



**COVID-19
RESPONSE**

UNITED NATIONS MOLDOVA

2020 COUNTRY RESULTS REPORT



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FOREWORD



Dear reader,

On behalf of the United Nations Country Team in Moldova, I have the pleasure to invite you to read this 2020 United Nations Country Results

Report. The document takes stock of the progress made in 2020 by the United Nations, together with its many partners, in supporting the Republic of Moldova to achieve its national priorities and the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It further outlines the challenges tackled and the lessons learned by the United Nations in Moldova during the year and provides an overview of what our priorities and ambitions are for 2021.

2020 was the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. It was celebrated during the entire year through various thematic events and campaigns aimed at highlighting the role of the organization as a driver of multilateral cooperation and transformational change as it worked towards addressing some of the most pressing global problems. The anniversary was also used as an opportunity to initiate a series of dialogues across sectors and generations to learn about people's hopes and vision for the future.

However, the United Nations marked its anniversary at a time of great challenge for the country and the world posed by an unprecedented global health crisis, which also carried with it severe economic and social implications. Despite the disruptions and issues that it brought; the crisis did not discourage us. To the contrary, it highlighted the importance of a strong commitment and coordinated efforts across all stakeholders in addressing complex and multifaceted problems. Hence, the United Nations family once again joined forces and mobilized the support of other partners to help the country respond to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic.

The United Nations actively supported the Government of the Republic of Moldova to address the threats posed by COVID-19 from the very beginning, being initially involved in preparedness planning and later in response and recovery efforts. We have offered support in three main areas: health system preparedness; technical assistance and capacity-building; and information and risk communication on COVID-19.

In addition to supporting the COVID-19 response, we continued to make progress in the implementation of the United Nations–Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development 2018–2022, with a focus on advancing the well-being of all people in Moldova, in particular the most vulnerable. Most notably, as a team, we supported the revision of the National Development Strategy 'Moldova 2030', which is fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, and the development of the first Voluntary National Review for Moldova, which was presented at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum in July 2020. Furthermore, we took concrete steps to enhance our coherence, effectiveness and efficiency, strengthen our joint operations, consolidate our partnerships and improve our advocacy and communication efforts.

All of the above and more is captured in this 2020 Country Results Report. I invite you to join us in celebrating our achievements but also in reflecting on the many things that still remain to be done to improve the lives of people in Moldova.

Sincerely,

SIMON SPRINGETT

United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Republic of Moldova

UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) is composed of representatives of United Nations funds and programmes, specialized agencies and other United Nations entities working in Moldova and jointly supporting the country in the achievement of its national development priorities and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UNCT is chaired by the United Nations Resident Coordinator, who is the designated representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for development operations in the country.

The UNCT had 18 members at the beginning of 2020. Its membership expanded towards the end of the year to include three additional entities: the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction; the International Fund for Agricultural Development; and the International Telecommunication Union. Another entity – the United Nations Office for Project Services – joined the UNCT at the beginning of 2021. Currently, a total of 24 United Nations entities, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, are working in Moldova.

The UNCT is guided in its work by the [United Nations–Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development](#) (UN PFSD) 2018–2022, which is the main instrument for strategic planning and implementation of the United Nations development activities in the country. The UN PFSD 2018–2022 outlines four priority areas for the work of the United Nations on the ground:



Governance, human rights and gender equality



Sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth



Environmental sustainability and resilience



Inclusive and equitable social development

The fundamental principles of leaving no one behind, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, sustainability and resilience, and accountability are cross-cutting and are integrated in all priority areas, with a special emphasis placed on supporting and lifting up the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

In 2020 the UNCT also developed and approved the [COVID-19 Socioeconomic Response and Recovery Plan](#) (COVID-19 SERP), which is an intermediate offer of support to the country in its efforts to address the unprecedented challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of the response and recovery plan is to anchor the socioeconomic response to COVID-19 firmly in the national COVID-19 response and long-term development plans, and to leave no one behind. The document is built around five pillars that outline the main areas and directions of support. The five pillars are: protecting health services and systems; social protection and basic services; protecting jobs, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the most vulnerable productive sectors; macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration; and social cohesion and community resilience.

The work of the UNCT is facilitated by several inter-agency working groups and task forces, which contribute to the effective implementation of the UN PFSD 2018–2022 and the COVID-19 SERP, as well as their associated joint workplans. The plans help operationalize the two strategic documents and include all the outputs and the related activities delivered jointly or by individual entities under each document, with a view to maximizing synergies and avoiding duplication. The documents also identify the resources that are available for the implementation of the activities included in the plans and the existing funding gaps.

United Nations funds and programmes, specialized agencies and other United Nations entities working in Moldova

- ❖ United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- ❖ International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
- ❖ International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- ❖ International Labour Organization (ILO)
- ❖ International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- ❖ International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- ❖ International Trade Centre (ITC)
- ❖ International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
- ❖ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- ❖ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)
- ❖ Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
- ❖ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- ❖ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
- ❖ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- ❖ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)
- ❖ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- ❖ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- ❖ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- ❖ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- ❖ United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- ❖ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- ❖ United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)
- ❖ World Bank (WB)
- ❖ World Health Organization (WHO)

KEY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN THE COUNTRY

The work of the United Nations in the country would not be possible without the engagement, support and contributions of its many different partners. Government institutions at the national and local levels, civil society organizations, private sector companies, and bilateral and multilateral donors all contribute to the implementation of the UN PFSD 2018–2022 and support the UNCT in helping the country undertake the transformations needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Implementing partners

In 2020 the United Nations in Moldova strengthened many of its existing partnerships, but also forged new ones to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the SDGs and respond effectively, efficiently and decisively to the threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which reached the country at the beginning of the year. The long-lasting partnership with the State Chancellery, for example, continued in 2020 and was marked by the presentation of the first [Voluntary National Review](#) (VNR) for Moldova at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2020. The development of the VNR was coordinated by the State Chancellery and supported by the United Nations. Furthermore, the State Chancellery and the United Nations worked closely together on the coordination of COVID-19 response efforts throughout the year.

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, with which the United Nations has maintained a fruitful partnership over the years, was the main government counterpart of the organization in protecting health services and systems during the crisis. Similarly, the United Nations worked closely with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research to ensure the continuity of learning amid the pandemic. The partnerships with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and the National Anticorruption Centre all continued strong, primarily focusing on strengthening the capacity of these institutions

to develop, implement and monitor legislation, policies and budgets to advance integrity, gender equality and human rights commitments. Promoting the production and use of reliable data for SDGs remained a priority for the United Nations in the country; this has translated into the strengthening of the partnership with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), which contributed timely data and was also supported to collect such data to inform the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Civil society organizations have been consistently engaged in the work of the United Nations in the country and remained valued partners of the organization in 2020.

More than 1/3 of the activities implemented by the United Nations in Moldova in 2020 involved civil society organizations as implementing partners.

The activities that included these organizations as partners mainly focused on the promotion of gender equality and human rights, ending violence against women and children, strengthening the justice system, child protection and health education.

Recognizing the tremendous potential that the private sector has for contributing to the achievement of the SDGs, in recent years the United Nations in Moldova has turned its attention towards the development of new partnerships and the consolidation of existing collaborative relationships with private sector companies. In 2020 the work with the private sector particularly focused on the mitigation of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The partnership with the Moldcell Foundation, which was established by one of the largest cellular phone providers in the country and with which the United Nations in Moldova signed a memorandum of understanding towards the end of the year, is one example. The partnership has already produced concrete results through the implementation of a project aimed at helping older adults to cope with the social isolation effects of the pandemic.

A previously established partnership with Premier Energy, which is the largest electricity provider in the country, allowed for the quick and efficient distribution of COVID-19 prevention messages to the population, with electricity bills being used as a means of communication. The same company became part of another innovative partnership facilitated by the United Nations, which also brought together the NBS, the European Space Agency and Orange Moldova, the largest cellular phone provider in the country, to build a large collaborative data platform that integrated different types of data, including electricity consumption and mobility data, to generate insights on the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. The platform was used by the government to inform the national COVID-19 response.

Partnerships with the World Bank and other financial institutions were also consolidated. A proposal put forward by the United Nations for the development of a climate investment and innovation fund received the backing of the World Bank and IFAD. The United Nations and the World Bank also initiated discussions on the joint implementation of a comprehensive gender assessment, an initiative that continued into 2021 with positive results. Furthermore, the Development Partners' Meeting, a forum co-chaired by the United Nations and the World Bank, convened regularly during the year, reflecting the effective collaboration between the two entities on facilitating aid coordination in the country. The meeting brings together the key international development partners of Moldova to discuss development challenges, opportunities and risks. In 2020 the meeting was used to coordinate COVID-19 response efforts and share information on the evolution of the pandemic in the country and in the broader region.

Financing partners

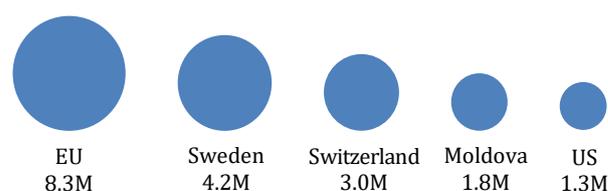
The contributions of investing partners, including bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as various global funds, are essential for the implementation of United Nations activities in the country, and the organization continued to rely on their generous support in 2020.

About 85 per cent of the available resources for the implementation of the activities planned for 2020 under the UN PFSD 2018-2022 represented the contributions of investing partners.

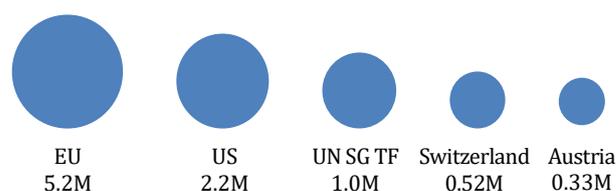
The share of non-core resources available for the implementation of the COVID-19 SERP was similar. A total of 26 financing partners contributed financially to the implementation of activities planned under the two documents.

The European Union (EU) and the governments of Sweden, Switzerland, Moldova and the United States were the largest contributors to the implementation of the UN PFSD 2018-2022 in 2020. Their contributions amounted to approximately 75 per cent of the total available resources for the year. The EU, the United Nations Secretary-General's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Trust Fund (UN SG TF) and the governments of the United States, Switzerland and Austria were the largest contributors to the implementation of the COVID-19 SERP. Their contributions amounted to 70 per cent of the total available resources for the plan. The full list of financing partners is included in annex A.

Top five financing partners of the UN PFSD 2018-2022 in 2020



Top five financing partners of the COVID-19 SERP in 2020



Most of the resources made available by financing partners were directed towards the implementation of development activities by individual agencies. However, funding mechanisms that enable more integrated approaches to programme or project development and implementation were also used. The EU and the governments of Sweden, Austria and Switzerland were the main funding partners that contributed resources to the joint implementation of United Nations programmes and projects in 2020. Those joint initiatives primarily focused on strengthening human rights in the Transnistria region; consolidating economic, territorial and social cohesion in Moldova; consolidating and fortifying gender mainstreaming at the local level; maximizing the positive impact of migration on socioeconomic development; and addressing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The resources made available through the COVID-19 UN SG TF and under the UNAIDS Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework also contributed to the joint implementation of United Nations activities. The projects focused on HIV testing, treatment and prevention, and on addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. The United Nations will continue to explore and pursue similar opportunities in the future to enable the implementation of more joint projects and activities where bringing the comparative advantages of different United Nations agencies, funds and programmes under single, integrated initiatives would provide the most value, judged by their potential for accelerating the achievement of the SDGs.

