## List of Acronyms

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<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ASG</td>
<td>Assistance Secretary General</td>
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<td>CCA</td>
<td>Common Country Analysis</td>
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<td>DOCO</td>
<td>Development Operations Coordination Office</td>
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<td>DCO</td>
<td>Development Coordination Office</td>
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<td>EOSG</td>
<td>Executive Office of the Secretary General</td>
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<td>ERG</td>
<td>Evaluation Reference Group</td>
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<td>FGDs</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussions</td>
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<td>FGM</td>
<td>Female Genital Mutilation</td>
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<td>GEEW</td>
<td>Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women</td>
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<td>HCs</td>
<td>Humanitarian Coordinators</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
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<td>HRAs</td>
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<td>HRBA</td>
<td>Human Rights Based Approach</td>
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<td>HRM-MDTF</td>
<td>Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism Multi-Donor Trust Fund</td>
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<td>HRuF</td>
<td>Human Rights Up Front</td>
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<td>HRWG</td>
<td>Human Rights Working Group</td>
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<td>HuriTALK</td>
<td>UN Human Rights Policy Network</td>
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<td>IBCs</td>
<td>Issue-Based Coalitions</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<td>IMS</td>
<td>Information Management System</td>
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<td>KIIIs</td>
<td>Key Informant Interviews</td>
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<td>LAC</td>
<td>Latin American and the Caribbean</td>
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<td>LGBTQ</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer or Questioning</td>
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<td>LNOB</td>
<td>Leaving No One Behind</td>
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<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
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<td>MPTFO</td>
<td>Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office</td>
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<td>NHRIs</td>
<td>National Human Rights Institutions</td>
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<td>OECD/DAC</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance</td>
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<td>OHCHR</td>
<td>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</td>
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<td>Peace and Development Advisors</td>
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<td>PUNOs</td>
<td>Participating United Nations Organizations</td>
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<td>QCPR</td>
<td>Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review</td>
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<td>RBM</td>
<td>Results-Based Management</td>
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<td>RCs</td>
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<td>RENAMO</td>
<td>Mozambican National Resistance</td>
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<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>ToRs</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
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<td>ToC</td>
<td>Theory of Change</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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<td>UFE</td>
<td>Utilization-Focused Evaluation</td>
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<td>Organization Name</td>
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<td>United Nations Country Team</td>
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<td>United Nations Development Assistance Framework</td>
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<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UN Development System</td>
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<td>United Nations Evaluation Group</td>
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<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework</td>
<td>UNSDCF</td>
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<td>United Nations Sustainable Development Group Human Rights Mainstreaming Multi-Donor Trust Fund</td>
<td>UNSDG HRM MDTF</td>
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<td>Universal Periodic Reviews</td>
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Executive Summary

Background and Purpose of the Evaluation

As the first evaluation conducted of the Fund, the purpose of this evaluation is to understand the Fund’s achievements towards institutionalizing the mainstreaming of human rights into UN operational activities for development so as to have a transformational impact on human rights at the country level, and to provide recommendations to strengthen its impact going forward.

About the Human Rights Mainstreaming Multi-Donor Trust Fund (HRM-MDTF)

Promoting universal respect for and observance of Human Rights is a key purpose and principle enshrined in the United Nations Charter and is integral to the development work of the United Nations. In 2010, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) established the HRM-MDTF to support the programming of its inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanism in an effort to promote inter-agency human rights mainstreaming across the UN Development System (UNDS). The Fund supported and was aligned with the work plans of the UNDG/UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms from 2010 – 2020. The inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms provided the Fund’s governance structure (i.e. its Steering Committee) from 2010 – 2019 while the Secretariat of the Fund also served as the Secretariat of the inter-agency mechanisms. In 2019, the Fund’s Steering Committee was separated from the UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanism in place at the time due to changes in the UNSDG architecture. Due to constant changes in the UNDG/UNSDG architecture, the inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanism has been restructured and renamed four times over the past decade.

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation is structured around the standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and drew on a theory-based design that used contribution analysis and that was utilization-focused. It drew on mixed methods by employing two country-level surveys with Human Rights Advisors (HRAs) and Resident Coordinators (RCs) across the UNDS, five virtual country case studies (Argentina, Costa Rica, Jordan, Malawi, and Nigeria), an extensive document review, and over 30 key informant interviews with stakeholders at the global and regional levels. It used a participatory approach that engaged stakeholders throughout the inception, data collection, and reporting and validation phases of the evaluation. Members of the Evaluation Reference Group and the Fund’s Steering Committee and UN Agency Focal Points provided extensive feedback on the evaluation design and its findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The evaluation used a human rights, gender equality, and equity approach and followed UNEG ethical standards.
Summary of Main Findings

Relevance

The mainstreaming of human rights throughout the UN development system remains as relevant and important as ever. In fact, over half of surveyed RCs believe that human rights should be their top priority. The Fund is currently at a critical point in history where reforms in the UNDS and leadership from the Secretary General through his 2020 Call to Action on Human Rights offer opportunities for increased human rights mainstreaming through a more empowered RC and more coordinated country-level inter-agency planning through the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

The Fund has demonstrated its relevance by addressing important needs and priorities within the UNDS at the global, regional, and country levels and among national stakeholders by serving as an essential funding tool to mainstream human rights across the UNDS. The Fund’s inter-agency approach and support for HRAs who work directly in the RC’s Office (RCO) with the full institutional support of OHCHR have also facilitated the Fund’s relevance. This has encouraged human rights mainstreaming to be seen as a common good owned by the UNDS. Within the context of UN Reform, donors are particularly interested in funding initiatives that support inter-agency work.

Constant changes to the UNDG/UNSDG architecture over the past decade have reduced the Fund’s ability to plan strategically and long-term. While the Fund’s general change logic is outlined in its ToRs, it does not have a multi-year results framework, formal Theory of Change (ToC), or a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework. In addition, the Fund lacks visibility among UN staff at the global, regional, and country levels, which hinders the ability of UN staff to request support from the Fund and to engage in its services.

While the Fund has conducted only limited work at the regional level due in large part to a weak regional UNDG/UNSDG architecture, the UNDS Reform’s call for stronger regional mechanisms offers an opportunity for the Fund to strengthen its regional presence. The Fund is also lacking a strategy and strategic partnerships to increase coordination around human rights mainstreaming across the development and humanitarian spheres as well as coordination across the UN’s three pillars of human rights, development, and peace and security to support impact level results at the country level that are affected by the human rights intricacies relating to early warning and prevention systems, development work, and responses to grave human rights violations.

Effectiveness

The Fund has made important contributions to institutionalizing and operationalizing human rights mainstreaming across the UNDS. These include the integration of human rights principles into global UNDG/UNSDG priorities and frameworks (such as the QCPR and the 2030 Agenda) and the development of guidance documents and capacity development tools to operationalize these
priorities. Evaluation key informants at the country level have indicated that the guidance and tools supported by the Fund have been very helpful in operationalizing human rights mainstreaming among RCs and UNCTs. The Fund has provided support for RC human rights leadership dialogues that, within the context of a more empowered RC role as part of the UNDS Reform, shows potential for scale-up. The Fund’s financing of HRA deployments to RCOs has facilitated the mainstreaming of human rights principles throughout the UNCTs’ common planning processes (i.e. CCA, UNDA, UNSDCF). In fact, the provision of HRAs is the most widely recognized and appreciated aspect of the Fund’s work. HRAs have played and continue to play a larger role than simply advising on human rights issues that includes bringing national stakeholders together and advancing human rights priorities at the country level. However, HRAs have very limited financial resources at their disposal to advance this work in areas that require financing such as convening, conducting assessments and studies, etc. The Fund has also provided extensive support to Member States through support from HRAs to strengthen their reporting on human rights and engagement with human rights mechanisms.

Stakeholders have raised concerns over weaknesses with respect to mainstreaming human rights throughout the implementation of UNCT programming. There is a perceived lack of capacity within the UNCT member organisations to effectively mainstream human rights throughout their work. While the Fund made some attempts to finance projects that mainstream human rights throughout UNCT programme implementation, it faced capacity challenges to manage and monitor this work. The Fund’s lack of an M&E framework has likely negatively influenced its ability to guide, assess, and modify its work to ensure its effectiveness. The Fund’s support for a UNDG/UNSDG-wide knowledge management function has gradually been deprioritized, leaving a major gap in current human rights mainstreaming knowledge management.

Efficiency

The Fund’s current governance structure, as of 2019 consisting of a Steering Committee that is intended to make both strategic and technical decisions, has increasingly become a technical body that does not facilitate strategic decision-making. The technical nature of the Steering Committee meetings has dissuaded many senior decision-makers from participating organisations from attending, thus further reducing the strategic nature of the meetings. Steering Committee meetings have increasingly become focused on reviewing HRA deployments and discussing the criteria for deployment. While some modifications and updates have been made to the HRA deployment criteria, they have not been clearly consolidated and articulated in a formal document. The 2012 HRA Deployment Strategy has not been formally updated since 2012. Detailed criteria with respect to HRA deployment prioritization among RCs/UNCTs is currently not outlined in a formal document.

The current level of engagement of some participating UN agencies towards the inter-agency Fund is low and is manifested through the minimal exchange of information and reporting on results among participating organizations, the near absence of senior (i.e. Director level or higher) representatives from participating organizations, and low commitments from participating organizations to
contribute towards the Fund through activities such as knowledge management and resource mobilization efforts. This is due to a number of factors that include the technical/administrative nature of the Steering Committee meetings; the Fund’s primary focus on the HRA programme over other activities that require in-kind engagement from PUNOs; limited staff capacity among agencies to work on human rights; and uncertainty with respect to the future UNDG/UNSDG architecture. In addition, while there has been some donor engagement over the years, it has been largely limited to annual reporting, with no functioning mechanism in place to engage donors in strategic planning or decision-making.

The Fund is achieving administrative efficiencies, and is compliant with UNDG Guidance, by transferring a minimum of 100,000 USD per project per agency. However, this limits the Fund’s degree of flexibility in meeting the needs and priorities of its stakeholders as some activities such as workshops and training require less funding than the threshold. The Fund’s ToRs and the work plans of the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms contain some RBM weaknesses that have hindered the Fund’s ability to plan and achieve results. The ad hoc sharing of results between annual reporting periods among organisations within the Fund has not facilitated operational efficiencies and has diminished trust between participating entities.

Sustainability

Mainstreaming human rights into five-year country plans (UNDAFs and UNSDCFs) has encouraged the sustainability of the integration of human rights into country planning and programming. While HRAs have, over the years, been partially funded by RCOs and UNCTs, this continued cost-sharing arrangement has proven to be unrealistic within the context of UN Reform and resulting changes in resource allocation including the cost-sharing arrangement for the RC system. Therefore, the Fund is currently required to continue supporting the full financing of HRA deployments on a yearly basis. The Fund has experienced severe funding volatility and currently has a limited donor base. It also does not have structures or processes in place to regularly engage current donors to help generate funding or bring in new ones, thus raising concerns over the sustainability of the Fund. The Fund does not have a formal resource mobilization strategy and the roles and responsibilities for resource mobilization among PUNOs are unclear. In 2019, the Fund’s Steering Committee made several decisions to enhance the sustainability of the Fund that include conducting this evaluation, extending the Fund to 2024, and planning the development a multi-year results framework.

Impact

The Fund provides significant value-added to inter-agency coordination and cooperation around human rights by consisting of multiple UN agencies and by facilitating a space for UN agencies to work together to mainstream human rights. This space has facilitated synergies between UN agencies based on their comparative advantages, which have provided added value to the UNDG/UNSDG. The provision of the Secretariat to the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency human rights
mainstreaming mechanisms and human rights capacity within DOCO/DCO has also been a value-added as it allowed the Fund to deliver additional results that don’t require financing.

The Fund has a comparative advantage in linking global and regional inter-agency efforts to country-level work, particularly through the provision of guidance and tools, capacity development, and technical support at the country level. Due to the efficiency issues outlined above, the Fund is currently not functioning to achieve maximum impact. However, the Human Rights Advisor Programme shows potential for scale-up, as there is a strong interest among RCs to receive HRAs but that the extent of their deployment has been limited due to funding constraints.

The Fund’s potential to generate a larger impact is currently hindered by few partnerships with non-UN actors, minimal synergies with other UN initiatives, and currently minimal knowledge sharing across countries and regions. The UN Secretary General’s Call to Action for Human Rights outlines important areas of work where the Fund could increase its potential impact with respect to mainstreaming Human Rights throughout the UN Development System. These include working on “hot” priorities such as digital rights and climate justice.

Conclusions

1. **The Fund has demonstrated its unique added value in supporting human rights mainstreaming throughout the UNDS and is well placed to further advance human rights mainstreaming within the context of UNDS Reform.**

The Fund has used its comparative advantage of linking human rights mainstreaming efforts across the global, regional, and country levels to support the institutionalization of human rights mainstreaming and its operationalization at the country level. This work has contributed towards the widespread acceptance of the centrality of human rights within development work across the UNDS and has supported human rights mainstreaming throughout country level planning. The Fund is well placed to continue supporting human rights mainstreaming and to leverage the results achieved and contributions made by participating UN organisations within the current context of UNDS Reform due to the Fund’s direct link to a more empowered RC and a stronger country planning process through the UNSDCF.

2. **The UNDS Reform and the Secretary General’s Call to Action for Human Rights present important opportunities to advance the Fund’s current work and reinvigorate the mainstreaming of human rights within the UNDS. However, the Fund is currently not achieving its potential to engage donors and mobilize resources to support this work.**

While the Fund is currently well positioned to take advantage of UNSD Reform opportunities to further promote human rights mainstreaming, it lacks a resource mobilization strategy to engage potential donors. The Fund also doesn’t have regular and interactive mechanisms in place to engage current donors to promote the Fund and is lacking visibility across the UN system and among potential new
The Fund’s current resource mobilization is not currently sufficient to meet the demands for human rights mainstreaming support across the UNDS.

3. The diversity of the Fund’s portfolio has been one of its major strengths and has encouraged the engagement of UN participating organisations. However, activities unrelated to the HRA Programme have not kept pace with the overall growth of the Fund. There are areas outside of the HRA Programme that require further support in order to deliver on human rights mainstreaming across the UNDS.

The diversity of the Fund’s portfolio is one of its major strengths as it has permitted the Fund to influence the UNDS at the global, regional, and country levels and has facilitated a coordinated and holistic approach towards human rights mainstreaming across the UNDG/UNSDG. However, over time, knowledge management has been gradually deprioritized and PUNOs have struggled to engage in inter-agency work outside of the HRA Programme due to a combination of factors including limited human rights resources and low levels of engagement from some participating organisations. Areas that require further investment by the Fund include developing a strong knowledge management function that gathers and shares information on human rights across the UNSDG; further presence at the regional level; continued policy work, and further support for mainstreaming human rights throughout UNCT programme implementation.

4. By operating through its current pooled funding format, the Fund is able to directly engage a variety of UN agencies in human rights mainstreaming efforts, leverage the comparative advantages of these agencies, and pursue a diversified portfolio that links global to country level efforts.

While the Fund’s work could potentially be executed through alternative arrangements such as through a joint programme, they don’t offer the same degree of direct inter-agency engagement as that offered by the Fund’s current structure. By having an inter-agency Steering Committee, the Fund guarantees that the visions, needs, and priorities of participating UN organisations are taken into consideration. The inter-agency nature of the Fund also provides PUNOs with the opportunity to invest resources into the common goal of mainstreaming human rights across the UNDS.

5. The Fund’s goal of achieving “transformational impact” at the country level requires further coordination across UN pillars in order to address the interconnected nature of the development and humanitarian spheres as well as the UN pillars of peace and security, human rights, and development work.

Human rights work that falls outside of the Fund’s mandate (particularly mainstreaming human rights throughout humanitarian work, early warning systems, and responses to grave human rights violations) influences the Fund’s ability to achieve its goal of “transformational impact on human rights at the country level” due to the interconnectedness of these areas and the development sphere. Even though the Fund has provided some support to mainstream human rights throughout humanitarian work and to
advance the Human Rights Up Front (HRuF) Initiative, coordination between the Fund and other UN entities working on humanitarian work and in the other UN pillars of peace and security and human rights has been limited. The Fund does not have a strategy in place and has not established partnerships to strengthen coordination across the UN pillars.

6. **The Fund’s governance system and management processes are currently not functioning in line with best practices and require improvements and further professionalization to achieve maximum impact.**

The Fund currently doesn’t have a multi-year results framework, a Theory of Change to outline its change logic, or a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework. This limits the Fund’s ability to plan long-term, strategically target its work for maximum impact, achieve strategic results through synergies and scale-up, mobilize resources, and understand the extent to which its support is advancing human rights mainstreaming. The Fund also currently isn’t engaging donors in its strategic decision-making. The efficiency and effectiveness of the day-to-day management of the Fund is suffering due to a lack of professionalization. The roles and responsibilities of participating organisations have not been clearly defined with respect to important areas such as contributions towards knowledge management or resource mobilization efforts. Annual reporting is shared formally through the consolidated annual report. However, additional interim results sharing is not done within a formalized process. While the Fund’s Steering Committee is aware of these challenges and has recognized these areas as needing improvement, addressing these weaknesses through further professionalization of the Fund carries some cost implications, as it would entail significant investments on behalf of the Secretariat.

7. **The current structure of the Steering Committee and the nature of its meetings do not facilitate strategic decision-making or the development of important strategic frameworks.**

With the elimination of the Resource Management Committee, the Steering Committee is currently required to make both the strategic and technical level decisions of the Fund. Steering Committee meetings have become increasingly technical over the past couple of years, which has reduced the Steering Committee’s ability to engage in strategic decision-making. Upcoming changes to the UNSDG architecture will likely dissolve the current inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanism, potentially leaving the UNSDG and the Fund without a high-level strategic decision-making body composed of senior decision-makers. In an ideal scenario, a UNSDG-wide forum consisting of exclusively high-level decision makers would guide the human rights mainstreaming strategic priorities of entities across the UNSDG, which would include the Fund. However, since such a mechanism may or may not be established, the Fund’s current Steering Committee will need to re-evaluate its structure and processes to ensure that it can function at the strategic level that is necessary to set the strategic agenda of the Fund.

8. **The lack of formalized detail with respect to the HRA deployment criteria is contributing towards the decreasing strategic nature of the Fund’s Steering Committee meetings and raises doubts among stakeholders over whether the needs of all RCs are being equally met.**
The criteria for HRA deployments from the 2012 Human Rights Advisor Strategy hasn’t been formally updated since its original publication. A number of changes and detailed definitions have been approved and used since. However, these criteria could benefit from more details with respect to the prioritization of deployments within a context of limited resources. This has caused members of the Steering Committee to spend a significant amount of time engaged in discussions around HRA deployments and the criteria for selection, which has contributed towards the ever-increasing technical nature of Steering Committee meetings. The lack of formalized detailed criteria that outlines processes to determine prioritization among countries in need has also affected how interviewed stakeholders across the global and country levels perceive the relevance of HRA deployments and has raised concerns among stakeholders as to whether the needs of all RCs are being equally taken into consideration.

Recommendations

1. Define the Fund’s strategic vision, including through the creation of a ToC and multi-year results framework, and raise awareness among the UNSDG about the need for a UNDS-wide senior leadership space to guide human rights mainstreaming work, including that of the Fund.

2. Mobilize additional resources by developing a resource mobilization strategy and an aligned communications plan that promote the Fund’s visibility among UN stakeholders and donors and that articulates the Fund’s comparative advantage, value added, and its future vision for mainstreaming human rights across the UNDS.

3. Continue scaling-up support for Human Rights Advisors while simultaneously expanding the proportion of the Fund’s portfolio that falls outside of the HRA Programme.

4. Institutionalize and systematize the Fund’s management processes to align them with good management practices and to better reflect results-based management principles.

