



UN KINGDOM of
SAUDI ARABIA
COUNTRY RESULTS REPORT
2020



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FOREWORD

by the Resident Coordinator



We are pleased to present the United Nations Country Results Report for 2020, the fourth year of our United Nations Common Country Strategic Framework (UNCCSF) 2017-2021. The year 2020 marked an unprecedented year for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Nations. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many existing vulnerabilities in the country. Simultaneously, crude oil, which is expected to represent 53.5% of the KSA's revenue in 2020, was at its lowest in over 20 years.

The UNCCSF 2017-2021, developed by the United Nations Country Team in consultation with Government, identified four priority areas for its support based on a comprehensive common country analysis (CCA) and national demand. The four priority areas are; 1. Knowledge-based equitable and sustainable economic development, underpinned by technology, innovation, and improved infrastructure; 2. Effective and equitable delivery of social services and education for improved quality of life; 3. An equitable, accountable, effective, and efficient public sector; and 4. The sustainable management, use and preservation of natural and cultural resources.

The United Nations Saudi Arabia employed the United Nations Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19, which consists of five pillars connected by strong environmental sustainability and gender equality imperatives to build back better. These five pillars are essential in our fight against COVID-19 to continue the progress towards achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Agenda 2030. Three significant milestones were achieved by the United Nations Saudi Arabia in 2020. The first was the publication of the United Nations COVID-19 Capacity Brief, submitted to the Government at the end of June, which contains a collation of 67 ongoing and newly suggested activities and projects which could be enhanced or accelerated to support the Government's response to COVID-19. Twenty-seven activities are currently being implemented to benefit and strengthen COVID-19 mitigation in the KSA.

The second milestone was the publication of the Diagnostics Paper on the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 in the KSA and How to Build Back Better in early December. The Paper summarizes the economic and social landscape of The KSA with a focus on the potential impact of COVID-19 and the oil price crisis and includes additional possibilities of support by the United Nations and policy recommendations. The Diagnostic Paper also incorporates the policy recommendations previously listed in the United Nations COVID-19 Capacity Brief. The first central theme of the Diagnostic Paper is leaving no one behind as the short-term framing of response to and mitigation of COVID-19, while the second theme is the longer-term framing of the constructive impact these short-term strategies have on the achievement of the SDGs, the United Nations' Agenda 2030 and the KSA's Vision 2030, a broad reform programme in the country.

The third milestone represents the formation and activities of the United Nations Network on Migration (UNNM) in the KSA. The establishment of UNNM is a significant advance towards forming strong and revitalized partnerships for sustainable development. UNNM provided coordinated and comprehensive support by the Country Team to the Government in its implementation, follow-up, and review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration. The UNNM also supported the Government in progress on the SDGs.

Among the highlights for the United Nations Saudi Arabia in 2020 was the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations Charter. In this context, the United Nations Saudi Arabia prepared an online commemorative event, "Recovering from the COVID-19 Crisis and Advancing towards Sustainable Development in Saudi Arabia: Building on the UN-G20 Partnership", and streamed it on October 24. The ceremony was marked by a round-table discussion on how the world, in general, and the KSA, in particular, were coping with the new reality and which changes were required to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Panelists included the Director of the Financing for Development Office



of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), the Chair of the G20 Development Working Group, the Director of the Finance Sector Hub of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Lead Researcher of the UN and Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector Awqaf Research Project. The dialogue also focused on the financial challenges in the achievement of SDGs in the country, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the United Nations Saudi Arabia began establishing a local network for the UN Global Compact, a partnerships group to advance private and public engagement and dialogue in the country and strengthened the communications group.

We look forward to 2021. The Government has started a broad vaccination campaign for all. Additionally, the Government successfully transitioned their education system to exclusively online to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. The Ministry of Education implemented online classes within 10 hours of the decision and broadcast lessons on 23 different TV stations to improve nation-wide access. The year 2020 revealed additional vulnerabilities, yet countless efforts were made to build back better, with the constant aim of leaving no one behind.

N. Fustier
29 March 2021

Nathalie Fustier
Resident Coordinator
United Nations
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



United Nations Country Team

United Nations Saudi Arabia

The United Nations has been actively working with the KSA since 1952; The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) comprises all United Nations entities working in or with the KSA. The UNCT is led by the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Nathalie Fustier, who has been in the country since November 1, 2018; Twenty-one United Nations entities are working in the KSA: thirteen agencies, funds, and programmes, two of which support operations in Yemen; and eight entities, which operate through regional offices and/or headquarters.

In-Country Presence

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and the World Bank Group.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and World Food Programme (WFP) (All three in support of Yemen).

Operating Through Regional Offices and/or Headquarters

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), International Labour Organization (ILO), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), UN Women, United Nations Volunteers (UNV), and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).



Image: RC Etaam Visit



United Nations Entities





Key Development Partners of the UN Development System in the Country

The United Nations would like to thank the many partners, without whose support the United Nations would not have been able to achieve the many successes and accomplishments during 2020. Below is a list of some of our partners:

- ◊ Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions
- ◊ Al Nahda Society
- ◊ Al Ula Development Authority
- ◊ Alanood Center for Youth Development (Warif)
- ◊ Arab Urban Development Institute
- ◊ Architecture and Design Commission
- ◊ Association for Sustainable Development (Talga)
- ◊ Council of Saudi Chambers
- ◊ Environmental Development Foundation| Faseel
- ◊ Family Affairs Council
- ◊ G20 Secretariat and Engagement Groups
- ◊ General Authority for Statistics
- ◊ General Authority of AWQAF
- ◊ General Council for Islamic Banks and Financial Institutions
- ◊ Gulf Research Center
- ◊ Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector
- ◊ Islamic Research and Training Institute
- ◊ King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (MAWHIBA)
- ◊ King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue
- ◊ King Abdulaziz University
- ◊ King Khalid Foundation
- ◊ King Salman Center for Local Governance
- ◊ King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief)
- ◊ Madinah Development Authority
- ◊ Ministerial Committee of Traffic Safety
- ◊ Ministry of Culture
- ◊ Ministry of Economy and Planning
- ◊ Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture
- ◊ Ministry of Health
- ◊ Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development
- ◊ Ministry of Interior
- ◊ Ministry of Municipal, Rural Affairs, and Housing
- ◊ Muslim World League
- ◊ Naif Arab University for Security Sciences
- ◊ National Commission for Education, Culture and Science
- ◊ National Committee for Workers' Committees
- ◊ National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking
- ◊ National Competitiveness Center
- ◊ National Family Safety Program
- ◊ Northern Borders Province
- ◊ Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)
- ◊ Prince Sultan University
- ◊ Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University
- ◊ Refugee Zakat Fund
- ◊ Royal Commission for Riyadh City
- ◊ Saudi Center for Disease Prevention and Control
- ◊ Saudi Energy Efficiency Center
- ◊ Saudi Food and Drug Authority
- ◊ Saudi Food Bank
- ◊ Saudi Fund for Development
- ◊ Saudi Health Council
- ◊ Saudi Human Rights Commission
- ◊ Saudi Red Crescent Authority
- ◊ Saudi Stock Exchange (Tadawul)
- ◊ Sharkiya Development Authority
- ◊ Sustainable Agricultural Rural Development Program

