monetary, and financial systems—in supporting national development. In response, the United Nations development system offers tailored support to enhance trade facilitation, digital trade practices, and sustainable economic growth.

98. For least developed countries (LDCs) preparing for graduation, the UN system monitors and updates international trade support measures. UN DESA, ITC, and WTO manage the e-Ping platform to track sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical trade barriers. Additionally, in 2025, UNCTAD will release guidance to help countries navigate tax and investment treaty issues.

99. In the Arab region, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization launched the Arab Food Safety Initiative to harmonize agricultural standards and boost intra-regional trade. In Africa, the UN supports the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), helping 42 countries integrate trade commitments into national strategies, focusing on sustainability, gender inclusivity, and small and medium-sized enterprises. The UN also assists 19 African countries in developing green value chains aligned with climate goals.

100. At the regional level, the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business promotes digital solutions like Digital Product Passports, enhancing transparency and supporting the circular economy. In Asia and the Pacific, the UN helped Cambodia diversify export markets, while over 1,700 stakeholders from countries in special situations benefited from trade policy training.

Through these efforts, the UN development system enables countries to improve trade, economic policies, and create sustainable, inclusive development strategies for national progress.

## V.  Tailoring support for every country context

101.  Recognizing that there is no "one size fits all" approach to development,[16] the United Nations development system repositioning process aimed to tailor the UNCT presence, skillsets and response to each country. This was the heart of the idea of establishing a core RCO function in each country setting, while allowing other substantive capacities and wider UNCT response to fluctuate and adapt to national needs and priorities, as defined in the UN Cooperation Frameworks. This has allowed for a much more tailored approach to different country challenges and demands.

102.  The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review reiterated the call for the United Nations development system to address the challenges faced by countries in special situations, including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and African countries, and to support their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals. The review also called for supporting countries in complex situations, including those in conflict and emergencies, and for assistance on the specific challenges facing middle-income countries.

103.  Moving forward, we will continue to tailor our development approaches by deepening context-specific strategies, providing targeted support and policy expertise to support vulnerable countries with addressing complex situations. and reinforcing the cooperation framework to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

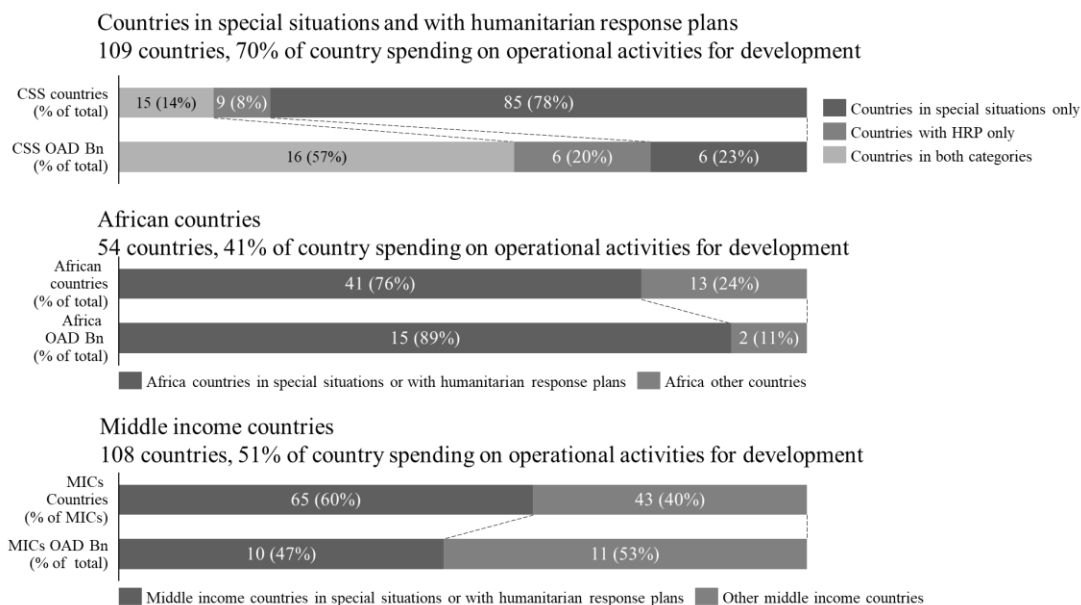### A.  Meeting our promise to provide tailored support in different country settings

104.  Two thirds of countries supported by the United Nations development system are in special situations or facing humanitarian emergencies. Together, they account for 109 of 162 currently supported by UN country teams and 70 per cent of all country-level spending (see figure 11).

105.  The 100 countries in special situations have specific programmes of action, including least developed countries (44), landlocked developing countries (32) and small island developing States (52), with some countries falling into more than one of these categories.[17] The United Nations development system also supports 24 countries in with complex emergencies. Of these, 15 are also countries in special situations. All 54 African States are host countries; 39 are in special situations.

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[16] General Assembly resolution 79/226, paragraph 2.

[17] 100 countries are members of at least one these categories. Some countries are members of multiple categories, for example those that are both landlocked and least developed countries.

Figure 11

**Countries in special situations and other groups**

Countries in special situations and with humanitarian response plans
109 countries, 70% of country spending on operational activities for development

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CSS countries (% of total) | 15 (14%) | 9 (8%) | 85 (78%) |
| CSS OAD Bn (% of total) | 16 (57%) | 6 (20%) | 6 (23%) |

- ■ Countries in special situations only
- ■ Countries with HRP only
- ■ Countries in both categories

African countries
54 countries, 41% of country spending on operational activities for development

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| African countries (% of total) | 41 (76%) | 13 (24%) |
| Africa OAD Bn (% of total) | 15 (89%) | 2 (11%) |

- ■ Africa countries in special situations or with humanitarian response plans
- ■ Africa other countries

Middle income countries
108 countries, 51% of country spending on operational activities for development

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| MICs Countries (% of MICs) | 65 (60%) | 43 (40%) |
| MICs OAD Bn (% of total) | 10 (47%) | 11 (53%) |

- ■ Middle income countries in special situations or with humanitarian response plans
- ■ Other middle income countries

*Source*: CEB, 2025.
*Note*: OAD = Operational activities for development ($, Bn.); CSS = countries in special situations; HRP = countries with a Humanitarian Response Plan; MICs = middle income countries

1. **Tailored support to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and African countries**

106. In 2024, the United Nations development system continued to provide tailored support to least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and small island developing States (SIDS). These countries face unique development challenges and follow distinct programmes of action. Although they are home to 1.3 billion people—16 per cent of the global population—they account for only 3 per cent of global GDP.

107. These countries received 56 per cent of the UN's total country-level expenditures, with spending increasing faster than average. Since 2020, support grew by 20 per cent for LDCs, and by over 32 per cent for LLDCs and SIDS, compared to a 19 per cent rise across all countries. Notably, in SIDS, development spending made up two-thirds of total UN spending, surpassing humanitarian aid.

Table 1

**Expenditures on operational activities by country group**

| Country group | Number of countries | Total 2023 expenditure (billions of United States dollars) | Expenditure as a share of the total at country level (percentage) | Three-year trend in expenditure (percentage) in real terms | 2023 development share of total (percentage) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Least developed countries | 44 | 20.4 | 50.3 | +20 | 30 |
| Small island developing | 52 | 1.3 | 3.3 | +32 | 67 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| States | | | | | |
| Landlocked developing countries | 32 | 11.5 | 28.4 | +34 | 30 |
| Africa | 54 | 16.6 | 40.8 | +14 | 33 |
| Middle-income countries | 108 | 20.8 | 51.2 | +18 | 41 |
| Countries with complex emergencies | 24 | 21.8 | 53.7 | n/a | 24 |
| All programme country Governments | 162 | 39.6 | 90 | +19 | 34 |

*Source*: Chief Executives Board, 2025.