5. Update the 2012 HRA deployment criteria and clearly articulate the detailed criteria (including prioritization) in a formalized document. At the same time, formalize DCO’s contributions towards supporting the HRA Programme in line with its new role of supporting the RC system.
Acknowledgements

The Evaluation Team (consisting of Ms. Katherine Garven as Senior Evaluation Specialist and Team Lead and Ms. Natalia Voronova as Junior Evaluation Specialist) would like to thank members of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Human Rights Mainstreaming Multi-Donor Trust Fund (UNSDG HRM MDTF) (hereafter “the Fund”) for their support and participatory engagement throughout the evaluation process. This includes support provided by the Evaluation Manager, Ms. Brianna Harrison; the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG); and the Fund’s Steering Committee and UN Agency Focal Points. The Evaluation Team is particularly grateful for inputs and feedback provided on the draft evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations that were shared prior to the development of this report. The evaluators would also like to thank all of the Fund’s stakeholders who participated in the data collection through key informant interviews, case studies, and surveys. The diversity of thoughts, opinions, and recommendations for improvement shared with the evaluation team has greatly contributed to the quality of this report.
Section 1: Background, Context and Description of the HRM-MDTF

1.1 Background and Context of the HRM-MDTF

Promoting universal respect for and observance of Human Rights (HR) is a key purpose and principle enshrined in the United Nations Charter and is integral to the development work of the United Nations (UN). The importance of mainstreaming human rights as part of the core work of the United Nations development system to support member governments to achieve the Agenda 2030 and the UN and its Members States’ commitment to Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) was re-emphasized in the 2020 UN Secretary General’s Call to Action on Human Rights, stating that “the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets correspond overwhelmingly to existing – and legally binding – human rights commitments” and that “we must keep human rights principles at the fore of SDG implementation, and use our human rights instruments to contribute1.”

Mainstreaming human rights within the UN Development System (UNDS) continues to be as relevant as ever, particularly within the context of the UN development system reform outlined by the Secretary General in 20182 designed to reposition the UN as a more effective partner to countries in their efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda, in line with their human rights obligations3. Within the context of the new UN reform of its development system, ensuring greater human rights leadership and technical capacities in the UNDS for coherent integration of human rights is key to a UNDS that fulfills its role in supporting the transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda.

1.2 Description of the HRM-MDTF

As part of efforts to mainstream Human Rights throughout the UNDS, the UN Development Group (UNDG) established the Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism Multi-Donor Trust Fund (HRM-MDTF) in 2010, (hereafter “the Fund”)4. With an initial operating period from December 1st, 2010 until December 31st 2013, the Fund has been extended five times with its current end date set for December 31st, 2024.

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1 Secretary General, message to all UN staff on the launch of the Call to Action on Human Rights, 24 February 2020.
2 The reform of the United Nations development system (UNDS) is mandated by the General Assembly of the United Nations in Resolution A/RES/72/279 of 31 May 2018, which responded to the vision and proposals of Secretary-General António Guterres to reposition the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.
3 The UN development system reforms mandated by the General Assembly (A/Res/72/279) envisage a revitalized UNDAF in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, new generation of UNCTs ensuring the best configuration of support on the ground, and strengthened capacities, resources and skill sets within the UN development system to support national Governments in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It also envisages impartial and empowered Resident Coordinators, with the authority and leadership to draw on the expertise and assets of all United Nations development system entities, including non-resident agencies, and system- wide accountability on the ground for implementing the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and supporting countries in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
4 The Fund was initially named the UNDG Human Rights Mainstreaming mechanism (HRM) MDTF in 2010. However, over the past decade, the Fund has experienced restructuring on a number of occasions; being renamed the UN Sustainable Development Group Human Rights Mainstreaming (UNSDG- HRM) MDTF in 2019.
Over the past decade, the Fund has supported the programming of the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms through both financial contributions as well as support from its Secretariat. From 2010 – 2020, the Fund has taken its strategic direction from the work plans of the inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms by aligning its funding activities to those in the work plans. The inter-agency mechanisms provided the Fund’s governance structure (i.e. its Steering Committee and Resource Management Committee) from 2010 – 2019 while the Secretariat of the Fund also served as the Secretariat of the inter-agency mechanisms.

In 2019, the Fund’s Steering Committee was separated from the UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanism in place at the time due to changes in the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) architecture. The Fund’s Resource Management Committee was also dissolved at this point, leaving only the Fund’s Steering Committee in place. Even though this separation occurred, the Fund still continued to use the work plan of the current inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanism (the Task Team on Leaving No One Behind, Human Rights, and the Normative Agenda) as its source of strategic guidance. Over the past decade, the UNDG/UNSDG has undergone numerous changes to its architecture, which has resulted in the restructuring and renaming of the inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanism from the UNDG Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism (2010 – 2014) to the UNDG Human Rights Working Group (2015 – 2016) to the Give Voice to Common Values and Norms UNDG Results Group (2017) to the Task Team on Leaving No One Behind, Human Rights and the Normative Agenda (2018 – 2020), as outlined in Exhibit 1 below.

Exhibit 1. Changes to the structure of the UNDG/UNSDG human rights interagency coordination mechanisms from 2010-2020
Today, the Fund continues to provide support for the implementation of UNSDG priorities, including through the current UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanism. The Fund’s overall objective is to institutionalize the mainstreaming of human rights into UN operational activities for development so as to have a transformational impact on human rights at the country level. In contributing to its overall objective, the Fund focuses on four primary components:

1. Promoting a coordinated and coherent UN system-wide approach towards the integration of human rights principles and international standards into UN operational activities for development;
2. Providing coherent support for Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams in mainstreaming human rights;
3. Developing a coherent UN-system wide approach, through cooperation and collaboration among UN agencies, to providing support towards strengthening national human rights protection systems at the request of governments; and
4. Contributing to the integration of human rights issues in the overall UNSDG advocacy on development agenda and global issues.

1.3 Change Logic

The Fund’s change logic is generally outlined in the 2019 Terms of Reference of the Fund and the ToRs of the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms that it has supported over time. However, the Fund has yet to develop a comprehensive and coherent Theory of Change (ToC) model that clearly articulates the Fund’s overall goal, outcomes, outputs, and activities, along with associated assumptions, risks, and factors that facilitate and hinder change. To support the Fund in better articulating its change process and to guide the evaluation analysis, the Evaluation Team has reconstructed the Theory of Change Model presented in Annex 4 based on the Fund’s 2019 ToRs that reflects the Fund’s current change logic.

1.4 Stakeholders

The Fund engages with a number of stakeholder groups and is accountable to both rights holders and duty-bearers. Rights holders include people across the world who depend on the United Nations to support their efforts to demand the fulfilment of their human rights. Duty-bearers include Member Governments, Donors, and United Nations entities.

Stakeholders within the UNDS include those directly engaged with the Fund’s implementation and those who directly benefit from the Fund’s activities.

UN stakeholders directly engaged with the implementation of the Fund include:

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5 While the Fund’s objectives have shifted slightly since its inception in 2010, the reconstructed Theory of Change captures the Fund’s current goals and objectives, as it is based primarily on the Fund’s 2019 ToRs.
• Members of the Fund’s Steering Committee
• The Fund’s Technical Secretariat
• Participating UN organisations
• Inter-Agency Mechanisms that support Human Rights mainstreaming (primarily the Human Rights Working Group, the Give Voice to Common Values and Norms UNDG Results Group, and the Task Team on Leaving No One Behind, Human Rights and the Normative Agenda).

UN stakeholders who directly benefit from the Fund’s activities include:
• Organisational members of the UNSDG
• Resident Coordinators (RCs)
• UN Country Teams (UNCTs)
• UNDS staff across programming areas
• Human Rights Advisers (HRAs)

A detailed Stakeholder Map outlining each stakeholder group, their role and participation in the Fund, and their interests in the evaluation findings and recommendations, developed by the evaluation team is presented as Annex 3.
Section 2: Purpose, Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to facilitate both accountability and learning by providing a deeper understanding of the Fund’s achievements, as well as identifying areas for improvement so as to strengthen the Fund’s overall impact going forward.

The overall objectives of the evaluation are to: 1) promote accountability among partners involved in the implementation of the Fund; 2) provide a broad evidence base to support the design and implementation of the next multi-year results framework; and 3) inform efforts to strengthen the effective governance, management, and operational processes of the Fund within the current development and UN development system reform context.

The specific objectives of the evaluation are the following:

1) Demonstrate accountability to stakeholders through an assessment of the progress and contributions of the Fund towards the mainstreaming of human rights within the UN development system in relation to the Fund’s states objectives and primary components;
2) Assess the Fund’s governance and management to identify if and how they can be improved in terms of efficiency and effectiveness;
3) Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the operational aspects of the Fund, as well as the Fund’s impact on coherence between UNSDG entities with respect to human rights mainstreaming;
4) Given the evolution of the UNSDG and reforms in the UN development system, in particular at country level (including the funding landscape), identify opportunities for the next phase of the Fund.
5) Document lessons learned to improve programme design and provide evidence to inform the development of the Fund’s 2021-2024 Multi-Year Results Framework.

The primary users of the evaluation will be the participating UN organizations of the Fund; the DCO; the Fund’s Administrative Agent (MPTFO); and contributing Donors.

Secondary users include RCs and UNCTs; potential new donors; Member States and national stakeholders (including government bodies and CSOs); organisational members of the UNSDG, including inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms; HRAs; and UNDS staff across programming areas.

Evaluation scope: The timeframe covered by the evaluation is: 1 December 2010 to 31 December 2019. It includes all initiatives supported through the Fund at country, regional and HQ levels, encompassing the Fund’s management, financial, and governance structures and processes, including the Technical Secretariat and Steering Committee; Fund implementation by Participating UN Organisations; and the roles played by Fund partners. The evaluation assesses both intended and unintended effects of the Fund. Due to the forward-looking nature of the evaluation, some events and activities that have taken
place in 2020 have been included in the evaluation scope in order to capture key developments and changing circumstances such as fluctuations in funding and the effects of recent situations such as COVID-19 on the Fund.

The evaluation is structured around the standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of relevance/coherence; effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact. In addition to addressing the evaluation objectives, the evaluation examines the evolving status of the Fund itself throughout the period of the evaluation, including changes to the UNDG/UNSDG architecture and inter-agency platforms to which it has been linked since its establishment as well as fluctuations in the participation of funding and agencies. The use of primary and secondary data from Headquarters (HQ) and at the global level has been central in assessing the substantive work of the Fund regarding global policy coherence and coordinated approaches to human rights mainstreaming. Primary and secondary data from the country level was used to understand how the Fund has supported human rights mainstreaming within the UNCTs and the Offices of the RCs, as well as the capacity of national stakeholders to promote and mainstream human rights. Key evaluation questions used to guide the evaluation are presented within the Evaluation Matrix found in Annex 2, which outlines how data methods and sources were used to answer the evaluation questions and sub-questions through the use of assessment indicators.

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6 The Key Evaluation Questions originate from those outlined in the Evaluation ToRs. During the Inception Phase, the Evaluators made slight modifications to their wording; re-categorized them according to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria; and added some new questions in order to provide a full assessment of the Fund. These changes were approved by the Evaluation Reference Group through the revision and approval of the Inception Report.
Section 3. Evaluation Methodology and Process

3.1 Design and execution

This evaluation was conducted from August 2020 – January 2021 by a team of two external independent consultants (Senior Evaluation Specialist/Team Leader and Junior Evaluation Specialist). It was commissioned by the Fund’s Steering Committee and managed by its Secretariat. An evaluation reference group (ERG) composed of representatives of different participating UN agencies and donors provided guidance throughout the evaluation process. Members of the participating UN organisations (PUNOs) were consulted on the evaluation design and implementation plan during the evaluation inception phase as well as on the preliminary findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations.

To meet the specific evaluation objectives identified in the Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToRs), the Evaluation drew on mixed quantitative and qualitative methods, through the use of both primary and secondary quantitative and qualitative data. The evaluation also drew on elements of a theory-based design by using a reconstructed Theory of Change (ToC) model based on the Fund’s most up-to-date ToRs. The evaluators tested the ToC, including its hypotheses and assumptions, throughout the evaluation while drawing on it as a framework through the use of contribution analysis to assess the Fund’s contributions towards results. In addition, since the evaluation will be used by the Fund and its key stakeholders as a forward-looking tool to inform its strategic positioning within the UNDS Reform and to support the development of a Multi-Year Results Framework, the evaluation is utilization-focused to ensure that the evaluation findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned are as useful as possible to the evaluation users.

The evaluation used a participatory approach to engage relevant stakeholders at the national, regional, and global levels. The evaluation process was highly participatory, with stakeholder engagement during the inception phase, data collection phase, and reporting and validation phase. Once preliminary evaluation findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations were developed, these were shared with the Evaluation Manager and Evaluation Reference Group through a Power Point Presentation for discussion and validation. Subsequently, the evaluators hosted a virtual Workshop with members of the Fund’s Steering Committee and UN Agency Focal Points to review the evaluation findings and lessons learned and to facilitate a group discussion on how lessons learned can be applied to the Fund’s future work within the context of the UNDS Reform. This process ensured that the evaluation findings and lessons learned are well grounded and accurate and that the evaluation recommendations are targeted and actionable.

The evaluation also used a case study approach to facilitate a more in-depth assessment of support provided by the Fund to stakeholders at the country level and the linkages between the Fund’s work at the global, regional, and country levels.
In addition, the evaluation used a *human rights based approach, a gender equality and women’s empowerment approach, and an equity approach* by thoroughly integrating these principles throughout the evaluation process and deliverables. The evaluation followed the UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations and OHCHR Guidance on Preparing an Evaluation Report (2019).

### 3.2 Data collection

The evaluation collected data at the global, regional and national levels through an extensive *document review* of more than 200 documents, which include Fund governance documents, Fund Steering Committee and Resource Management Committee meeting minutes, Approved project proposals and reports, CCAs, UNDAFs, key publications, ToRs, and work plans. A complete list of key documents consulted by the evaluation team can be found as Annex 9.

In order to gain a holistic view of the Fund’s support across countries, the evaluation conducted two *online surveys*: one with RCs and another with HRAs. The HRA survey was answered by 22 HRAs out of 37 deployed at the time of the evaluation, and 50 out of 129 RCs who received the invitation to the survey. The surveys are considered gender-balanced, as the respondents to the surveys, female RC survey respondents constituted 52 per cent (26/50) and men - 48 per cent (24/50) while the HRA survey was answered by 55 per cent female HRAs (12/22) and 45 per cent male HRAs (10/22).

*Virtual key informant interviews (KII)*s and *focus group discussions (FGDs)* with key global and regional stakeholders included 33 people (11 men and 22 women), representing Steering Committee members and UN Agency Focal Points, Current and former Secretariat members, Members of the inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms, former regional human rights advisors, donors, and other select UN actors. As part of case studies, a total of 33 people (15 men and 18 women), including RCs, HRAs, national stakeholders and UNCT members, were interviewed in one-on-one KIIIs or as part of FGDs. Ensuring a gender-sensitive evaluation, the gender distribution of interviewed stakeholders was respected with 61 per cent of those interviewed at the global, regional and country-levels being women and the remaining 39 per cent being men, as outlined in Exhibit 2.

**Exhibit 2. Stakeholders Interviewed during the Evaluation**

![Exhibit 2. Stakeholders Interviewed during the Evaluation](image)
At the country level, five country case studies were conducted in Costa Rica, Argentina, Jordan, Malawi and Nigeria. These countries were selected in a way that would allow for representation of the differences between countries that received support from the UNDS through the Fund. The selected countries include countries where UNCTs and RCs have engaged directly in at least one initiative supported by the Fund, regional balance (due to challenges in the identification of countries that fulfilled the criteria and were able to participate in the evaluation during the data collection phase, 3 of the 5 UNSDG regions were ultimately represented in the selection), including those currently classified as humanitarian contexts. The complete criteria for selection of countries for case studies is included as Annex 5.

3.3 Data Analysis Methods

The evaluation drew on the following data analysis methods to achieve the evaluation objectives.

Table 1: Data Analysis Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Change Analysis</td>
<td>Using the reconstructed ToC model, the evaluation used a Theory of Change Analysis to test its hypotheses and assumptions to ensure theoretical coherence and to assess the extent to which the Fund’s activities have contributed towards its goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution Analysis</td>
<td>The evaluation drew on contribution analysis to assess the extent to which the Fund’s activities have contributed towards results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Data Analysis</td>
<td>Quantitative data was obtained through the document review, and survey data was analyzed using Excel to determine quantitative results and trends. Data is presented using charts and graphs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding and Triangulation</td>
<td>Qualitative data was coded and all data was triangulated during the data analysis phase of the evaluation to ensure accuracy, reduce bias, and provide rigor to the development of evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights, Gender Equity and Equity Analysis</td>
<td>A human-rights, gender equality, and equity analysis was used during the data analysis phase of the evaluation to ensure that the needs, priorities, and different experiences of women, men, and sub-groups of vulnerable peoples have been accurately and fully captured by the evaluation. Human rights and gender equality considerations were integrated into the evaluation though the utilization of mixed evaluation methods and disaggregation of data by gender during the survey data collection and analysis (see Annexes 12 and 13 for survey results disaggregated by gender).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Ethics

The evaluation approach was aligned with the UNEG Norms and Standards and ethical principles that fall under three broad categories: obligations of evaluators, obligations to participants, and the evaluation process and product. The approach was in line with the Ethical Code of Conduct for Evaluation on the UN System and the updated UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (2020) and the four guiding ethical principles for evaluation: Integrity, Accountability, Respect, and Beneficence. The evaluation was grounded in necessity in that it was designed and implemented with the expectation of drawing key lessons learned and best practices in order to inform decisions regarding the Fund’s future support for human rights mainstreaming within the UNDS. The principle of necessity guarantees that the evaluation was conducted in a way that minimizes disruption, invasion of privacy and exposure to risks of participants. All efforts were undertaken to ensure the evaluation was conducted efficiently and made proper use of time and resources available. It also followed the UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations.

3.5 Limitations

The Evaluation findings should be viewed in light of the following limitations that were encountered during the Evaluation:

- **Measurement**: The absence of robust baseline data has influenced the extent to which the evaluation team was able to measure results progress. As it is common for initiatives to have limited baseline data, the evaluation team has designed an evaluation methodology that does not overly rely on the availability of such data.

- **Accessibility to stakeholders**: Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, the evaluation has drawn exclusively on virtual data collection methods. This approach relied to a great extent on the willingness of stakeholders to engage through virtual means as well as their access to the Internet. The Evaluation Team has engaged members of the Fund’s Steering Committee and UN Agency Focal Points early in the evaluation during the Inception Phase to promote the importance of the evaluation among their colleagues, and by selecting countries where stakeholders have reliable Internet connectivity as part of the country case studies.

- **Accessibility of information**: The evaluation team also encountered challenges in accessing some information about the earlier years of the Fund because of changes in staff within the UNDS and among national stakeholders. To mitigate this limitation, the team ensured selection of stakeholders for interviews who have an understanding of earlier years of the Fund, and used the document review (e.g. meeting minutes) to fill in any gaps. Follow-up interviews and validation of

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7 The UNEG Norms and standards include: 1) Internationally agreed principles, goals and targets; 2) Utility; 3) Credibility; 4) Independence; 5) Impartiality; 6) Ethics; 7) Transparency; 8) Human rights and gender equality; 9) National evaluation capacities; and 10) Professionalism
preliminary findings and recommendations during two workshops with Fund’s Steering Committee and UN Agency Focal Points allowed the evaluation team to fill gaps in information.

- **Evaluation timeframe:** The evaluation timeframe was limited for the size and scope of the evaluation and the extent of data to be collected. This has been taken into consideration when designing the proposed evaluation approach and methodology. The proposed data collection methods included the maximum number of stakeholders possible within the limited evaluation timeframe.