Partnership Highlights

Partnerships were a key priority for the United Nations Saudi Arabia in 2020, emphasizing SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals. Collaborations advancing efforts by the United Nations in the country in 2020 included a partnership with the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions, spearheaded by UNHCR, which aimed to develop Islamic finance tools to benefit the world's most vulnerable refugees and internally displaced persons. As part of this collaboration, expertise was exchanged, Zakat governance standards for international humanitarian organizations were created, and other Islamic philanthropic areas for the United Nations identified. The Refugee Zakat Fund, started in 2019 by UNHCR, assisted refugees in neighbouring countries and at-risk groups whose situation was aggravated by the global pandemic. Both ILO and UNICEF lead a partnership with the Family Affairs Council. UNICEF focused on drawing increasing attention to ongoing and emerging issues of child development that affect children as well as their families. Tadawul collaborated with UN Women, advancing the private sector's commitment to the Women's Empowerment Principles of the Global Compact. Additionally, the United Nations partnered with the King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity, facilitated by UNICEF, to promote creativity in science and technology among young people.

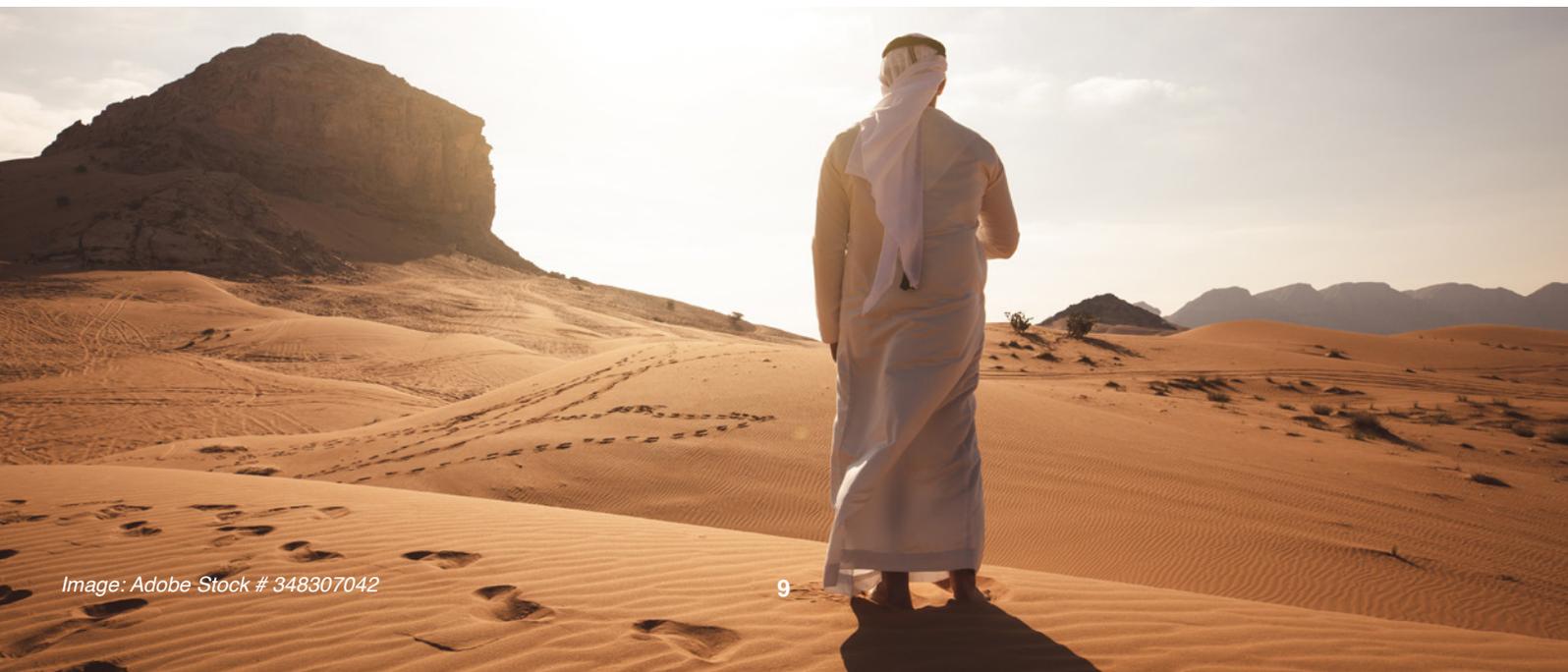
Over the past year, UNDP collaborated with the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue and developed a national cohesion index. Additionally, by creating an index, UNDP partnered with the Saudi Energy Efficiency Center to expand policies to improve energy efficiency. The National Family and Safety Programme was a significant partner to several United Nations entities, including ESCWA,

UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UNODC, to combat gender-based violence.

The UN Resident Coordinator's Office and UNDP partnered with Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD) to undertake research on the potential for using Awqaf as a vehicle for sustainable financing for Vision 2030 and the SDGs.

The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center extensively cooperated with UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO, and was one of their largest donors for relief efforts in Yemen. Special recognition goes to the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center, which, since its establishment in 2015, has generously donated more than \$53 million to UNHCR relief efforts outside the country.

With assistance from the Office of the Resident Coordinator, IOM led the efforts to establish the national United Nations Network on Migration (UNNM) to coordinate system-wide support by the United Nations Saudi Arabia on migration and migrants issues. Furthermore, UNNM initiated a strong partnership with the Saudi Food Bank to promote food assistance to vulnerable and harder-to-reach communities during the particularly challenging period of confinement and restricted mobility due to COVID-19. IOM, as coordinator and secretariat of UNNM, also promoted increased engagement with migrant-sending countries, notably through established national United Nations networks to improve the exchange of information and best practices. 2020 was a year full of meaningful partnerships, and the United Nations Saudi Arabia looks forward to strengthening already existing relationships and forging new ones in 2021.