108. Several major global processes in 2024 reaffirmed the commitment to countries in special situations. The Fourth International Conference on SIDS emphasized the need for targeted, results-oriented investments. The General Assembly adopted a new Programme of Action for LLDCs (2024–2034), building on lessons from the Vienna Programme of Action. This new roadmap will guide preparations for the Third UN Conference on LLDCs in 2025, aiming to help these countries overcome geographic disadvantages. Meanwhile, Member States stressed the continued importance of implementing the Doha Programme of Action for LDCs (2022–2031). To support LDCs graduating from this classification, the UN launched the Sustainable Graduation Support Facility in four countries.

109. Most UN entities have developed strategies to support these groups: 80 per cent for LDCs, 70 per cent for LLDCs (up from 61 per cent in 2023), 80 per cent for SIDS (up from 74 per cent), and 75 per cent for African countries. However, reporting to governing bodies is not yet consistent across the system, highlighting the need for more coordinated, system-wide reporting.

110. Countries in special situations prioritize means of implementation and focus on key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2024, all emphasized contributions to food security and hunger, health and well-being, education, poverty eradication, climate action and gender equality. There were also regional differences. For example, LDCs emphasized support for water and sanitation (Goal 6) and responsible consumption (Goal 12). SIDS highlighted contributions to land, ecosystems, and forests (Goal 15).

Figure 12

**Government responses on selection of the top five areas of significant United Nations contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals in their country over the past two years**

All programme countries, top five SDG areas with significant UN contribution (last 2 years)
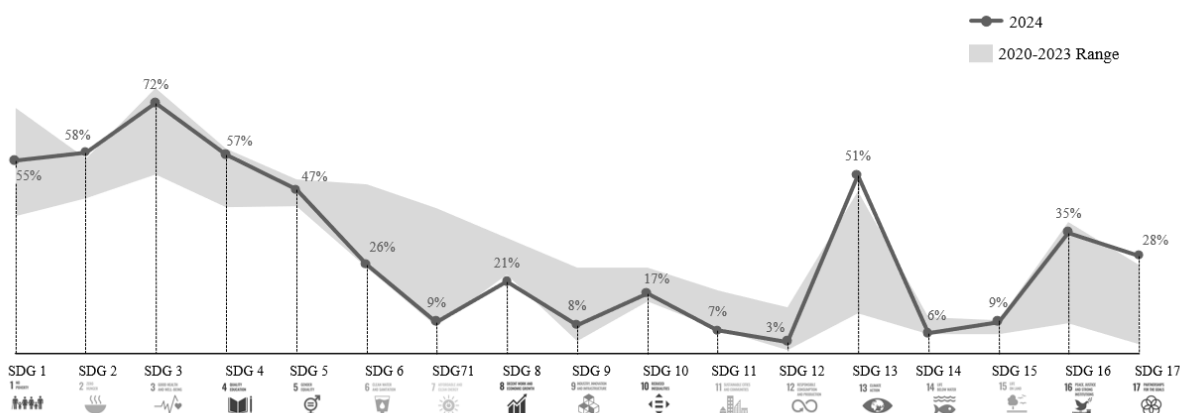
Countries in special situations, top five SDG areas with significant UN contribution (last 2 years)
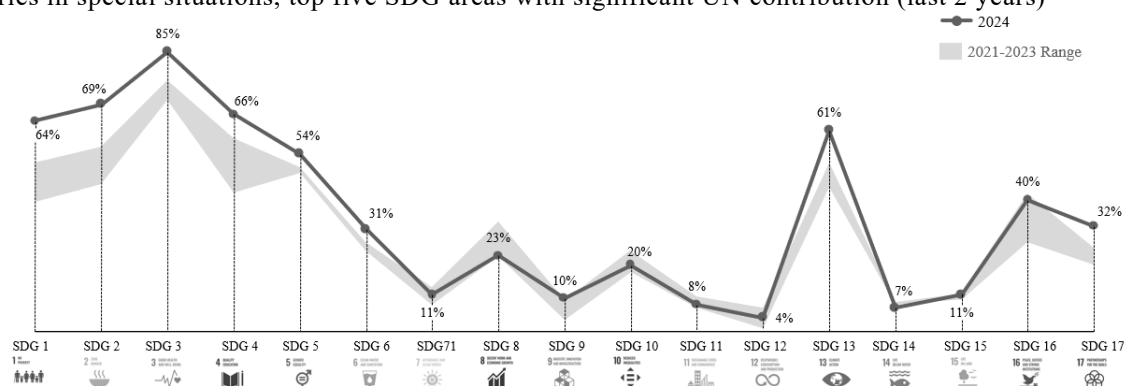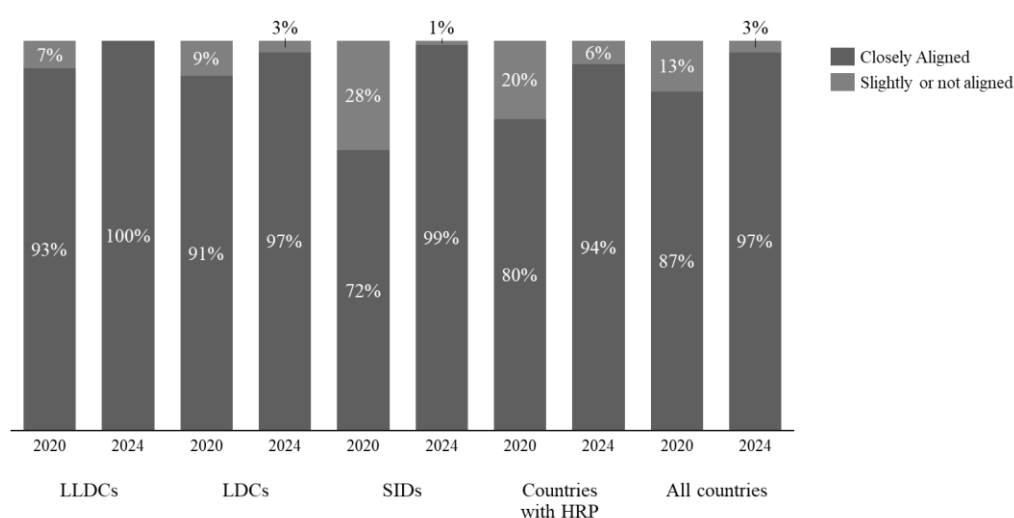


*Source:* Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of programme country Governments (various years)

*Note:* LLDC, Landlocked Developing Countries; LDC, Least Developed Countries; SIDS, Small Island Developing States; Countries with HRP, Countries with Humanitarian Response Plan

111. Satisfaction with UN support remains high. In 2024, **98 per cent** of countries in special situations felt that UN activities were well aligned with their national priorities—up from 85 per cent in 2020. Among African countries, this alignment reached 100 per cent. Countries also reported strong satisfaction with how UN country teams are configured, with ratings between 89 and 92 per cent. SIDS saw the most improvement—from 57 per cent in 2019 to 83 per cent in 2024. LDC satisfaction declined slightly from 92 to 89 per cent, while humanitarian settings saw a drop from 100 per cent in 2023 to 84 per cent in 2024.

Figure 13
**Alignment of activities with national development needs and priorities**

*Source:* Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of programme country Governments (various years)

112. UN support for evidence-based policy advice, technical assistance, statistical capacity, and partnerships also received high ratings. However, countries expressed slightly lower satisfaction in areas such as joint policy advice and resource mobilization, particularly when it came to integrated national financing frameworks. This underscores the need for the UN development system to strengthen support in this area, especially as satisfaction with financing assistance has generally improved in recent years. (see figure 14).