- **Attributing results:** While contribution analysis is a useful tool to assess the extent to which activities have likely contributed to results, it is challenging to completely isolate the attribution of results generated by the Fund from other efforts and dynamics currently at play within the UNDS (particularly with respect to the Fund’s contributions towards complex outcome and impact level results). To help mitigate this limitation, the evaluation team took into consideration other human rights work within the UNDS when analyzing contributions towards outcome and impact level results.

- **Capturing the Fund’s evolution through the Reconstructed Theory of Change:** The reconstructed Theory of Change provides an overview of the Fund’s current change logic, as expressed in the Fund’s 2019 ToR, but does not capture any evolution of the Fund’s priorities and change logic that might have occurred during its lifespan over the past decade. This being said, a comparison of the original TORs and those from 2019 reveals that there has been very minimal change to the change logic. Even so, this has made it somewhat difficult to use the current ToC as a theoretical reference tool to assess past contributions of the Fund towards previous priorities. To mitigate this limitation, the evaluation team included flexibility in its approach to assessing contributions to results based on the Fund’s past priorities.
Section 4: Findings

Relevance

1. The mainstreaming of human rights throughout the UN development system remains as relevant and important as ever. The Fund is currently at a critical point in history where reforms in the UN system and leadership from the Secretary General offer opportunities for increased mainstreaming of human rights.

After decades of working mainstreaming human rights throughout the UN development system (UNDS), human rights work remains a central UN priority and is as relevant as ever. Rising inequality is affecting more than two thirds of the world’s population\(^8\), threatening sustainable development gains among rights holders. Human rights protection is as important as ever as serious human rights violations continue to occur through calamities such as the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar and the deadly and prolonged conflicts in Syria and Yemen. Long-standing human rights concerns as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights continue to require sustained efforts while emerging priority areas such as recent pushback of women’s sexual and reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights, racial justice, digital justice, rights of persons with disabilities, and climate justice gather increasing global attention. As the current Covid-19 Pandemic exacerbates growing inequalities and increases the vulnerability of already vulnerable rights holders, there is growing recognition across the UNDS of the importance of mainstreaming human rights throughout sustainable development as well as the central role that human rights play within the UN’s value system and responsibilities stemming from the UN Charter\(^9\).

Human rights mainstreaming is a shared system-wide responsibility that is highlighted in UN-wide priorities such as the UNDG Common Understanding Among UN Agencies on the Human Rights Based Approach to Development and the Secretary General’s 2020 Call to Action for Human Rights. The support provided through the Fund is a further contribution to efforts of the UNDS (including those advanced by OHCHR and the RC system) to mainstream human rights throughout the development system. Indeed, one of the strategic strengths of the Fund is that it is governed by multiple entities of the UNSDG, thus reinforcing the objective of promoting system-wide coherence, collaboration and support for UNRCs and UNCTs on human rights mainstreaming in development. The UNDS reform is fundamentally linked to the UN’s support to the 2030 Agenda, which is in turn based on the Human Rights Based Approach. Due to the fundamental integration of human rights into the 2030 Agenda, the

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\(^9\) Information obtained through key informants at the global and country levels.
Fund’s support for human rights mainstreaming will continue to be relevant throughout the current Decade of Action to help the UNDS achieve the 2030 Agenda and its goals.

Within this context, the Fund is situated at a unique point in history where changes in the UNDS offer a number of opportunities for increased human rights mainstreaming. For instance, the current UN development system reform provides the Resident Coordinator (RC) with a more empowered role to coordinate among members of the UN Country Teams (UNCTs). Promoting respect for and protection of human rights is a core responsibility of the RC. When an RC prioritizes human rights and has the necessary capacities and tools, this empowered role has the potential to facilitate stronger mainstreaming of human rights throughout a more coordinated UNCT. RC survey results indicate that the vast majority (over 96 per cent or 48/50) of surveyed RCs agree that mainstreaming human rights throughout the UNDS is important, while well over half (70 per cent or 35/50) of surveyed RCs believe that the promotion of mainstreaming of human rights should be their top priority, thus reflecting general willingness on the part of RCs that is in line with their mandated responsibility to mainstream human rights throughout UNCT work.

The UN development system reform also facilitates stronger and more coordinated country-level inter-agency planning by using the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) as the central planning document for all UNCT members. The UNSDCF builds on the coordinated work facilitated by the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) that was used as the central planning document prior to the UN Reform but requires UN agencies to engage even more in coordinated planning and reporting by further aligning their results. It is a UN requirement to mainstream human rights throughout the UNSDCF. Having a strong centralized planning document facilitates further mainstreaming of human rights throughout the planning of all UNCT members by providing one primary entry point to mainstream human rights across results. In addition, the UN development system reform calls for increased inter-agency collaboration and joint programming, which also provides more consolidated entry points that facilitate human rights mainstreaming. As donors have long been calling for increased inter-agency collaboration and joint programming among UN organisations to facilitate a more cohesive UN response to development challenges, they are eager to fund initiatives that support inter-agency collaboration, including those that promote and mainstream human rights. Increased willingness among donors to fund human rights work that is promoted and mainstreamed throughout inter-agency collaboration such as that mandated by the Fund could lead to additional human rights funding for the UNDS.

In addition to opportunities presented through the UN development system reform, the UN Secretary General issued a Call to Action on Human Rights in February 2020 that called on UN actors across the system to further invest in human rights work. The Call to Action sets out overarching guiding

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10 Key informant interviews with donors.
principles\textsuperscript{11} and outlines specific steps to advance the human rights agenda, thus signaling both a commitment from the UN’s senior leadership to promote human rights as well as practical actions. The combined Call to Action and UN development system reform offer important opportunities to mainstream human rights throughout the UNDS.

2. The Fund has demonstrated its relevance by addressing important needs and priorities within the UN development system and among national stakeholders with respect to human rights mainstreaming, serving as an important funding tool to mainstream human rights within the UNDS.

At the global level, the Fund’s Steering Committee, Secretariat, and financial support for the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms have facilitated important inter-agency spaces that have allowed UN agencies to come together in a cohesive and coordinated manner to mainstream human rights throughout the UNDS\textsuperscript{12}. For instance, through support provided by the Secretariat to the inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms, the Fund has filled important needs in terms of advocating for the integration of human rights language and priorities within global development agendas and policies such as the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) and the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as designing practical global guidance to support the implementation of human rights mainstreaming at the county level through guidance documents such as the UNCT Guidance Note on Human Rights for RCs and UNCT and the Leave No One Behind Guidance.

At the regional level, the Fund supported Regional UNDG Teams through the provision of two Regional HRAs in Asia Pacific and LAC to assist RCs and UNCTs to address human rights priorities and commitments within the UNDAF process, and to support the implementation of the UNDG-HRM’s regional strategy. In 2020, the Fund is supporting RCs and UNCTs through a surge initiative to provide increased technical capacity with respect to integrating human rights principles in Covid-19 responses and economic development reinvigoration plans.

At the country level, the Fund has provided technical support through guidance, training, and through the deployment of Human Rights Advisors, enabling RCs and UNCTs to engage in more active, coherent and strategic human rights mainstreaming in the context of development and, where relevant, humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts. HRAs have supported RCs and UNCTs in implementing their human rights responsibilities, including integrating human rights into CCAs and Cooperation

\textsuperscript{11} The UN Secretary General’s Call to Action for Human Rights outlines seven domains as follows: (1) rights at the core of sustainable development; (2) rights in times of crisis; (3) gender equality and equal rights for women; (4) public participation and civic space; (5) rights of future generations, especially climate justice; (6) rights at the heart of collective action; and (7) new frontiers of human rights.

\textsuperscript{12} The Fund’s Steering Committee function was integrated into the UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms up until 2019 when the Fund’s TORs were amended to separate the Steering Committee function from the UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms, responding to the UNSDG re-structure. Additionally, DCO-funded staff took over the primary role of Secretariat of the UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms in 2020, with continued additional support provided by the Fund Secretariat.
Frameworks. Under the leadership of the RCs, HRAs collaborated with and supported national stakeholders (governments, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), National Statistics Offices, civil society organisations and other national partners) to better integrate human rights norms, standards and principles into country level activities, strengthening the overall national capacity to implement the 2030 Agenda. HRAs have also facilitated UNCTs to leverage other UN planning processes - such as the Joint SDG Fund and UN system-wide strategies on gender equality, youth and disability inclusion - for more coherent and collaborative action on human rights.

3. The inter-agency nature of the Fund’s support for Human Rights Advisors and the fact that Human Rights Advisors work directly in the Resident Coordinator’s Office and are supported with the full institutional capacity of OHCHR has facilitated human rights support across UN organisations that make up UNCTs.

Over the past decade, the Fund has increasingly supported the financing of Human Rights Advisors (HRAs), as outlined in Exhibit 3 below. The degree of financial support for HRAs provided directly by the Fund has fluctuated over the years, as OHCHR and at times other funding sources have covered the expenses of HRA deployments. For instance, the Fund took over funding all of the HRAs in 2020, including those previously funded by OHCHR. Therefore, Exhibit 3 refers to the number of HRAs financially supported by the Fund and not the total number of HRAs deployed by the HRA Programme. As of 2020, from 41 deployments (4 of which were under recruitment) and out of 37 current HRAs, 59.5 per cent were female and 40.5 per cent male (see Exhibit 4 below).

Since human rights capacity is not included in the minimum capacity of the RCO, the Fund’s support for HRA deployments has allowed RCs and UNCTs to have direct access to a human rights specialist who provides an important link to the institutional capacity of OHCHR\textsuperscript{13}. The entity’s support to HRAs is critical to the success of HRA deployments, as it facilitates access to crucial human rights backing...
including access to policies, legal support, thematic expertise, and human rights mechanisms. This has facilitated RCs and UNCTs in addressing complex human rights issues at the country level that require closer attention from the UN system beyond the combined capacities of UN entities present in the UNCT. The deployment of HRAs supports all UN agencies by working directly with UNCT members. The inter-agency financing provided by the Fund and the strategic positioning of HRAs within the RCO has encouraged human rights mainstreaming to be seen as a common good owned by the UNDS.

4. Humanitarian and nexus issues are not captured in the Fund’s design, which limit the impact of human rights work at the country level.

While the Fund’s current change logic as outlined in its 2019 ToRs provides a comprehensive description of how human rights will be mainstreamed within the UNDS, it does not fully capture how this will have a transformational impact on human rights at the country level. This is largely due to the intricacies of human rights work that span across the UN pillars of human rights, development, and peace and security. The Fund is mandated to work on mainstreaming human rights only within the development pillar. However, transformational impact requires a nexus across the three pillars. RCs and UNCTs are required to not only mainstream human rights throughout development work but are also required to lead the inter-agency prevention and responses to grave human rights violations. In addition, strengthening country-level human rights mechanisms and capacities are often interlinked with these areas.

Transformational impact also requires support for human rights mainstreaming within humanitarian work, which also largely falls outside of the Fund’s mandate. This being said, support provided by HRAs to RCs in humanitarian settings where RCs also serve as Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) has helped to mainstream human rights throughout humanitarian work. This support for humanitarian work, however, is not explicitly articulated in the Fund’s change logic.

Interviews with RCs and UNCT members point towards a need for strengthened human rights early warning systems and knowledge management, UN country-level coordination to respond to grave human rights violations, and better human rights mainstreaming throughout humanitarian work. In fact, 68 per cent of surveyed HRAs (15/22 of which 9 female and 6 male HRAs) identified the prevention of serious human rights violations as one of the top three needs requiring support among RCs.

“There is currently little coordination within the UN to facilitate work that spans across pillars. Within this context, the Fund does not have a strategy or established strategic partners to promote cooperation with other UN entities working on these important issues that affect the Fund’s impact at the country level.”

Quote from the country case studies
level but that fall outside of its mandate. The Secretary General’s 2020 Call to Action for Human Rights calls for the leveraging of mandates across pillars and could serve as an opportunity to strengthen the nexus between the Fund’s mandated work and humanitarian considerations and inter-agency prevention and responses to grave human rights violations. OHCHR also pursues human rights mainstreaming in the humanitarian field and relevant mechanisms and structures as well as in the area of peace and security. There may be opportunities to further leverage OHCHR’s work in these areas to support cross-pillar work at the country level.

5. While the Fund has conducted some regional level work, the UNDS Reform’s call for stronger regional mechanisms offers an opportunity for the Fund to strengthen its regional presence.

To advance human rights mainstreaming at the regional level, the Fund supported two Regional HRAs as part of a pilot initiative; one in LAC and one in Asia Pacific. Regional HRAs provided support to the Regional UNDG Teams to assist RCs and UNCTs to address human rights priorities and commitments within the UNDAF process, and to implement the UNDG-HRM’s regional strategy. By working at the regional level, the HRAs were able to provide targeted human rights mainstreaming support across multiple countries to support human rights mainstreaming within common planning as part of the UNDAF process.

In the Asia-Pacific region, the Regional HRA established, coordinated and strengthened the Human Rights Network coordinated by SRHRA, which grew from 12 regular UNDG Asia-Pacific member agencies to 19, which included members from UNCTs and RCOs. The Human Rights Network became a forum for information and knowledge exchange as well as capacity development on development policy and programming. The subgroups of the Human Rights Network have been reported to contribute to evidence base around civil society space and extremism, and helped increase collaboration and synergies between the SRHRA’s work and work of UN agencies.

Although feedback received from RCs in discussions with the HRWG Co-Chair demonstrated that there was deep appreciation for the work of Regional HRAs, funding extensions for Regional HRAs were not extended in 2016 due to overall funding constraints. Feedback from the regions had highlighted that the impact was stronger for in-country HRAs due to a weak regional infrastructure to support regional level synergies. Therefore, the HRWG prioritized extensions for in-country HRAs.

Even though the funding for Regional HRAs discontinued, the Fund continued to support some regional level human rights mainstreaming through collaboration with the Regional UNDG Teams. For instance, in 2018, with the support of the Asia-Pacific regional UNSDG, the first Regional Human Rights Dialogue for RCs in the Asia Pacific Region was convened. The event provided an excellent opportunity for the exchange of experiences between RCs with respect to effective strategies and approaches for norm-

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14 Some efforts were made to incorporate the Human Rights Up Front Initiative within the work plans of the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms but references to prevention of and response to grave human rights violations are largely missing from the Fund’s articulated change logic.
based and principled leadership, and helped RCs to increase their understanding of regional trends with respect to human rights. The event also provided a much-needed space for the identification and discussion of opportunities where the regional UNSDG could provide further support. For instance, RCs identified that the regional UNSDG could further support human rights leadership at both the regional and country levels by more actively supporting cross-country communication and convening stakeholders.

In response to the increasing demand of the RCs for opportunities to exchange experiences and concerns about their roles in leading human rights mainstreaming, the MENA Resident Coordinators’ Regional Human Rights Leadership Dialogue was held in 2019 and provided a forum for open dialogue regarding approaches and strategies for UN engagement on human rights concerns that are posing significant challenges to the realisation of the 2030 Agenda.\(^\text{15}\)

The UNDS Reform includes a focus on strengthening the UN’s regional infrastructure to provide a more cohesive link between the global and country levels, to provide technical support for country-level work, and to generate synergies across countries and regions.\(^\text{16}\) The new regional architecture as part of the reform is still being determined.\(^\text{17}\) However, it is clear that it includes increased regional capacity within DCO (with the establishment of new regional DCO Offices) that will serve to backstop RCs and strengthen the connection between regional level actors and RCs. For instance, DCO is supporting regional inter-agency peer support groups that continue to provide technical support and quality assurance for Cooperation Frameworks, increasingly involving regional commissions to ensure a robust economic analysis and policy focus. DCO is also working with the UNSDG to bring RCs and UNCTs into major regional initiatives and facilitate access to key regional assets. DCO regional offices are being comprised of a variety of capacities (such as economists) that will further support the work of RCs. DCO is also debuting a regional management and accountability framework (MAF) to ensure a consistent approach across countries. There are also other actors now located at the regional level, such as Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs) who could generate synergies with the work of the HRAs.

This strengthened regional architecture as part of the UNDS Reform may provide the needed regional infrastructure that was previously missing and that caused the Fund to discontinue the regional HRA positions. DCO’s increased capacity at the regional level and strengthened linkage between regional

\(^{15}\) Whilst this event was regional in focus, it was part of an overall strategy to support leadership of RCs on human rights, and included numerous global events.

\(^{16}\) The regional reform focuses on five transformative areas as follows: (a) Creation of United Nations regional collaborative platforms that would absorb existing duplicative coordination mechanisms and foster collaboration on sustainable development among United Nations development system entities operating at the regional level; (b) Establishment of strong knowledge management hubs in each region by pooling policy expertise currently scattered across various entities; (c) Enhanced transparency and results-based management at the regional level, including through annual reporting on United Nations system-wide results at the regional level in support of the 2030 Agenda; (d) Launch of a region-by-region change management process to consolidate existing capacities with regard to data and statistics; (e) Identification of administrative services that could be provided more efficiently to regional offices through common back offices (e.g. human resources, procurement and common premises), similar to efforts that have been made at the country level.

\(^{17}\) For example, the regional level Management and Accountability Framework of the UN development and RC system has not yet been developed.
actors and RCs may provide a useful entry point for regional HRAs to support RCs across countries. There are also new opportunities for regional HRAs to develop synergies with newly established regional actors such as the regional DCO teams of experts and the Regional PDAs. Within a strengthened regional context, it may be in the Fund’s best interest to ensure a strong human rights presence to support increased coordination among countries around common human rights priorities such as the rights of Indigenous peoples, the rights of peoples with disabilities, climate justice, etc.; addressing cross-border issues such as inter-country migration, FGM, etc.; furthering knowledge management and regional synergies; and strengthening the UNDS’s engagement with regional human rights mechanisms. As part of the UNDS Reform, most existing mechanisms currently part of the regional UNSDG and the regional coordination mechanism will be realigned through time bound issue-based coalitions (IBCs). This will create an urgency to ensure that human rights priorities are mainstreamed throughout the IBCs.

6. The Fund currently lacks some clarity with respect to its mandate and does not have a multi-year strategic plan to set priorities and guide its work. This lack of strategic clarity is largely due to structural changes within the UNDG/UNSDG and may have hindered the Fund’s ability to target programming and support to those areas where its work is most relevant.

The Fund’s scope of work and change logic are outlined in its Terms of Reference (ToRs) that were initially drafted in 2010 and then amended in 2019. While the ToRs provide an overview of the Fund’s different areas of work, they do not clearly define the Fund’s mandate or demarcate the parameters around what kinds of work the Fund is and is not mandated to pursue. They also do not include a Theory of Change to explain how the Fund’s support to activities is designed to contribute towards outcome and impact level change.

The Fund’s change logic, as outlined in its 2019 ToRs, identifies four main areas of work that will support strengthened human rights mainstreaming throughout the UNDS. However, it does not clearly explain how its work will affect different actors and elements within the UNDS and how these elements will interact to produce more robust human rights mainstreaming. In particular, it is unclear how action at the global and regional levels will support country-level UN actors to mainstream human rights throughout their work. The change logic also does not articulate in detail how strengthened human rights mainstreaming within the UNDS will promote human rights among national stakeholders and strengthen national human rights systems and mechanisms. This level of change articulation is necessary to understanding the interconnections between actions and results.

The Fund initially had a multi-year plan to help guide its strategic planning during its first three years of operation. However, structural changes within the UNDG have hindered the Fund’s ability to develop a multi-year strategic plan or results framework to guide its work. Over the past decade, structural changes within the UNDG have resulted in the restructuring of the UNDG Inter-Agency Human Rights

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18 When the Fund was first established, the HRM’s operational plan had clear parameters for its work.
19 The Fund also had not conducted an evaluation to take stock of its work and support its strategic planning until this current evaluation.
Working Group on three occasions\textsuperscript{20}. The uncertainty caused by this constant restructuring impacted the Fund’s ability to plan strategically since it was intended for the Fund to receive its strategic guidance from the UNDG Inter-Agency Human Rights Working Group.