CHAPTER ONE





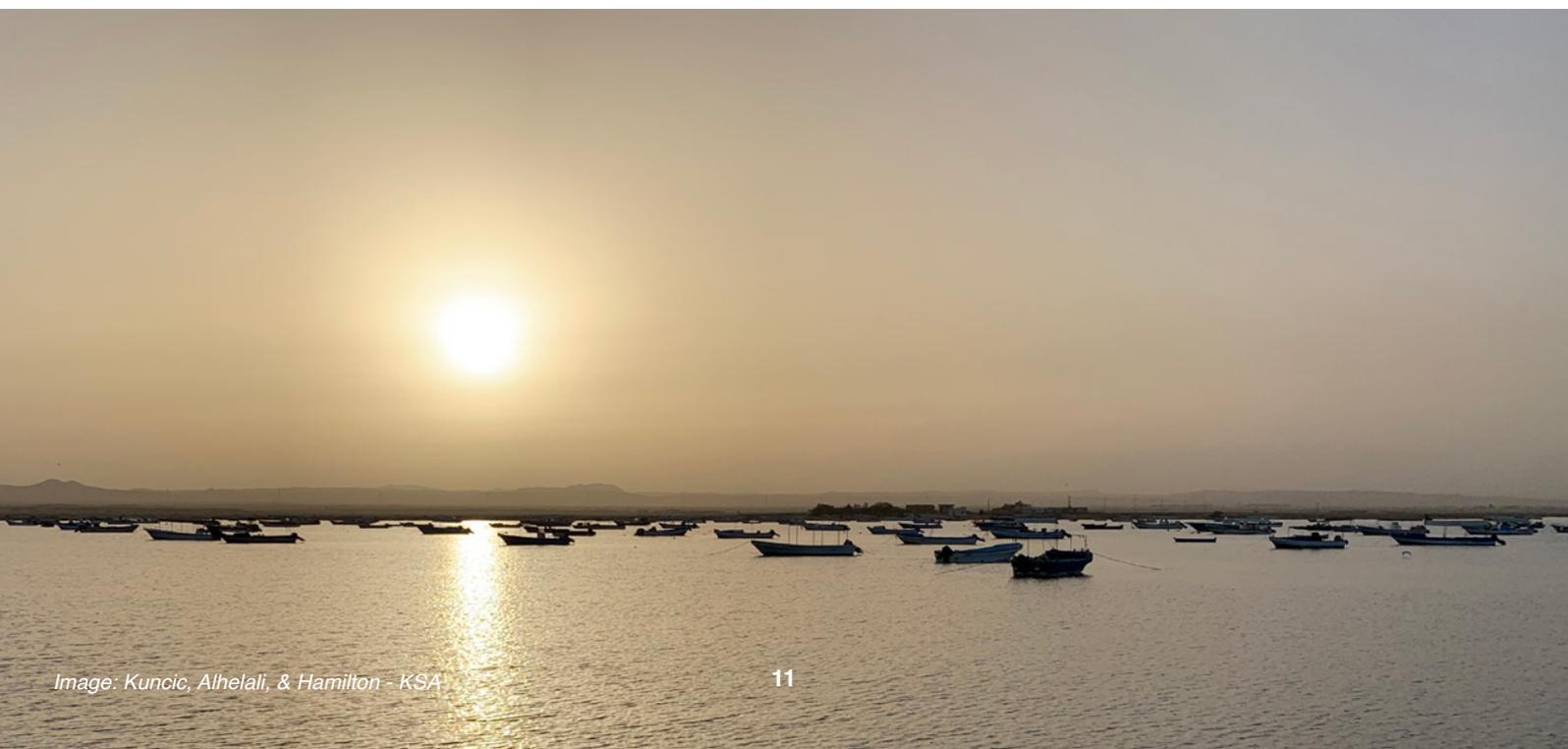
More than 70% of the labour force in the KSA are migrant workers, who were severely impacted by the concomitance of the oil crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. The United Nations Network on Migration (UNNM) in the country has achieved meaningful progress since its establishment in April 2020 to respond to the emerging needs and challenges faced by the most vulnerable migrants in the country. A mapping report highlighting key activities and projects on migration implemented by United Nations agencies in the country constituted the basis to set up coordinated and comprehensive support by the United Nations regarding migration issues in the country. Through consultations with the diplomatic corps in the KSA representing major migrant-sending countries, civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, UNNM strived to identify the hardest-to-reach communities, their needs, and the challenges they faced. Through a strong partnership with the Saudi Food Bank, the Network was able to mobilize food support to these communities during the particularly challenging period of confinement and mobility restrictions due to COVID-19. Furthermore, UNNM in the KSA consulted with UNNM offices in migrant-sending countries to exchange information and best practices.

The Government also achieved significant strides in enhancing migration governance in the country and adopted new policies and regulations lifting significant labour restrictions on migrant workers. These new policies aim to improve the protection of workers and reduce their vulnerabilities to abuse and exploitation. In addition, these reforms seek to enhance the labour

market's flexibility to face future shocks, in line with the KSA's Vision 2030. The Government is also actively engaged in the implementation, follow-up, and review of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), with the nomination of an official migration focal point in charge of providing national inputs and contributions to the regional review conference in the Arab region and the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF).

The Saudi Government employed exemplary mitigation methods to contain the spread of COVID-19 with a range of timely and well-developed measures and will be preparing itself for the recovery phase from the pandemic in the months to come. Despite the commendable Government response, the scale of the COVID-19 pandemic has generated socio-economic disruptions in the country and beyond. It has affected every sector of the economy and every aspect of life, with some groups such as temporary contractual workers in the country being significantly affected. Due to the pandemic, the Government dedicated an additional \$12.5 billion to the fight against COVID-19. The Government also decided to provide all COVID-19 healthcare services for free, even for those with irregular residency status. These actions helped curtail the spread of infections.

It is unclear at this time, due to the lack of updated data, how COVID-19 will impact Vision 2030, Agenda 2030, and the fulfillment of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The United Nations Saudi Arabia believes that 2020 has shown how the country can build back better and encouraged it to do so.