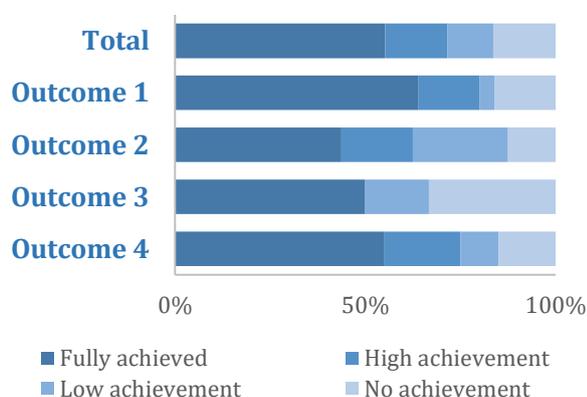


OVERVIEW: PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK PRIORITY AREAS AND PILLARS OF THE COVID-19 SOCIOECONOMIC RESPONSE AND RECOVERY PLAN

In 2020 the United Nations in Moldova continued to support the country in the implementation of its development priorities and the achievement of the SDGs, making progress in all four strategic directions of its work by advancing human rights and gender equality and strengthening institutional and governance capacities; improving access to decent work and enhancing local services and infrastructure; improving the quality of education, health services and social assistance; and promoting climate change-resilient development.

Despite the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and a changing national political context, the United Nations made good progress in achieving the goals that it set out to accomplish in 2020, registering a full or high level of achievement for 70 per cent of the 67 output level indicators for which data is available.¹

Indicator progress



In addition to registering significant progress in the four regular strategic directions of its work, the United Nations made an important contribution to national COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, supporting the country in strengthening the health system to address the effects of the pandemic and also ensuring the continuity of education and social services, while providing direct assistance to some of the most vulnerable population groups.

Many of the achievements made were supported by the integrated and coherent approach to development implemented by the United Nations in Moldova, which was further consolidated through several key joint efforts undertaken to accelerate the attainment of the SDGs, including the support provided to the government in the preparation of its first VNR of the progress made in the implementation of the SDGs and the assistance offered in the revision of the draft National Development Strategy Moldova 2030, which, once signed into law, will serve as a framework for the development of the country until 2030.

The United Nations in Moldova secured over \$27 million in resources for the implementation of its joint workplans for 2020, out of which 73.4 per cent were implemented, with the remainder being rolled over to 2021. The funds were directed towards programmes and projects that range across all SDGs, with the largest share of expenditure being directed towards SDGs 16, 9, 5, 8 and 3, which received over 80 per cent of the funding. The United Nations secured an additional \$13 million for the implementation of the COVID-19 SERP for projects to be initiated in 2020; 85 per cent of this funding was spent by the end of the year. Another \$7 million was secured at the very end of 2020 for activities to be initiated in 2021.

The effective implementation of the UN PFSD 2018–2022 and the COVID-19 SERP will remain a priority for the United Nations in 2021, as will the efforts to improve coherence, effectiveness and efficiency in programme implementation, operations and communication. In addition, in 2021 the UNCT will turn its attention towards the development of its next cooperation framework, which will set the directions for the work of the United Nations in the country for the next five years starting with 2023.

A more detailed account of the activity and results of the United Nations in Moldova, as well as of the lessons learned in 2020 and priorities for 2021, follows in this report.

¹ The indicators at the outcome level still remain to be assessed. The process will be completed when more data becomes available.



CHAPTER 1

KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND EMERGING ISSUES IN MOLDOVA



KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND EMERGING ISSUES IN MOLDOVA

Key political developments

In the past few years Moldova has experienced a polarized and shifting political landscape, and 2020 was no exception. Three main events dominated the political scene during the year, including the global and then local outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the reconfiguration of the parliamentary political parties and the presidential elections. All these events have important implications for the future development of the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic reached the country at the beginning of March 2020, placing in front of the relatively new Government, appointed at the end of 2019 by a coalition between the Party of Socialists and the Democratic Party and headed by Prime Minister Ion Chicu, the challenge of curbing the spread of a rapidly emerging disease while minimizing its economic impact on people and businesses, and all in the context of a fragile health system. At the beginning of the pandemic, a series of strict measures, with several reversals, reinstatements and extensions, were put in place to slow the spread of the disease. The second half of 2020 was characterized by an easing of restrictions, with only a few measures, most notably the use of face masks in public spaces, remaining in place. Towards the end of the year some additional restrictions were introduced. Nevertheless, the measures were insufficient to prevent a surge in coronavirus cases in the first half of December, putting the health system under a situation of extreme pressure.

The coalition between the Party of Socialists and the Democratic Party suffered a setback at the beginning of the year when several members of the latter decided to create a separate parliamentary group, Pro Moldova, which was later joined by an increasing number of members from the same party. The group was registered as a political party in the middle of the year. The split of the Democratic Party brought the governing coalition of the Socialists and Democrats close to losing their majority in parliament. An attempt to bring a Member of the Socialists into the Pro Moldova group, which if successful, would have tipped the balance of power in the Parliament, took place shortly after the registration of the new party. However, the

COVID-19: Timeline of Restrictions



attempt was unsuccessful and resulted in accusations of undue pressure on a Member of Parliament from both sides. Towards the fall and in the lead-up to the presidential election, the Socialists managed to cement their control of a parliamentary majority.

The presidential elections took place in November 2020 in two rounds, given that none of the registered candidates could accumulate more than half of the votes cast in the first round. The second round of elections was held between Maia Sandu, the leader of the Action and Solidarity Party, and Igor Dodon, the incumbent and de facto leader of the Party of Socialists at that time. After all the votes were tallied, the former was declared the winner with 57.75 per cent of the vote. Over 1,650,000 voters participated in the second round of the election, including nearly 263,000 voters from the

diaspora, who voted in record numbers at the polls.

The presidential elections brought a change to the configuration of political forces in the country, with the presidency, on the one hand, and the Government and Parliament, on the other hand, being controlled by different parties and political actors with diverging interests. The year ended with the resignation of the Prime Minister, creating a situation of political uncertainty that continued into 2021.

Key economic developments

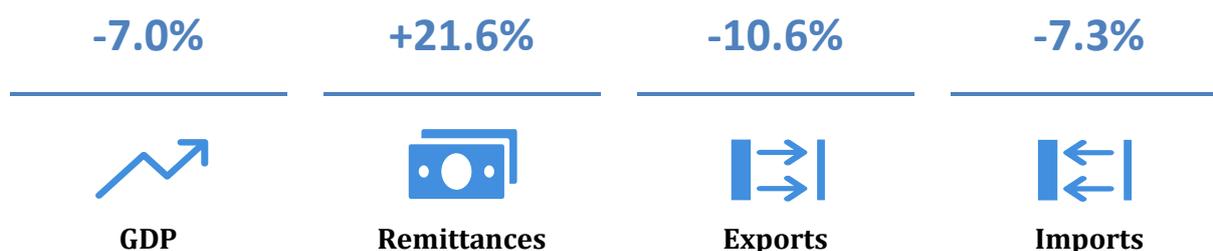
After witnessing a robust economic growth of 4.15 per cent on average during the previous three years, the economy of Moldova experienced a significant contraction in 2020, which was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and a severe drought that gripped the country. Based on preliminary NBS data, the economy contracted by 7 per cent in 2020 compared to the previous year. As a result of the lockdown, the manufacturing industry contracted by 5.5 per cent. The tourism sector also underperformed, receiving one fourth of the tourists than it did in 2019. At the same time, unfavourable weather conditions reduced gross agricultural production value by almost one third.

The COVID-19 crisis has pushed many small businesses to the brink of collapse, forcing them to reduce production activity, furlough their staff and increase their debt burden because of decreased liquidity or cash flow availability. Remittances, which had propelled the Moldovan economy on the consumption side for many years – in 2019 remittances represented 16 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) – increased by 21.6 per cent during 2020. However, the increase reflects the

formalization of money transfer flows rather than an actual change. On the other side, the vulnerability of those who rely on remittances – one fourth of all households in the country – increased significantly during the pandemic.

As a result of regional supply chain disruptions, Moldovan trade slowed: exports decreased by 10.6 per cent, compared to 2019, while imports declined by 7.3 per cent. The main export destinations included Romania, Germany, Russia, Italy and Turkey. Most imports continued to come from the EU, the Commonwealth of Independent States and China. However, as imports from the EU and Commonwealth of Independent States declined in 2020 by 12.7 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively, imports from China increased by 7.3 per cent, with this country becoming the leading trade partner in the import structure of Moldova, followed by Romania, Russia, Ukraine and Germany. The top three categories of exported goods included machinery and transport equipment, food products and live animals, and miscellaneous manufactured goods. The top three categories of imported goods included machinery and transport equipment, manufactured goods and chemical products.

In recent years, outmigration and economic growth have given rise to record low levels of unemployment. The unemployment rate was 5.1 per cent in 2019 and, based on quarterly NBS data, continued to remain low in 2020. However, the labour-market in Moldova is characterized by high levels of inactivity and informal employment. Given the relatively high levels of informal employment in the agricultural sector, the COVID-19 restrictions are expected to have disproportionately affected the rural poor and the most vulnerable populations as they are more likely to face impaired access to social assistance benefits.



To finance the crisis response measures, the government increased its spending, which contributed to the widening of the budget deficit from 1.4 per cent in 2019 to 5.1 per cent by the end of 2020. As a result, the central government debt represented 32.9 per cent of GDP in 2020. Nevertheless, the set of measures put in place was insufficient to avert a significant contraction in the economy.

State of the SDGs

Despite the challenging circumstances brought by the pandemic, 2020 was a productive year for the assessment of the progress made in the implementation of the SDGs in the country. The Government of Moldova participated for the first time in the VNR process and presented its results at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum in July 2020.

The United Nations supported the process through strategic advice and by assembling a team of highly qualified consultants to guide the process. The report was developed in a participatory and inclusive manner. Extensive online and offline consultations were held within the government and with civil society, the private sector, academia and development partners as part of the VNR process.

The VNR revealed that the country registered significant progress in achieving SDGs 1, 8, 13 and 17, while underlining the moderate results obtained in achieving SDGs 2, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11. However, the review also revealed that progress in achieving SDGs 4, 6, 10, 12, 15 and 16 was less noticeable. Hence, these areas will require increased attention in the future.

In parallel to the VNR process, the NBS developed a revised list of nationalized SDG indicators and assessed the existing data gaps in measuring progress towards SDGs. The revised list of indicators, together with the associated data, was used to complete the analysis for the VNR. The exercise will also help to guide all future data initiatives that aim to support the achievement of the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In addition, the Government approved a revised draft of the National Development Strategy 'Moldova 2030'. The strategy, which is fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, as well as with the commitments assumed by the Republic of Moldova under the EU-Moldova Association Agreement, was developed and updated with the support of the United Nations. The strategy is currently under review with the Parliament. Once approved by the Parliament and signed into law, the document will become the key framework for the development of the country, setting the direction for the achievement of the SDGs.