Figure 14

**Extent to which groups of countries agreed that the United Nations adequately provides advice and support (by category)**
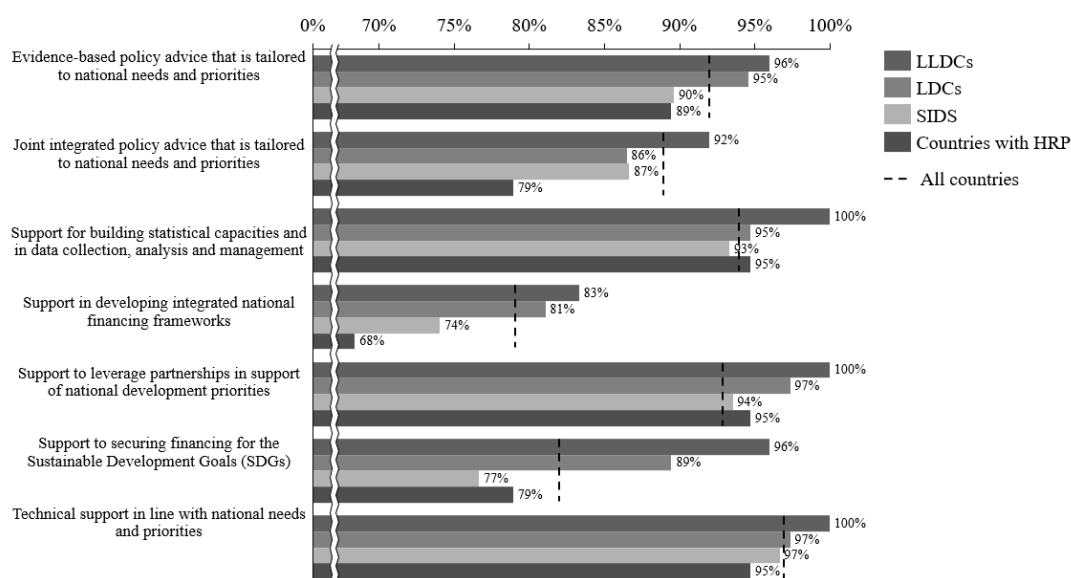


*Source:* 2024 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of host country Governments

113.  In response to advocacy led by SIDS, the High-Level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) released its final report in February 2024. The report presented a new index, a conceptual framework, and preliminary country scores aimed at capturing structural vulnerabilities that traditional economic measures, like GDP, fail to reflect.

114.  The 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) encouraged UN entities to use the MVI and accompanying vulnerability-resilience profiles in relevant programmes and reporting. Over the coming years, the UN development system will work to integrate these tools to support more targeted, evidence-based policies that address multidimensional vulnerabilities in countries most at risk.

## 2.  Tailored support to middle-income countries

115.  In 2024, the 108 middle-income countries (MICs) accounted for 30 per cent of global GDP and 75 per cent of the world's population—including over 60 per cent of those living in poverty. This group is diverse: 53 per cent of MICs supported by the UN development system are also in special situations, 10 are grappling with complex emergencies, and 40 per cent fall outside of any specific classification— yet they represent 27 per cent of country-level UN spending.
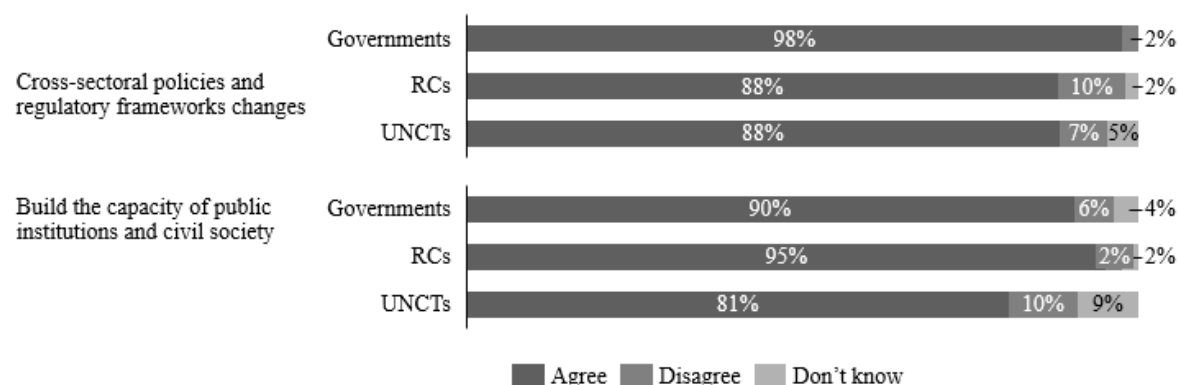
116.  Despite this diversity, tailored UN support is increasing. Sixteen out of 29 UN entities reported having specific country strategies for MICs in 2024. These strategies focus on integrated policy advice, technical assistance, financing for the SDGs, partnerships, innovation, and South-South cooperation. To better align support with national priorities, 18 out of 26 entities now use gross national income per capita alongside other indicators such as the Human Development Index (18), Multidimensional Poverty Index (17), SDG indicators (22), and gender-related indices (19).

117.  Surveyed MICs reported strong alignment between UN development system support and national priorities, rising from 85 per cent in 2020 to 100 per cent in 2024. Integrated, evidence-based policy advice rose in approval from 88 per cent in 2019 to 95 per cent in 2024, with similarly high ratings for support in statistics, partnerships, and technical assistance.

118.  Support for integrated national financing frameworks also improved, reaching 81 per cent in 2024, reflecting UN efforts to help countries access climate and concessional financing and pursue debt relief. Beyond GDP process is also a recognition that the GDP-centered approaches to sustainable development fail to properly capture the complexity, diversity and aspirations of MICs. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review requested the United Nations development system to support the work underway to develop measures of progress that complement or go beyond GDP. Moving beyond GDP can shape more effective, evidence-based policies across economic, social and environmental priorities.

Figure 15
**Perspectives of middle-income countries, resident coordinators and United Nations country team members on United Nations support in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals**

Figure showing horizontal stacked bar chart:

Cross-sectoral policies and regulatory frameworks changes
- Governments: 98% — 2%
- RCs: 88% — 10% — 2%
- UNCTs: 88% — 7% — 5%

Build the capacity of public institutions and civil society
- Governments: 90% — 6% — 4%
- RCs: 95% — 2% — 2%
- UNCTs: 81% — 10% — 9%

Legend: ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Don't know

*Source*: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of host country Governments, Resident Coordinators and United Nations Country Teams (various years)

### 3. Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in complex settings: enhanced collaboration between humanitarian and development action and stronger linkages to peace

119.  2024 brought to the forefront the interconnections between crises, shocks and development shortfalls to the forefront of the global consciousness. For the twelfth consecutive year, forced displacement due to violence and conflict increased, affecting over 120 million people.[18] Around 90 million were in countries with high to extremely high risks of climate hazards, compounding their vulnerabilities.[19]
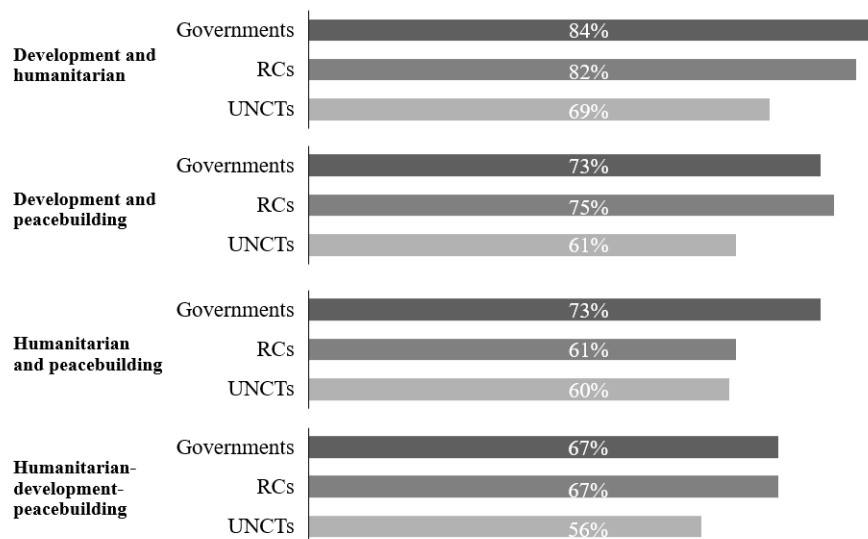
120.  The United Nations development system increasingly emphasizes collaboration and coordination with humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding efforts as essential to the achievement of SDGs at the national level, in line with the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review. Country teams continue, however, to show closer collaboration between development and humanitarian action compared to both development and peacebuilding and humanitarian and peacebuilding (see figure 16).