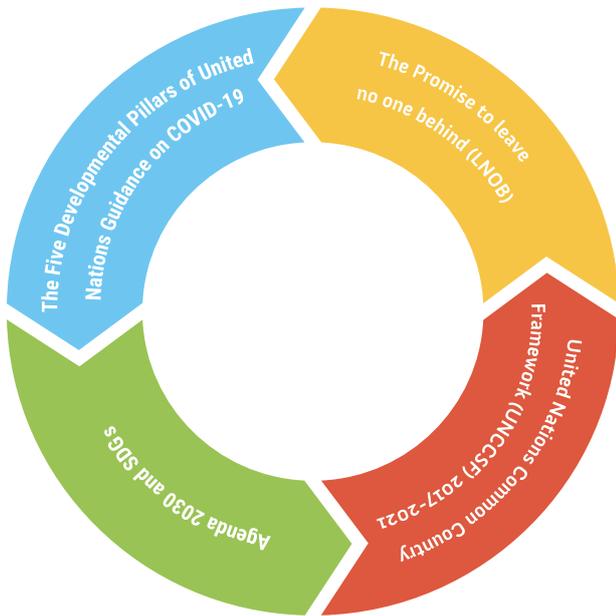


CHAPTER TWO



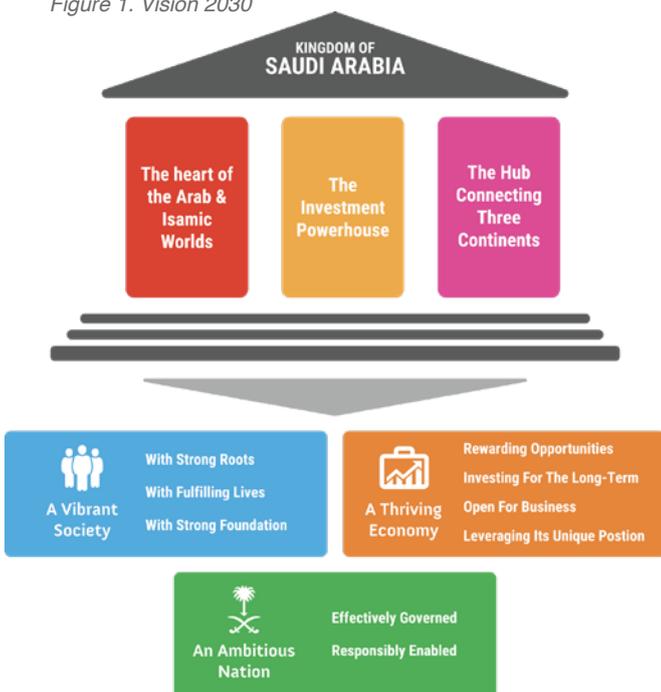


2.1 Overview of Cooperation Framework Results



Four broad frameworks prioritized and organized the United Nations’ strategy and activities in the KSA in 2020. They are the Saudi Vision 2030 (Figure 1), Agenda 2030 and SDGs, the United Nations’ Common Country Strategic Framework (UNCCSF) 2017-2021, the five developmental pillars of United Nations guidance on COVID-19, and the promise to leave no one behind (LNOB), all underpinned by a strong commitment to the cross-cutting issues of human rights, gender equality, women’s empowerment, and others.

Figure 1. Vision 2030



The United Nations Saudi Arabia has prioritized activities and programmes that advance the collaboration and mutual fulfillment of SDGs, the Agenda 2030, and the country’s Vision 2030. Some activities worth highlighting were UNNM; various partnerships between the United Nations and organizations within the country; Saudization initiatives, under which Saudi companies are required to fill a certain quota of their workforce with Saudi nationals; COVID-19 mitigation strategies; and fostering resilient Saudi businesses, to name a few. The United Nations Saudi Arabia is committed to supporting the advancement of all three pillars of its Vision 2030, namely, a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation. There are substantial overlaps and common interests between the SDGs and Vision 2030.

The Group of Twenty (G20)

The Group of Twenty (G20) is an international forum comprising the Governments and central banks from 19 nations and the European Union. The scope of the forum is to foster policy discussion towards global financial stability. G20 members make up approximately 90 percent of the gross world product, approximately 80 percent of the world’s trade, and almost 70 percent of the world’s population. In 2020, the KSA held the presidency and hosted the 15th meeting of the G20. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the KSA had to scale back their in-person portion of the forum and hosted it virtually to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The virtual event was held during 21-22 November 2020. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided an expert advisor to the G20 Secretariat while UNCT members provided technical inputs to several specialized groups, such as the C20 on civil society, the U20 on urban, Y20 on youth, and the T20 on think tanks, and the W20 on women.

Leaving No One Behind

As a response to the current pandemic, LNOB efforts in the KSA include free COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccines, when available. Further LNOB efforts include information sharing, designing media campaigns targeted to reach migrants irrespective of their status, creating multi-language materials, and

disseminating them on various media channels. Such strategies are designed to combat the concerns of non-Arabic-speaking and residents with irregular legal status that they are discriminated against based on their citizenship and legal status. The KSA has one of the highest rates of temporary contractual workers worldwide, over 70% of the labour force. To tap into the opportunities, the United Nations has shown continued support to efforts by the Government to empower temporary contractual workers. In particular, the United Nations has assisted the Government in combating human trafficking, setting up a fair and equitable labour market, expanding migrants' rights, and enhancing the socio-economic well-being of migrants and their families, with particular focus on the most vulnerable of migrants, who were strongly affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

UNNM in the KSA was established in April 2020 to ensure coordinated support by the United Nations to the Government in the implementation, follow-up, and review of GCM. In addition to other efforts, the United Nations implemented a project to support the Government in strengthening and operationalizing its counter-trafficking system, including training and capacity-building activities for governmental and non-governmental actors. Assessments are

made to identify gaps in protection and assistance services to potential victims of trafficking (PVoTs) and victims of trafficking (VoTs). Furthermore, the United Nations Saudi Arabia initiated the Youth Leadership Programme, which offers training to civil society organizations (CSOs) for youth on human rights principles and strengthens CSO engagement with United Nations mechanisms. The United Nations supported the country in protecting, safeguarding, and promoting its cultural and natural heritage and creativity. It prioritized a series of technical orientations and training on violence prevention, child protection, and other topics supporting the National Family Safety Programme, a leading initiative tasked with research and service provision in the KSA. In the past year, the country made many positive changes to the legal framework and legislation related to the employment of women. With support from the United Nations, it drafted a national equality policy and a national child labour policy and provided capacity-building to tripartite constituents, including workers' committees. The UNCT submitted a detailed COVID-19 socio-economic response plan to the Government consisting of 67 existing and newly proposed activities, together with an in-depth COVID-19 impact analysis report. The following Table 1 is taken from the Information Management System (IMS) Survey 2020, UNCT Coordination and Programmatic Areas, and indicates which type of support is provided for the advancement of SDGs in the KSA.



	Normative Support	Policy Advice & Thought Leadership	Data Collection & Analysis	Capacity Development & Technical Assistance	Convening & Partnerships	Communications, Advocacy & Knowledge-Sharing	Direct Support & Service Delivery	Support Functions	Coordination
SDG 1					●		●		●
SDG 2		●	●	●	●	●	●		●
SDG 3		●			●	●	●		●
SDG 4	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
SDG 5	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
SDG 6									
SDG 7									
SDG 8	●	●	●	●					
SDG 9									
SDG 10	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
SDG 11	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
SDG 12									
SDG 13									
SDG 14		●	●	●		●			
SDG 15		●	●	●		●			
SDG 16	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
SDG 17	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Table 1. Types of Support for the Advancement of SDGs in the KSA

Strategic Framework Priority Areas



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Knowledge-based Equitable and Sustainable Economic Development, Underpinned by Technology, Innovation, and Improved Infrastructure



SOCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION

Effective and Equitable Delivery of Social Services and Education for Improved Quality of Life



PUBLIC SECTOR

Equitable, Accountable, Effective, and Efficient Public Sector



RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Sustainable Natural and Cultural Resources Management, Use, and Preservation



Figure 2. Arab SDG Monitor Target Tracker for the KSA

Figure 2 shows the current status of the Arab SDG Monitor target tracker for the KSA. The infographic displays the status of each of the 17 SDGs, and the status of the 169 targets is reflected through different colours. Thirty-two targets are on track, twenty-four are in progress, and nine of the remaining targets are off-track of the reported targets in the Agenda 2030. No data for the KSA is available on more than 60 percent of targets, namely, 104 targets, which could impede retracking and the ultimate achievement of

the Agenda 2030. SDG 3 is the most on-track Goal, with 61.5 percent of its targets projected to meet the Agenda 2030, and SDG 16 was the least on-track Goal, with 8.3 percent of its targets projected to meet Agenda 2030. SDG 8 was most off-track, with 25 percent of its targets projected not to meet the Agenda 2030. It must be noted, however, that, due to the lack of data on 16 SDGs and their targets, misprojections might occur when assessing the performance of the KSA towards achieving the Agenda 2030.