CHAPTER 2

UNITED NATIONS IMMEDIATE SOCIOECONOMIC RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Photo credit: WHO

UNITED NATIONS IMMEDIATE SOCIOECONOMIC RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Coordinating immediate support efforts and planning the response

The United Nations in Moldova has been at the forefront of COVID-19 response and recovery efforts in the country, being actively involved in the process from its very early stages, when it supported the Government to develop the COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan. The plan strengthened the preparedness of the health care system for the early detection of cases, risk assessment, risk communication, surveillance, laboratory testing, clinical case management and infection prevention and control. The National Public Health Emergency Operations Centre was also refurbished and endowed with appropriate information and communications technology equipment early on to facilitate the coordination of response efforts.

To ensure a harmonized approach to the provision of COVID-19 support by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, the UNCT developed the COVID-19 SERP soon after the pandemic reached the country. The development of the plan, which was undertaken in parallel to the provision of immediate assistance aimed at consolidating the capacity of the health system, and supporting the most vulnerable populations to cope with the emerging crisis. The final plan included a costed project portfolio that amounted to \$106.7 million, of which 12.2 per cent or \$13 million was mobilized in 2020 for projects to be initiated during the year.

The COVID-19 SERP has a solid evidence base, being informed by over 25 assessments. The document also exhibits a strong focus on gender equality and human rights, taking into account the particular vulnerabilities faced by women, youth, older adults, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV, migrants and other disadvantaged groups in the context of the pandemic. This same focus was translated into the projects implemented under the plan.

The challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic require strong commitment and

coordinated efforts from all partners at all levels. The United Nations in Moldova was successful in bringing together government and development partners under one platform – the Development Partners’ Monthly Meeting – to discuss the pandemic, identify existing and emerging needs, match the needs identified with the resources available, mobilize additional funding to address the effects of the pandemic and promote an overall coordinated approach to response and recovery efforts in the country.



~500,000 vulnerable people were helped to cope with the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic with the support of the United Nations. The support was possible due to the timely identification of the citizens and communities affected by the pandemic and the rapid mobilization of the necessary resources.

Ensuring access to essential equipment and supplies

As with other countries in the world, Moldova was affected by a severe shortage of personal protective equipment at the beginning of the

outbreak. In this context, the United Nations supported the needs assessment efforts of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, helping the institution use monthly planning rather than rely on ad hoc procurements to increase the predictability and quantity of supplies. Laboratory testing capacity was also gradually increased, from around 450 to over 4,000 tests per day.

In addition to strengthening procurement and supply management in the health care sector, the United Nations helped protect the health and safety of front-line workers through the direct procurement and delivery of protection and medical equipment, as well as of other essential supplies. Overall, the United Nations procured, with funding from its partners, more than 2 million surgical masks, 170,000 body shields, 3,700 thermometers, 93 ventilators and 380 oxygen concentrators, among other items. The items were delivered to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection and health care facilities, as well as to local governments, territorial employment agencies, youth friendly health centres, prisons, border points, shelters and civil society organizations assisting vulnerable groups. Around 50,000 staff working in health facilities and many others outside the health care system benefited as a result of these efforts.

Ensuring vaccine access

COVID-19 vaccine access was also facilitated with United Nations support. The efforts in this regard resulted in the delivery of the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX facility – a global initiative aimed at equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines – in early 2021. Preparatory efforts for the arrival and distribution of vaccines involved the implementation of two major assessments, a vaccine introduction readiness assessment and a cold supply chain assessment, as well as the development of a national vaccination plan. All were completed with the support of the United Nations.

Strengthening the capacity of health workers to respond to the pandemic

To further consolidate the capacity of the health care system to respond to the pandemic, the

United Nations supported the development of clinical protocols on COVID-19 and the training of medical professionals on the application of those protocols. The continuity of essential health services was also ensured, with about 4,000 health care workers being trained in the provision of care in the context of COVID-19.

Assessing and communicating COVID-19 risks

The support provided to health authorities on risk communication allowed them to reach the public with useful information about the novel coronavirus in a timely manner, identify threats and fake news about the virus at an early stage and adjust their messaging to the general population and to targeted groups. To inform the public and all interested parties of the evolution of the pandemic, a [public dashboard](#) that enabled the real-time monitoring of COVID-19 cases in the country was launched in March 2020. The platform had more than 2 million views by the end of the year.

Ensuing safe border crossing

Moreover, to support the implementation of COVID-19 infection control and prevention measures at border crossings, the United Nations helped update and disseminate specific standard operating procedures for the detection, notification, isolation, management and referral of travellers infected with COVID-19. A training curriculum was developed and over 200 border workers were trained in the updated procedures.

Strengthening the education system's capacity to cope with the pandemic

Supporting the continuity of learning during the pandemic was a key priority for the United Nations in 2020. Hence, assistance was provided to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research to develop special guidelines and regulations for the organization of learning processes in the context of COVID-19. Subsequently, nearly 40,000 managerial, teaching and non-teaching staff from schools and preschools were trained in the guidelines developed. Water and sanitation supplies were also procured and delivered to all 2,600 schools and kindergartens in the county.

Furthermore, online training was organized for more than 10,000 managerial and teaching staff on positive parenting for early childhood development during the pandemic and the recovery period, which helped them to provide support to over 100,000 young children through online counselling with parents and caregivers. Additionally, about 98,000 adolescents and young people, as well as nearly 285,000 teachers and parents, were reached through a psychological assistance programme designed to help them cope with the effects of the pandemic.

Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable

Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable is central to the work of the United Nations in the country. Hence, a broad range of initiatives was implemented by the organization in the context of COVID-19. As part of these initiatives, the continuity of treatment for people from remote areas living with HIV and people recovering from drug addiction was ensured; measures were put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among prisoners; a few thousand older adults received life-saving assistance; multiple vulnerable migrants affected by the pandemic were supported to return home; several residential institutions for children, including children with disabilities and vulnerable families with young children with developmental delays, received hygiene and cleaning products; refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people who lost their jobs or income received cash assistance; the list goes on.

Ensuring voter health and safety during elections

The United Nations further supported the preparation and organization of transparent and accessible presidential elections in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. A campaign implemented by the United Nations, in partnership with the Central Election Commission, reached over 1.2 million people with information about the voting process. The prepared materials explained in an easy-to-see and easy-to-understand manner the main rules and procedures to be followed by voters on the election day in the context of the pandemic.

KEY RESULTS UNDER THE COVID-19 SERP



COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan and National Vaccination Plan developed



\$13 million in resources mobilized



> 25 assessments informed the response



~ 50,000 health workers benefited from personal protective equipment and other supplies



~ 4,000 health workers prepared to ensure the continuity of essential health services



COVID-19 dashboard launched and viewed by over 2 million people



Infection control and prevention **measures at border crossings** taken



~ 40,000 staff from the education system prepared for the organization of learning processes in the context of the pandemic



Vulnerable populations supported to cope with the effects of the pandemic



> 1.2 million voters reached with information about the voting process in the context of the pandemic



CHAPTER 3

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES THROUGH THE PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK



Photo credit: ILO

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES: RESULTS UNDER THE PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK OUTCOMES

OUTCOME 1: GOVERNANCE, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY



During the year the United Nations achieved several notable results in the field of governance, human rights and gender equality, despite the challenging political situation and the difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Consolidating data capacities for SDGs

In 2020 the United Nations continued to work on strengthening data capacities for SDGs. Supported by the United Nations, the NBS launched an innovative programme to establish a statistical population register by making greater use of existing administrative data and developed the concept of the register as the first step in the process. To facilitate the access of the NBS to other data sets, the institution was helped to improve its data protection policies by developing an internal regulation on personal data protection. A full audit on the protection of personal data was carried out to this end.

Furthermore, the United Nations supported the national statistical system in the collection and analysis of data in specific fields, with some notable results. For example, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection and the NBS were supported to conduct the most comprehensive demographic survey, Generations and Gender Survey, to help address demographic challenges in Moldova. An ad hoc household budget survey was conducted by NBS, and its results were analysed, including in combination with new types of data, to help assess the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the population. The NBS also received support in the collection of agricultural statistics and the development of thematic statistical publications on the situation of children in the country.

United Nations support in the field of data for SDGs extended further to include a series of capacity-building activities involving several

representatives of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, who acquired better knowledge and skills on ensuring the quality of administrative data on domestic violence as a result. In addition, 11 local public authorities improved their knowledge and skills on using disaggregated local data for youth in the development of annual youth action plans with the support of the United Nations.

Strengthening the capacities of human rights institutions and civil society to protect human rights

Following continuous advocacy efforts by the United Nations, the National Human Rights Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, met for the first time ever in a working session to review the recommendations from the sixth periodic report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) issued to the country in 2020. The Committee approved a set of measures for the implementation of the recommendations.

Sixteen civil society organizations actively participated in the CEDAW review process, having been supported by the United Nations to submit alternative reports to the Committee. They also benefited from technical and financial assistance to participate in the CEDAW national pre-session, as well as to engage in advocacy activities at the international level at the CEDAW session in Geneva.

Civil society and people at large now have an online platform to report gender-based discrimination, gender-based violence, sexist speech and violence against women in elections developed by the United Nations in partnership with the Platform for Gender Equality. During the two months of the electoral campaign for the 2020 presidential elections, 144 violations were reported through the platform. Based on the identified cases of sexism, three complaints were submitted to the Equality Council for review.

To increase the capacity of media professionals on both banks of the Nistru river to promote human rights, several capacity strengthening initiatives were implemented during the year with the support of the United Nations. As a result, over 100 media professionals, including from state institutions, increased their knowledge of human rights issues and learned how to address them effectively in their work.

The United Nations also registered several results in the promotion of children's rights. The capacity of the Child Rights Ombudsperson to ensure the regular and independent monitoring of the rights of children was strengthened, with specific attention being paid to the assessment of intersectoral cooperation mechanisms to prevent and reduce a range of risks to child well-being. In addition, a package of comprehensive legislative amendments was adopted during the year, improving the regulations on the custody of children left behind by migrant parents, tutorship and guardianship for children without parental care, and the protection of child victims of violence, among others.

Consolidating the capacities of national institutions to advance integrity, gender equality and human rights

A number of important results were achieved with the support of the United Nations in the field of gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence in 2020. An improved legal framework and system of protection and response to gender-based violence are now in place following the revision by the Parliament and the Government of a set of related legal provisions. Women working in the peace and security area now enjoying safer working environments due to the newly enforced mechanism on the identification and elimination of discriminatory and sexual harassment behaviour within the sector. Furthermore, 220 representatives from the peace and security sector improved their skills on how to assess public policies from a gender-responsive budgeting perspective after their participation in capacity-building activities implemented by the United Nations.

Institutional integrity and transparency were further enhanced in 2020, including with the development and implementation, with United

Nations support, of a tool for reporting on the implementation of the National Integrity and Anticorruption Strategy, now used by 34 per cent of reporting institutions. Several additional online tools were also implemented, including a tool aimed at increasing transparency in public procurement and a tool for the submission of whistle-blower protection requests to the Ombudsperson. Furthermore, about 500,000 people were reached with messages about integrity issues through five awareness-raising campaigns.

During the year key state bodies and mechanisms engaged in human rights implementation coordination, monitoring and reporting increased their capacity to effectively engage with international human rights mechanisms. To this end, a series of webinars was organized by the United Nations for government human rights focal points on the national mechanism for reporting on the implementation of treaty obligations to international human rights systems and following up on the recommendations emanating from them. The National Reporting and Tracking Database, an online platform designed to facilitate the monitoring of the implementation of recommendations, was also handed over to the State Chancellery for use.