Figure 16
**Percentage of Governments, United Nations country team members and resident coordinators reporting close collaboration across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities**

_____

[18] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2024. Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2023.
[19] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2024. No escape: On the frontlines of climate change, conflict and forced displacement.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Development and humanitarian** | Governments | 84% |
| | RCs | 82% |
| | UNCTs | 69% |
| **Development and peacebuilding** | Governments | 73% |
| | RCs | 75% |
| | UNCTs | 61% |
| **Humanitarian and peacebuilding** | Governments | 73% |
| | RCs | 61% |
| | UNCTs | 60% |
| **Humanitarian-development-peacebuilding** | Governments | 67% |
| | RCs | 67% |
| | UNCTs | 56% |

*Source*: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of host country Governments, Resident Coordinators and United Nations Country Teams (various years)

121. For the first time, the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review calls upon the United Nations development system to assist countries in addressing the development needs of internally displaced persons. The mandate of the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement, which concluded in 2024, has left the system well positioned to respond to this request. The mandate played a crucial role in supporting Governments and United Nations resident coordinators to address the multidimensional challenge of internal displacement, beyond the humanitarian sector alone. Among 15 countries piloting this broader approach, 12 have adopted national plans and 2 are devising subnational plans. The plans cover solutions for over 11 million internally displaced people, underscoring the importance of Government leadership in finding responses at scale. Further support at the national level has come through the additional dedicated support for resident coordinators from solutions advisers. Guidance on integrating solutions pathways into country level responses has been developed, with a view to ensure that the United Nations ensure that its work strengthens the capacities of national governments. A Solutions Hub, carrying forward the legacy of the Special Advisor, has be established in the Development Coordination Office with funding from UNDP, IOM and UNHCR to ensure the guidance, lessons learned, and approaches are carried forward in future country responses.

122. At the headquarters level, United Nations entities reported some obstacles to closer coordination with humanitarian activities, and to strengthen linkages to peace. These related particularly to finance (89 per cent) and impact assessments (67 per cent), which remain largely siloed. Other concerns included a lack of common understanding of complementarity, inconsistent data and diverse planning tools. Some of these matters can be addressed through enhanced internal practices and procedures, including through coordinated analysis and complementary planning across mandates. Ultimately, more significant process will rely on shifting behaviours across pillars, with better funding and entity-specific incentives.

## C. Leaving no one behind

123.  In alignment with the 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, which called on all development system entities to assist governments with their efforts to respect and fulfil human rights commitments, the UN continues to work with countries in their efforts to operationalize the pledge to leave no one behind. 76 per cent of UN entities now report on how they integrate human rights into their work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This system-wide commitment supports my *Call to Action for Human Rights*, and I encourage all entities to continue responding to this call.

124.  Human rights support is in high demand at the country level. In 2024, 71 per cent of Resident Coordinators reported that programme country governments requested assistance on human rights. Among those, over 89 per cent of governments agreed that United Nations country teams are effective in engaging with national human rights institutions. The deployment of human rights advisers expanded to 42 UN country teams, with 12 additional deployments approved but delayed due to funding constraints. The Surge Initiative remained a key mechanism, delivering human rights analysis and operational advice for 40 Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks, and completing its sixth project round with 18 initiatives. These focused on accelerating progress on issues such as universal health coverage, the right to food, and environmental protection.

125.  With support from OHCHR in 2024, many country teams helped national counterparts integrate human rights principles into national economic policies. They also provided human rights-based budget analyses, addressing topics such as economic inequality, debt, taxation, and the human rights impacts of International Monetary Fund loans—issues directly tied to financing the six key transformative pathways for sustainable development.

126.  As interest grows among Member States in the ethical use of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, the UN development system has advanced its normative work by promoting human rights-based approaches to technology. In May 2024, the system released *Human Rights Due Diligence for Digital Technology Use*, offering practical guidance for applying human rights safeguards in rapidly evolving digital contexts. Complementing this, the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology and the United Nations Development Programme launched the *Universal Digital Public Infrastructure Safeguards Framework*, providing comprehensive recommendations to mitigate risks and promote inclusion and individual safety in digital systems.

# VI.  Accountability and oversight for development

## A.  Results-based management and evidence-driven reporting

127. From day one of our reforms, I emphasized my absolute commitment to transparency and accountability. Over recent years, we have seen a major transformation in this regard. The 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) reinforces this by calling for strengthened results-based management for both individual entity efforts and integrated system-wide results. The reform established a structured framework for results reporting at the country, regional, and global levels. In 2024, for the third consecutive year, all UN country teams produced annual country results reports, with most governments acknowledging improved alignment with national priorities. However, only 58% of governments found financial data in these reports sufficient, pointing to an area that still requires attention.

128. Progress has been made to sharpen accountability within internal structures. For example, 79% of UN entities now require their country representatives to report contributions to cooperation framework results to the Resident Coordinator—though full coverage and a culture of collaboration are still needed. Resident Coordinators have also been proactive in engaging national counterparts to enhance transparency and feedback. Upskilling efforts are underway to improve the capacity of UN teams in results-based management, including support from the Development Coordination Office and the integration of AI platforms.

129. Financial transparency is also improving. All UN entities now report activity and spending by SDG, with increasing alignment to global standards like the OECD and IATI. A system-wide "data cube" initiative ensures comparability and consistency. The UN is also enhancing technical expertise in data, digital tools, innovation, foresight, and behavioral science. While capabilities have grown—with around 60% of entities using modern practices, country teams still report gaps in high-priority areas like scenario planning and advanced analytics. Addressing these capacity needs will be crucial for achieving strategic impact in the years ahead.

Figure 17

**Percentage of Government agreement on the quality of United Nations country team annual results reports**
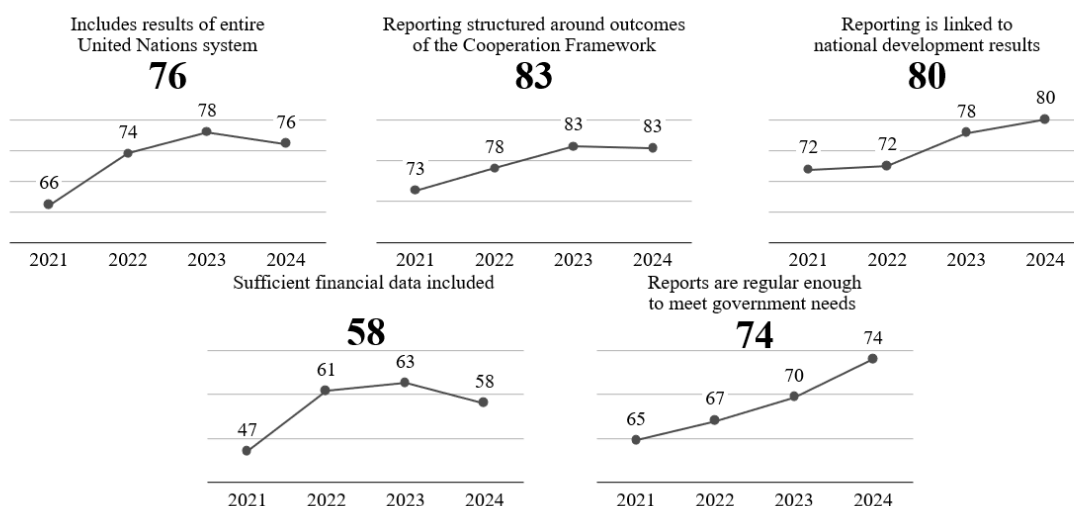