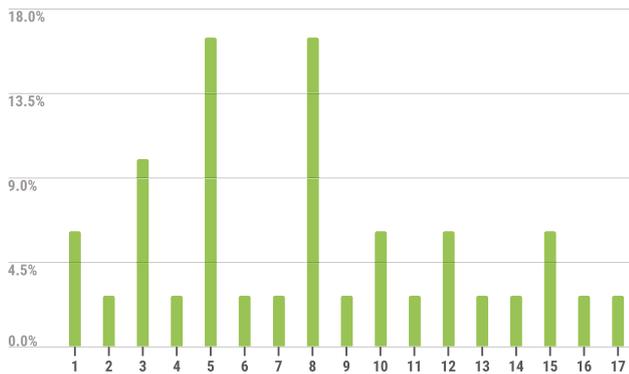


Figure 3. SDGs including SFPAs 1 (Economic Development)

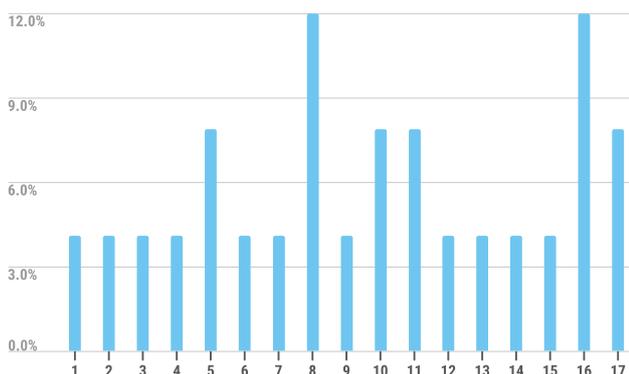


Figure 4. SDGs including SFPAs 3 (Social Services & Education)

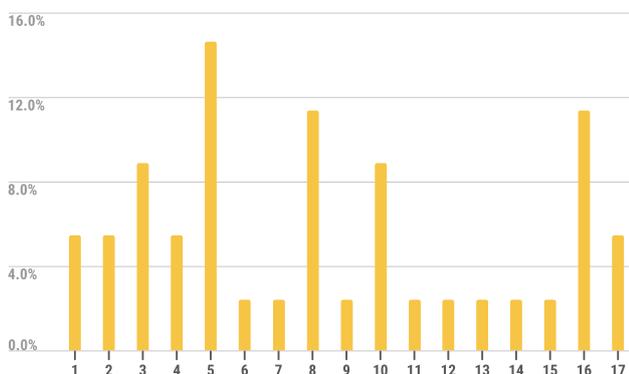


Figure 5. SDGs including SFPAs 2 (Public Sector)

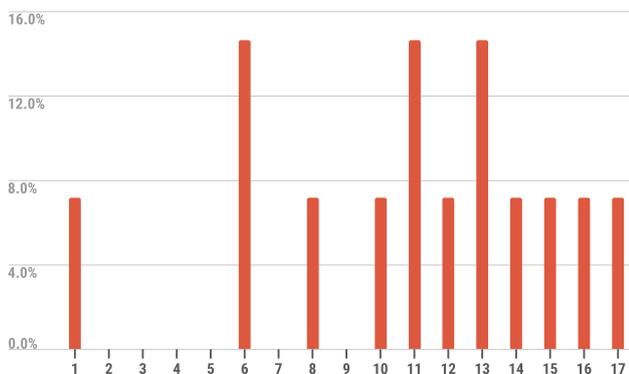


Figure 6. SDGs including SFPAs 4 (Resource Management)

Figures 3 to 6 were generated on the basis of a self-reported questionnaire on the linkage of the four Strategic Framework Priority Areas (SFPAs) to the SDGs, which was distributed to UNCT members in the KSA and answered by thirteen members reflecting on the past year. The results show that SFPAs 1 (economic development) was linked to all 17 SDGs and mostly targeted SDGs 5 and 8. SFPAs 2 (social services and education) was linked to all SDGs and mostly targeted SDGs 8 and 16. SFPAs 3 (public sector) was linked to all SDGs and mostly targeted SDGs 5 and 16. SFPAs 4 (resource management) was linked to most SDGs, except for SDGs 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 9, and mostly targeted SDGs 6, 11, and 13.

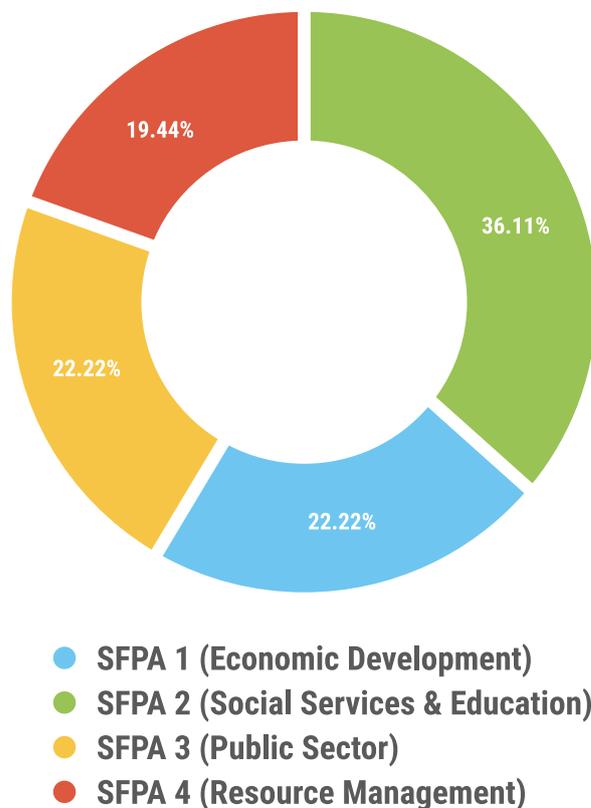


Figure 7. SFPAs Activities of UNCT Members

Figure 7 illustrates the activities carried out by 15 UNCT members under each SFPA during 2020. It demonstrates that these activities were close to being evenly distributed across the four priority areas.