In the field of law enforcement, the United Nations supported the Law Enforcement Training Centre to enhance its capacity to provide high-quality physical and tactical training to police staff using modern equipment. The capacities of police forensic experts were also enhanced by equipping them with skills and software solutions for audio and video examinations, which have already been applied in 28 expertise reports.

Similarly, the General Inspectorate of Border Police can better address cross-border crime and protect migrants' rights following the assessment of its border surveillance capacities and needs, and the upgrading of the training capacity of the Centre of Excellence in Border Security with United Nations support. Trade and the movement of people across the common Ukrainian–Moldovan border was also facilitated, while preventing and combating smuggling and other border-related offences, crime and corruption, through the support provided towards enhancing inter-agency cross-border cooperation and joint border surveillance.

Furthermore, the government is now better prepared to aid victims of trafficking following the establishment of a specialized service for male victims, which is the first of its kind in Moldova and one of the few in the world. The United Nations supported the development of the rules and regulations for the service, which were officially adopted by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection in 2020. In addition, the first online course dedicated to the prevention of trafficking in human beings and to the provision of assistance to victims of trafficking was developed and is ready for use.

Strengthening civic engagement and participation in democratic governance

The United Nations continued to advance the participation of women in politics through capacity-building and awareness-raising events that reached numerous women across the country. To illustrate, about 440 women elected or appointed to public office participated in various capacity-building programmes on gender equality implemented by the United Nations in 2020, and over 100,000 women were reached through the online workshop series “Women in Elections”, designed and implemented with United Nations support to motivate women to actively engage in electoral and democratic processes and discuss barriers to women’s participation in politics.

As a result of efforts to empower rights holder to claim their rights, 100 persons, mostly from vulnerable groups, as well as 28 human rights defenders and members of civil society organizations in the Transnistria region improved their capacities and knowledge of human rights. Furthermore, a resource group of parents with children with disabilities initiated and participated in advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns aimed at promoting the rights of their children, with United Nations support.

The United Nations played a key role in supporting the organization of the 2020 presidential elections and strengthening the electoral processes. An online system developed with the support of the United Nations and offering real-time data on voter turnout was accessed by 1.9 million users during the election. The submission of financial reports by political parties through an online system, also developed



Elena Neaga, the first woman mayor of the Balasesti commune, Singerei district said: *“Initially, many locals were sceptical about a woman mayor, but now most have radically changed their minds. If more women take leadership positions, our country will be prosperous. I believe that women are capable in any field. Have you noticed how prosperous are countries where women are in charge? They can change the world.”*

with the support of the United Nations, became mandatory, contributing to the transparency of political party finance. The inclusiveness of the electoral processes was promoted through the development and dissemination of electoral education materials adapted to people with disabilities and linguistic minority groups. A bilingual online application with information about the electoral process aimed at voters living abroad was also implemented and reached 86,700 people in 99 countries during the election.

To amplify the voice of youth in development, the National Youth Council of Moldova was supported to organize a national campaign aimed at providing young people with adequate skills and enabling their participation in policy processes. The campaign reached more than 1,000 young people and resulted in the development of a robust youth report, with the findings being mainstreamed into the VNR.

In addition, young people were reached with information on elections and engaged in corruption prevention using innovative approaches. As a result, over 200 young people enhanced their knowledge about elections, and around 150 youth were engaged in organizing anticorruption initiatives. These initiatives reached thousands of people.

Improving the capacity of the justice system

The justice system became more accessible with the support of the United Nations in 2020. Women and men now benefit from improved access to free legal aid as a result of the digitalization of the service request process. Since the digitalization of the process in the middle of 2020, 82 per cent of legal aid requests have been submitted online. The capacity of the criminal justice system to function remotely was further strengthened through the refurbishment and equipment with videoconference systems of multipurpose rooms in prisons in four locations. The measure was especially important in the context of COVID-19.

The modernization of the forensic system moved forward during the year, with forensic institutions benefiting from software solutions and specialized training that strengthened their capacity to perform swift and accurate forensic investigations in line with international quality standards and contribute to the efficient delivery of justice. A total of 50 forensic experts increased their knowledge and skills as a result of the provided specialized training.

Justice for children was also strengthened by extending the applicability of the mandatory probation programmes for children and drafting bylaws on measures and services for children with deviant behaviour. In addition, the capacities of specialists working with children in contact with the law were strengthened following the development and implementation of e-learning courses on the criminal investigation of cases involving child offenders, the implementation of the juvenile delinquency prevention programme and the application of the mandatory probation programme. A total of 130 specialists working with children in contact with the law benefited from at least one of these courses in 2020.

KEY RESULTS UNDER OUTCOME 1



The concept of the **statistical population register** developed



16 civil society organizations participated in the CEDAW review



220 representatives from the peace and security sector improved their skills in gender-responsive budgeting



500,000 people reached with messages on integrity issues



440 women in public office increased their knowledge of gender equality



Government human rights focal points have **increased capacities to engage in human rights reporting**



Border **surveillance capacities assessed**



82 per cent of legal aid requests submitted online following digitalization



First online course on the prevention of trafficking in human beings developed



50 forensic experts and **130** specialists working with children in contact with the law are better prepared to do their work

OUTCOME 2: SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH



In 2020 the United Nations made considerable progress in enhancing access to livelihood opportunities and productive employment, with several achievements on the policy and practice fronts being registered, notwithstanding the challenging COVID-19 context.

Improving policies towards sustainable economic growth and productive employment

As a result of the technical support provided by the United Nations, in 2020 the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection developed and revised a range of employment laws and programmes. More specifically, the Employment Promotion Law was revised to include tested outreach measures to increase labour-force participation. To foster better employment opportunities for women and equal pay for equal work, two draft laws, on the incorporation of pay transparency principals into the national legislation and on the promotion of alternative childcare services, were developed. Furthermore, two active labour-market programmes on wage subsidies and workplace adaptation for persons with disabilities were developed and successfully piloted during the year.

The legal and policy framework on labour migration was also strengthened. A set of laws were amended by the Parliament to provide for more clearly regulated private recruitment processes so as to improve the protection of labour migrants. Further, the development of a new national reintegration programme for returning migrants was initiated by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection and the Bureau for Diaspora Relations, both the result of the technical and capacity-building assistance provided by the United Nations. In addition, the mechanism for the recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired by migrants through non-formal and informal means was successfully piloted by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and prepared

for scaling-up to facilitate the legal employment of returned migrants.

The United Nations further supported the development of two evidence-based national action plans with targeted measures for the effective recovery of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including female-owned enterprises, as part of efforts aimed at the consolidation of a stronger and more resilient economy in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. An in-depth analysis of current innovation policies and how they contribute to the sustainable development priorities of Moldova was also initiated in 2020.

Moreover, an analysis of food losses and waste in the country was conducted with United Nations support to inform the development of a national strategy in the field. In addition, technical expertise was provided to the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure in the development of a draft law on the prevention of food waste.

Improving the access of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to resources and sustainable jobs

Efforts implemented by the United Nations in 2020 to improve the knowledge and skills of disadvantaged groups and enhance their access to resources and jobs produced some important results. To illustrate, over 200 people entered employment, and more than 100 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises benefited from wage subsidies because of the financial and methodological support provided by the United Nations to active labour-market programmes. In addition, at least 450 small entrepreneurs, including from the Transnistria region, benefited from support to integrate digital processes into their work.

During the year the United Nations continued to support people living in regions with a special status in improving their livelihoods by being more aware of their human rights. Over 50 representatives of civil society organizations representing various vulnerable groups and mass media from the left bank of the Nistru river were helped to improve their information and communications technology, leadership and communication skills, which are necessary to

promote human rights issues in the region. In addition, five thematic cross-river cooperation platforms supported by the United Nations continued to co-design confidence-building solutions, contributing to the deepening of the dialogue with the Transnistria region.

The increasing access of vulnerable women to employment opportunities remained a priority for the United Nations in 2020. Over 40 women from underrepresented groups established or strengthened their businesses after being selected as beneficiaries of a programme financed by the United Nations and several other partners. In addition, 50 women and girls, of which one third identified as survivors or witnesses of gender-based violence, benefited from full scholarships to strengthen their information and communications technology skills.

Further efforts aimed at helping women access income-generating opportunities in professions traditionally dominated by men resulted in over 200 women and girls graduating from the third edition of a national information and communications technology programme for women and girls. Moreover, nearly 600 women and girls became members of a network and a hub for women in information and communications technology created with the support of the United Nations to allow members to generate and share ideas, and develop a common vision for the further inclusion of women in information and communications technology.

Supporting adolescents and youth to transition from school to gainful employment

The transition of youth from school to gainful employment was further promoted, with several accomplishments being registered in the field. Over 6,300 young people increased their knowledge of their employment rights and received practical tips for being better prepared for entering the labour-market with United Nations support. The result was made possible by the implementation and active promotion among young people of a dedicated mobile application.

In addition, over 370 women and girls improved their knowledge of gender equality and women's empowerment through an online course. The course is intended to increase the knowledge of women and girls about their rights in the workplace, with the ultimate goal of changing

the behaviour and attitudes of employers and employees in relation to gender equality.

Furthermore, over 100 young people co-created solutions aimed at helping young women and men affected by COVID-19 as a result of their participation in a dedicated edition of the UPSHIFT programme. As part of this social innovation programme for young people, 12 social ventures were selected for implementation and provided with seed funding. Around 2,000 young people from 12 localities indirectly benefited from the implementation of the selected ventures.



Denis Hadirca, an UPSHIFT programme participant, developed a project aiming at making school education more fun and understandable for adolescents.

Consolidating local capacities to improve public services and enhance access to decent jobs

Local authorities from over 100 communities across the country enhanced their capacities to apply the three-pronged approach in rural and urban development by improving access to upgraded public infrastructure and services, stimulating economic growth and capitalizing on human capital for development. As result, approximately 300,000 people benefited from enhanced access to local public services and nearly 1,500 jobs were created or maintained, leading to improved livelihoods for almost 5,400 people. The attainment of these results was made possible, among other things, by the successful replication of the model for diaspora engagement in local development in 41 communities via 46

public service and infrastructure improvement projects. The model was also institutionalized, with United Nations support, into a government-led programme, DAR 1+3, implemented for the first time in 2020. The further engagement of the diaspora in local development resulted in the implementation of another 88 small-scale interventions, which became possible due to the efforts of 90 diaspora members who offered their skills and professional knowledge to serve their communities of origin.

To enhance access to employment opportunities and match employers with job-seekers, starting in 2020 a human-centred model of public employment service has been applied in Chisinau, where the largest public employment office is located. The model, introduced with the support of the United Nations, was used to provide assistance to about 7,000 people searching for a job and about 3,000 employers in 2020 alone. Access to decent jobs was further promoted through a local employment partnership that was established during the year with assistance from the United Nations.



Photo credit: ILO

Local employment partnerships are based on the cooperation of public and private partners trying to find solutions for labour-market challenges in their community. In the case of Cahul, 20 partners, including education institutions, microfinance banks, the employment service and several enterprises, came on board. The launch by 20 young people not in employment or education, including three people with disabilities, of start-ups in beekeeping is one of the many results registered by the partnership in Cahul.