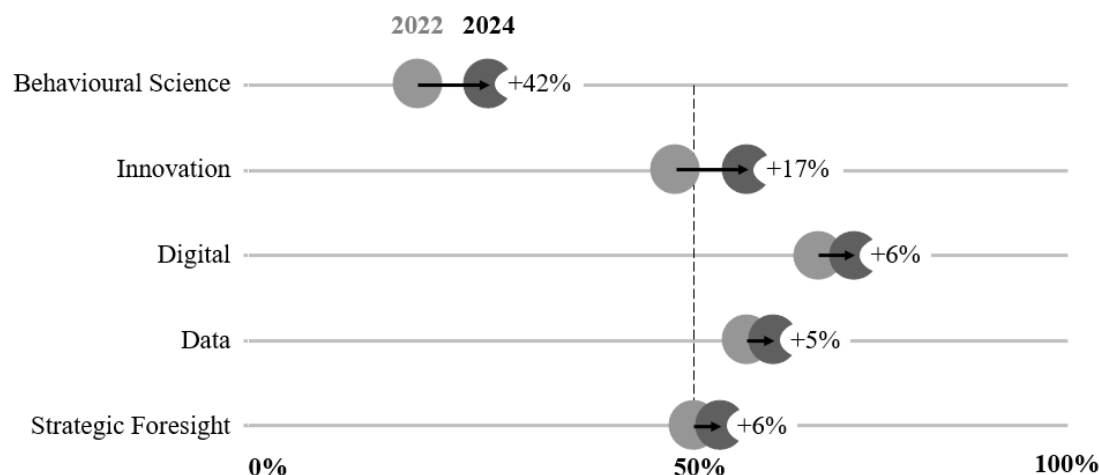*Source*: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, 2024.

130. Reporting on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) contributions is becoming more standardized, with an increasing number of country teams using common indicators—up from 15% in 2022, with full adoption targeted by 2028. Ninety-two percent of Cooperation Frameworks now include joint workplans published on UN-Info, mapping activities to outcomes. To improve QCPR monitoring, the UN will launch an updated indicator framework in 2025, balancing accountability with streamlined reporting. This complements other systems such as the Funding Compact and reform check list.

131. Financial transparency is also improving. All UN entities now report activity and spending by SDG, with increasing alignment to global standards like the OECD and IATI. A system-wide "data cube" initiative ensures comparability and

consistency. The UN is also enhancing technical expertise in data, digital tools, innovation, foresight, and behavioral science.
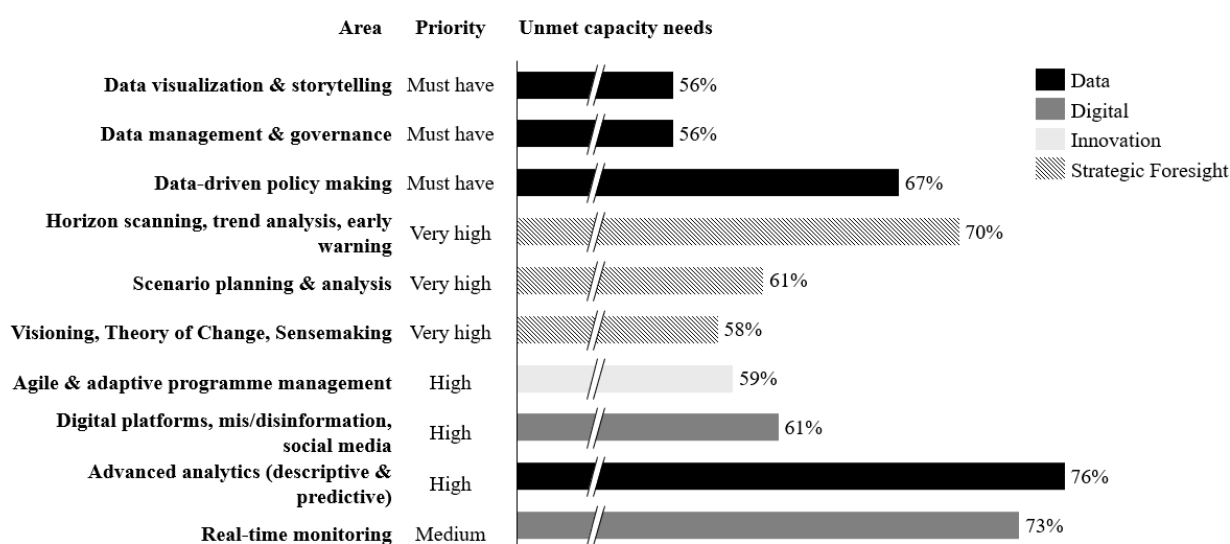
Figure 18
**Percentage of UN entities with key practice methods**

2022  **2024**

Behavioural Science ——— +42%

Innovation ——— +17%

Digital ——— +6%

Data ——— +5%

Strategic Foresight ——— +6%

0%    50%    100%

*Source*: Chief Executives Board, Scorecard Assessment (2022, 2024)

Figure 19

**Unmet Capacity Needs in UN Country Teams in Top-10 Most Strategic New Priority Areas**

| Area | Priority | Unmet capacity needs |
|---|---|---|
| **Data visualization & storytelling** | Must have | 56% |
| **Data management & governance** | Must have | 56% |
| **Data-driven policy making** | Must have | 67% |
| **Horizon scanning, trend analysis, early warning** | Very high | 70% |
| **Scenario planning & analysis** | Very high | 61% |
| **Visioning, Theory of Change, Sensemaking** | Very high | 58% |
| **Agile & adaptive programme management** | High | 59% |
| **Digital platforms, mis/disinformation, social media** | High | 61% |
| **Advanced analytics (descriptive & predictive)** | High | 76% |
| **Real-time monitoring** | Medium | 73% |

Legend: Data, Digital, Innovation, Strategic Foresight

*Source*: IMS 2024

## B. System-wide evaluation office and lesson learning for increased impact

132. In 2024, significant progress was made in solidifying the foundations of the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office, advancing its independence, credibility, and effectiveness. As a unique function within the United Nations development system, the office conducts evaluations and syntheses across the entire system, offering vital insights into the UN's contributions to the 2030 Agenda. Its creation represents a major milestone in the repositioning of the UN development system. However, the office remains in its early stages and faces ongoing challenges, particularly around predictable and sustainable financial support necessary to fulfill its mandate.

133. A key achievement in 2024 was the adoption of the System-Wide Evaluation Policy, which defines the roles, responsibilities, and procedures for evaluations, including management responses and reporting. The office worked throughout the year to build awareness of its mandate and promote transparency by publishing two major reports: the *Evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls* and a *Value for Money Assessment*. The evaluation offered eight actionable recommendations to improve UN interventions and harmonize practices aimed at ending violence against women and girls. These reports also accounted for the UN system's responsiveness to evolving crises and contexts.

134. To bridge the gap between evaluation evidence and its use in policymaking, the office launched an AI-driven initiative to create interactive digital maps of evaluation evidence related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR). It also produced evidence summaries on key QCPR themes to support Member State deliberations. Two new system-wide evaluations were launched, one reviewing progress on forming a new generation of UN country teams and another assessing the 2019 UN Disability Inclusion Strategy—both scheduled for completion in 2025.