In addition, the longevity of the Fund’s existence has also been questioned over the past decade due to a number of factors including revised requirements and funding thresholds introduced by the MPTF office and the establishment of the Delivering Together Facility (DTF). When the UNDG established a minimum threshold of 5 million USD per annum for pooled fund operations, the Fund was unable to meet the threshold. Then in 2016, DOCO decided to establish the DTF in order to consolidate different funding streams that support RCs and UNCTs under one umbrella. Due to the Fund’s inability to meet the MPTF threshold and the fact that the Fund largely supports the efforts of RCs and UNCTs to mainstream human rights, it was decided that funding from the Fund would be diverted towards the DTF in the continued pursuit of the Fund’s objectives but that the Fund itself as a funding mechanism would close down. However, due to internal donor requirements, SIDA funding was unable to go through the DTF and therefore the Fund was extended on an annual basis from 2017 – 2019 in order to absorb SIDA funds\textsuperscript{21}. Due to additional restructuring within the UNDG, it was decided in 2019 that the DTF would no longer solicit contributions and would aim to close by the end of 2020. With the closure of the DTF, the Fund has become once again the primary funding mechanism for human rights mainstreaming across the UNDS.

Within this context, the Fund’s Steering Committee is planning to establish a multi-year results framework to strategically guide the Fund’s work. However, structural instability within the UNSDG continues to present a challenge for the Fund’s long-term planning as additional changes to the UNSDG structure are expected as part of the UNDS Reform, which could potentially include the disbanding of the current UNDG inter-agency human rights working group. It remains unclear what structural changes will take place and how these will influence the Fund’s mandate and future work since the Fund was established to support the inter-agency human rights working groups (currently the Task Team on Leaving no one Behind) and the Fund receives its strategic direction from the working group. These combined factors have made it difficult for the Fund to have a multi-year strategic vision over most of the past decade, which, as a result, may have reduced the Fund’s ability to target programming and support to those areas where its work is most relevant.

\textsuperscript{20} The UNDG inter-agency human rights coordination mechanism was initially established in 2010 under the name UNDG Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism. In 2015 this was renamed as the Human Rights Working Group. It was then transformed into the Give Voice to Common Values and Norms UNDG Results Group in 2017, and then became the Task Team on Leaving No One Behind, Human Rights and the Normative Agenda in 2018.

\textsuperscript{21} The MPTF Office made an exception to its 5 million USD per annum threshold in order to keep the Fund open.
7. The Fund lacks visibility among UN staff at the global, regional, and country levels, which hinders the ability of UN staff to request support from the Fund and to engage in its services, thus potentially reducing the Fund’s relevance among stakeholders.

Although the Fund has provided significant financial contributions to support the mainstreaming of human rights throughout the UNDS, it is generally not well known or understood among UN staff at the global, regional, or country levels\(^{22}\). In the cases when UN actors are aware of the Fund, they often only associate it with support for Human Rights Advisors (due to the widely perceived success of the HRA Programme and less visibility of the Fund’s other work) and are unaware of the other types of human rights support that the Fund has provided in the realms of policy support, guidance and tools, knowledge management, and capacity development.

Part of the reason for the Fund’s lack of visibility is due to a conscious choice made by the Fund’s Steering Committee to not encourage “calls for support” in an effort to manage expectations across the UNDS with respect to what the Fund can realistically support given its funding constraints. As part of this effort, the Fund did not actively promote its work or its “brand”. In 2012, the Fund experimented with issuing a call for proposals among UNCTs and RCs to support country level catalytic initiatives on human rights mainstreaming (with support comprising of 100,000 USD per project). The vision behind this “focused support” was that seed funding would support UNCTs take forward innovative inter-agency projects on human rights mainstreaming, from which lessons learned, methodologies and results would be drawn, which in turn would feed back into the wider efforts of the UNDG-HRWG to support UNCTs integrate human rights into their development work. Among the most successful

Under the framework of providing catalytic support to nationally-led UNCT programmes and initiatives, the Fund has provided financial support to the following initiatives, in response to requests from UNCTs:

- Enhancing the Monitoring and Implementation Capacity of the Outcome Document of UPR – Turkey;
- Human Rights mainstreaming in Myanmar;
- Appui a l’intégration des droits humains dans les politiques au Maroc à travers le renforcement des capacités de la délégation interministérielle aux droits de l’homme;
- Joint Programme on Strengthening the National Capacities for the Mainstreaming of Human Rights on Politics and Programmes – Guinea Bissau’;
- Construction of an intercultural dialogue process to promote indigenous peoples’ human rights effective observance in southern Costa Rica;
- Support to the consolidation of the reform of the penitentiary system and the protection of human rights of people deprived of liberty with an emphasis on adolescents, women and children- Uruguay;
- One UN Zambia Human Rights Mainstreaming;

\(^{22}\) Source: KIIs at the global, regional, and country levels where stakeholders admitted to being unaware of the Fund, unaware of its activities, and/or in a position where they felt that the people around them were unaware of the Fund.
projects (including those in Costa Rica, Morocco, Turkey and Uruguay), the relatively small amount of funding was able to support the UNCTs not only achieve their planned objectives, but also strengthen the overall understanding, work and engagement by the UNCT on human rights. At times it also strengthened the RCs and UNCT’s relationships with the government and other national actors, strategically leveraging the UN’s convening role. However, an informal assessment of the projects carried out by UNDOCO in 2016 at the request of the RMC Focal Points revealed that in countries where there were challenges with respect to RC leadership, strategic opportunity in the national context and capacity within the UNCT, the projects struggled to move ahead as planned. The assessment found that without the project anchored in a broader national process, the UNCT struggled to keep it on track. As a result of these challenges at the country level and in combination with challenges that the Fund faced to monitor results and administer funding extensions, the MDTF did not pursue a second call for proposals. As displayed in Exhibit 5 below, survey results among RCs who responded to the evaluation survey suggest that while 40 per cent (20/50) are familiar with the Fund, 60 per cent (30/50) of RCs were unfamiliar with it or were unsure or didn’t have an opinion, indicating a lower level of awareness.

Exhibit 5. Extent to which RCs are familiar with the work of the HRM MDTF

Disaggregated results, as shown in Exhibit 6 below, indicate that RCs who are working with a HRA have a good level of familiarity with the Fund while RCs without a HRA were unsure or indicated little to no knowledge of the Fund. Exhibit 7 demonstrates that male RCs indicated stronger familiarity with the Fund than female RCs, and more female than male RCs reported not being familiar with the Fund.

Exhibit 6. Extent to which RCs with HRAs vs. those without HRAs are familiar with the work of the HRM MDTF
In addition, while the existence of HRAs may be well known throughout the UNDS, they are often perceived as representing exclusively OHCHR as opposed to the inter-agency interests of the UNCTs. HRAs report to OHCHR as a second reporting line (RCs are the first reporting line) and are supervised by the OHCHR Regional Offices where they are viewed as integral members of the OHCHR team. Key informant interviews at the global, regional, and country levels confirm that in some cases, not only do UN staff perceive HRAs to be exclusive representatives of OHCHR but that some HRAs also perceive themselves as primarily or exclusively OHCHR staff. There have been anecdotal reports of HRAs openly referring to themselves as OHCHR staff as opposed to members of the RCO. This is likely due to a number of factors that may include a strong sense of connection and allegiance between the HRAs and OHCHR as a result of the extensive technical support provided by OHCHR to support HRAs, confusion with respect to having two reporting lines: one to the RC and a second to OHCHR, etc. The erroneous conception that HRAs represent exclusively OHCHR reduces awareness among UN staff of the inter-agency work supported by the Fund. This lack of awareness may even influence the utility of the HRAs among UNCTs if it is not fully understood that the HRA serves all UNCT members.

If RCs and UNCT members are unaware of the existence of the Fund or the kinds of support it provides, then RCs and UNCTs who require support to strengthen human rights mainstreaming may not know how to ask for it. The Fund has made efforts to inform RCs and UNCTs of its potential support23, yet the overall lack of visibility of the Fund within the UNDS remains a major challenge.

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23 The Fund developed a Roadmap for Outreach for HRA Expression of Interest in 2019 to ensure that every RC that could be eligible for an HRA is aware of the opportunity to apply and has considered it as an option.
Effectiveness

8. The Fund has made important contributions to institutionalizing and operationalizing human rights mainstreaming within the UNDG/UNSDG.

Over the past decade, the Fund has provided much needed financial resources and has leveraged the in-kind contributions of its participating organisations and other organizational members of the UNDG/UNSDG to support the integration of human rights principles into global UNDG/UNSDG priorities and frameworks and to support their operationalization at the country level. The Fund’s Secretariat also provided invaluable support to the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms to leverage the in-kind contributions of UN organisations to advocate for human rights to be mainstreamed into these priorities and frameworks. For instance, the 2012 senior policy retreat, culminated in developed messages and a common vision and strategy on policy coherence across the UN with respect to mainstreaming human rights and, at the time current and developing, development agendas - the Rio+20, QCPR and post-2015 agenda (later, the SDGs); these were later used to advocate and raise awareness around the relevance of human rights mainstreaming across the UNDS as well as for the provision of technical expertise and guidance to the UNDG on strengthening normative and operational linkages in developing the Standard Operating Procedures for Delivering as One countries, the revised Resident Coordinator job description and the Guidance Note on UNCT Conduct and Working Arrangements in 2013. In addition, the Fund supported the operationalization of these priorities at the country level through the development of guidance documents and capacity development tools and workshops. The following list provides a sample of some of the policy guidance and practical tools supported by the Fund since 2011 to facilitate the operationalization of human rights mainstreaming at the country level:

- The UN Common Learning Package on HRBA
- Web-based guide on Strengthening Engagement with the International Human Rights Machinery
- Information materials for the Frontiers Dialogues; key messages for RCs on Frontier issues; Frontier Forum
- Policy and Operational messages for integrating human rights in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda
- 2015 Guidance Note on Human Rights for RCs and UNCTs
- UNCT Support to Tracking the Follow-up of Human Rights Recommendations
- 2018 Operational Guide on Leaving No One Behind for UNCTs

Evaluation key informants at the country level have indicated that the guidance and tools supported by the Fund have been

“At the beginning of the Fund’s work, it was tough to explain to UN Staff why a HRBA is useful. Now, pretty much everyone within the UN understands the HRBA and why it is important”.
helpful in providing guidance and strengthening the capacities of the RCs and UNCTs to operationalize human rights policies and further mainstream human rights at the country level. For instance, it has been reported that the LNOB Guidance has been useful at supporting human rights analysis to inform the CCA, which has then led to stronger mainstreaming of human rights within the UNDAFs. Survey results indicate that 50 per cent of RCs (25/50) found the Guidance Note on Human Rights for Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams mostly or very useful. Of those RCs that indicated they found the note ‘very useful’ or ‘mostly useful’, the majority (64 per cent) were male.

The Fund’s work has also supported a general understanding and acknowledgement around the importance of human rights mainstreaming across the UNDS. For instance, the Fund’s support for a Regional HRA in Latin America and the Caribbean allowed the HRA to design and implement a capacity development workshop organized by UNESCO in Costa Rica in 2015 to strengthen the capacity of UNCTs to mainstream human rights throughout their work. The workshop explored what mainstreaming means and how to apply it to the UNCT work. Nearly a decade later, key informants at the country, regional and global levels have indicated that the concept of human rights mainstreaming and its importance are well understood across the UNDG/UNSDG and that now the discussion has shifted towards effective entry points to advance human rights work. This general understanding and acknowledgement around the importance of human rights mainstreaming across the UNDS is a major accomplishment of the Fund.

Other important results that the Fund has contributed towards and that point towards the institutionalization of human rights within the UNDG/UNSDG include the inclusion of human rights considerations within the ToRs for RCs as well as the integration of human rights mainstreaming indicators in the annual reporting by UNCTs since 2015 (and expanded in 2019) that provides data to inform UNSDG policies and institutional support. Some of these data are included in the QCPR monitoring framework, thus strengthening UNDS accountability to Member States for work in this area. In addition, the Fund’s support for human rights mainstreaming encouraged DCO to create a permanent position for a human rights specialist to help integrate human rights throughout the UNSDG.

9. While the Fund has historically made efforts to establish a knowledge management system around the HRBA, investment in this area has not continued in recent years.

“The human rights mapping was very appreciated by UNDG members and demonstrated the value-added of the inter-agency nature of the Fund”

Quote from a KII stakeholder at the global level

Since its establishment, the Fund has made significant investments to strengthen knowledge management with respect to human rights within the UNDG/UNSDG. For instance, in 2011, the Fund carried out a mapping exercise that identified human rights activities being carried out by UNDG members as well as areas of success, challenges and gaps. Up until 2014, the Fund’s knowledge

24 Survey results indicate that most (84 per cent) of surveyed RCs are familiar with the Operational Guide on Leaving No One Behind for UNCTs.
management function was housed within UNDP. Knowledge management initiatives that were advanced during this time include supporting the HRBA Portal that was launched in 2009\(^\text{25}\). It brought together through one single entry point a wide range of resources on integrating HRBA into development programming. Another initiative was to manage the HuriTALK network that facilitated the exchange of information, good practices, and lessons learnt and facilitated dialogue among UN practitioners on how to integrate human rights into their work. Indeed, key informant interviews attested that the Consolidated Replies to human rights queries was a particularly useful knowledge management element of the HuriTALK network. These initiatives were seen by stakeholders as successful due to dedicated staff to manage the platforms and the use of a networks approach to support knowledge management.

In 2014, HuriTALK and the HRBA portal were moved out of UNDP to be managed by DOCO and the Fund’s Secretariat due to UNDP budget cuts and hopes of broadening the products’ reach\(^\text{26}\). From 2014 to 2017, the Fund invested in a full-time knowledge management position. Since the Secretariat was housed within DOCO, this was designed to facilitate alignment between human rights knowledge management and DOCO’s knowledge management system. However, this position was discontinued in 2017 due to funding constraints and challenges in meeting some strategic knowledge management objectives. DOCO and the Fund’s Secretariat have continued to house the knowledge management function ever since, but with reduced capacity. Since transferring out of UNDP, there has been a gradual reduction in HuriTALK and HRBA portal activity. Whilst the HRBA Portal continues today, it is largely dormant. HuriTALK has ceased to exist. In 2019, the Fund’s Secretariat established the Yammer Community of Practice on Human Rights, Leaving no one Behind, and the Gender Platform under the leadership of the co-Chairs of the Task Team on Leaving no on Behind, Human Rights, and the Normative Agenda to promote knowledge exchange among UN technical practitioners.

The Fund’s Steering Committee has recognized that reviving the Fund’s knowledge management function is important moving forward. In fact, the Fund’s 2020 workplan recognizes that a knowledge management strategy is required. DCO has offered to house the knowledge management function, which seems appropriate given the UNDS Reform and DCO’s role of supporting RCs and sharing knowledge across RCOs. DCO is currently building its knowledge management function to provide support across the UNSDG. However, as only an observing member of the Fund as opposed to a full participating entity, DCO is unable to accept financing from the Fund to support this. It could accept funds if it were to sign on as a full participating entity. The Steering Committee has yet to determine how to proceed and is considering whether another participating organisation could support the knowledge management function or if this should be provided by the Secretariat, as was the case from 2014 – 2017.

\(^{25}\) The Portal can be accessed at www.hrbaportal.undg.org

\(^{26}\) Steering Committee Meeting Minutes from 5th RMC meeting 13 Sept 2013
10. The Fund has provided important support to strengthen inter-agency planning at the country level that has resulted in increased human rights mainstreaming throughout UNCT planning documents. However, the integration of human rights mainstreaming throughout country-level inter-agency programme implementation appears to be a weakness.

The Fund has made important contributions towards strengthening human rights mainstreaming within UNCT planning by providing guidance, tools, and capacity development opportunities in addition to direct technical assistance provided by HRAs in those countries where they have a presence. Country level stakeholders interviewed as part of the evaluation clearly pointed towards strong added value of HRAs to assist UNCTs to include human rights considerations during the development of the Common Country Analysis (CCA)s and the UNDAFs (now the UNSDCFs), therefore ensuring that human rights are mainstreamed throughout the primary planning documents at the country level. In fact, 84 per cent (42/50) of surveyed RCs signaled that HRAs provided average to extremely high levels of support to mainstream human rights into the UNDAF/UNSDCF. While these responses are equal between male and female RCs, more male RCs than female RCs indicated a higher level of support.

As exhibit 8 below indicates, even RCs in countries that do not have the presence of a HRA found the technical and operational advice provided by the Fund and its inter-agency coordination mechanisms to be useful, with 77 per cent finding the extent of support to be average or high.

**Exhibit 8. Extent of the technical and operational advice provided to RCs by the Fund and its inter-agency coordination mechanisms**

While major progress has been made with respect to mainstreaming human rights throughout UNCT planning, stakeholders have confirmed through global interviews, country case studies, and open-ended survey feedback that considerable work left to be done with respect to supporting UNCTs to effectively mainstream human rights throughout their programme implementation. Inconsistent quality and extent of human rights mainstreaming throughout the programming work of individual organisations that make part of the UNCTs was a major area of weakness identified by stakeholders, particularly at the country
level. UNCTs require additional tools and support to ensure that human rights are mainstreamed throughout the operationalization of programming, including monitoring and reporting.

While it is outside of the Fund’s mandate to provide direct human rights mainstreaming support to UN organisations, the Fund does have a mandate to strengthen the mainstreaming of human rights throughout UNCT programming. There are a number of tools that can be employed to support this work that the Fund has yet to fully capitalize on, such as an accountability score card of some kind (similar to UN Women’s SWAP Score Card) to monitor and measure the extent to which human rights are mainstreamed in both the planning and implementation of UNCT programming. Some surveyed HRAs have suggested that competing priorities and interests among UNCT members are factors that have inhibited the effective mainstreaming of human rights within UNCT programming.

11. With a more empowered RC as part of the UNDS Reform, the Fund’s leadership support to RCs presents potential for scale-up, particularly with respect to interactive RC leadership dialogue sessions.

The provision of leadership support to RCs to promote the mainstreaming of human rights at the country level has been an integral part of the Fund’s work since its inception and is reflected in the Fund’s reconstructed Theory of Change under Output 2.2. “RCs and UNCTs leadership have access to learning opportunities on how to mainstream human rights.” The Fund’s work in this area was initially informed by efforts such as a 2011 survey of UNCT needs for human rights mainstreaming to understand the potential for enhancing the learning opportunities for RCs and UNCT agency leadership on human rights. Over the years, the Fund provided support to RCs through a number of outlets such as guidance documents (as outlined in Finding 8), the deployment of Human Rights Advisors (as discussed in Finding 13), knowledge management (as outlined in Finding 9), and through training and leadership dialogues.

In 2014, RCs were engaged in discussions and collection of valuable lessons and feedback on integration of human rights through the RC induction programme, which led to human rights becoming consistently and coherently integrated as part of the overall agenda for the RC induction training. The “Dialogues” in New York and Geneva with UN leaders in country offices on the political and practical realities of leading the human rights agenda on the ground, organized in 2015, were part of an effort to create a Human Rights Leadership development strategy. The well-attended events served as a valuable platform for peer-to-peer exchange on engagement and experiences with human rights mainstreaming realities in country contexts and demonstrated the increasing extent of engagement by RCs’ and UNCTs’ on and awareness of human rights issues; they also showcased the value of providing space for such an exchange and the usefulness of the interactive methodology developed. Furthermore, in 2016, leading up to the Human Rights Frontiers 2030 Forum, a session with selected RCs was held to explore opportunities and challenges in exercising “principled leadership”.