2.2 Cooperation Framework Priorities, Outcomes, and Outputs

United Nations Common Country Strategic Framework

UNCT developed UNCCSF 2017-2021 and structured it into four priority areas based on a comprehensive common country analysis and national demand and validated with national partners.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Knowledge-based Equitable and Sustainable Economic Development, Underpinned by Technology, Innovation, and Improved Infrastructure

In 2020, the United Nations implemented various programmes to advance equitable and sustainable economic development in the KSA through innovations and improved infrastructure. Led by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations improved rural infrastructure by establishing terrace farms and rain-water collection technologies, such as cisterns, focusing these investments in the six hilly districts of the country. The United Nations established protected geographical indicators (PGIs) to facilitate the identification of the origin of agricultural products, in particular in the coffee and mango producing subsectors. Under the technical cooperation agreement with the Saudi Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) is supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Agricultural Rural Development Programme (2019-2025). The programme focuses on nine components, covering commodities, rain-fed cereals, subtropical fruits,

rose, fisheries, coffee Arabica, beekeeping and honey, and livestock, in addition to managing natural resources and adding value from smallholdings and rural activities.

A major component for achieving the SDGs is to improve the knowledge-sharing infrastructure in the KSA. The United Nations improved the tracking of SDGs through the Arab SDG Gateway established by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The profile for the KSA provides policymakers, partners, and other stakeholders with vital data to inform their policies and ensure that programmes target specific development gaps. ESCWA's Data Portal provides access to all available data on social, economic, and environmental indicators. In partnership with the National Competitiveness Center, UNCT and ESCWA supported an extension of registration for businesses, using the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities.

The foundation of equitable and sustainable economic development is grounded in human rights, particularly gender equality. Through UN Women, the United Nations Saudi Arabia collaborated with Tadawul, the national stock exchange, to celebrate Women's International Day. Tadawul led the celebration to showcase its commitment to having more women in decision-making positions. The celebration also witnessed seven companies signing the Women Empowerment Principles and joining the global journey of chief executive officers to promote gender equality and women's empowerment within their companies. The signing of these Principles will pave the way for more businesses in the KSA to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Additional efforts to advance gender equality in the KSA were made by supporting Women 20 (W20) as a technical partner, with a focus on defining key recommendations for G20 Heads of State and Ministers of Finance. The recommendations provide guidance towards ensuring COVID-19 response and recovery plans are gender responsive, including in macro-economic policy- and decision-making. The

W20 presented the recommendations to G20 leaders, diplomats, Ministers of Finance and Central Bank Governors. This work contributed to the inclusion of key priorities for the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment in the final Communiqué' of the G20 leaders at the end of the G20 Riyadh Summit in November 2020. The Communiqué' recognizes the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women. It underscores the need to take action to ensure the pandemic does not widen gender inequalities. The Communiqué' further highlights the importance of advancing women's digital financial inclusion, of addressing the unequal distribution of unpaid and care responsibilities, and of protecting and promoting decent jobs for women. Taking action towards advancing women and girls empowerment is recognized as central to G20 priorities, and women are recognized as key drivers of economic growth. Over the past year, the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat) helped the Ministry of Housing revise and update the housing development programme, focusing on governance, legal issues, and site locations from an integrated angle. UN-Habitat also supported the engagement group Urban20 (U20), and the U20 Communiqué mentioned the knowledge-based economy and

circular and carbon-neutral economies as key drivers of urban development.

In 2020, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assisted the KSA in areas of energy efficiency and improvements in related infrastructure, which helped create a new economic niche and employment opportunities. UNDP also cooperated with the General Authority for Statistics, which addressed recommendations made in the second phase of the Third Progress Report of the G20 Data Gaps Initiative, which resulted in improved statistics on foreign investment and agricultural activities.



SOCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION

Effective and Equitable Delivery of Social Services and Education for Improved Quality of Life

In 2020, the United Nations made considerable efforts to improve the quality of life by supporting effective and equitable delivery of social services and education. One such initiative was led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which cooperated with the Ministry of Education and the Board of Directors of the National E-Learning Center of the KSA. A methodology was developed to evaluate the impact of distance and e-learning on the progress of students and learning outcomes, comparing data from before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This evaluation was an integral part of measuring successes and areas of improvement for the rapid adaptation of learning and teaching methods to the special requirements brought about by the pandemic both at the national and global levels.

The pandemic of 2020 and its social and economic repercussions called for the creation of new standards related to the new virus. The World Health Organization (WHO) took on this task to set definitions, identify means of transmission, elaborate response plans, and

ensure effective laboratory analysis, diagnosis criteria, and treatment protocols. Led by WHO, the United Nations shared with the KSA the latest knowledge and policies related to the pandemic through extensive virtual training and webinars. All aspects pertaining to COVID-19 were covered, including the reporting of cases, surveillance and epidemic response, prevention, and control of infections, laboratory testing, mental and psychological health, treatment guidelines and protocols, including during pregnancy, maintaining essential health services, food security, and nutrition, while continuing regular programmatic activities to the extent possible under COVID-19 circumstances. One initiative that could not be continued during the pandemic was the Healthy Cities Programme because the field visits needed for the assessment and certification of healthy cities could not be carried out. Instead, a novel concept was designed to develop criteria for a healthy universities initiative, and Princess Nora University qualified for this award. The University's teaching hospital was certified as a health-promoting hospital. The COVID-19 pandemic was taken as a suitable occasion to boost anti-smoking campaigns, pointing out the higher risks of smokers and increased COVID-19 transmission by smoking water pipes, which led to the closure of smoking lounges; and tobacco cessation clinics, which were inaccessible during the curfew, started providing their services virtually. Yet, WHO continued to prioritize the analysis of data on road traffic accidents, focusing on the hours during curfew to identify possible impacts that could benefit policymaking.

A global concern throughout 2020 and related to the pandemic was the impact social distancing and increased time spent at home would have on mental health and domestic violence, and there was evidence that COVID-19 was affecting women disproportionately.

The United Nations Saudi Arabia collaborated with the National Family and Safety Programme. With the aim of sharing good international practices,

standards, and principles governing the delivery of services for women survivors of violence, UN Women provided training on the Essential Services Package, highlighting practical examples of its implementation, including in the region. The webinar was attended by nearly 400 participants and featured two case studies from Egypt and Tunisia, which illustrated practical examples of implementation. Another webinar focused on administrative data and provided the example of a recently developed intersectoral database supported by UN Women. The General Authority of Statistics in the KSA led the discussions, and more than 390 participants attended. Additionally, a joint United Nations webinar was held in the KSA on establishing and adapting a hotline providing effective service in particular to women and children during the COVID-19 pandemic. The lessons learned by Morocco on building the capacity of hotline workers were among the main contributions to the webinar. These training activities strengthened collaboration between the United Nations and the National Family and Safety Programme, providing a strong foundation to address violence against women in the coming year.





PUBLIC SECTOR

**Equitable, Accountable,
Effective, and Efficient
Public Sector**

During 2020, the United Nations focused a substantial portion of its resources on improving the public sector in the KSA, notably prioritizing the improvement of its equity, accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency. It conducted capacity-development activities for the members of the National Committee on Combating Human Trafficking (NCCHT), led by UNODC, which resulted in the launch of a national referral mechanism for the victims of human trafficking. Agencies benefitting from these capacity-development programmes included judicial authorities (public prosecution and judiciary), security authorities (police stations, border posts, security centres, criminal investigations, field patrols, and specialized committees), the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, the Ministry of Health (health centres, emergency services, and hospitals), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

international organizations (via official channels in the country), the Ministry of Media (audio-visual media), the Saudi Bar Association, and charitable and civil associations. In close collaboration with Naif Arab University for Security Sciences, the Office for the Gulf Cooperation Council Region (OGCCR) delivered a two-week training on criminal intelligence analysis based on Anacapa methods. UN-Habitat delivered several trainings for officials of the Ministry of Housing (development housing) with a strong focus on housing as one of the human rights in the KSA.