135. Looking ahead, the office will issue a system-wide evaluation plan for 2025–2028, and develop mechanisms for quality assurance, management response, follow-up, and oversight. Two additional evaluations will begin, focusing on SDG transitions and youth-related UN programming. These efforts aim to strengthen both accountability and learning across the UN development system.

136. Despite the progress establishing this office, the limited voluntary contributions continue to undermine the ability of the office to deliver in a dedicated, independent manner. Adequate, predictable and sustainable resourcing of the office is fundamental to upholding its independence, credibility and effectiveness. Without predictable resources, the office may be constrained by solely taking forward evaluations which are readily financed, as it does not have the capacity to engage in resource mobilization on a fulltime basis.

137. The first annual report of the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office is being presented in parallel to this report to the Economic and Social Council at its operational activities for development segment, in accordance with the General Assembly request in the 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.

## C. A more responsive governance architecture

138. The accountability of the development system for system-wide results is grounded in a partnership between Member States and the Secretary-General. The Economic and Social Council's annual operational activities for development segment acts as the accountability platform, guiding the development system to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda. Each governing body should then ensure that the implementation of system-wide guidance is secured at the entity-specific level.

139. Over the preceding quadrennial cycle, we worked together, hand in hand, to enable Member States to perform their oversight functions.  Entities have also strengthened governing body oversight functions, using tools such as the "checklist on the implementation of the reform of the United Nations development system".In 2024, eleven UNSDG entities reported using the checklist—up from five in 2023— while eight more partially incorporated elements into their reporting. However, twelve entities have yet to report, underscoring the need for full participation, and oversight of the governing bodies, to drive coherent progress.

140.    The oversight from Member States remains paramount in guiding the system to deliver a reformed United Nations system which is best equipped to deliver on the SDGs. We will work with Member States but continuing to strengthen the data-evidenced information at their disposal. Member States may consider further formalizing annual Economic and Social Council resolutions or decisions to respond to the report and provide necessary guidance. Monitoring and accountability tools related to QCPR implementation will be updated in 2025 to reflect the latest guidance from the General Assembly, ensuring alignment and improved tracking of progress across the system.

D.    **Leading by example: translating commitments into action on the ground for sustainability, gender equality, disability inclusion, and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse**

141.  The United Nations development system continues to strengthen its operational frameworks to ensure that system-wide practices align with the standards and commitments enshrined in intergovernmental guidance. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, in particular, includes specific directives to uphold standards across the system, including on gender equality, disability inclusion, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and sustainability. The reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system offers a unique vertical backbone that helps ensure this intergovernmental guidance lands in concrete action on the ground, permeating across UN country teams in a way that adapts to national circumstances and demands. This was not the case in the looser coordination system that predated reforms.

**Sustainability**

142. The United Nations development system demonstrated strong progress in integrating a climate- and environment-responsive approach into its work in 2024, responding to demands by national counterparts. Most United Nations entities (93 per cent) now address environmental and climate challenges in strategic plans and report on these activities to their governing bodies. More can be done to integrate environmental and social safeguards or standards across policies, projects and programmes. Currently only 18 United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities (56 per cent) incorporate these standards based on the latest 2023 data.

143. On the other hand, entities must strengthen efforts to meet commitments under the United Nations Strategy for Sustainability Management. Only 18 per cent have met environmental management systems requirements, although a further 45 per cent are approaching these thresholds. To scale up efforts, the UN Secretariat has developed a new reporting platform, dashboard and training packages for country teams. Scaling up environmental sustainability measures by fully implementing environmental management systems requirements and channelling investments in data collection, validation and reporting will contribute to building a more sustainable and climate -resilient United Nations.

**Disability inclusion**

144. Since 2019, the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy has provided a system-wide framework for transformative change. Significant progress has been made, with 40 per cent of UN entities and 45 per cent of UN country teams now meeting or exceeding at least half of the strategy's accountability framework indicators. This results from the implementation of a series of internal policies to mainstream disability inclusion. Just over half of development system entities (51 per cent) have integrated disability inclusion into strategic plans, and 56 per cent of cooperation frameworks have disability inclusion mainstreamed in outcome areas and disaggregated data by disability.

145. Moving forward, increased attention will be required to address challenges in accessibility, procurement and human resources. Capacity-building initiatives and training for resident coordinators and country teams have been conducted by the Development Coordination Office and the Disability Inclusion Team of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. Accessibility remains an obstacle, as 60 per cent of development system entities have yet to develop or implement accessibility policies. Where policies exist, they have enabled more comprehensive assessments, including safety measures. Employment of persons with disabilities in the United Nations remains low despite a 15 per cent increase since 2019, with 27 per cent of development system entities meeting or exceeding employment requirements. While country teams and development system entities continue to consult persons with disabilities, the consultations remain largely limited to disability-specific issues. Only 40 per cent of United Nations entities and 41 per cent of country teams consult persons with disabilities across all areas.

146. There is momentum. To build on the achievements of the past five years, the UN development system must ensure dedicated funding and a strengthened institutional commitment to embedding disability inclusion throughout all areas of our work. This is a key priority we have set for ourselves moving forward.

**Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment**

147. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review emphasized the need for stronger prevention and response efforts related to sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment, in line with the United Nations' zero-tolerance policy. While reported allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse decreased by 16% from 2023 to 2024, the overall figures have risen significantly since 2018, reflecting increased awareness, improved training, and strengthened reporting mechanisms. However, challenges such as underreporting, fear of retaliation, and stigma remain.

148. Significant progress has been made to improve accountability and transparency. Over 97% of UN entities now provide annual reporting to their governing bodies on actions taken to prevent and address these issues, a significant increase from 68% in 2021. Most entities have specific policies and action plans in place, 84% of entities have sexual harassment action plans. Additionally, the UN have made global efforts to support victims and prevent abuse, such as the establishment of victim support functions within organizations like the World Health Organization, UN-Women, and UNOPS. A model prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse clause has also been developed for inclusion in Cooperation Frameworks to crystalise system-wide efforts, and briefings were provided to UN Country teams to the clause's inclusion.

149. At the country level, Resident Coordinators hold system-wide responsibility for ensuring the development and implementation of annual action plans to mitigate risks of sexual exploitation and abuse with country teams, with 92% of them having such plans in place. However, gaps persist, particularly regarding whistleblower protection and reporting mechanisms. Only 36% of country teams have established safeguards to protect those reporting abuse, and only 31% have a funded position for a country-

level coordinator. Addressing these gaps, ensuring sustainable funding and institutionalized prevention mechanisms remain essential to effectively combat sexual exploitation and abuse within the UN system.
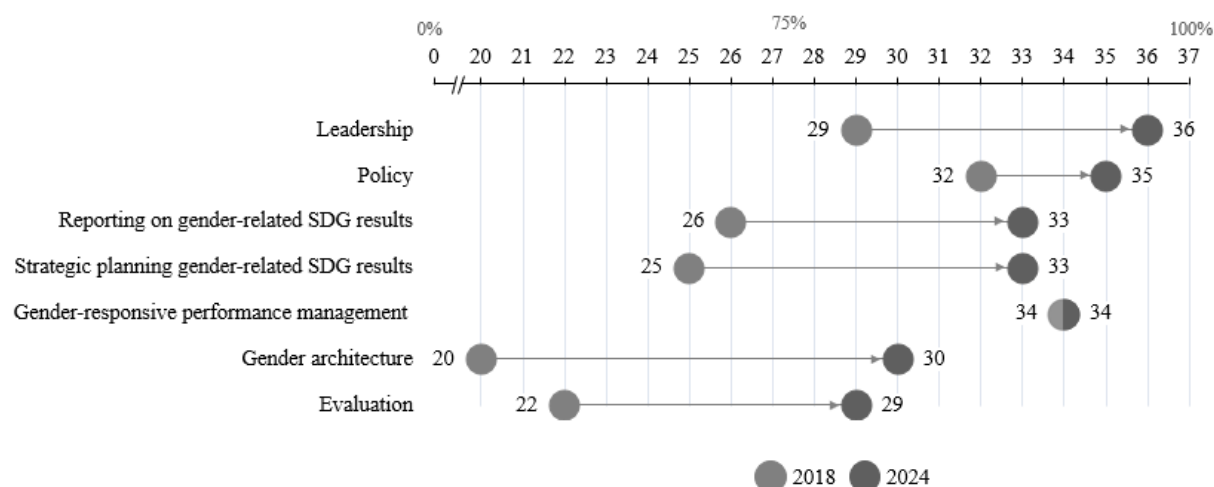
### Gender equality

150. In 2024, the United Nations accelerated efforts to better integrate supports for women and girls and advance gender equality through the System-Wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan. A new governance structure, led by the Secretary-General and comprising 43 UN entities, elevated accountability and political will. Seventy-five per cent of reporting entities established senior-level steering mechanisms to oversee gender equality policies. On International Women's Day 2025, the Secretary-General launched the Gender Equality Clarion Call, reinforcing a unified, principled approach to gender equality across the system.