As already discussed in Finding 5, in 2018, a Regional Human Rights Leadership Dialogue for RCs took place in the Asia and the Pacific region that allowed for exchange and reflection on strategies and approaches by which to support human rights-based implementation of the 2030 Agenda. With 17 RCs
from the region participating, the dialogue’s first day and a half were held with the RCs only to promote frank discussion on selected human rights themes. A second RC Dialogue session took place in 2019 in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region with the participation of seven RCs. This provided a forum for the RCs from countries in the MENA region to engage in an interactive peer-to-peer exchange and to share their experiences, challenges and good practices with respect to topics that included freedom of expression; discrimination against minorities; issues related to citizenship status and statelessness as well as issues relating to the human rights of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs); and gender equality and discrimination. In addition to the in-person RC Dialogue Sessions, the Fund supported the webinar "Making LNOB a reality: tactics, methods and approaches for successful RC leadership" for RCs aimed at ensuring that they are aware of key strategic entry points for advancing LNOB including VNRs, HR mechanisms (including UPR, TBs and Special Procedures), the Cooperation Framework, and the UNSDG Operational Guide on LNOB as a system-wide tool. The webinar also served as an opportunity for RCs to raise challenges or concerns regarding the LNOB principle and to articulate their needs with respect to support for its implementation.

Within the context of UNDS Reform, the Fund’s support to RCs to strengthen human rights mainstreaming within country level planning and programming holds even greater potential for impact, as RCs have a more empowered role to coordinate country level programming. The dialogue sessions are particularly promising as they provide an interactive opportunity for RCs to hold frank conversations and address difficult human rights challenges through a peer-to-peer atmosphere. They also facilitate the exchange of information and feedback between RCs and the Fund’s inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms. These benefits point towards potential to scale-up these initiatives.

12. The Fund has provided extensive support to Member States to strengthen their reporting on human rights and engagement with human rights mechanisms.

Over the past decade, one of the most important contributions that the Fund has made to strengthen national human rights protection systems has been through its support for improved human rights reporting to treaty bodies, engagement with special procedures, and support for the Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs). This support has come largely through the provision of HRAs who provide, among other things, excellent human rights technical knowledge and the ability to facilitate linkages between RCs and UNCTs and national stakeholders, including human rights mechanisms supported by OHCHR. Several surveyed RCs mentioned that one of the major strengths of human rights mainstreaming within the UN system at the country level is the strong effort to ensure follow-up on the UPR and special procedures recommendations. This effort appears to be increasing, as seen through the Nigeria case study which revealed that while the country managed to have only two Special Rapporteur visits from 2006 – 2016, this number increased to eight between 2017 – 2020. This is an excellent illustration of the impact of having a strong link between RCs and OHCHR through HRAs.

UN monitoring of government engagement with human rights mechanisms has also improved over the past decade through contributions made by the Fund, particularly through support provided by the Fund’s Secretariat to assist the work of the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming
mechanisms. For instance, the Fund’s inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanism supported the integration of selected human rights indicators – such as the degree of support provided by UNCTs to governments to engage with human rights mechanisms - into the QCPR 2016 monitoring framework. The Fund also worked closely with DOCO/DCO to strengthen the integration of human rights reporting into its annual reporting system. As a result, DCO’s Information Management System (IMS) collects data on the extent to which UNDAFs and CCAs integrate the recommendations of the UPR, treaty bodies, and special procedures. Exhibit 9 below provides an overview of the extent to which UNCTs engaged in human rights reporting to treaty bodies, special procedures, and the UPRs in 2018 broken down between those countries that have a HRA and those with no HRA or in-country OHCHR presence.

Exhibit 9. Comparison of UNCT reporting on selected human rights mainstreaming activities in 2018

Data in above figure drawn from 2018 UNCT reporting in UNDCO Information Management System (IMS)

13. The Fund has been effective at supporting the mainstreaming of human rights at the country level particularly through the provision of HRAs, which is the most widely recognized and appreciated aspect of the Fund’s work. Human Rights Advisors have played and continue to play a larger role than simply advising on human rights issues that includes bringing national stakeholders together and advancing human rights priorities at the country level. However, the fact that these areas of work are not supported with a budget envelope limits the effectiveness of the HRAs.

The Fund’s support for Human Rights Advisors (HRAs) is the most recognized and widely appreciated aspect of the Fund’s work. They have been instrumental in promoting human rights mainstreaming at the country level by working closely with RCs and UNCTs. Support provided by the Fund has facilitated a system-wide approach to providing HRAs and has increased the predictability and coverage of HRA deployments. Support from HRAs has gone far beyond providing technical advice and serving as an

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27 Ascertained through key informant interviews at the global, regional, and country levels
advisor to the RC, and has in fact moved towards facilitating change at the country level. HRAs have conducted a variety of meaningful work that includes data collection, research and analysis of important country-level human rights issues, which they have then used to raise awareness and increase the profile of human rights considerations among the RC and UNCT. As discussed in Finding 10, they have also worked closely with the RC and UNCT to ensure that human rights priorities are integrated into the common programming frameworks (namely the CCA, UNDAF, and UNSDCF) to facilitate human rights mainstreaming throughout UN country-level planning and programming. HRAs have also played an important role in connecting the RC and UNCT to national human rights stakeholders, thus actively pushing forward and facilitating the promotion and protection of human rights at country level.

Evaluation case studies and the Fund’s annual reports have highlighted the important role played by the HRA, RCO, and UNCT in facilitating dialogue between government and civil society to address human rights concerns. An example of this was found in the Argentina case study where the HRA worked closely with the RC to facilitate dialogue between local government actors and Afro-Indigenous rights holders to address basic human rights concerns with respect to access to clean water and proper sanitation. Examples from the Fund’s annual reports that illustrate human rights structural changes that have been achieved at the country level through the support of HRAs include improved alignment of drug policies with human-rights principles in Belarus (2019), the unprecedented inclusion of some 28 groups of people considered to have been left behind in the Kenyan census (2019), assessment of the human rights situation in the north of Ecuador – a systematically neglected area before 2018, amendments of legislation in favour of criminalising marital rape in Barbados (2018), development of the SDG indicator on violence against human rights defenders in Sierra Leone (2017), finalization of the HIV/AIDS Management and Control Bill in Malawi (2017), assessments and exposure of poor detention conditions in Nigeria by the National Committee against Torture (2016), and improvement in engagement by the UNCT on rights of persons with albinism in Tanzania (2015), among others.

Due to resource constraints, HRAs have not have access to a funding envelope to support the variety of initiatives outlined above until recently in 2020 when they were provided with 15,000 USD per year for travel and activities. While HRAs are widely perceived by UN staff and national stakeholders as very capable, dedicated and hardworking, they are also known to be over-extended, having to face competing priorities and to manage an increasingly growing portfolio of human rights work. In some cases, this has limited the ability of HRAs to meet the needs of stakeholders, including national stakeholders, who are actively requesting additional support.

One of the reasons why HRAs had not been provided with a budget had been to try to avoid a parallel programming mechanism at the country level and to encourage ownership and collaboration within the RCO and across the UNCT. HRAs are specifically mandated to be non-operational. However, HRAs require access to financial resources in order to execute important activities such as commissioning studies, hosting dialogue sessions, or

“Even from an outsider’s perspective, it is clear that our country’s HRA is a very hard worker but is completely over-extended. This has made it difficult for the HRA to provide the kinds of support that we as national stakeholders need.”

Quote from a national government stakeholder
travelling to participate in relevant events. In some cases, HRAs have received funding through project-style initiatives (such as in Nigeria where the HRA successfully obtained funding through project proposals) while in other cases, the RCO has provided small seed funding to help advance the HRA’s work. While these creative solutions have been helpful, the lack of regular and consistent funding for HRA work is a barrier for HRAs to achieve their full potential.

14. The effectiveness of the Fund’s work has likely suffered due to the lack of a monitoring and evaluation framework to guide and assess the Fund’s results. The changing UNDG/UNSDG architecture over the past decade has contributed to the Fund’s lack of monitoring and evaluation framework.

The Fund’s Steering Committee has made several efforts over the past decade to set up and implement a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to monitor and report on the Fund’s results. In fact, a consultant was hired to conduct baseline research and an M&E Framework was developed in 2015. However, regular restructuring of the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms hindered these efforts since it was necessary for the M&E framework to be aligned with the work plans of the inter-agency mechanisms, which were constantly in flux. For instance, the 2015 M&E Framework did not go forward since the HRWG changed to the Give Voice to Common Values and Norms UNDG Results Group.

An M&E framework based on a long-term vision of development is an essential component for the work of any UN entity or fund. However, it is particularly important for the HRM MDTF where changes in the conditions of human rights require a long-term investment and need consistent medium and long-term indicators to measure outcome and impact level changes. Indicators for change with respect to human rights work are often qualitative (i.e. capturing changing beliefs, social norms, social engagement, dialogue, etc.), thus further highlighting the need for a robust and comprehensive M&E framework. Key informant interviews with members of the Steering Committee have highlighted the urgent need to develop an adequate M&E system to also ensure the Fund’s accountability and to demonstrate its impact among UN staff and donors.

15. The Fund is well placed to take advantage of opportunities presented by the UNDS Reform and the transition from DOCO to DCO to strengthen inter-agency coordination around shared mandates such as human rights.

There are a number of changes brought by the UNDS Reform that offer opportunities for the Fund to strengthen its inter-agency human rights coordination work. Firstly, due to the core responsibility of the RC to mainstream human rights, the more empowered RC position within the UNDS Reform is a facilitating factor for the work of HRAs since HRAs are based within the RCO and the RCO will play a stronger coordination role. Secondly, the further coordinated UNCT planning and programme

“The Fund was established prior to the UN Reform and was, in many ways, ahead of its time by promoting inter-agency work and supporting RC and UNCT coordination”.

Quote from a stakeholder at the global level
implementation process through the UNSDCF provides an even stronger entry point to mainstream human rights throughout country level planning and programming. Thirdly, the UNDS Reform calls for increased joint programming, which should encourage additional UNCT work and human rights mainstreaming opportunities. Finally, the UNDS Reform has given a stronger mandate to DCO to support the RC system. DCO is an observer member of the Fund and the Fund’s Secretariat sits in DCO and reports to DCO management. DCO is therefore in a strategic position to facilitate the flow of information between the country, regional, and global levels and is well placed to inform the Fund of the needs and priorities of the RCs and UNCTs with respect to human rights mainstreaming. This is in addition to information that can be leveraged through the Fund’s membership and the direct link that the Fund’s participating UN agencies have to their country offices to transmit information back to the Fund.

16. The Fund and its inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms have supported the implementation of the Human Rights Upfront Initiative by promoting early warning and prevention work throughout their activities. However, the results of these activities have been somewhat scattered and the link between the EOSG strategy to implement the initiative and the Fund’s contributions towards larger results has been unclear.

The Human Rights Up Front (HRuF) initiative was launched by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in December 2013 to address the ‘systematic failure’ identified by an Internal Review Panel in meeting UN responsibilities to prevent and respond to serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law. The initiative was designed to help the UN act more coherently across the pillars of the Organization’s work – peace and security, development, and human rights – by achieving a cultural change to make sure that UN staff understand their prevention responsibilities and pursue them, operational change to ensure that the UN works on the basis of shared analysis, and enhance engagement with Member States. The main purpose of the HRuF Action Plan, therefore, was to strengthen the UN system’s ability to effectively prevent and respond to serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The HRuF Action Plan provides a framework for a timelier and more predictable UN-wide response to situations of concern, based on a more deliberate use and leveraging of the full range of UN resources, mandates and skills across the Secretariat, Specialized Agencies, Funds and Programmes and applied at headquarters and individual country-level.

In 2014, the HRuF initiative, under the leadership of the EOSG, articulated an action plan that identified entity responsibilities as well as responsibilities for structures such as the UNDG and its working mechanisms, including specific responsibilities for the HRM MDTF. In response to this, the Fund supported a number of activities that were integrated into the work plans of the Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism and the HRWG to promote early warning and prevention work. Examples of activities include integrating HRuF principles in the RC’s ToRs and developing a UNDG Guidance Note on Human Rights for RCs and UNCTs. In addition, the ToRs of the HRAs were modified to further

28 In 2020, DCO became a management steering committee observer
29 HRuF was an entire pillar of the HRWG 2015 – 2016 workplan.
strengthen the HRuF Initiative by mandating HRAs to provide early warning and prevention support to RCs who also serve as Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) in humanitarian and conflict settings. An example of this is the case of Mozambique where, in 2017 in the context of the resurgence of the armed conflict between the government of Mozambique and the RENAMO, the HRA increased the capacity of the UNCT on situational awareness and early warning that enabled the UNCT to keep DPA and OHCHR abreast of the situation to facilitate prevention actions and advocacy. The Fund’s 2020 work plan and budget include dedicated activities in support of HRuF, in line with the Secretary General’s 2020 Call to Action for Human Rights that encourages strengthened cross-pillar UN work to advance the HRuF initiative.

Although activities to promote the HRuF initiative were integrated into the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency work plans, the plans do not explicitly articulate the ways in which these contributions will lead towards the larger results of the HRuF initiative. The Fund’s annual reports also do not provide a comprehensive description of how the Fund’s contributions fit into and have strengthened the HRuF initiative. In addition, the Fund’s updated 2019 ToRs do not articulate how the Fund will contribute towards the HRuF initiative. The Fund’s lack of a Theory of Change and M&E Framework may have contributed to this missing link in the results chain. Examples of the Fund’s work to support the HRuF Initiative suggest that the Fund is well placed to support such a system-wide human rights initiative. However, the Fund’s contributions towards the larger initiative would need to be more clearly documented in order to demonstrate this.

17. The Fund’s change logic makes a number of assumptions that are largely true or partially true. When these assumptions are not true, they have had a direct negative impact on the Fund’s effectiveness.

The Fund’s reconstructed Theory of Change (ToC) identified six assumptions that are crucial to understanding the Fund’s effectiveness. The evaluation tested these six assumptions and found, as outlined below, that while they are true in most circumstances, they become significant hindering factors in those cases where they are not true.

**Assumption 1: UN agencies and staff members develop a trusting relationship with the HRAs.**

Survey results and case study interviews confirm that HRAs overwhelmingly have a trusting relationship with RCs and UNCTs and that this close relationship is one of the primary factors that facilitate the work of HRAs. In fact, over 95 per cent (21/22) of surveyed HRAs stated that they had a relationship based on trust and mutual understanding with the RC and UNCT; comparing the responses of female and male HRAs, a larger part (67 per cent) of female HRAs “strongly agree” that they have a relationship based on trust and mutual understanding.

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30 HRA Report: Draft Inputs from Mozambique, MDTF Reporting, 2017
trust with the RC and UNCT, while the majority only “agree” with the statement (Exhibit 10). Case studies revealed that when the relationship is less close, HRAs have felt disempowered and frustrated and have been less able to promote human rights mainstreaming within the UNCT and have lacked legitimacy when interacting with national stakeholders.

**Exhibit 10. HRA’s opinions on whether they have a relationship based on trust and mutual understanding with the RC and UNCT**

![Bar chart showing the distribution of responses to the question](attachment:image.png)

**Assumption 2: UNCTs and staff understand the need for further human rights mainstreaming, and are willing to implement the mainstreaming of human rights by building their capacities and working together.**

Survey results, case studies, and key informant interviews confirm that this assumption is largely true and that UN-wide acceptance and understanding of human rights mainstreaming has increased over the past decade (as explained in Finding 9). In fact, over 90 per cent (20/22) of surveyed HRAs stated that the RC is open to and understands the necessity to mainstream human rights throughout the UN system, while the HRA’s perceived acceptance of HR mainstreaming by UNCTs appears to be somewhat lower at 68 per cent (15/22). Survey results also indicated that 86 per cent (19/22) of surveyed HRAs feel that the RCs and UNCTs are open to their suggestions with respect to engaging in novel ways of supporting national human rights systems, and that the RC regularly appeals to him/her for information on the guidelines and tools for human rights mainstreaming within the UNDS; gender disaggregated responses demonstrate that while responses of male HRAs vary in degree of agreement with the statement, three female HRAs disagree that the RC regularly appeals to them for information. This being said, key informant interviews across the global, regional, and country levels highlighted continued
resistance among UN staff (including RCs and UNCTs) at the country level to address human rights issues due to the fear of potential political repercussions. This is a hindering factor, particularly with respect to early warning and prevention work as well as inter-agency responses to grave human rights violations. A large majority of surveyed RCs - 96 per cent (48/50) - believe that human rights mainstreaming throughout the UN Development System should be either a top priority or one of the top priorities. As Exhibit 11 illustrates, the deployment of the HRA does not make a significant difference, and, in fact, the RCs without an HRA deployed to the RCO are of the opinion that human rights mainstreaming is of a higher priority than those with an HRA in the RCO.

Exhibit 11. RC’s opinions on the importance of HR mainstreaming throughout the UNDS

Assumption 3: National governments are willing and eager to promote human rights at the country level.

The evaluation has found this assumption to be partially true. The 2012 Human Rights Advisor Strategy ensures that HRAs are deployed to countries where there is some willingness from national governments to promote human rights. Therefore, this assumption is largely true for those countries where HRAs are deployed. Survey results (Exhibit 12) demonstrate that HRAs generally report having a relationship based on mutual trust and understanding with National Human Rights Institutions. However, even though it is the responsibility of national governments to protect and implement human rights, the long-standing challenge to human rights work of engaging national governments to promote human rights and address human rights violations within their territories remains as present as ever, thus serving as a hindering factor among some Member States. In response to the survey (in one of the optional qualitative follow-up questions), five RCs (out of 14 that responded to the question) cited challenges related to cooperation with government stakeholders as a reason for delays in human rights mainstreaming activities; three of the RCs have an HRA deployed at the RCO and two do not.
Assumption 4: The Fund has sufficient operational capacity to influence UN policy, inter-agency collaboration mechanisms, and actors at the country-level.

The Fund has been able to achieve significant influence across the global, regional, and country levels when taking into consideration its size and financial capacity, as outlined in the effectiveness section. However, unstable funding (discussed in Finding 26) has reduced the capacity of the Fund to plan strategically, share information, and monitor its results. These challenges are factors that have limited the Fund’s influence on UN policy, inter-agency collaboration mechanisms, and actors at the country-level.

Assumption 5: Inter-agency HR mechanisms are functional

While the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms have largely been successful at implementing their work plans, changes in the UNDG/UNSDG system have caused regular restructuring of the mechanisms, which as hindered their ability to plan strategically and more long-term.

Assumption 6: Capacity building initiatives translate into practice

The evaluation has obtained anecdotal evidence to support the assumption that capacity building initiatives supported by the Fund have translated into improved human rights planning and programming. For instance, UN staff who participated in the training workshop on human rights mainstreaming organized by UNESCO and supported by the Fund’s Regional Human Rights Advisor in Costa Rica in 2015 used the knowledge and skills they had gained to integrate a HRBA and GEEW perspective into their review of the UNDAF Mid-Term Review. However, the Fund’s lack of an M&E framework (as discussed in Finding 14) has made it impossible to know on a more systematic basis the extent to which capacity building initiatives have translated into practice.
Efficiency

18. The Fund’s current governance structure as of 2019 does not facilitate strategic decision-making.

When the Fund was initially established in 2011, its governance structure consisted of a Steering Committee designed to make strategic level decisions. A short while later in 2012, the Fund’s Steering Committee established a Resource Management Committee to support technical decisions and to manage the Fund’s day-to-day operations. Both bodies supported the work of the Fund. This two-tiered structure was in place until 2019 and was designed to provide one space for strategic level decision-making and another separate space for the day-to-day management of the Fund. The two-tiered structure provided the necessary space to pursue strategic thinking. However, the Steering Committee was unable to develop essential strategic documents to guide the Fund’s work such as subsequent multi-year work plans, a Theory of Change, or an M&E Framework due to a constantly changing UNDG/UNSDG architecture that didn’t facilitate long-term planning.

In 2019, the governance structure of the Fund was restructured to dismantle the Resource Management Committee and to formally separate the Fund’s Steering Committee from the inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanism. The expectation was that the Fund would continue to align its work with the priorities outlined in the mechanism’s work plans. However, this restructuring left the Fund with only the Steering Committee in place to make both strategic and technical decisions for the Fund. By only having one forum to make both strategic and technical decisions, the nature of the Steering Committee meetings have become more technical since 2019.