KEY RESULTS UNDER OUTCOME 2



Legal and policy framework on employment and labour migration **strengthened**



~6,300 people increased their knowledge of labour rights



~450 small entrepreneurs supported to integrate digital processes into their work



~200 women and girls graduated from a national information and communications technology programme



>370 women improved their knowledge of their rights in the workplace



~300,000 people benefited from enhanced public services



>1,500 jobs created or maintained



46 public service and infrastructure projects implemented in **41** communities with diaspora engagement



~7,000 people searching for jobs supported with relevant information

OUTCOME 3: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE



Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 the United Nations in Moldova made important contributions to improving national and local capacities for applying sustainable natural resource management practices and integrating climate change mitigation and adaptation priorities into local development plans. The results obtained facilitated the mitigation of the negative effects of the drought that affected the country during the year and prepared people to cope better with climate change challenges.

Improving capacities to apply sustainable natural resource management practices

To promote land degradation neutrality, the relevant legal and institutional framework was assessed, and recommendations were provided for improvement. Furthermore, representatives of local public authorities and 150 farmers from two districts strengthened their knowledge and skills in climate-smart agricultural practices and land degradation prevention. The awareness-raising events on the topic were particularly addressed to women farmers and other vulnerable groups from rural areas.

Efforts to promote sustainable forest management resulted in increased capacity of staff from the national forestry agency to conduct the required data-collection and assessment activities for the first forestry inventory in the country. The result is due to the technical tools and guidance documents that were developed and disseminated with United Nations support to national staff from the agency.

The United Nations also supported the country in increasing its capacity in radioactive waste management and decommissioning. To this end, options for the final disposal of radioactive waste were identified and a decommissioning and remediation plan for an existing radioactive waste storage facility was developed. In

addition, equipment for decommissioning and radioactive waste management activities was procured and delivered to the country.

Additional support in the field focused on advancing the finalization of legal reforms on environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment, promoting integrated water resource management as well as the sustainable use and protection of the Nistru river, assessing legislative barriers to equitable access to water and sanitation, and increasing the national capacity for emission reporting in accordance with the requirements of the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution.

Improving capacities for climate change adaptation and mitigation

In 2020 the country embarked on the second national adaptation planning process with United Nations support. As part of the process, specific climate change adaptation actions were mainstreamed in agriculture policy documents and programmes. The institutional framework for climate change adaptation in agriculture was also strengthened, with specialized working groups being created. At the same time, the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment completed an initial mapping of policy documents and programmes related to climate change, benefiting from qualified assistance in the process.

A comprehensive analysis of the disaster risk reduction system in agriculture was also developed in consultation with the government. The report will be used to strengthen the policy framework and institutional mechanisms in the field. In addition, the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment to address the effects of the severe drought that affected Moldova in 2020 was consolidated through the provision of assistance in the assessment of the damages to the agricultural sector, as well as through the delivery of specialized training in damage and loss assessment in agriculture to around 20 public servants.

At the local level, during the year the United Nations supported several districts to

strengthen their climate resilience capacities and integrate climate change and disaster risk reduction actions into local development strategies and budgets. As a result, the proportion of districts applying climate resilient practices increased from 18 in 2016 to 23 in 2020. Specific actions included the updating of climate profiles in four districts with environmental and gender components, which informed the development of gender-mainstreamed action plans in the field of climate change adaptation and environmental protection at the district level. The development of climate profiles for the Transnistria and Gagauzia regions was also supported.

Moreover, five communities were supported to draft and adopt local climate change and disaster risk reduction plans. The construction of seven water storage basins and the establishment of community-based rescue and firefighting brigades were also initiated in the five communities in order to enhance their climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction capacities.

The sustainability of initiatives aimed at strengthening climate resilience capacities at the local level was ensured through the development of materials on the topic and delivery of training to relevant stakeholders. Approximately 250 local officials and civil society representatives increased their knowledge of integrating climate adaptation and disaster risk management priorities into local development planning, including with the application of a gender equality perspective.

Improving resource efficiency and environmental performance of businesses

To promote sustainable business practices, an online self-assessment tool for the resource-efficient and cleaner production of small and medium-sized enterprises in Moldova was developed and launched with United Nations support in 2020. Resource packages and tools for training and coaching activities on resource-efficient and cleaner production were also developed for use.

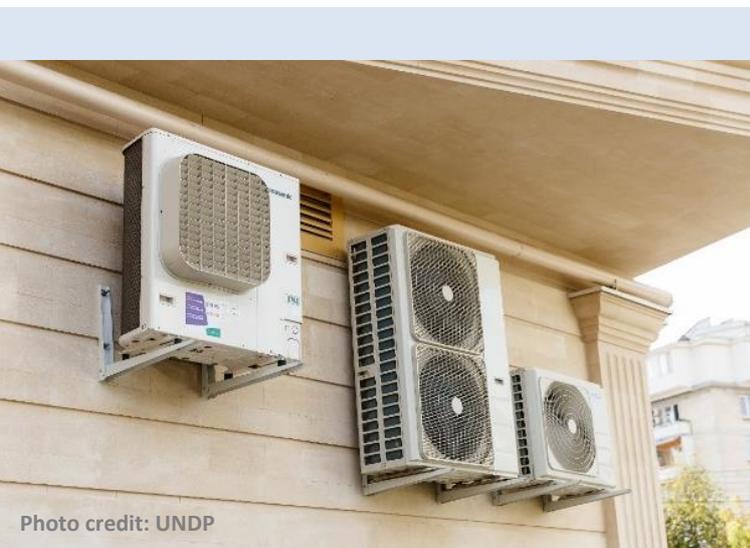


Photo credit: UNDP

The United Nations is supporting Moldova in transposing into national legislation the acquis communautaire on fluorinated greenhouse gases used in refrigeration and air-conditioning. The implementation of the legal amendments in the field will limit the use of the harmful gases and promote the adoption of cleaner alternatives. To comply with the new international requirements, Moldovan businesses have already started to install refrigeration systems that use less polluting agents.

KEY RESULTS UNDER OUTCOME 3



Policy and institutional framework in the field of environmental sustainability and resilience **strengthened**



150 farmers have increased knowledge and skills in climate-smart agricultural practices



The **proportion of districts applying climate resilient practices increased** from 18 in 2016 to 23 in 2020



~250 local officials and civil society representatives have the skills to integrate climate adaptation and disaster risk management priorities into local development planning

OUTCOME 4: INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Although most of the United Nations support for inclusive and equitable development in 2020 focused on strengthening the capacity of the health and education systems to cope with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, progress on other aspects also continued, albeit at a slower pace.

Improving the capacity of the health system to provide quality health services

The United Nations successfully supported the development of two evidence-based as well as human rights and gender-responsive national programmes for the control of tuberculosis and HIV. The programmes substantiated an application to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, developed by national stakeholders together with the United Nations family, which brought the country an approved grant of over \$20 million to be implemented over three years.

Supported by the United Nations, the health system became better prepared to improve the accessibility and quality of sexual and reproductive health services, HIV-related services and cervical cancer prevention services. The achievement is the result of the development of three sets of legal documents in the field and the implementation of capacity-building activities for over 3,000 health professionals and community workers. Radiotherapy services were also improved through the procurement and provision of equipment.

Remarkable results were further achieved with United Nations support in child and adolescent health care. More specifically, national food-based dietary guidelines were developed for preschools and schools to help overcome nutritional issues in children and adolescents. In addition, a series of capacity-building activities were organized with a focus on ensuring the continuity of routine

immunizations during the pandemic, the early identification and timely referral of children with developmental delays and disabilities, and the provision of care for children under three years old, in accordance with adjusted standards on child growth and development supervision. Overall, around 550 family doctors and nurses increased their knowledge and skills on different aspects of child and adolescent health through their participation in capacity-building activities supported by the United Nations.

Increasing the accessibility of health and related services for vulnerable populations is a priority for the United Nations, which is reflected in its activities and results. To illustrate, due to the concerted technical assistance and capacity-building efforts undertaken by the United Nations, the number of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis beneficiaries more than doubled in one year, increasing from 89 in 2019 to 213 in 2020. Moreover, the capacities of 25 civil society organizations working with women who use drugs were enhanced in the provision of gender-specific services, as were the capacities of 160 police officers who received training on tuberculosis, HIV, viral hepatitis and COVID-19 prevention and are now able to refer vulnerable populations to relevant medical and psychosocial services.

Empowering vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to access and demand quality services

The United Nations continued to empower vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to access quality social services. In regard to people with disabilities, as a result of an advocacy and awareness-raising campaign supported by the United Nations that included children with disabilities and their parents, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection committed to ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. To further advance the rights of persons with disabilities, United Nations agencies provided assistance to the National Council for Disability and Work Ability Assessment to revise the criteria for the determination of the degree of disability in accordance with international standards.

When it comes to persons living with HIV, due to the efforts of the United Nations, in 2020 they were consulted for the first time by the central government on the specific gender-related concerns and priorities that were included in the draft National Programme on the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections 2021–2025. In addition, nearly 60 people living with HIV, sex workers, drug users and men who have sex with men improved their understanding of the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS through tailored training sessions.

Women and girls in situations of risk were also supported. A mentoring programme implemented with the help of the United Nations empowered seven women survivors of gender-based violence to contribute to the establishment of the national network of survivors of violence in Moldova. Another 75 women and girls in situations of risk increased the knowledge and abilities needed for better employment and over 40 women living with HIV became more confident to report cases of violence against women following their participation in initiatives supported by the United Nations.

Furthermore, in 2020 approximately 34,700 young boys and girls were reached with comprehensive information on sexual and reproductive health and rights through a peer-to-peer information campaign on social media. Also, the very first network of youth peer educators in vocational education and training schools was established with the support of the United Nations to enable young people to develop life skills and healthy behaviours.

The promotion of youth sexual and reproductive health and rights was further advanced through the expansion of an advocacy platform working in the field and counting teachers, young people, parents and religious leaders among its members. The platform was expanded to five districts and is currently active in 40 communities.

Roma women and men were also empowered to address the issues that they face. As a result, nearly 70 Roma, including Roma leaders living in urban and rural areas, were involved in the development of a road map and action plan for the establishment of the first Roma community mediator institution in the Transnistria region.



Nadejda Kilar, from Tiraspol, Republic of Moldova, has been living with HIV for several years. Her antiretroviral therapy has suppressed her viral load to undetectable levels, but during pregnancy and childbirth she was isolated. She was kept in an isolation ward, gave birth in a separate delivery room and after giving birth was placed in a special room for women living with HIV – a room with bars on the window. It was then when Nadejda understood that for things to change she needed to defend her rights.

At the advice of a peer consultant at the HIV clinic she attends, Nadejda joined the Women’s Mentoring Programme, along with 20 other women living with HIV from different communities in the area. The programme helps women living with HIV to understand and identify their problems, learn about their rights and get support in the fight against violence and discrimination. As a result, since 2019 Nadejda has been working in a sales job and has been studying at the university to become a teacher. *“It’s not easy for me. I do not sleep much at night, but I have gained confidence that I can solve problems on my own,”* she said.

Increasing the capacity of the education system to deliver quality and inclusive education

The United Nations continued to make progress in strengthening the capacity of the education system during the year while helping it cope with the effects of the pandemic. At the policy level, the development of the Education Sector

Strategy 2021–2030 and the accompanying medium-term programme of action was supported. The development of the next national programme for inclusive education was also launched. Both strategic documents are slated for adoption in 2021.