151. In country, we are seeing the impact of this more clearly through stronger collaborative efforts. In Viet Nam, dedicated efforts are underway thanks to the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN Women to close gender gaps in education including through stronger policies and investment in infrastructure. Supported by the Joint SDG Fund, a new programme in Türkiye, led by the Resident Coordinator and bringing five agencies together is working with public institutions and local authorities to improve policies for care services and support women's livelihoods.

152. The year also marked the conclusion of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) 2.0 (2018–2024), with four entities fully meeting all indicators and 28 meeting at least 75 per cent. However, a gap remains between commitments and capacity: while 89 per cent of development entities integrated gender into strategic planning, only 19 per cent reported having sufficient capacity to implement those commitments. To address this, the United Nations launched UN-SWAP 3.0 in 2024, introducing improved performance indicators to align gender equality with strategic plans and programming.

Figure 20
**Number of United Nations development system entities that meet the following standards in the system-wide action plan (UN-SWAP)**



*Source*: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), 2024.

153. At the country level, UN country teams advanced implementation of gender-focused tools, including the UNCT-SWAP gender scorecard and the country team gender equality marker. Eleven country teams used the scorecard for the first time in 2024, and 19 entered a second cycle. Half of the 30 teams completing full assessments met at least 60 per cent of updated scorecard standards—an improvement from 30 per cent in 2023.

154. The United Nations Sustainable Development Group also issued mandatory guidance on applying the gender equality marker, with 46 country teams allocating at least 70 per cent of their annual funding to activities promoting gender equality. Furthermore, 44 per cent of new Cooperation Frameworks mainstreamed gender equality, and one-third included standalone outcomes.

155. Looking ahead, the UN will enhance transparency by requiring each entity to publish gender marker-based funding data starting in 2026. Currently, only 29 per cent of entities report on gender marker implementation to governing bodies. Financial constraints remain an obstacle for fully supporting UN developing system programming in country—only 16 UN development entities met the target of dedicating 15 per cent of resources to gender-focused activities.

156. UN advocacy efforts in 2024 helped prevent regression on laws addressing harmful traditional practices, supported the African Union Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls, and contributed to a Human Rights Council resolution on tech-facilitated gender-based violence. The UN-EU Spotlight Initiative continued its comprehensive efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls, with new programs in three countries and one region already securing a $100 million funding pipeline.

Figure 21
**Percentage of United Nations country team instruments with dedicated analyses and indicators on ending violence against women and girls**
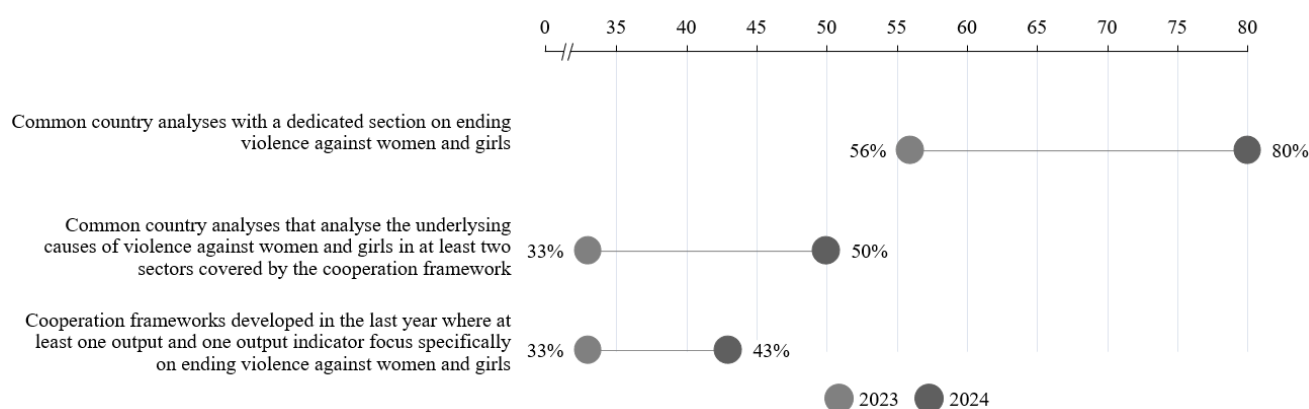


*Source:* UN-Women, 2025.


# VII. Implementation of the funding compact and funding trends

## A. The road thus far in implementing the funding compact

157. In 2024, the United Nations continued to prioritize flexible and sufficient funding as essential to scaling effective support for sustainable development. The adoption of a new Funding Compact between the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) and Member States in July 2024 marked a key milestone. With 12 mutually reinforcing commitments—six from Member States and six from the UNSDG—the Compact aims to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and adaptability in the UN development system. The focus is on increasing quality funding, including core and pooled contributions, to better tailor expertise and operations to country needs.

158. Following its adoption, the Development Coordination Office began implementing the Compact through global and field-level guidance and engagement. Several UN entities started developing individual monitoring frameworks and initiated funding dialogues around the new Funding Conpact with their governing bodies. At the country level, Resident Coordinators led Compact dialogues in 34 countries, with 51 more planned in early 2025. These dialogues are key to aligning contributing country support with development outcomes, making contributing countries' participation critical to maximizing the effectiveness of their assistance and yield the full impact of the Funding Compact.
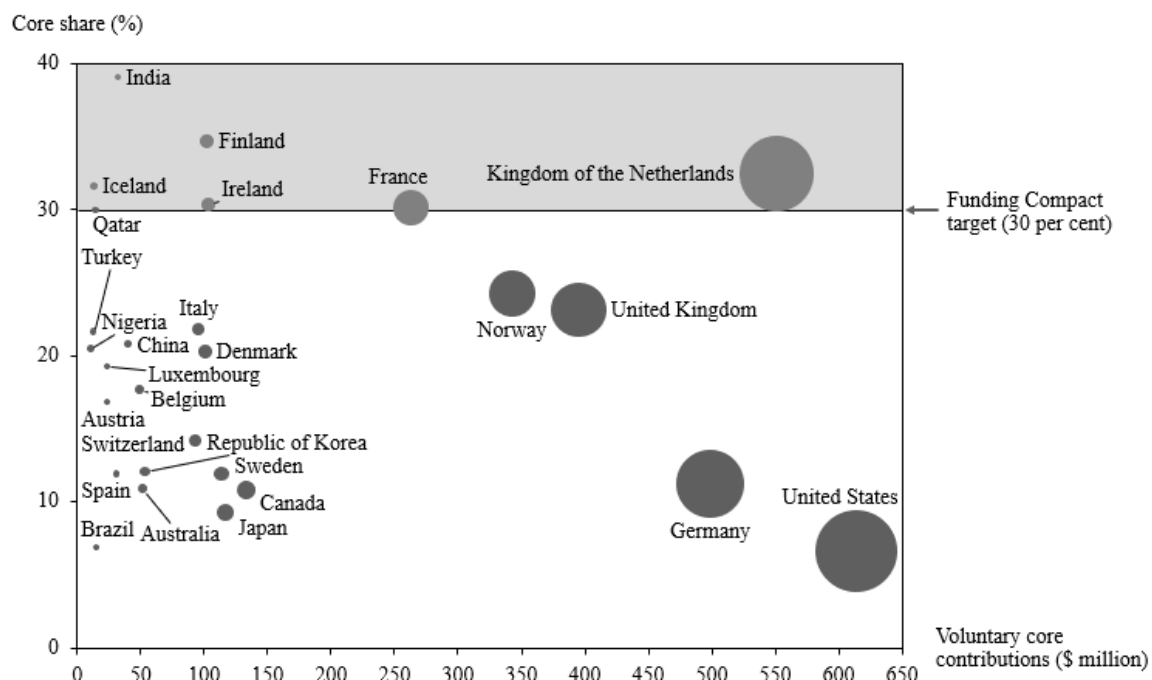
159.  Preliminary data from 2024 shows encouraging progress. The proportion of UN country teams with joint workplans linked to outcomes increased to 91 per cent, up from 74 per cent in 2023. Similarly, more teams now have multi-year funding frameworks and publish annual funding plans. There's also been growth in joint resource mobilization strategies (79 per cent of teams, up from 61 per cent in 2023). Meanwhile, the share of non-core funding from non-Member State contributors rose to 38 per cent in 2023, showing some success in diversifying the donor base. However, the share of core or unearmarked voluntary contributions from Member States in 2023 remained low at 13 per cent—still far from the 30 per cent target.