The technical nature of the Steering Committee meetings has dissuaded many senior decision-makers from participating organisations from attending. Prior to 2019, the Steering Committee was co-chaired by two ASGs and had some regular engagement from Directors. However, the separation of the Fund’s Steering Committee from the UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanism in 2019 has entrenched a trend seen even prior to 2019 of diminishing seniority among Steering Committee members. The Steering Committee currently no longer has ASG participation (the ASG co-chairs work exclusively with the inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanism since 2019) and Director no longer attend its meetings, with some important exceptions such as UNDP, OHCHR, and DCO.

It is anticipated that the UNSDG will continue to make structural adjustments as part of the UNDS Reform, which will likely include dismantling the UNSDG inter-agency working groups and setting up time-bound purpose-driven working groups that will not set strategic agendas. Within this context, the Fund may be left with a further strategic void, as there would potentially be no UNSDG body to set strategic priorities and develop an inter-agency vision on how to mainstream human rights within the UNDS.
19. The current level of engagement of some participating UN agencies towards the inter-agency Fund is low due to a number of factors that include the technical/administrative nature of the Steering Committee meetings; the Fund’s primary focus on the HRA programme; limited staff capacity among agencies to work on human rights, and uncertainty with respect to the future UNDG/UNSDG architecture.

One of the Fund’s current primary challenges is the low level of engagement among some of the participating organisations towards the Fund. This low level of engagement is manifested in a variety of ways including through the minimal exchange of information and reporting on results among participating organizations, the near absence of senior (i.e. Director level or higher) representatives from participating organizations, and low commitments from participating organizations to contribute towards the Fund through activities such as knowledge management and resource mobilization efforts.

When the Fund was first established, there was considerable enthusiasm and engagement among participating organizations that viewed it as an opportunity to make an impact with respect to mainstreaming human rights across the UNDG. In fact, enthusiasm was so high that the Fund’s initial portfolio was quite ambitious for the size of the Fund. The Fund’s Secretariat found it challenging to manage expectations and address the ambitious nature of its portfolio with the resources available to it.

The Fund’s initial work focused largely on policy work, standard setting, capacity development, and knowledge management with the HRA Programme assuming a small percentage of the Fund’s portfolio (in 2013, the Fund supported the deployment of only 2 HRAs). However, with the perceived and widely acknowledged success of the HRA programme, the percentage of the Fund’s portfolio dedicated to the programme has increased, as outlined in Exhibit 13, with the Fund providing the majority of the financial support for HRA deployments in 2020.

This occurred in combination with challenges around getting PUNOs to engage in leading the implementation of human rights mainstreaming initiatives outside of HRA deployments such as convening, policy work, and knowledge management that require substantial in-kind contributions from PUNOs at the global level. PUNOs at the global level have found it challenging to provide human rights expertise and staff time to support the Fund’s portfolio, as the extent of human rights resources within UN agencies remains extremely limited and inter-agency mechanisms habitually struggle to achieve sufficient member participation. In some years, funding was planned for inter-agency activities that were ultimately not implemented. Unused funding was then reallocated towards the HRA Programme that didn’t require as much in-kind engagement from PUNOs at the HQ level. At the field level, PUNOs

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31 This was an area of concern identified through numerous KIIs. It has also been challenging to get UN organisations to participate in the Fund, reflecting low level of engagement from the UN system.

32 As further discussed in Finding 22, the Fund’s results reporting and information-sharing processes among PUNOs has not been formally institutionalized and has relied on somewhat ad-hoc information sharing.

33 As explained in Finding 26, the lack of stability within the UNDG/UNSDG architecture and the resulting lack of a multi-year plan have contributed towards challenges with respect to resource mobilization efforts.
have contributed towards HRA deployments both financially and through their engagement, reflecting the value of having a HRA at the country level.

Having an inter-agency fund in place provides a rationale for entities to plan for dedicated staff time to advance inter-agency work. It also presents disadvantages as agencies may start to take a more hands-off approach to inter-agency human rights mainstreaming, which is not only detrimental to the Fund but can be detrimental to the entire UNDS efforts to mainstream human rights. Constant changes to the UNDG/UNSDG architecture have also affected UN entity engagement beyond piece-meal activity-driven proposals since the Fund was unable to establish multi-year results and M&E frameworks.

Combined with the technical nature of the Steering Committee meetings as explained in Finding 19, these factors have led to the decreased level of engagement currently seen from some participating UN organisations. Low levels of agency engagement risk leading to limited ownership, limited engagement from agencies to contribute towards mobilizing resources, and reduced galvanized support for human rights work within the UNDS.

Exhibit 13. Budgets (net funded amounts) by category 2013-2020
20. The process and selection criteria used to identify and prioritize which countries will receive HRAs lacks specificity and formalization.

HRA deployments are identified using a request-based process as opposed to a global process for soliciting HRA needs from RCs/UNCTs. This was decided in part to avoid building expectations in a context where there were limited funds for new deployments. However, not all RCs are aware of the Programme or understand how to submit a request for support. Both the Fund and OHCHR are aware of this and have conducted outreach in an attempt to raise awareness of the Programme among RCs/UNCTs. However, awareness of the Programme across RCs/UNCTs remains patchy. This risks not fully capturing all urgent and feasible HRA deployment opportunities. In addition, even though OHCHR has a strong understanding of human rights issues and RCs may have some ongoing dialogue with national stakeholders, the process used to identify requests for HRAs to support RCs does not include formal mechanisms to consult with and engage national stakeholders in identifying key human rights priority areas.

When an RC submits a request for a HRA deployment, OHCHR works with the RC to identify the feasibility and urgency of the potential deployment, in line with the criteria outlined in the 2012 Human Rights Advisor Strategy. All requests for HR deployments received from RCs are then presented to the Fund’s Steering Committee for approval or rejection based on the 2012 criteria. These criteria are largely focused on ensuring that the necessary factors are present to facilitate HRA work such as willingness from the RC to work with the HRA on human rights mainstreaming and a national context that facilitates human rights work. However, the criteria are less clear with respect to what constitutes an urgent human rights situation\textsuperscript{34}. In addition, the 2012 Strategy does not clearly articulate how to prioritize urgent and feasible requests within a context of limited funding. While OHCHR and the Fund have made some modifications to the Strategy (such as removing the requirement for RCs and UNCTs to fully finance the HRA post by the third year of deployment, as discussed in Finding 27), it has not been formally updated or expanded on through an accompanying policy since it was released in 2012. Changes within the system (including the capacity of the RC0 through the provision of gender advisers and PDAs) are not formally included in the criteria.

21. The Fund has found efficient ways to support human rights mainstreaming but the efficiency of Steering Committee meetings has diminished over time due to extensive engagement in the details surrounding HRA deployments.

By supporting an inter-agency platform to advance the mainstreaming of human rights across the UNDS, the Fund has made efficient contributions towards integrating human rights principles into UNDG/UNSDG policies and frameworks by galvanizing existing human rights expertise among UN

\textsuperscript{34} The urgency of the country’s human rights situation is outlined in OHCHR’s HRA assessment and proposal template that is submitted to the Steering Committee but criteria with respect to urgency are not clearly articulated within the 2012 HRA Strategy. It is also unclear how the prioritization of HRA deployments should occur among countries with urgent human rights needs.
agencies. At the country level, the Fund has provided efficient support to multiple UN organisations through the provision of a HRA who is based in the RCO and who works directly with members of the UNCTs. Financing one technical expert to assist the entire UNCT is a low-cost structure. Although a surge capacity model may be more efficient at targeting specific needs and executing concrete tasks, it is not appropriate in the context of human rights mainstreaming, which is a long-term process that requires sustained efforts.

The timeliness of the Fund’s approval for the deployment of Human Rights Advisors is also, on average, within a reasonable period (approximately 2 months) from when the Fund receives a request for funding to its approval. This time is typically shorter for urgent/emergency deployments. This being said, it is unclear what the turn-around time is between when an RC requests HRA to when a proposal is submitted to the Fund by OHCHR for approval. A total of 82 per cent (41/50) of surveyed RCs reported that activities supported by the Fund were sometimes or often on time with only 12 per cent (6/50) indicating that services were rarely or never on time; analysis of responses disaggregated by gender demonstrate that only female RCs responded that services were rarely or never on time.

**Exhibit 14. RC’s opinions on whether activities provided by the UNSDG that support human rights mainstreaming are typically delivered on time**

Even though the Fund’s portfolio includes efficient mainstreaming approaches, the efficiency of its Steering Committee meetings has diminished over time due to extensive engagement in the details surrounding HRA deployments. Steering Committee meeting minutes reveal that extensive discussions have taken place over the criteria for deployment, which contributes to the reduction of the strategic nature of the meetings, as explained in Finding 19. Without clearly articulated and formalized detailed HRA deployment criteria (as outlined in Finding 20), Steering Committee members have become heavily involved in the selection process, which is inefficient for a Steering Committee that needs to prioritize more strategic-level discussions and thinking.
22. The ad hoc sharing of results between organisations within the Fund has not facilitated operational efficiencies and has diminished trust between participating entities.

Reporting by participating organisations to the Secretariat has been, and continues to be, on an ad hoc basis. While annual reporting is shared formally through the consolidated annual report, additional interim results sharing is not done within a formalized process. The Fund does not have a formal internal reporting system set up to facilitate the quick and reliable exchange of reporting information between participating organisations and the Secretariat/Steering Committee. This has resulted in inefficiencies in obtaining the necessary reporting data to prepare the Fund’s annual report, as well as some erosion of trust between participating organisations, as results have not been made available on a regular formalized basis.

The UN entities that make up the Fund have different reporting requirements and therefore require a more institutionalized approach to reporting. For instance, OHCHR has specific periodic reporting requirements while DCO has other requirements for RCs and RCOs to report. The lack of an institutionalized approach to reporting within the Fund may be hindering the ability of OHCHR and DCO to collaborate on supporting the work of HRAs and raising the visibility of achieved results.

23. The degree of engagement between the Fund and donors has been limited to annual reporting. The Fund has not used any mechanisms to engage donors in strategic planning or decision-making.

The Fund shares information with its donors on an annual basis through consolidated annual reports. However, there is no formal system in place to facilitate information sharing to provide more regular updates between annual reports. Key informant interviews with donors have revealed that donors would like to receive more regular updates and would prefer to receive this information through more engaging means (i.e. through the use of shorter more results focused reports, briefs and summaries, visual data, etc.).

In addition, donors have not been engaged in the strategic management of the Fund by including them in its governance structure. The Fund has the potential to engage donors in strategic decision-making through an annual stakeholders meeting or by inviting them to become permanent members of its Steering Committee. Other funds engage donors in strategic decisions, such as the Anti-Microbial Resistance Fund (AMR) that includes donors as members of its Steering Committee.

24. The Fund is achieving administrative efficiencies by transferring a minimum of 100,000 USD per project per agency. However, this limits the Fund’s degree of flexibility in meeting the needs and priorities of its stakeholders.

The UNDG policy around minimum thresholds for multi-partner trust funds stipulates a minimum transfer of 100,000 USD per project per UN agency in order to reduce administrative costs associated
with the transfer of funds. While this minimum threshold helps the Fund to achieve administrative efficiencies by minimizing administrative and management costs associated with reviewing proposals, monitoring progress (including extensions and amendments, etc.), and reporting, it limits the Fund’s flexibility to provide targeted support to stakeholders that may be under 100,000 USD. For instance, training initiatives and workshops are often below the financial threshold. The shifting of activities online due to the Covid-19 pandemic has, in some cases, resulted in resource surpluses. However, the Fund’s flexibility to shift these resources to other activities is limited due to the 100,000 USD threshold. Some exceptions to the threshold have been made but they remain exceptions.

25. The Fund’s ToRs and the work plans of the UNDG/UNSDG human rights mainstreaming inter-agency mechanisms contain RBM weaknesses that have hindered the Fund’s ability to plan and achieve results.

A careful examination of the Fund’s ToRs and the work plans of the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms has revealed a number of weaknesses with respect to the use of results-based management principles that have hindered the Fund’s ability to plan and achieve results. For instance, there is significant overlap between the Fund’s outcome areas, as presented in the reconstructed theory of change (ToC). For instance, both outcomes 1 and 4 discuss policy (output 1.1. discusses policy tools while output 4.2 discusses policies). This overlap and lack of clarity make it difficult to understand how results will be achieved through the results chain. In addition, proposals received by the Fund have lacked detail with respect to the outcomes that will be achieved, which in turn have hindered the Fund’s ability to understand how it is contributing towards larger outcome-level results.

With respect to the work plans of the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms, a number of RBM weaknesses have been identified that include:

1. **Overly vague outcome and output statements.** For example, the UNDG Human Rights Working Group 2017 Draft Work Plan Output 1.12 was formulated as “Support the human rights-based implementation of the 2030 Agenda”. The formulation of this statement is vague as it is not clear, for example, what goals of the 2030 agenda would be addressed and what kind of support they would entail. In this case, the vague use of language made it difficult to develop indicators of successful delivery of the output and thus monitor the extent to which it was achieved.

2. **Outputs and outcomes are not pitched at the correct level.** For example, the UNDG Human Rights Working Group 2016 Work Plan Output 2.2.2 was formulated as “UN system-wide knowledge management enhanced in the area of human rights and development”. This formulation lacks a specific output that will be delivered as a result of implemented activities. The current formulation could be an outcome or even impact level result. This incorrect formulation can lead to challenges with respect to ensuring effective monitoring of whether the output has been achieved.
3. **Lack of monitoring indicators to measure progress and achievements.** The work plans of the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms are mostly focused on outcome, output, and activity formulation and listing but are missing monitoring indicators to measure progress and achievements. While outlining the planned activities is an important process for work planning, setting out a structure for how results will be monitored is equally important as it allows for course adjustment and effective management of the planned processes.

**Sustainability**

26. Mainstreaming human rights into four-year country plans (UNDAFs and UNSDCFds) has encouraged the sustainability of the integration of human rights into country planning and programming.

The Fund’s intentional approach to provide support to RCs and UNCTs to mainstream human rights priorities throughout the UNCT’s planning processes, namely the UNDAFs and UNSDCFds, has successfully embedded human rights priorities within four-year country level plans, thus facilitating the sustainability of results. As discussed in Finding 10, HRAs have provided essential support to integrate human rights throughout the CCAs and UNDAFs / UNSDCFds. In those countries where HRAs are not deployed, the Fund supported human rights mainstreaming into the CCAs and UNDAFs / UNSDCFds through other means of support including regional HRAs, training and capacity development initiatives (such as was the case in Costa Rica), and guidance documents (such as the LNOB Guidance), among others.

27. The Fund has experienced severe funding volatility and currently has a limited donor base. It also does not have structures or processes in place to regularly engage current donors or bring in new ones, thus raising concerns over the sustainability of the Fund.

Over the past decade, the Fund has struggled to achieve stable long-term funding to support its work. As outlined in Exhibit 15 below, the Fund had a budget of nearly 4 million USD in 2012 that then decreased to a low of slightly over 1 million USD in 2016 before rising to a high of over 7 million USD in 2019. This instability was largely caused by constant changes in the UNDG/UNSDG architecture that reduced the Fund’s ability to plan long-term and was exacerbated by the decision to divert funding towards the Delivering Together Facility (DTF), as explained in Finding 6. The structural instability within the UNDG/UNSDG prohibited the development of a multi-year results framework during most of the Fund’s existence that hindered the Fund’s ability to secure multi-year funding, plan ahead, conduct an evaluation, and build on past results to achieve scale up and/or synergies.
Over the years, the Fund has drawn on a consistent small group of Northern European donors ranging from 1 to 6 donors contributing per year. These donors have strong mandates and associated budgets to support human rights work and are actively looking for ways to support human rights within the UNDS. In fact, some of the recent donors proactively approached the Fund to offer their support. Within this context there remain, therefore, opportunities for the Fund to engage new donors who may have an interest in promoting human rights throughout the UNDS but who are not actively looking for such opportunities. Most of the Fund’s resource mobilization efforts have been done by OHCHR and DOCO without wider inter-agency engagement. They have also been done outside of a formal resource mobilization strategy. Currently, the roles and responsibilities regarding resource mobilization have not been clearly defined by the Steering Committee. Current members of the Steering Committee do not have fundraising experience and are therefore looking towards staff contributions from participating agencies to move fundraising efforts forward. Key informant interviews have suggested that it has been particularly challenging to obtain fundraising support from participating organisations when the funds go towards inter-agency work as opposed to the work of each agency. A resource mobilization working group was recently created under the Steering Committee to try to address some of these challenges. In addition, in 2019, the Fund’s Steering Committee made several decisions to enhance the sustainability of the Fund that include conducting this evaluation, extending the Fund to 2024, and planning the development a multi-year results framework.

The Fund is currently not capitalizing on an important opportunity to engage current donors who believe the Fund’s work to generate increased interest among new donors. Key informant interviews with donors suggest that some of the current donors would be willing to serve as ambassadors for the Fund and help raise awareness of the Fund’s good work among potential new donors. However, donors have cited the lack of processes and mechanisms to engage them in the Fund’s work as obstacles in doing this. So far, the level of engagement with current donors has remained within the realm of sending information and updates on an annual and ad-hoc basis. The Fund does not offer donors with a

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35 These donors include the governments of Finland, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, and Germany.
space to engage and interact with the Fund, which is contrary to the practices of other funds such as the AMR Fund that invites donors to participate as regular Steering Committee members. Donors have also mentioned that they would need to receive communications products that highlight the Fund’s important mandate and added value to the UNDS in order to raise awareness and generate new interest in the Fund.

28. The original intention of the HRA programme was for UNCTs to fully finance their HRA by the third year to ensure buy-in and sustainability. However, this hasn’t worked out as planned.

The 2012 Human Rights Advisor Strategy outlines a sustainable funding model where the Fund would pay 100% of the Human Rights Advisory’s salary in the first year of deployment with a gradual phase out where the RC would pay for half of the salary in the second year and would assume full costs in the third year. This was designed to ensure sustainability and to encourage buy-in and ownership at the country level. While HRAs have, over the years, been partially funded by RCOs and UNCTs, this continued cost-sharing arrangement has proven to be unrealistic within the context of UN Reform and resulting changes in resource allocation including through the cost-sharing arrangement for the RC system. This risk was foreseen, with efforts to manage this through circular assessment of funding through the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation. Therefore, the Fund is currently required to continue supporting the full financing of HRA deployments on a yearly basis. The Fund uses alternative indicators to reflect RC and UNCT buy-in and ownership.

Impact

29. The Fund provides significant value-added to inter-agency coordination and cooperation around human rights by consisting of multiple UN agencies and by facilitating a space for UN agencies to work together to mainstream human rights.

Over the past decade, the Fund has provided important inter-agency support to the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms, serving as the primary source of funding for their work. In fact, as previously explained, the Fund’s supported activities were decided based on the work plans of the mechanisms to ensure alignment and coordinated support. The inter-agency nature of the human rights coordination mechanisms as well as the presence of multiple UN agencies on the Fund’s Steering Committee has provided the UNDG/UNSDG with a space to bring UN agencies together to discuss, plan, and implement support in a coordinated and holistic fashion to mainstream human rights throughout the UNDS.

This space has facilitated synergies between UN agencies based on their comparative advantages, which have provided added value to the UNSD/UNSDG. For instance, UNDP played an important role at engaging RCs (who were also UNDP representatives until the UNDS Reform in 2018) and sharing information with respect to their needs and priorities with the Steering Committee. Other agencies have
made important contributions based on the strengths of their unique mandates, such as UN Women and UNFPA who have provided important technical expertise and insights with respect to women’s rights.