Inclusive education was further advanced during the year, with a focus on children with disabilities and Roma children. Guidelines for intersectoral collaboration for the inclusion of children with severe disabilities in education were successfully tested. In the process, 161 professionals were trained and engaged in intersectoral collaboration, and 51 children with severe disabilities were included in education. Furthermore, the capacity of 190 preschool managers, educators, psychologists and speech therapists in three districts for the application of child-centred methodology was strengthened, resulting in the better inclusion in the education process of children with disabilities and Roma children in the respective communities.

Promoting access to quality health education, including through the education system, remained a priority for the United Nations in 2020. Nearly 30,000 students from general education and vocational institutions benefited from health education courses during the year. To improve health and life skills education in vocational schools, edutainment materials were developed for a course on healthy lifestyles, and staff from 12 vocational schools received relevant training in the field.

Addressing poverty through effective social assistance

In the field of social assistance, coverage of vulnerable households with children increased in 2020. The result was achieved following the adoption by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection of a recommendation from a microsimulation exercise supported by the United Nations that provided for an increase in the weight of children in the calculation of social assistance payments. The change was approved as a mitigation measure against COVID-19.

Additionally, the curriculum and materials for a human rights training for the staff of

residential institutions and other specialists in the field of social assistance was developed in an inclusive manner with United Nations support. The programme was developed for the staff of the National Social Assistance Agency, particularly for employees directly involved in the provision of assistance to people with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities in both residential and community settings.

Addressing violence against women and children

Lockdown measures implemented to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic increased the risks of gender-based violence and child abuse. To strengthen support services in the field, the United Nations, in coordinated partnership with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, local authorities and other partners, supported several initiatives, including the establishment of a data-collection mechanism on gender-based violence through the health system, the development of standard operating procedures for intersectoral response to violence against women and the opening of a regional support centre for survivors of domestic violence in the Gagauzia region. Effective assistance to 95 victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation was also provided.

Furthermore, the prevention of violence against women and child abuse was advanced. During the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign, over 470,000 persons were reached online through various means, including events with messages on ending violence against women and girls. A novelty introduced in 2020 as part of the efforts aimed at dismantling gender stereotypes was the active engagement of men and boys in targeted campaigns.

To address violence against children, United Nations agencies supported the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection to initiate the process for the development of the next national strategy in the field of child protection. The phenomena of bullying and unhealthy behaviours among young people were also addressed in both schools and vocational institutions, including through partnerships with school managers on the

development of specific procedures on violence reporting, the engagement of parents and young people in the process and the equipping of children and adolescents with the relevant knowledge and skills.



Photo credit: personal archive, Plamadeala family

Ever since they got married, the Plamadeala spouses have been equally sharing family responsibilities. When Svetlana was staying at home taking care of the children, Gheorghe would cook and keep the house clean. When she went back to work, he started looking after the children. Both believe strongly that the equal participation of mothers and fathers in child-rearing is important to ensure children's proper and harmonious development. In Moldova childcare leave is provided, on an equal footing, to either the mother or the father, as the family decides. Parental leave is granted to fathers for 14 calendar days within the first 56 days since the child was born. Gradually, more and more fathers are breaking the stereotypes and start sharing family responsibilities.

KEY RESULTS UNDER OUTCOME 4



\$20 million mobilized by the country to fight AIDS and tuberculosis



>3,500 health professionals increased their knowledge in different fields



HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis beneficiaries more than doubled in one year



75 women and girls in situations of risk have increased their knowledge needed for better employment



~34,700 youth reached with comprehensive information on sexual and reproductive health and rights through peer-to-peer support



~30,000 students from general education and vocational institutions benefited from health education courses



Social protection coverage of vulnerable households with children **increased**



95 victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation received assistance



470,000 persons reached with messages on ending violence against women and girls

UNITED NATIONS SUPPORT FOR PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCING THE 2030 AGENDA

In 2020 the United Nations in Moldova continued to consolidate and diversify its partnerships to help accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. Several innovative partnerships, particularly with the private sector, were established during the year and have already produced some notable results. South-south and triangular partnerships were also advanced as were partnerships focused on strengthening financing for SDGs.

Innovative partnerships with the private sector

❖ In 2020 the United Nations in Moldova and Moldcell signed a memorandum of understanding, which cemented the beginning of a new partnership between the two organizations. The partnership is the first of its kind and works as a platform to foster collaboration between the private company and United Nations entities in Moldova. The partnership pursues several objectives, including the promotion of SDGs and the engagement of stakeholders in efforts aimed at the achievement of the global goals. The memorandum of understanding has already contributed to the development and implementation of a project that helped 200 older adults to cope with the social isolation effects of the COVID-19 pandemic by connecting them with young people and facilitating the transfer of digital skills between generations.

❖ In March 2020, when the whole country went into lockdown, an innovative partnership with Premier Energy helped facilitate the distribution of COVID-19 prevention messages to the company's 850,000 clients, using electricity bills. With the same company as a partner, a social experiment was carried out among 20,000 households with high levels of electricity consumption. The selected households received a letter comparing their bills to those of their energy-efficient neighbours, while offering solutions for energy saving during the pandemic and encouraging people to pay their

bills online as a safety measure to prevent contraction of the novel coronavirus. While the overall population increased their electricity consumption by more than one third in July 2020, the households that were part of the experiment used only about 5 per cent more electricity during the same period. Moreover, Premier Energy supported a United Nations initiative aimed at addressing the safety of children left at home alone due to lockdown measures.

❖ Endava, a private information and communications technology and software company, joined United Nations efforts to support the fight against the novel coronavirus by purchasing and providing much-needed medical equipment to eight health institutions from the Chisinau municipality. The equipment allowed front-line health workers to monitor the health of patients with COVID-19 and stabilize those in a critical condition.

These are extraordinary times requiring extraordinary efforts, and I would like to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to everyone working day and night to treat and prevent the spread of COVID-19. We are in solidarity with doctors and only by providing them with the necessary conditions and equipment we can play a role in the fight against the virus.

Radu Lazar, Regional Manager, Central Europe, Endava.

❖ A collaborative partnership, facilitated by the United Nations, brought together the expertise, capabilities, data and technology of Orange Moldova, the European Space Agency, Premier Energy and the NBS to build a collaborative data platform and generate insights into the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. Six services were developed as part of the platform, including a

stay-at-home index and a risk map. All were used by the government to inform the COVID-19 response in the country. The platform also integrates forecasting features to help prevent future crises.



Photo credit: UNFPA

Valentina Rotari is a retired French teacher who, before the pandemic, used to spend her time doing household chores, reading library books and interacting with family and friends. As for many older people, during the pandemic loneliness became a burden for Valentina. Hence, at the age of 85 she became a student. The discipline: how to use a cellular phone, get access to information and connect virtually with family and friends. Valentina is one of the 200 older people who was part of the programme implemented within the framework of the partnership with Moldcell.

“This phone is like a friend to me. Although I still cannot manage with this smartphone fully, I’m trying to do something by myself to be informed about the events in the country and to chat with my friends, to see them at least virtually and to know they are safe. It helps me to cope easier with loneliness. This programme engagement is a priceless gift for me and for all older people,” said Valentina.

KEY RESULTS OF INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS



200 older adults supported to cope with the social isolation effects of the COVID-19 pandemic



850,000 households received COVID-19 prevention message via electricity bills



20,000 households supported to make more sustainable electricity consumption decisions during the pandemic



8 health institutions benefited from much-needed medical equipment during the pandemic



6 services developed as part of a data platform created to monitor the evolution of the pandemic in the country



NBS has access to high-level expertise from other national statistical offices in its journey to create a modern and strong national statistical system



Impact of COVID-19 on **air quality measured** and results shared through an easy-to-read dashboard



First concept of a Climate Investment and Innovation Fund developed

South-south and triangular partnerships

❖ As part of an initiative funded by the India–UN Partnership Development Fund, the process of the transformation of the national statistical system into an administrative register-based system that will contribute to the tracking and achievement of SDGs continued in 2020. The initiative focuses on the establishment of a statistical population register, managed by the NBS, which would use administrative data produced by other data holders in Moldova. The statistical population register will be a cornerstone for the statistical system in Moldova and will support the NBS in moving from a traditional to a register-based census, and to the accurate and timely estimation of the population number and migration estimates at the national and local levels. In the spirit of south-south and triangular cooperation, the initiative creates opportunities for expertise from different national statistical offices in building statistical population registers and moving towards a register-based census to be shared with the NBS.

❖ In 2020 an analysis designed to map air pollution in the country using earth observation data was conducted for the first time in Moldova. The analysis was undertaken in partnership with the European Space Agency and covered two countries simultaneously, Moldova and neighbouring Ukraine. The primary objective of

the study was to measure the impact of COVID-19 on air pollution; however, rich historical data sets were also used in the analysis. The overall situation of air pollution in Moldova revealed itself as a favourable one, specifically when compared to other European countries in the region. To complement the research project, two easy-to-read dashboards were developed, showcasing the results of the analysis.

Partnerships for financing the SDGs

During the year, as part of an inter-agency initiative, a multi-stakeholder partnership was created for the development of a project proposal on the establishment of a Climate Investment and Innovation Fund in Moldova. The project was shortlisted among the first 24 proposals worldwide; it was supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment and backed by several financial institutions. Although the first application submitted to secure funding for the project was not successful, the detailed project documentation remains an asset that will be used to invite development partners and other financial institutions to invest in the fund. The facility will help leverage much-needed financing for climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives, and improve the access of farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises to loans that are otherwise limited because of collateral requirements and other constraints.



UNITED NATIONS COHERENCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

Results of the repositioning of the United Nations development system

The second year of implementation of the United Nations development system reform, which started back in 2019, brought many positive changes to the work of the UNCT in Moldova. As a result of the reform, three new agencies, ITU, UNDRR and IFAD, joined the team in 2020, contributing to the strengthening of the integrated support that the United Nations can provide to the country. The three agencies brought valuable additions to the mix of experience and expertise of the UNCT in Moldova, each in their respective areas of work: ITU in information and communications technologies; UNDRR in the reduction of disaster risks and losses; and IFAD in the eradication of poverty and hunger in rural areas. At the beginning of 2021 the UNCT also welcomed UNOPS to the team.

The reform further brought increased collaboration across agencies. For the first time, the [Common Country Analysis](#) – a comprehensive assessment of the country’s situation – was conducted by the UNCT relying only on internal capacities and expertise. The UNCT also came together, under the leadership of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, to develop, in record time, a joint plan for the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, more accurate and complete joint workplans for the implementation of the UN PFSD 2018–2022 were developed during the year.

The implementation of joint projects and programmes continued in 2020, with additional joint programming initiatives being pursued by the UNCT. United Nations entities worked on the implementation of 12 joint programmes and projects, of which seven were initiated in 2020. A total of \$3 million in new resources were mobilized for joint programmes during the year to focus on strengthening the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, helping address climate change through innovative financing, advancing gender equality and combating gender-based violence, and improving HIV treatment and prevention.

Making its work more effective and efficient is a priority for the UNCT, including through the development of effective and efficient management structures. Hence, in 2020 the UNCT engaged in an innovative business process redesign exercise; this resulted in greater focus on joint programming in the areas of work that fall under the scope of two inter-agency working groups. The UNCT also put in place several new coordination mechanisms that helped facilitate an integrated response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including a COVID-19 Socioeconomic Impact Task Force and an Education Task Force.