160. While contributions to pooled funds like the Joint SDG Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund increased significantly in 2023, key indicators for effective aid—such as the proportion of non-core funding that is flexible and the number of contributors providing 30 per cent or more unearmarked funding—have declined. This backslide threatens the ability of the UN system to plan and operate effectively. Although 27 Member States exceeded the $10 million voluntary core funding threshold in 2023 (up from 20 in 2022), only seven met the target of providing 30 per cent of voluntary contributions as core funding.

161.  Recognizing these challenges, I called on senior UN leadership to scale up joint resource mobilization and strategic planning for pooled funds, especially across the SDG Fund, CERF, and the Peacebuilding Fund. I continue to urge funding partners to align their contributions with the new Compact and ensure coherent messaging across embassies and missions about the importance of shifting toward more flexible funding. As global fiscal pressures mount, the Funding Compact remains a vital framework to guide both the strategic deployment of limited aid resources and efforts to build a more responsive, unified, and impactful UN development system.

Figure 22

**Top contributors of voluntary core funding, volume and share for all voluntary contributions, 2023**

Figure: Core share (%) versus Voluntary core contributions ($ million). Funding Compact target (30 per cent). Countries plotted include India, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, France, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Qatar, Turkey, Italy, Nigeria, China, Denmark, Luxembourg, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Republic of Korea, Norway, United Kingdom, Spain, Sweden, Canada, Brazil, Australia, Japan, Germany, United States.

## B. Rooting reforms and scaling up results through a fully funded resident coordinator

162. Six years on from the repositioning, the Resident Coordinator system has been cemented at the core of the development system. As reflected in the report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, the Resident Coordinators are at the forefront of the United Nations shift to programmes – marshalling the breadth of the United Nations support. However, global challenges are mounting and expanding – and countries are looking to Resident Coordinators to serve as a guide for the UN in their country.

163. In the last year alone, Resident Coordinators have supported over 160 countries. They have leveraged the United Nations system to support host countries engaging in crucial global dialogues including COP29. In 2024, there were 44 new cooperation frameworks developed, 10 of which started implementation in 2025, and 34 expected to finalize design this year and start implementation in 2026. Globally, the Resident Coordinators are working to coordinate over $20 billion annually in United Nations programming

164. Over the course of 2024, I prioritised securing resources for the Resident Coordinator system to enable the system to deliver on the expectations of Member States. The General Assembly decided to provide increased resources - $53 million - from the regular budget for the Resident Coordinator system. While the resources provide a higher level of predictability in the funding base for the system, it falls short of the needed resourcing. Therefore, the Resident Coordinator system continues to be reliant on voluntary contributions by Member States. Moreover, in the current fiscal context, we count on the UNSDG entities to continue to make their vital contributions.

165. In 2024, donor contributions to the Special Purpose Trust Fund continued at similar levels as in 2023, amounting to approximately USD202.1 million at the end of the year. In total, 26 countries and the European Union made commitments in 2024, including two developing countries. Ten multi-annual agreements ran through 2024,

with three concluding at the end of the year and seven continuing into 2025. This still represented a shortfall of USD79.7 million.

166. As requested by the General Assembly, a refined comprehensive and detailed report on the financing and governance of the resident coordinator system will be presented to the General Assembly at its 81st session. This will include the requested comprehensive review of all possible funding models and streams, including adjustments to the coordination levy and cost-sharing arrangements. An review will be conducted of the structure of resident coordinator offices to ensure that resource requirements are tailored to the context and needs of host countries.

167. A fully funded and capacitated Resident Coordinator system is a key tenant of rooting the reforms across the system. I look forward to working closely with Member States to achieve these goals and ensure the resident coordinator system's sustainability and effectiveness.

# VIII.  Conclusion

168. Led by resident coordinators on the ground and in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals and national development priorities, the United Nations development system is increasingly positioned to support Member States in meeting their needs.

169. There is no question that the world faces grave concerns and urgent needs, in poverty alleviation, inclusion, human rights, climate and the roles of institutions, among others.  This makes the role of the United Nations development system even more important, as it provides a proven, and effective channel to invest in the development fundamentals required to reach the Goals.

170. At a moment where risks of regression are acute, the United Nations development system must pull together as never before. The system has advanced in delivering results, and we will continue to be clear and concrete in reporting these, including for core resources. We will address remaining points of misalignment in programming and operations including strengthening the tailoring of our footprint in country and continue to maximize efficiencies, building on another record year in realising efficiency gains. Momentum behind these efforts will grow through a firm commitment to continue strengthening the role of the resident coordinator system, and to realizing agreed objectives under the funding compact. In the next year, we look to see Member States enhance delivering on their commitments under the Funding Compact. Improved evaluation and other systems for learning and transparency, such as the System-Wide Evaluation Office, are key for deepening accountability and responsiveness to the full spectrum of needs among Member States.

171.  Looking ahead, strengthening regional support to country-level implementation will require ensuring that regional mechanisms are positioned to deliver timely, demand-driven expertise aligned with national priorities. This includes more deliberately structuring and leveraging existing regional policy, analytical, and convening capacities — including those of the regional economic commissions — to enhance impact on the ground.

172. As we look to the upcoming Fourth World Conference on Financing for Development and the Second World Social Summit, there will be many opportunities to support the operational delivery through the United Nations development system. The Second World Social Summit builds on the legacy of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, which emphasized commitments to social inclusion, eradicating poverty, and achieving full productive employment and decent

work. The Fourth International Conference on Financing for development provides a space for leaders across governments, international organisations, financial institutions, businesses and more to come together on reforming financing, including support reform of the international financial architecture and efforts to address the financial challenges impairing the urgent investments need to scale up the SDGs.

173. As we mark eight decades of the United Nations, we look forward with urgency and commitment as we near the 2030 timeline. While the journey is far from complete, the United Nations development system must continue to efforts to deliver transformative actions in country. These efforts relay on adequate funding, conducive to the United Nations delivering in a coherent and effective manner. With robust partnerships and the provision of policy expertise, the United Nations stands ready to support Member States with realising a lasting impact and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.