Human rights are crucial to assuring an equitable, accountable, effective, and efficient public sector, which can support the prevention of abuse. In this regard, the United Nations Saudi Arabia promoted international human rights standards and strengthened practices of journalists' and civil society practices to promote accountability among public services, spearheaded by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), for instance, is working towards the advancement of SFP 3 in the country. Implementing a human-rights-centred approach, and as part of UNNM, UNFPA is establishing a legal framework for expatriates working under temporary contracts while building the capacities of local stakeholders so they can fulfill their roles as part of a holistic approach.

Partnering with the National Family Safety Programme in the KSA, and with the assistance of ESCWA, the United Nations was actively involved in the fight against domestic violence, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the provision of services for the victims thereof, following a holistic and survivor-centred approach. Support was provided to the Family Affairs Council, and a presentation was made at the third virtual forum of the Family Affairs Council on the topic of family in times of crisis.



RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

**Sustainable Natural and
Cultural Resources
Management, Use, and
Preservation**

The United Nations is committed to the sustainable preservation, use, and management of natural and cultural resources in the KSA. The KSA is devoting considerable efforts and resources to transitioning its economy beyond oil, a process that is slow and not necessarily painless for its citizens. Starting in 2019 and until November 2020, and in line with Vision 2030 and Agenda 2030, the UN in the KSA, primarily through UNEP, supported the Environment Stream under the G20 from 2019 to November 2020. UNEP supported two Saudi-lead initiatives: one on land restoration and habitat loss, in collaboration with FAO and UNCCD and another one on coral reefs preservation, which was launched during the G20 summit. The USD 25 million strategic cooperation agreement between UNEP and the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture came into effect in May 2020 and the implementation of the “Saudi Environment Sustainability Programme - SESP” started. The programme aims to support the ambitious environmental governance reform agenda, to implement the national environment strategy and to strengthen institutional capacities and legal frameworks to achieve internationally agreed environmental goals, including the 2030 Agenda. Key priority areas of support to the Kingdom under the SESP include, but are not limited to climate action, biodiversity and ecosystems services, chemicals and waste management, air pollution, and environmental performance monitoring. Under the Compliance Assistance Programme of the Ozone, UNEP supported Saudi Arabia to prepare and implement a Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs)

phase-out management plan. UNEP provided policy and technical assistance to facilitate the ratification of the Kigali Amendment on HCFCs phase down under the Montreal Protocol and thus promoted the use of long-term climate friendly measures in Saudi Arabia. A national ozone unit has been established in Saudi Arabia making the Kingdom fully compliant with its obligation under the Montreal Protocol.

Water scarcity has always been a major challenge for the KSA. As part of a regional study headed by ESCWA, the United Nations analysed the progress of the country towards water-related SDGs. The study highlighted ways to deal with the current and projected water scarcity at both the regional and national levels by developing a set of scenarios and linking SDGs and their targets with regional and national water strategies and action plans. The study also analysed how water-related SDG targets and indicators guide policy measures that tackle water challenges in the country. Additionally, the United Nations Saudi Arabia, led by UNDP, supported the G20 position paper on Fostering Sustainable and Resilient Water System Globally, pointing out the global and regional relevance of this issue. As previously mentioned, a long-term partnership with the Saudi Energy Efficiency Center contributed significantly to positive results in the development of the national energy sector.

In January 2020, UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture signed a cooperation framework agreement worth U\$ 25 million to support and promote culture and accelerate progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.



Image: UN75 Event - Saudi Influencers



COVID-19 Analysis and Mitigation

When the COVID-19 pandemic started in early 2020, few people predicted the extent to which COVID-19 would impact the world. Among the main challenges facing the KSA, similar to the rest of the world, was to find a balance between reacting to the immediate needs caused by the pandemic, including extreme caution, and pursuing the goals established by the United Nations Saudi Arabia, which fall under the following five concepts: the Saudi Vision 2030, Agenda 2030 and SDGs, UNCCSF 2017-2021, the five pillars of the United Nations Roadmap for the COVID-19 Recovery, and the LNOB promise. Synthesizing these elements and balancing the country's prudence and need for immediate responses, UNCT published two significant reports: the United Nations COVID-19 Capacity Brief, which was released in July 2020; and the Diagnostics Paper on the Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 in the KSA and How to Build Back Better, released in December as result of a partnership between UNDP and Prince Sultan University. Both reports made valuable contributions to analysis and mitigation of COVID-19 in the KSA. UNFPA in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), for example, provided technical assistance through the Saudi Family Forum, and, following a request from the Family Affairs Council, the UNFPA Global Youth Advisory Panel delivered key messages and a statement through the Forum.

United Nations COVID-19 Capacity Brief

The overall objective of the United Nations COVID-19 Capacity Brief is to propose to the Saudi Government a set of actions complementing already existing Government efforts. The Capacity Brief contains a collation of 67 ongoing activities and projects which could accelerate Government responses to COVID-19 and new activities aimed at COVID-19 mitigation. Drawing on the United Nations Development System Framework for the Immediate Socio-economic Response to COVID-19, the Capacity Brief lists UNCT activities related to COVID-19, structured around the SDGs and the five developmental pillars that make up the framework. Under the guidance of the United Nations Secretary-General and the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, the United Nations Saudi Arabia is determined to mitigate suffering by emphasizing the interconnectivity between health, environmental,

social, and economic issues, in particular for vulnerable groups, such as women, children, migrant workers, and those working in the informal market without social or unemployment welfare, who are likely to feel implications of COVID-19 the strongest. Reporting and information management on COVID-19 was among the major themes of the Capacity Brief.

COVID-19 Reporting and Information Management

As a result of the Capacity Brief, UNCT elaborated a more focused strategy for its activities in the context of COVID-19, resulting in the expansion of monitoring and evaluation of COVID-19-related metrics in the country. For instance, UNDP provided programmatic support to the General Authority for Statistics during the second and third quarters of 2020 to enable the release of preliminary estimates of economic activities ahead of the official national accounts, which is expected to facilitate better-informed decision- and policymaking with regard to COVID-19. UNHCR, as part of its preparedness and response interventions, monitored and assessed the impacts of the current pandemic on specific and vulnerable groups. UNHCR disseminated information to persons of concern and utilized a referral system that helped 50 vulnerable persons receive critical and life-saving medical treatment during 2020. Additionally, the United Nations Saudi Arabia published COVID-19 reports on a regular basis, first weekly, and later, when daily new cases reached single digits, monthly. Reporting related to COVID-19 improved considerably during the second and third quarters of 2020.