The changes brought about by the reform were welcomed by government and development partners alike, with improved coordination being seen as a key benefit of the reform.

“ [The establishment of the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office] brought an added value to our collaboration with the United Nations, and the principle of One UN is taking even better shape when we have one person or one structure that represents the entire UNCT, making it very easy for us to coordinate and cooperate with the United Nations. ”

Adrian Ermurachi, Deputy Secretary-General of the Government

Results of communicating as one

The implementation of joint communication activities planned by the UNCT for 2020 was jeopardized by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the United Nations Communication Group managed to adapt and realign its activities, developing and deploying five large-scale joint communication campaigns. The campaigns focused on raising awareness on the rights of persons with disabilities, promoting human rights, ending violence against women and girls, engaging youth in the promotion of the SDGs and celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations.

The United Nations also supported national risk communication efforts as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A complex campaign, involving multiple phases, was implemented to inform the public about the risks associated with COVID-19 and to raise awareness of effective protection measures against the virus. A recent survey carried out by WHO showed that over 90 per cent of the population was aware of the COVID-19 risks and prevention measures, which reflects the success of the joint communication efforts undertaken by the government and the United Nations.

Results of operating as one

In 2020 the United Nations continued to optimize its business operations. Effective cooperation on procurement, human resources and information and communications technology at the level of the UNCT resulted in cost savings of \$127,122. To secure further savings in the future, 13 long-term agreements with local companies and individual consultants for the repetitive procurement of goods and services were extended during the year.

Furthermore, an internal web-based platform was created to provide an overview of COVID-19-related procurement activities across United Nations entities. The platform allows for the mapping and coordination of procurements undertaken, contributing to cost efficiencies and transparency with donors and beneficiaries.

In 2020 the United Nations continued to promote sustainability in its operations and beyond through the reduced procurement of information and communications technology equipment, the use of outsourced services for equipment rental, and by raising the awareness of local businesses of sustainable procurement principles. A project for the installation of a photovoltaic panel on the roof of the United Nations House was also launched during the year. In addition to becoming more environmentally friendly, the United Nations House also became more accessible with the refurbishment of two additional bathroom

facilities into fully accessible ones. Currently four fully accessible lavatory facilities are available on different floors of the United Nations House.

KEY RESULTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS WORKING MORE AND BETTER TOGETHER



3 new agencies joined the UNCT



3 key documents – Common Country Analysis, COVID-19 SERP and Joint Workplans – developed



\$3 million mobilized for **7** new joint programmes and projects, with a total of 12 joint programmes and projects being implemented



5 large joint communication campaigns implemented



National **COVID-19 risk communication** efforts supported



\$127,122 in cost savings achieved because of joint procurement efforts



Web-based **platform to track COVID-19 procurements** created



UN House **sustainability and accessibility** improved

KEY CONSTRAINTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Key constraints



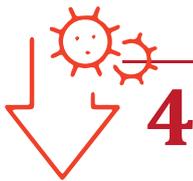
The COVID-19 pandemic was the greatest challenge that the United Nations in Moldova faced in 2020. The pandemic affected nearly all programme and project planning and implementation processes, requiring the organization and its staff to adjust in a very short period of time to a completely new working environment. Certain activities had to be postponed, while others were delayed, and the quality of some interventions, especially of those related to capacity-building and policy development, suffered because of the limitations associated with the new online delivery modes.



In addition to disrupting activities, the COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the weakness and inequalities built into the current systems. The fragility of the health system, for example, became rapidly apparent. The pandemic overwhelmed health services at all levels, put extreme pressure on the health workforce, deepened the financial needs of the health system and affected health supply chains and procurements. The weak capacity of the education system to adapt and transition to remote teaching, which especially affected vulnerable children and young people, was also accentuated, as was the unpreparedness of social services to cope with an emergency of such proportions.



Development activities have been profoundly affected by political volatility in recent years, and 2020 was no exception. Changes in the political context affected government leadership, including at the level of line ministries, and generated periods of institutional uncertainty and restructuring, causing delays in the implementation of planned activities, with projects involving policy-level interventions especially impacted. A lack of commitment to certain processes also posed implementation delays and challenges. The delays experienced hampered the achievement of results on time.

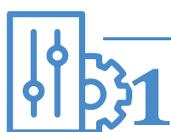


The overall limited institutional capacity of public authorities, particularly for the implementation of complex technical assistance projects, had a significant impact on programme and project implementation. Many public sector institutions continued to be affected by high staff turnover rates, inadequate human and financial resources, and limited access to relevant tools and infrastructure. Weak national data-collection mechanisms, which were further weakened by the COVID-19 pandemic, also hindered effective decision-making for the delivery of the support and services needed.



Digital skills and access to the Internet and technology became a necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, such skills and resources are not evenly distributed among different stakeholders, which limited the effectiveness of certain activities, particularly the delivery of capacity-building support, and required elementary technological literacy courses to be built into projects involving digitalization and digital transformation components. Even when digital skills are not an issue, the online format of events poses specific challenges, allowing for less interactive and shorter engagements, which can reduce the effectiveness of activities.

Key lessons learned



1 Internal flexibility that allows for rapid programmatic adjustments to be made and the reconceptualization of programme interventions to be undertaken is a key factor of success in situations that require quick decisions and actions, as was the case of the COVID-19 pandemic. The United Nations had a comparative advantage in this regard as it had the ability to quickly adapt its programme development and implementation modalities, timelines and the content of its programmes and activities.



2 The digitalization of business processes and the use of digital means for public service delivery are important for consolidating the resilience of the public and private sectors to external threats and crises. However, the implementation of new tools, particularly digital ones, requires strong training components to ensure the continuous maintenance and use of such tools. More broadly, the strengthening of digital skills among key stakeholders and the greater integration of digital technologies into their work can bring various positive outcomes. Supporting local stakeholders in transitioning to online working modes, for example, was essential in ensuring the uninterrupted and timely implementation of interventions in partner communities. The use of online courses proved to be a cost-effective way to deliver training and also allowed for wider participation. Although online modes of teaching pose certain challenges, the use of interactive and innovative methods in online training delivery can contribute to a high level of engagement among participants and lead to the efficient delivery of courses.



3 Designing activities aimed at strengthening institutional capacities where such capacities are weak can contribute to the successful implementation and sustainability of development interventions. Combining dedicated training sessions with tailored assistance can be an effective way to build the capacity of beneficiaries and ensure an adequate implementation pace of interventions. Accurately timing thematic training sessions to project implementation stages can also improve overall project outcomes as can the piloting of new services and programmes, which if coupled with targeted staff development measures, can allow for test-supported corrective measures, adjusted planning and a smoother roll-out of programmes when the pilots phase out.



4 Strategic coordination on similar initiatives can help avoid overlaps and increase the overall efficiency of programme activities. In addition, productive synergies with other ongoing initiatives in the same area of work can improve outcomes across multiple interventions and allow for higher-level impact.



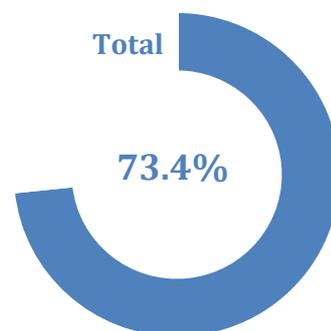
5 Ensuring stakeholder engagement, commitment and ownership of programme and project results is essential for the successful outcome of development interventions and contextualization of response. Continuous and efficient dialogue, as well as transparency in the implementation of all activities, can enable the adequate participation of all relevant stakeholders in programme and project implementation.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION*

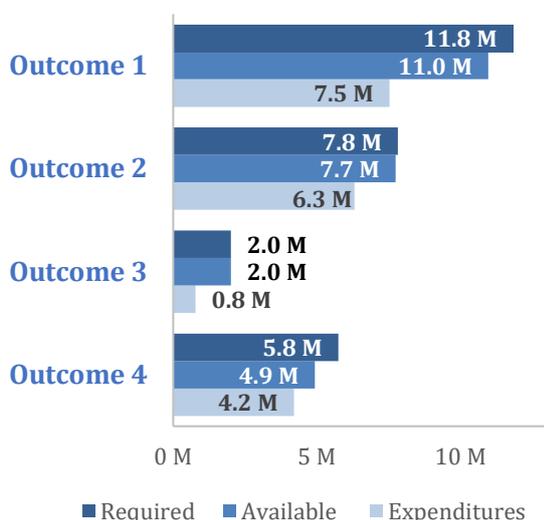
Total required, available** and spent resources under UN PFSD 2018–2022 in 2020



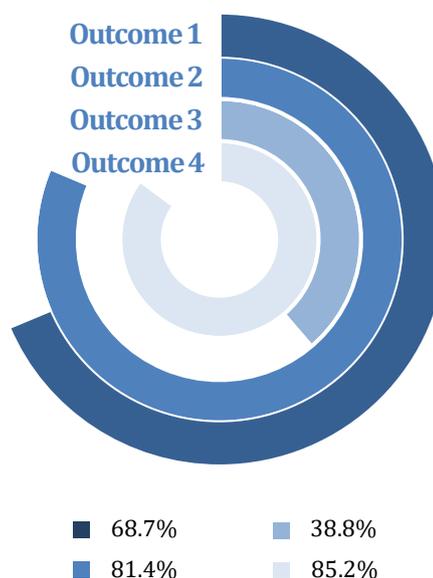
UN PFSD 2018–2022 delivery rate in 2020



Required, available** and spent resources under UN PFSD 2018–2022 in 2020 by outcome

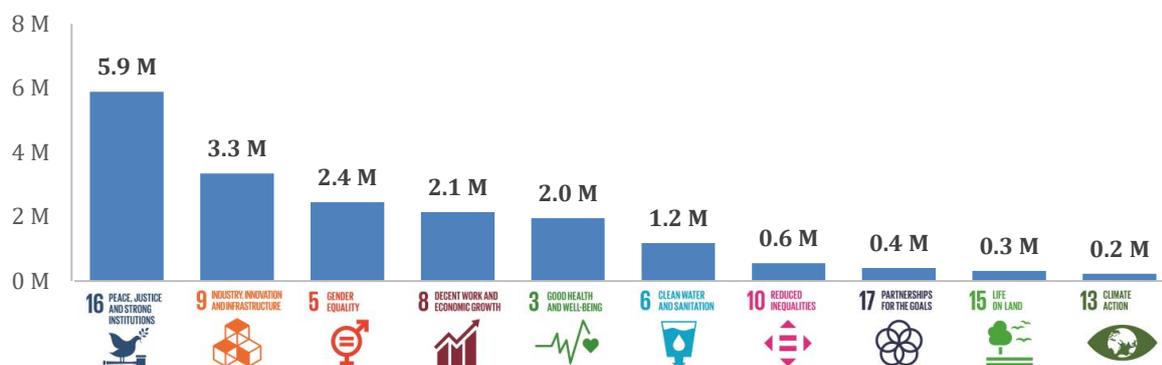


UN PFSD 2018–2022 delivery rate in 2020 by outcome



**Available based on the data at the beginning of the cycle

Expenditures under UN PFSD 2018–2022 in 2020 by the top 10 SDGs



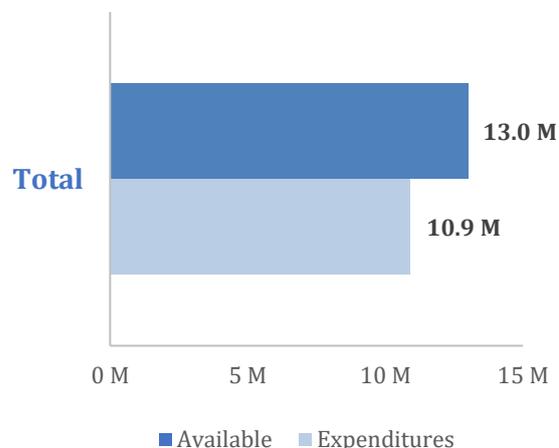
*Based on the information included in and reported under the joint workplans for 2020.