The provision of the Secretariat to the UNDG/UNSDG inter-agency coordination groups and human rights capacity within DOCO has also been a value-added as it allowed the Fund to deliver additional results pertaining to important quality assurance, coordination and partnership support for the human rights mainstreaming work of the UNDG/UNSDG through its role in supporting the inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms to deliver on their work plans; importantly, because of the dedicated Secretariat support many inter-agency initiatives have been able to move forward with their initiatives. The Secretariat developed a Monitoring and Evaluation plan for the work of the UNDG-HRWG; facilitated a transparent process for funding decisions; and organised regular meetings at focal point and membership level. Other examples of its support include:

- Consensus over the ToR and development and implementation of the work plan of the Human Rights Task Team established in 2018, in the context of the changing UNDG/UNSDG architecture;
- Collaboration of the Human Rights Task Team in the HRA community of practice workshop, introducing workshop design elements that leveraged the opportunity for obtaining inputs from the HRAs on the UNDAF/UNSDCF Guidance and the Operational Guide on Leaving No One Behind for UNCTs in 2018;
- Support in the context of the changing UNDG/UNSDG architecture with regards to fundraising, reporting and liaising with donors for the work of the UNDG-HRWG through the transition to the RG VVN in 2017 and ToR development and implementation of the work plan of the Human Rights Task Team in 2018;
- Driving the inter-agency coordination and facilitating the engagement and ownership of colleagues (including from across HQ and the field) in processes at both strategic and technical levels designed to identify and respond to human rights mainstreaming needs in the UNDS, examples include the Frontiers Dialogues, the Frontiers Forum and Policy and Operational Support on Human Rights in the SDGs as well as the Operational Guide on LNOB for UNCTs;
- Identifying opportunities in UNDG/UNSDG work on development policy, developing guidance and tools for policy coherence and mainstreaming human rights, coordinating with entities to provide advice based on agency inputs. Examples include the Senior Policy Dialogues (2012-2014), development of common messages on the QCPR 2012 and 2016, IMS indicators on human rights mainstreaming, reviews of CCAs and UNDAFs and common messages for UNDS reform discussions;
- Substantive guidance, coordination and organizing with entities in the development and implementation of the RC leadership strategy, ensuring it responds to the challenges and opportunities of the current environment and is informed by broad contributions across the UNDG/UNSDG and inputs from the field, for instance on the HRA Strategy, in dialogues linked to broader UNDG leadership processes, development of the Guidance Note on Human Rights on
RCs for UNCTs and Annexes, assuming a leading role on letters to RCs on engagement with the human rights mechanisms;

- Substantive guidance to operational support to country and regional colleagues to ensure alignment of efforts with UNDG/UNSDG priorities and emerging good practices, for example, in-country projects and through the support to regional HRAs, organization of the UNDG LAC Community of Practice and HRA Communities of Practice.

Inter-agency synergies are particularly encouraged as part of the UNDS Reform, which has called for increased inter-agency collaboration and joint programming. The inter-agency nature of the Fund is therefore particularly relevant and well placed within the UNDS Reform context and is essential for advancing human rights mainstreaming that is increasingly seen as a UN-wide issue. Key informant interviews have revealed that donors are also more interested in funding inter-agency work that supports the UNDS as opposed to individual agency work. The Fund’s mandate to strengthen human rights mainstreaming across the UNDS (as opposed to the mainstreaming of human rights within each organisation) is therefore aligned with donor priorities. For instance, the fact that HRAs are supported by the Fund and seen as a common UN good is an attractive element of the HRA Programme for donors.

30. The Fund has a comparative advantage in linking global and regional inter-agency efforts to country-level work.

Due to the Fund’s portfolio of work that supports global, regional, and country level mainstreaming initiatives, the Fund is well placed and has a comparative advantage to continue linking mainstreaming efforts across levels. As outlined in the effectiveness section of this report, the Fund has successfully influenced UNDG/UNSDG policies and priorities to incorporate human rights considerations. The Fund then supported their operationalization by developing guidance and tools, capacity development, and technical support at the country level. Efforts to connect the country and regional levels have included support for regional initiative such as Regional HRAs as well as support for human rights knowledge management. In particular, the Fund’s support for country-level HRAs has provided an excellent entry point to operationalize global policies and frameworks and promote human rights mainstreaming throughout the work of the UNCTs.

The infrastructure that the Fund has invested in over the past decade to connect the country, regional, and global levels offers huge potential to advance human rights mainstreaming. Within the UNDS Reform context, the Fund has the potential to further strengthen its comparative advantage with respect to working across levels. While half (11/22) of surveyed HRAs stated that the UNSDG global, regional, and national human rights mainstreaming efforts are closely interlinked and aligned, 32 per cent (7/22) stated that they were not, suggesting some room for improvement (Exhibit 16). In addition, as outlined in Finding 5, the Fund’s support at the regional level could potentially be strengthened within the new UNSDG regional architecture. Due to the Fund’s comparative advantage in linking human rights mainstreaming work across the global, regional, and country levels, it has the potential to further strengthen communication and information sharing and facilitate the sharing of feedback from the country to the global level.
### 31. The Fund is currently not functioning to achieve maximum impact.

**Exhibit 16. HRA’s opinions on whether the UNSDG global, regional and national human rights mainstreaming efforts are closely interlinked and aligned**

Due to some of the challenges that have been outlined in previous findings, the Fund is currently not functioning to achieve maximum impact. It does not have an effective strategic-level decision-making forum and tools in place to strategically guide the Fund’s work or a functioning M&E framework and system to monitor and report on results. In addition, the Fund’s management processes (such as formalized results sharing, clearly defined roles and responsibilities with respect to issues such as knowledge management and resource mobilization, etc.) require further professionalization. These weaknesses affect the Fund’s ability to plan long-term, ensure that programming is most relevant, adjust programming to achieve its greatest effectiveness, and achieve scale-up and synergies.

### 32. The Human Rights Advisor Programme shows potential for scale-up.

As outlined in Finding 13, HRAs provide added value to the work of RCs and UNCTs to mainstream human rights throughout their work and to support national stakeholders. They have demonstrated their ability to push human rights work forward beyond simply providing technical advice. Without engaging in programming since HRAs do not have a programming mandate, HRAs still require financial support to execute their role, which requires work in the areas of convening stakeholders, conducting studies/analysis, etc. HRAs are mandated to support human rights mainstreaming throughout UNCT programme implementation. However, this has been identified by the evaluation as an area needing further attention and investment. Financial support for the HRA to further support capacity development across the UNCT could potentially make part of this investment. In addition, key informant interviews have confirmed that there is a strong interest among RCs to receive HRAs but that the extent of their deployment has been limited due to funding constraints. This suggests that there is a need among RCs and UNCTs for the Human Rights Advisor Programme to be scaled-up.
33. The Fund’s potential to generate a larger impact is currently hindered by few partnerships with non-UN actors, minimal synergies with other UN initiatives, and currently minimal knowledge sharing across countries and regions.

Although the Fund has facilitated inter-agency collaboration around human rights mainstreaming, it has not necessarily taken full advantage of opportunities to collaborate and partner with other UN initiatives or actors outside of the UN system. For instance, synergies could potentially exist with the Peace and Development Advisors who also work in the RCOs\(^\text{36}\). There may also be potential synergies that could be exploited through collaboration with other similar funds such as the SDG Fund or the Peace Building Fund. UN actors working on the LNOB agenda would also be natural collaborators/partners for the Fund (i.e. actors working on Indigenous rights, disability inclusion, women’s rights, etc.). Because of clear mandates for each of the three pillars of the UN (i.e. Development, Peace and Security, and Human Rights), the Fund has largely worked on mainstreaming human rights throughout the UNDS. However, due to the complexity of human rights work, the impact of the Fund could potentially be greater, particularly with respect to prevent and response, if it were to collaborate more with entities across the three pillars. In fact, the Secretary General’s 2020 Call to Action for Human Rights encourages increased collaboration across the UN pillars. In 2020, the Fund planned (in collaboration with the EOSG) a number of activities aimed at supporting the UNDS to deliver on the responsibilities and demands of Human Rights up Front, which include\(^\text{37}\):

- Support to implementation of the Human Rights up Front Action Plan including revitalized Regional Monthly Review (RMR) mechanism which facilitates risk-based prevention discussions across the three pillars of the UN;
- Deployment of multi-disciplinary Light Teams to assist RCs and UNCTs with preventive analysis and response in complex situations;
- Actions to foster an organisational culture across the entire system that effectively supports staff in promoting and defending human rights.

The Fund’s collaboration with non-UN actors has also been limited, with the exception of the HRAs who engage with national stakeholders. There could potentially be lessons to be learned from the Peace and Development Advisor Programme that has been somewhat successful at engaging with UN and non-UN partners\(^\text{38}\). As an inter-agency financing tool, the Fund has the potential to generate impact across the UNDS by serving a catalytic function by bringing people, resources, and knowledge together to work through a coordinated approach that fosters synergies across actors.

\(^{36}\) Although not funded through the MDTF, some efforts to generate synergies between the PDAs and HRAs have occurred in the past. For instance, a workshop took place between PDAs and HRAs in Central and Eastern Europe to explore synergies and potential areas of collaboration.

\(^{37}\) These activities were not successfully implemented due to a number of factors that included delays resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and challenges bringing the EOSG into the Fund’s work.

\(^{38}\) The Joint UNDP-DPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention Mid-Term Evaluation 2015 – 2017 identified useful partnerships with the UN Volunteers Programme as well as the Swedish Folke Bernadotte Academy.
34. The UN Secretary General’s Call to Action for Human Rights outlines important areas of work where the Fund could increase its potential impact with respect to mainstreaming Human Rights throughout the UN Development System.

Key informant interviews have suggested that even though the HRBA is at the core of the UN’s mandate and priorities, the UNDS is experiencing some “human rights fatigue,” as some UN staff view human rights as part of an older generation of work. The Secretary General’s 2020 Call to Action for Human Rights reinforces the need to continue working in the Fund’s priority areas while calling for increased action around emerging “hot” priorities such as digital rights and climate justice. These areas are seen to be priorities among young people and responses to immediate challenges and pressing global priorities. There may be potential for the Fund to further draw attention towards these priorities to increase momentum and galvanize support for continued human rights mainstreaming work within the UNDS.

“The Call to Action is an attempt to bring the attention of the human rights community towards more contemporary issues. There is a need to renew and refresh the UN approach towards human rights and to make sure that they address the issues that young people care about”.

39 The Fund has done some work in these areas but the Call to Action calls for a stronger focus.
Section 5: Best Practices

Best practices are insights that have been found to be most effective in achieving their aims. They contribute to institutional knowledge. This evaluation has identified the following best practices derived from the evaluation findings:

1. Integrating human rights principles into centralized country planning documents such as the UNDAF or UNSDCF is an excellent entry point to mainstream human rights throughout country programming. Embedding human rights in these four-year plans also facilitates the sustainability of results (Findings 10, 26).

2. Ensuring the integration of human rights language and priorities within global development agendas and frameworks such as the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) and the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ensures that human rights will be mainstreamed throughout the UNDS and is a best practice (Findings 2, 8).

3. Including factors that facilitate human rights mainstreaming at the country level in the HRA deployment criteria facilitates chances for meaningful human rights work (Finding 20).

4. Inter-agency platforms to advance the mainstreaming of human rights across the UNDS leverage existing human rights expertise among UN agencies and encourage agencies to invest in human rights work (Finding 29).

5. Deployment of HRAs to work directly within the RCO and provide human rights support to the UNCTs allows RCs and UNCTs to have direct access to a human rights specialist and the full institutional support of OHCHR (Finding 3).

6. The Fund’s presence across both the global and country levels has facilitated a direct link between global policy and country-level implementation (Finding 30).

7. Directly supporting RC leadership through leadership dialogues strengthens the ability of RCs to mainstream human rights throughout country programming (Finding 11).

8. The Fund’s focused approach to supporting human rights mainstreaming through inter-agency entry points such as RCs and UNCTs has allowed it to generate meaningful results among these actors (Findings 8, 10, 13).
Section 6: Lessons Learned

Lessons learned are insights that contribute to institutional knowledge and that can be applied to similar initiatives in other contexts. This evaluation has identified the following lessons learned derived from the evaluation findings that inform human rights work, inter-agency work, and funding mechanisms.

1. While actors based at the regional level, such as Regional Human Rights Advisors, are well placed to provide support across multiple countries for targeted initiatives such as the mainstreaming of human rights throughout the UNDAF or UNSDCF, they inevitably do not have the same degree of country-specific knowledge, insights, or connections as a HRA based in-country. HRAs working at the regional level require a strong regional architecture to provide value-added beyond what country-level HRAs can offer (human rights insight from finding 5).

2. The RCs and UNCTs are widely perceived among national stakeholders as a trusted facilitator who can bring together government and civil society actors to discuss and advance human rights (human rights insight from finding 13).

3. Clearly defining roles and responsibilities in UN joint work is an activity that is often undervalued or overlooked and yet has significant implications and consequences on the quality of the joint initiative’s work (inter-agency insight from findings 9, 22 and 31).

4. Ensuring the visibility of funding mechanisms with respect to the achievement of results is crucial for resource mobilization and stakeholder engagement (funding mechanism insight from findings 7 and 27).

5. A Fund’s portfolio must be comprised of diverse activities to demonstrate the value added of the Fund. Otherwise, it risks being viewed simply as a funding source for a specific initiative (funding mechanism insight from findings 2, 8 and 19).

6. The strategic nature of a fund’s strategic governing body such as a steering committee risks being diluted if the nature of steering committee meetings becomes too technical (funding mechanism insight from findings 18 and 19).

7. While managing funding expectations is important for any Fund with resource mobilization constraints, using a targeted request-based system as opposed to an open-call approach can result in the needs of some stakeholders being potentially unmet due to lack of awareness of the Fund (funding mechanism insight derived from finding 20).

8. While the constantly changing UNDG/UNSDG architecture over the past decade has reduced the ability of the Fund and its inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms to plan strategically, being embedded within the UNDG/UNSDG architecture has facilitated ownership
within the UNDG/UNSDG with respect to human rights mainstreaming (*human rights insight from finding 18*).

9. In order to achieve transformational impact at the country level, the inter-linked issues of protection, prevention, development work, and response to grave human rights violations must be addressed through a coordinated approach across the UN’s three pillars through a strategy and partnerships (*human rights insight from findings 4 and 33*).

10. Although there is an identified need to provide further support to mainstream human rights throughout country-level programme implementation, direct funding for UNCT programming requires significant resources and capacity to administer the funding, manage project extensions, and monitor results (*funding mechanism insight derived from finding 10*).

11. Human rights mainstreaming activities that fall outside of the HRA Programme, such as policy work, guidance materials, knowledge management, etc. are essential elements of human rights mainstreaming and require further investment. However, these kinds of activities are resource-heavy for participating organisations who have limited capacities to contribute towards human rights work (*human rights insight from findings 2, 8, 9 and 19*).
Section 7: Conclusions

This section presents eight conclusions based on the analysis of the findings. The conclusions highlight the most important elements for consideration emerging from the evaluation and present a forward-looking discussion around the implications of the findings on the future of the Fund and inter-agency human rights work within the UNDS.

1. The Fund has demonstrated its unique added value in supporting human rights mainstreaming throughout the UNDS and is well placed to further advance human rights mainstreaming within the context of UNDS Reform.

(Derived from findings 2, 3, 8, 12, 13, 29, and 30)

Over the past decade, the Fund has used its comparative advantage of linking human rights mainstreaming efforts across the global, regional, and country levels to support the institutionalization of human rights mainstreaming and its operationalization at the country level. In addition, the inter-agency nature of the Fund has provided added value to the UNDG/UNSDG mainstreaming efforts by leveraging the comparative advantages of participating organisations. Added value has also been provided to PUNOs by offering UN organisations a platform by which to contribute to the strengthening of human rights principles that are the bedrock of the UNDS. PUNOs have also contributed towards greater coherence across the UNDG/UNSDG with respect to human rights mainstreaming, which is a major priority for donors within the context of UNDS Reform and may even provide additional opportunities for PUNOs to further access funds for human rights mainstreaming work. The Fund has also provided important financial resources to the inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanisms to support inter-agency work that provides PUNOs with opportunities to tap into the expertise of other participating organisations. The Fund’s work has contributed towards the widespread acceptance of the centrality of human rights within development work across the UNDS and has supported human rights mainstreaming throughout country level planning.

The Fund is well placed to continue supporting human rights mainstreaming and to leverage the results achieved and contributions made by participating UN organisations within the current context of UNDS Reform due to a number of facilitating factors that include a more empowered RC and a stronger UNCT planning process. Due to the fact that the Fund has a strong focus on supporting RCs and UNCTs to mainstream human rights throughout their country level work, a more empowered RC to coordinate UN actors and a stronger UN country planning process through the UNSDCF will further facilitate the Fund’s entry points to operationalize global policies, priorities, and frameworks that promote human rights mainstreaming.
2. **The UNDS Reform and the Secretary General’s Call to Action for Human Rights present important opportunities to advance the Fund’s current work and reinvigorate the mainstreaming of human rights within the UNDS. However, the Fund is currently not achieving its potential to engage donors and mobilize resources to support this work.**  
(Derived from findings 1, 7, 11, 15, 27, and 34)

The Fund is currently faced with a number of opportunities to strengthen its existing work and to reinvigorate human rights mainstreaming across the UNDS. As mentioned in Conclusion 1, the UNDS Reform strengthens the Fund’s country level entry points by further empowering RCs and strengthening the UNCT planning process through the UNSDCF. It will also strengthen the UNSDG regional architecture, offering opportunities for the Fund to further influence human rights mainstreaming at the regional level. The Secretary General’s 2020 Call to Action for Human Rights suggests an interest from senior UN officials to further promote human rights mainstreaming and emphasizes the importance of the Fund’s current work. It also identifies a number of priorities areas (such as climate justice, digital rights, etc.) to reinvigorate interest within the UNDS to promote human rights, and encourages UN entities collaborate across the three UN pillars to advance human rights. To advance human rights mainstreaming, strong political will is required across the UNDS from senior leadership to the on-the-ground actors.

While the Fund is currently well positioned to take advantage of these opportunities to further promote human rights mainstreaming, it requires resources to do so. The Fund has struggled to ensure consistent funding due to a number of reasons (that include the lack of a multi-year results framework, monitoring and evaluation framework, or evaluation conducted until present) and currently does not have a resource mobilization strategy to support future resource mobilization. The Fund also doesn’t have regular and interactive mechanisms in place to engage current donors and is lacking visibility across the UN system and among potential new donors. The Fund is currently missing out on opportunities to engage current donors to help promote the Fund among potential new donors. In addition, the Fund’s lack of visibility is a major barrier that needs to be overcome in order to generate more interest among new donors. Other UN funds analyzed as part of this evaluation that mobilize resources have stronger communication and visibility strategies that include attractive websites, catchy and informative communications materials, and mechanisms in place to engage current donors on a regular basis. The Fund could continue to provide significant added value to UNSDG human rights mainstreaming efforts by securing additional funding. The Fund’s current resource mobilization is not currently sufficient to meet the demands for human rights mainstreaming support across the UNDS.
3. **The diversity of the Fund’s portfolio has been one of its major strengths and has encouraged the engagement of UN participating organisations. However, activities unrelated to the HRA Programme have not kept pace with the overall growth of the Fund. There are areas outside of the HRA Programme that require further support in order to deliver on human rights mainstreaming across the UNDS.**

(Derived from findings 5, 9, 10, 13, 19, and 32)

The diversity of the Fund’s portfolio is one of its major strengths as it has permitted the Fund to influence the UNDS at the global, regional, and country levels and has facilitated a coordinated and holistic approach towards human rights mainstreaming across the UNDG/UNSDG. This inter-agency collaboration to influence UNDG/UNSDG policy and to manage human rights knowledge across the UNDS has encouraged UN organisations to participate in the Fund. However, activities unrelated to the HRA Programme have not kept pace with the overall growth of the Fund. Over time, knowledge management has been gradually deprioritized and PUNOs have struggled to engage in inter-agency work outside of the Programme due to a combination of factors including limited human rights resources and low levels of engagement from some participating organisations.