Total required and available resources under the COVID-19 SERP**

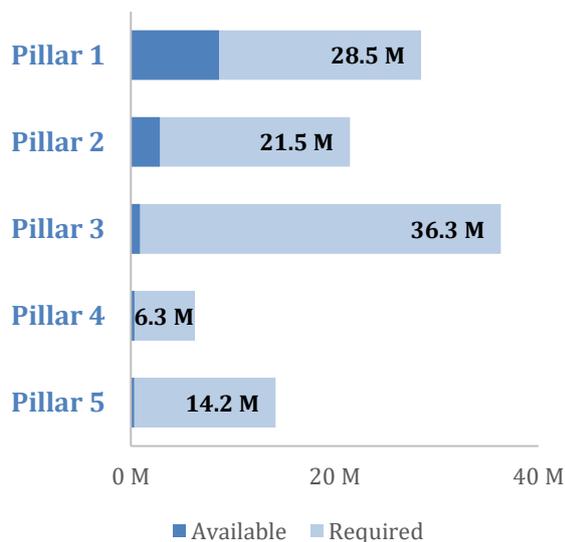
Required: **106.8 M**



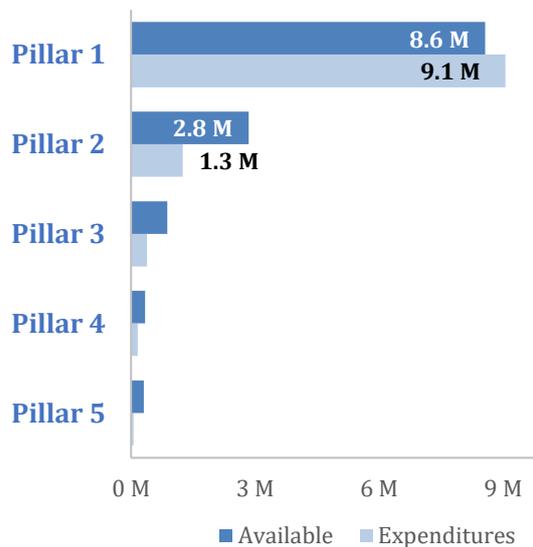
Total available and spent resources under the COVID-19 SERP in 2020**



Required and available resources under the COVID-19 SERP by pillar**



Available and spent resources under the COVID-19 SERP in 2020 by pillar**



**Available based on the data at the beginning of the cycle.*

As reflected in the UNCT's annual joint workplans for 2020 developed under the UN PFSD 2018–2022, the planned budget of the United Nations in Moldova for the year amounted to \$27.4 million, out of which 25.7 million were available resources. The delivery rate reached 73.4 per cent. The relatively low budget execution performance is explained by the programme and project implementation challenges posed by COVID-19, including procurement delays, as well as political considerations and savings achieved as a result of the adjustment of the format of activities to the pandemic situation. In addition, at least \$534,143 from the regular plans were

reprogrammed to fund the COVID-19 response. Excluding the reprogrammed resources from the calculations results in a delivery rate of 74.6 per cent. The total amount spent under the UN PFSD 2018–2022 is \$18.8 million. This is a little under two thirds of the \$30.5 million estimated as required for the implementation of the partnership framework at the beginning of the programme cycle. However, another \$10.9 million was mobilized and spent under the COVID-19 SERP in 2020, which brings the total amount spent by the United Nations in Moldova during the year on activities included in both the regular annual joint workplans and the COVID-19 SERP to \$29.7 million.



CHAPTER 4

UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM KEY FOCUS FOR 2021



Photo credit: UNDP

UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM KEY FOCUS FOR 2021

Consolidating COVID-19 socioeconomic response and recovery efforts

Supporting COVID-19 socioeconomic response and recovery efforts in line with the COVID-19 SERP remains a priority for the UNCT in Moldova in 2021. The UNCT will continue with the implementation of its existing projects in the field and will also seek to mobilize additional resources to strengthen the response. In this context, the implementation of the National Vaccination Plan and the National Vaccination Communication Plan will be one of the key activities that will be supported by the United Nations during the year.

A [multilingual website](#), accessible for persons with disabilities, tracking current and proposed projects under the COVID-19 SERP and including a repository of assessments and policy briefs on the topic will be made available and will be regularly updated to serve as a resource for the government, development partners and the broader public. In addition, as the co-chair and convener of the Development Partners' Monthly Meetings, the United Nations will continue to facilitate the coordination of the COVID-19 response across development partners.

Continuing advancing the achievement of SDGs in line with the UN PFSD 2018–2022

The Common Country Analysis conducted by the United Nations in 2020 revealed a series of development challenges that continue to affect Moldova and hamper the achievement of SDGs in the country. The challenges identified include an ageing population and high outmigration, underwhelming economic growth, a labour-market characterized by low employment, an education system affected by systemic and structural inefficiencies, a health sector that requires significant investment, an agricultural sector that is highly vulnerable to climate change and an economy that is one of the most energy-intensive in the region. Limited institutional capacity, low citizen participation in decision-making and fragile social cohesion are additional challenges identified as a result of the analysis, among many others. Each of the identified challenges

comes with numerous opportunities for improvement, which will be pursued by the UNCT in 2021.

Cross-cutting issues such as the promotion of human rights, gender equality and the principle of leaving no one behind will continue to be integrated throughout the work of individual agencies and the UNCT as a whole. Notably, in 2021 the UNCT will support state structures, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations to increase their knowledge of human rights standards and consolidate their capacity to participate effectively in the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review.

To advance the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UNCT will build on its work from 2020 to translate the key needs and problems faced by persons with disabilities identified through broad consultations into new projects and programmes. A comprehensive gender assessment will also be conducted to help direct future gender equality and women's empowerment programming.

In addition, the UNCT will foster multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on development issues through a series of post-VNR events to identify solutions to pressing development challenges and inform national strategies and plans. Effective policies that would help advance the SDGs require a strong evidence base. Hence, the UNCT will also continue to support the strengthening of the national statistical system in Moldova.

Setting the vision for the United Nations system support to the country for the future

In 2021 the UNCT, in collaboration with the government, will initiate preparations for the development of the next cooperation framework that will guide the United Nations development activities at the country level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for five years, starting in 2023. The process will begin with the development and approval of a road map and will continue with

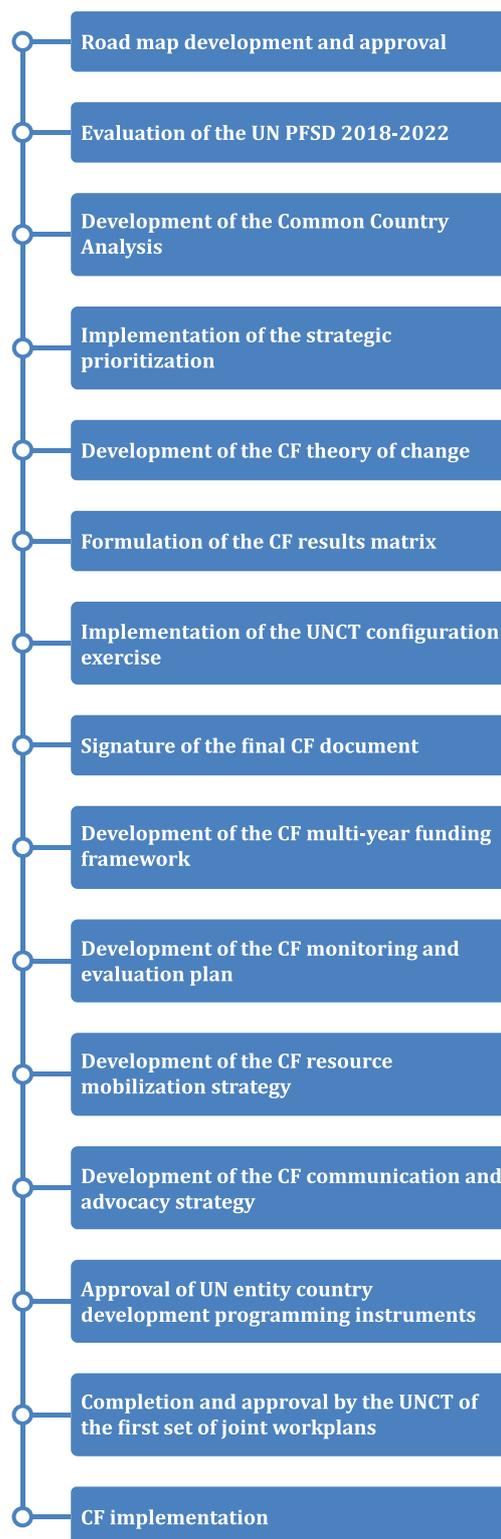
the evaluation of the UN PFSD 2018–2022 and the undertaking of the Common Country Analysis for 2021. During the second half of the year, the key development issues will be prioritized for inclusion in the future cooperation framework and a draft theory of change will be formulated to outline how the issues identified will be addressed. The process will continue into 2022, when the new cooperation framework will be approved.

Improving coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness

During the year the UNCT is expected to implement several initiatives to improve its coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness. The UNCT will finalize its Resource Mobilization Strategy, which will have a strong focus on new strategic partnerships. The document will identify opportunities for increasing the predictability of funding and widening the donor base. The UNCT will also update its Business Operations Strategy to promote common business operations – including through the establishment of common premises and a common back office – gender balance in staffing, and disability inclusion. The establishment of a common back office will be initiated to further reduce operational expenses.

Listening to the voices of different stakeholders can ensure that the United Nations in Moldova remains responsive to the needs of the people that it serves. To maintain fluid communication with young people, the UNCT will establish a Youth Advisory Panel. The panel will empower young people and allow them to raise awareness about their needs and the challenges they face. The UNCT will also accelerate the implementation of its Plan on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and will improve cross-agency coordination in this field. The implementation of the plan will ensure the strengthening of mechanisms for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Timeline for the Development of the Next Cooperation Framework (CF)



ANNEX I: LIST OF KEY FINANCING PARTNERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN THE COUNTRY IN 2020

- ❖ Austria
- ❖ Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- ❖ Endava
- ❖ Estonia
- ❖ EU
- ❖ GAVI
- ❖ Germany
- ❖ Global Environment Facility
- ❖ Global Partnership for Education
- ❖ Green Climate Fund
- ❖ India–UN Development Partnership Fund
- ❖ Japan
- ❖ Moldova
- ❖ Netherlands
- ❖ Norway
- ❖ Republic of Korea
- ❖ Soros Foundation
- ❖ Sweden
- ❖ Switzerland
- ❖ UNAIDS Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework
- ❖ UNICEF Thematic Child Protection Fund
- ❖ UNICEF Thematic Education Fund
- ❖ United Kingdom
- ❖ United Nations Secretary-General's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Trust Fund
- ❖ United States
- ❖ Universal Health Coverage Partnership