There are a number of areas outside of the HRA Programme that require further support in order to deliver on human rights mainstreaming across the UNDS. These include supporting a strong knowledge management function that gathers and shares information on human rights across the UNSDG; further presence at the regional level; continued policy work, and further support for mainstreaming human rights throughout UNCT programme implementation. Since HRAs have demonstrated their effectiveness at supporting human rights mainstreaming at the country level, it makes sense to continue supporting their work and even scaling-up the Fund’s support to the HRA Programme. However, without simultaneously investing in increasing the percentage of the Fund’s work that focuses beyond the HRA Programme (including supporting PUNOs to engage in this work), the Fund risks losing its comparative advantage and added value.

4. **By operating through its current pooled funding format, the Fund is able to directly engage a variety of UN agencies in human rights mainstreaming efforts, leverage the comparative advantages of these agencies, and pursue a diversified portfolio that links global to country level efforts** (Derived from findings 2, 8, and 29).

The Fund’s work could potentially be executed through alternative arrangements such as a joint programme between OHCHR and DCO, hosting the Fund’s activities within one agency with the closest mandate to that of the Fund (i.e. OHCHR), etc. While these alternative arrangements could have many potential benefits such as potentially providing a more consistent environment in which to plan results and mobilize resources, they don’t offer the same degree of direct inter-agency engagement as that offered by the Fund’s current structure. By having an inter-agency Steering Committee, the Fund guarantees that the visions, needs, and priorities of participating UN organisations are taken into consideration. The inter-agency nature of the Fund also provides PUNOs with the opportunity to invest resources into the common goal of mainstreaming human
rights across the UNDS. By pursuing a diversified portfolio that includes the HRA Programme, the Fund is able to link its activities such as global policy work, knowledge management, technical country-level support, etc. all under one structure.

5. **The Fund’s goal of achieving “transformational impact” at the country level requires further coordination across UN pillars in order to address the interconnected nature of the development and humanitarian spheres as well as the UN pillars of peace and security, human rights, and development work** (Derived from findings 4 and 33).

Human rights work that falls outside of the Fund’s mandate (particularly mainstreaming human rights throughout humanitarian work, early warning systems, and responses to grave human rights violations) influences the Fund’s ability to achieve its goal of “transformational impact on human rights at the country level” due to the interconnectedness of these areas and the development sphere. Even though the Fund has provided some support to mainstream human rights throughout humanitarian work (i.e. principally through HRAs who support those RCs who also serve as HCs) as well as targeted support to advance some of the Human Rights Upfront principles, coordination between the Fund and other UN entities working on humanitarian work and in the other UN pillars of peace and security and human rights has been limited. The Fund does not have a strategy in place and has not established partnerships to strengthen coordination across the UN pillars.

The Secretary General’s 2020 Call to Action for Human Rights encourages cross-pillar collaboration and could potentially provide a basis for the Fund to engage in collaboration or strategic partnerships with UN entities working under other UN pillars in order to achieve a greater impact at the country level.

6. **The Fund’s governance system and management processes are currently not functioning in line with best practices and require improvements and further professionalization to achieve maximum impact.**

   *(Derived from findings 14, 21, 22, 23, 25, and 31)*

Due to the constantly shifting UNDG/UNSDG architecture over the past decade and the uncertainties around the Fund’s lifespan, the Fund’s current situation is one where its governance system and management processes are not in line with best practice or with the Funding Compact’s indicator on common management features across all inter-agency pooled funds. For instance, the Fund currently doesn’t have a multi-year results framework, a Theory of Change to outline its change logic, or a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework. The lack of a multi-year results framework and Theory of Change limits the Fund’s ability to plan long-term, strategically target its work for maximum impact,

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40 The common management features outlined in the Funding Compact are: Including: a well-articulated strategy, including innovation features where relevant, clear theories of change, solid Results-Based Management systems, well-functioning governance bodies supported by effective secretariats, quality assurance on issues of United Nations norms and values; risk management systems and strategies; operational effectiveness/reporting/visibility/transparency standards; and planning and funding for joint and system wide evaluations that meet UNEG norms and standards.
achieve strategic results through synergies and scale-up, and mobilize resources. Without an M&E framework, the Fund doesn’t have the capacity to understand the extent to which its support is advancing human rights mainstreaming. This diminishes the Fund’s ability to make timely corrections, share information with current and potential donors, and raise the Fund’s visibility and perceived worth within the UNDS. The Fund also currently isn’t engaging donors in its strategic decision-making. The efficiency and effectiveness of the day-to-day management of the Fund is suffering due to a lack of professionalization. For instance, the roles and responsibilities of participating organisations have not been clearly defined with respect to important areas such as contributions towards knowledge management or resource mobilization efforts. While annual reporting is shared formally through the consolidated annual report, additional interim results sharing is not done within a formalized process.

While the Fund’s Steering Committee is aware of these challenges and has recognized these areas as needing improvement, addressing these weaknesses through further professionalization of the Fund carries some cost implications, as it would entail significant investments on behalf of the Secretariat. One of the advantages of the Fund over the years has been its ability to shrink and grow its Secretariat in line with the resources available to the Fund. However, with only one person currently sitting in the Secretariat, the Secretariat does not have enough capacity to address the weaknesses outlined above. Additional resources would be required for the Secretariat to support the processes required to advance the Fund’s strategic planning (through the development of a ToC and a multi-year results framework), build a functioning M&E framework, and further professionalizing management processes such as results sharing and resource mobilization.

7. The current structure of the Steering Committee and the nature of its meetings do not facilitate strategic decision-making or the development of important strategic frameworks (Derived from findings 18, 19 and 20).

With the elimination of the Resource Management Committee, the Steering Committee is currently required to make both the strategic and technical level decisions of the Fund. Steering Committee meetings have become increasingly technical over the past couple of years, with an overly detailed focus on the deployments of HRAs. The technical nature of the current Steering Committee meetings is a disincentive for high-level decision makers (Director level of higher) from PUNOs to participate. The general lack of high-level decision makers on the Steering Committee further hinders meaningful PUNO engagement and reduces the ability of the Committee to engage in strategic decision-making. With further changes to the UNSDG architecture as part of the UNDS Reform, it is expected that the current inter-agency human rights mainstreaming mechanism will be dissolved and that time-bound teams with no mandate to set the strategic agenda will be formed. Within this context, the Fund will be left with a largely technical-level Steering Committee and no currently identified high-level strategic body to guide human rights mainstreaming across the UNSDG or the Fund’s work.

In an ideal scenario, a UNSDG-wide forum consisting of exclusively high-level decision makers would guide the human rights mainstreaming strategic priorities of entities across the UNSDG, which would include the Fund’s work. However, since such a mechanism may or may not be established (it is beyond
the control of the Fund to directly influence this), the Fund’s current Steering Committee will need to re-evaluate its structure and processes to ensure that it can function at the strategic level that is necessary to set the strategic agenda of the Fund and move forward with the creation of a multi-year results framework, a ToC, and a functioning M&E framework in order to align the Fund’s governance and management systems to good practice.

8. **The lack of formalized detail with respect to the HRA deployment criteria is contributing towards the decreasing strategic nature of the Fund’s Steering Committee meetings and raises doubts among stakeholders over whether the needs of all RCs are being equally met** (Derived from finding 20).

HRA deployments are decided based on the 2012 Human Rights Advisor Strategy that outlines general criteria for deployment. However, the criteria do not outline a process for prioritization in the context of limited resources. The detailed specific criteria used to guide HRA deployment decisions has evolved over time but has not yet been clearly outlined in a formal document. In addition, the 2012 criteria have never been officially updated to take into consideration changing circumstances such evolving capacities within the RCO or lessons learned from previous deployments.

This has caused members of the Steering Committee to spend a significant amount of time engaged in discussions around HRA deployments and the criteria for selection, which has contributed towards the ever-increasing technical nature of Steering Committee meetings. The lack of formalized detailed criteria that outlines processes to determine prioritization among countries in need also affects how stakeholders perceive the relevance of HRA deployments and raises concerns over whether the needs of all RCs are being equally taken into consideration.
Section 8: Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to strengthen the Fund and improve its future work. Each one includes an overall strategic recommendation followed by operational recommendations. They are presented in suggested order of implementation.

1. **Define the Fund’s strategic vision, including through the creation of a ToC and multi-year results framework, and raise awareness among the UNSDG about the need for a UNDS-wide senior leadership space to guide human rights mainstreaming work, including that of the Fund.**

   - Aligned with conclusions 4, 5, 6 and 7
   - Recommended timeline: January 2021 – June 2021
   - High urgency, medium difficulty, high impact
   - Directed to the Fund’s Steering Committee

It is in the Fund’s best interest for the UNSDG to have a space for senior UN leaders from different agencies to come together to set the priorities and strategic vision for human rights mainstreaming across the UNDS. It would be ideal for this strategic UNDS-wide space to also set the strategic vision of the Fund. However, within the current shifting UNSDG architecture and because of the urgency in which the Fund requires strategic direction, the Steering Committee will likely need to move forward with setting the Fund’s strategic direction before the UNSDG architecture is finalized. Therefore, the Steering Committee should develop strategic planning tools to set its strategic direction while at the same time bring a recommendation forward to the UNSDG to establish a high-level inter-agency forum to set the strategic priorities and vision of the UNSDG with respect to mainstreaming human rights across the entire development system.

To operationalize this recommendation, the Steering Committee should:

- Bring a recommendation forward to the UNSDG to establish an inter-agency UNDS-wide senior decision-making group that would identify the priorities and strategic vision of the UNDS with respect to mainstreaming human rights across the UNDS. This mechanism should be embedded within the UNDS structure and should provide strategic guidance to the entire UNDS, including the Fund.
- Review the current structure of the Steering Committee to decide how best to raise the strategic level of Steering Committee meetings. Options to consider include:
  - Re-establishing a technical level body similar to the previous Resource Management Committee to manage the technical level decisions so that the Steering Committee can concentrate on strategic level thinking.
  - Implementing recommendation 5 to clarify and formalize the HRA deployment criteria to reduce the need for Steering Committee meetings to focus on this.
Actively advocating for more senior decision-making presence from PUNOs on the Steering Committee

- Invite senior level UN staff (at least at the director level) from the participating organisations to participate in a strategic planning session to clearly define the Fund’s mandate and outline what kinds of work fall within and outside its scope. The mandate should then be clearly documented.
- Determine how donors will be formally engaged in the Fund’s governance structure to participate in strategic decision-making, preferably through an Annual Meeting.
- Facilitate a series of interactive workshops with stakeholders at the global, regional, and country levels to collaboratively develop a Theory of Change (ToC) based on its established mandate. The ToC should identify entry points to support human rights mainstreaming throughout UNCT programming, human rights mainstreaming in humanitarian work, and ways to support or synergize its work with human rights prevention and response to grave human rights violations.
- Update the Fund’s ToRs based on the Fund’s clarified mandate and ToC.
- Develop a multi-year results framework based on the Fund’s clarified mandate, its ToC, and updated ToRs. The results framework should be aligned with RBM principles and an M&E Framework, and should include funding targets. It should also be clearly linked with the HRuF Initiative so as to demonstrate how the Fund’s activities contribute towards the initiative’s larger results.
- Conduct an internal review of the gaps in coordination between the UN’s three pillars with respect to human rights and identify how they affect human rights mainstreaming at the country level. Then, develop a strategy based on the review that identifies the Fund’s entry points and strategic partnerships to strengthen cross-pillar coordination.

2. Mobilize additional resources by developing a resource mobilization strategy and an aligned communications plan that promote the Fund’s visibility among UN stakeholders and donors and that articulates the Fund’s comparative advantage, value added, and its future vision for mainstreaming human rights across the UNDS.

- Aligned with conclusions 1 and 2
- Recommended timeline: January 2021 – September 2021
- High urgency, medium difficulty, high impact
- Directed to the Fund’s Steering Committee

To ensure the sustainability of the Fund and its work, the Fund requires a concrete strategy to mobilize resources that identifies targets, outlines roles and responsibilities for resource mobilization, and clearly articulates entry points to generate interest among new donors. The strategy should be aligned with a communications plan to promote the Fund’s visibility among UN stakeholders and donors and that articulates the Fund’s comparative advantage, value added, key results achieved, and its future vision for mainstreaming human rights across the UNDS.
To operationalize this recommendation, the Steering Committee should:

- Develop a resource mobilization strategy that includes the following key elements:
  - Resource targets linked to the multi-year results framework
  - Potential new donors and an analysis of their priorities and interests
  - Strategic approach to engage new donors (including how current donors could engage as advocates)
  - Entry points to generate interest among donors
  - Roles and responsibilities of UN participating agencies to contribute towards the joint effort of resource mobilization

- Develop a communications plan with the support of in-kind contributions from specialized communications staff from the participating UN organisations that includes the following elements:
  - A clearly articulated communications narrative with respect to the Fund’s mandate, past successes, comparative advantage, added value to the UNDS, and strategic vision.
  - Entry points to raise the Fund’s visibility among UN staff within the UNDS.
  - Work plan and schedule that identifies various communications products and events (i.e. communications briefs, newsletters, side-events, etc.) to raise the Fund’s visibility among potential new donors.

3. **Continue scaling-up support for Human Rights Advisors while simultaneously expanding the proportion of the Fund’s portfolio that falls outside of the HRA Programme.**

   - Aligned with conclusions 1 and 3
   - Recommended timeline: January 2021 – no end date
   - High urgency, medium difficulty, high impact
   - Directed to the Fund’s Steering Committee and participating UN organisations

The diversity of the Fund’s portfolio has been one of its major strengths and has facilitated its comparative advantage of linking human rights mainstreaming efforts at the global, regional, and country levels. It has also allowed the Fund to draw on the comparative strengths of the participating organisations, thus providing significant value added to the UNSD. In the past few years, the Fund has increased the percentage of its portfolio dedicated to HRA deployments (due largely to the success of the Programme) but has not increased the percentage of its portfolio focusing on the other areas of its work. Even though the HRA Programme has been generating success and warrants continued investment and even scale-up, the Fund should ensure that a large portion of its portfolio is invested in other inter-agency initiatives such as knowledge management, regional presence, policy work, etc. This will ensure that the Fund remains relevant and doesn’t become simply a funding source for one of its activity areas and will encourage increased engagement among participating organisations.
To operationalize this recommendation, the Steering Committee should:

- Continue to fund HRA deployments and, through the mobilization of additional resources, strive to scale-up funding support for additional HRAs both at the country and regional levels, leaving sufficient funding to further expand the other activities within the Fund’s portfolio.
- Provide a budget envelope to HRAs to support their work (i.e. convening, analysis, studies, etc.) without engaging in direct programming
- Further develop human rights mainstreaming tools and support to strengthen human rights mainstreaming throughout UNCT programming (such tools could include things like a human rights report card similar to the gender equality SWAP card)
- Prioritize investment in and take ownership of human rights knowledge management across the UNDS. Due to DCO’s role of facilitating knowledge management and supporting the RC system, the knowledge management function should likely be housed within DCO. However, dedicated capacity will be required to develop the knowledge management strategy and manage the human rights components of the knowledge management system that would be integrated into DCO. The Steering Committee should consider funding a part-time or full-time knowledge management specialist (with human rights expertise) to provide this support.
- Strengthen the Fund’s regional presence in light of the new UNSDG regional architecture. This should include funding for Regional HRAs in order to:
  - Ensure that human rights are mainstreamed through the work of the regional inter-agency peer support groups and the IBCs.
  - Support DCO’s regional offices to ensure that human rights mainstreaming support is provided to RCs.
  - Develop synergies with newly established regional actors such as the regional DCO teams of experts and the Regional PDAs.
  - Support increased coordination among countries around common human rights priorities
  - Strengthen the UNDS’s engagement with regional human rights mechanisms
- Generate partnerships and collaborative arrangements with UN and non-UN partners. This should include UN entities that are working in the other UN pillars so as to promote coordination with respect to human rights prevention and response to grave human rights violations.
- Further support human rights mainstreaming support for humanitarian work within the UNDS by allocating resources towards this and/or partnering with other UN entities doing humanitarian work.
- Continue supporting human rights mainstreaming throughout UNDS frameworks and policies.
- Scale-up the RC leadership dialogue initiatives
4. **Institutionalize and systematize the Fund’s management processes to align them with good management practices and to better reflect results-based management principles.**

- Aligned with conclusion 6
- Recommended timeline: January 2021 – December 2021
- High urgency, low difficulty, medium impact
- Directed to the Fund’s Steering Committee

The Fund’s current management processes require professionalization in order to ensure that they are up-to-date and aligned with good UN management practices. Strengthening these practices will lead to increased data collection and information sharing, improved results monitoring and reporting, improved donor engagement, more efficient processes, and increased trust and engagement among participating organisations.

To operationalize this recommendation, the Steering Committee should:

- Conduct an internal review of the governance structure and management processes including the composition, roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee and the roles and capacities of the Secretariat to ensure that they are aligned with the level of ambition of the Fund and the recommendations accepted through the Management Response of this evaluation. To further professionalize the Fund and expand the Fund’s portfolio as recommended, the Secretariat may require the following additional dedicated resources:
  - Resource mobilization capacity (this could be through in-kind PUNO contributions or a part-time member of the Secretariat);
  - M&E capacity to support the development of the ToC, multi-year results framework, M&E framework, and on-going results monitoring and reporting (this could be through a consultant or a part-time member of the Secretariat);
  - Communications capacity to develop the communications plans and raise the Fund’s visibility among donors (this could be through in-kind PUNO contributions or a part-time member of the Secretariat)
  - Knowledge management capacity through a dedicated knowledge management expert (full or part-time) to develop and manage the Fund’s knowledge management function
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework based on the Fund’s multi-year results framework.
- Engage donors by sharing information on a more regular basis by formally integrating them into the Fund’s governance structure so that they can participate in strategic decision-making.
- Further define the roles and responsibilities of participating organisations, particularly with respect to reporting and providing contributions towards knowledge management, resource mobilization, and strategic planning.
• Establish a formalized interim results reporting process and procedures among PUNOs to share information more systematically in preparation for the annual reporting and between annual reports.
• Conduct a partnership mapping exercise and develop a plan to collaborate and synergize efforts with potential partners both within and outside of the UN system.

5. **Update the 2012 HRA deployment criteria and clearly articulate the detailed criteria (including prioritization) in a formalized document. At the same time, formalize DCO’s contributions towards supporting the HRA Programme in line with its new role of supporting the RC system.**

- Aligned with conclusion 8
- Recommended timeline: January 2021 – no end date
- Medium urgency, low difficulty, medium impact
- Directed to the Fund’s Steering Committee, DCO, and OHCHR

Since the 2012 HRA deployment criteria hasn’t been formally updated since it was initially released, now is a good opportunity to do so. Formally updating the criteria and clearly articulating the detailed criteria and the prioritization process for HRA deployments would facilitate the inclusion of important new developments within the UNDS as well as lessons learned from previous deployments, raise awareness of the criteria among stakeholders, and free up time within the Fund’s Steering Committee meetings for strategic thinking. As part of the new UNDS Reform, DCO is playing a larger role in supporting the RC system. To capitalize on this role, OHCHR and DCO should formally articulate how DCO will support the HRA Programme within the context of UNDS Reform. DCO is well placed to facilitate communicate with RCs and support RCs in using HRAs strategically.

To operationalize this recommendation:

• OHCHR should work with the Fund’s Steering Committee to update the 2012 HRA deployment criteria to take into consideration new developments within the UNDS and lessons learned from previous deployments.
• OHCHR should clearly document the detailed criteria in a formalized policy and should include criteria for the prioritization of HRA deployments.
• OHCHR and DCO should formally identify DCOs’ role in the HRA Programme taking into consideration the new context brought by the UNDS Reform. DCO could potentially further contribute to the programme by:
  o Engaging its regional offices to work with OHCHR prior to the preparation of the HRA deployment funding proposal to exchange information on needs expressed by RCs for this type of support
  o Supporting RCs to strategically use the HRA to promote human rights mainstreaming
  o Integrating HRAs into the UNSDG capacity building and knowledge management processes housed within DCO
  o Facilitating systematic engagement and outreach to RCs about the HRA Programme