Image: UNDP

The following figures are taken from the COVID-19 monthly report for December 2020. Figure 8 provides basic COVID-19 data for 2020, including an annual average of 1,197 new cases per day. Figure 9 points out a peak of 4,919 new cases on June 18, 2020, and a substantial decline in the number of new cases in the fourth quarter, which is owed to swift and effective COVID-19 mitigation strategies.



Figure 8. General Data for the KSA on COVID-19, in 2020

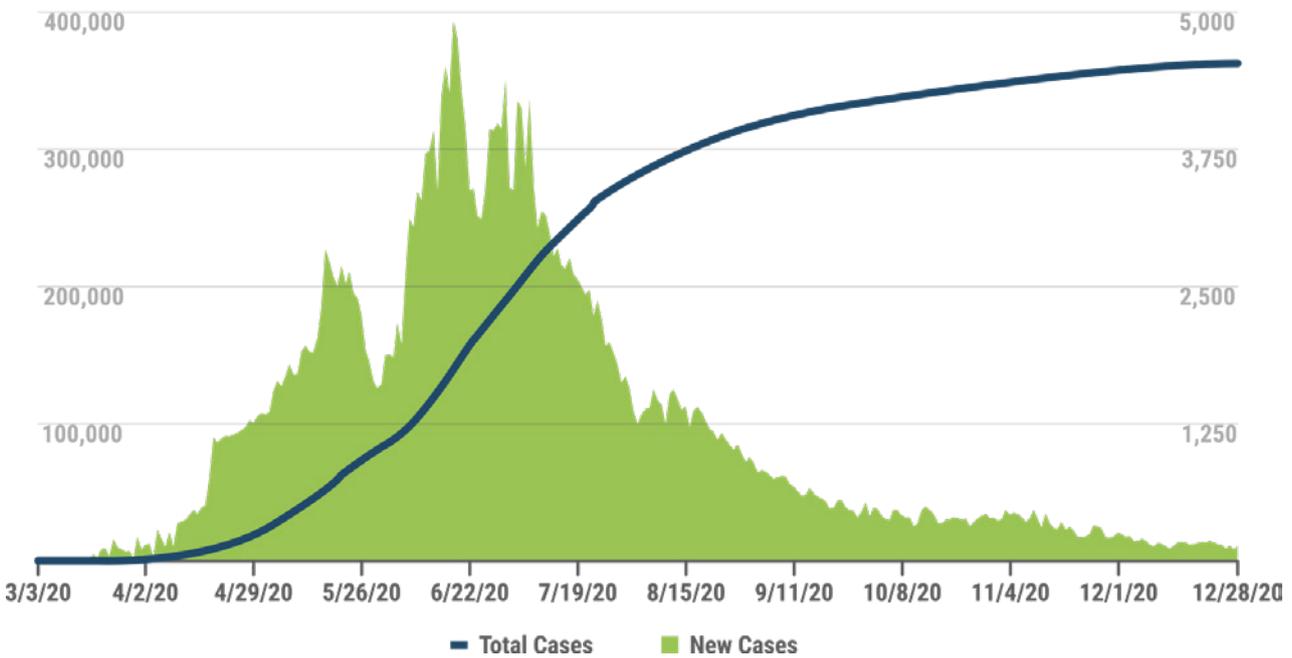


Figure 9. Total Versus New COVID-19 Cases in Saudi Arabia, 2020

Diagnosics Paper on the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19

The Diagnostics Paper on the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 and How to Build Back Better in the KSA summarizes the economic and social landscape in the country with a focus on the potential impact of COVID-19 and the oil-price crisis, utilizing the LNOB lens, and further substantiates the non-exhaustive set of possible support and policy recommendations by the United Nations, including the ones already outlined in the COVID-19 Capacity Brief. The Diagnostics Paper evaluated the rapid spread of COVID-19 across the world, how it disrupted all lives and livelihoods in communities globally, creating particular challenges for vulnerable people, and

points out the far-reaching impacts on the economy and the well-being of people. The Paper is structured into the following three parts: first, it establishes the pre-crisis profile of the KSA, providing a baseline on the macroeconomic and social structure; second, it aims to quantify the size of the shock of both oil crisis and pandemic to the economy and critical social and economic factors; and third, it frames the identified gaps and potential improvements in the five developmental pillars as laid down by the United Nations Framework. The Diagnostics Paper also lists relevant stakeholders who provide the most comprehensive and targeted responses to make sure that no one is left behind. This increases Government performance and efficiency and provides measures that can make the Government more adaptive and proactive in case of possible future shocks.



2.3 Support to Partnerships and Financing the 2030 Agenda

It is a priority of the United Nations Saudi Arabia to support and cultivate partnerships in the country. In 2015, all United Nations member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the 17 SDGs. SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals, is the basis for more robust and broader partnerships. In 2020, the great strides made with respect to SDG 17 were among the main achievements. Among those, the United Nations Saudi Arabia established a partnerships working group engaging with the public and private sectors. The group advocated knowledge-sharing, north-south and south-south cooperation, and a richer collaboration between public and private organizations. Over the past year, the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office supported the UNCT to work together towards achieving Saudi Vision 2030 and the 17 SDGs, which are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As preparations begin for a new SDG Cooperation Framework for 2022-2026, the Office of the Resident Coordinator is exploring opportunities and modalities to accelerate progress and enhance contribution by the United Nations in this regard. It is worth noting here that the KSA is a high-income country, which finances all United Nations activities in its territory. Moreover, the United Nations partnered with the embassies of the major migrant-sending countries on migrant-related issues, organized meetings with the diplomatic community, and shared monthly overviews of the socio-economic situation in the country.

In 2020, in addition to the efforts to combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic through the LNOB lens, UNCT efforts focused on two major themes, namely, human rights and migrant labour. These two areas are interlinked and historically have shown room for growth. The United Nations Saudi Arabia partnered with the Saudi Human Rights Commission (SHRC), involving, among others, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), OHCHR, and UNODC. One such partnership between the United Nations and SHRC, led by IOM through its Corporate Responsibility in Eliminating Slavery and Trafficking (CREST) initiative, supported the Government in strengthening mechanisms to combat trafficking in persons. The three main areas of intervention with SHRC were protection, prevention, and partnership, through building the capacity and knowledge of frontline workers and strengthening the system. As a new labour mobility component, the International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) is made available

for recruitment agencies and interested employers. Employers will be equipped with capacity-building information to address human rights risks in their operations and supply chains. In February 2020, UNODC OGCCR signed a cooperation agreement with SHRC and NCCHT, creating a partnership for the implementation of a two-year capacity-building project on supporting and strengthening national capacities to effectively prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons in accordance with international standards and best practices.

As part of its efforts to advance equality and non-discrimination and to support inclusive growth and productive employment for all, the United Nations Saudi Arabia, led by the International Labour Organization (ILO), worked closely with workers' and employers' organizations and the Government to ensure that all relevant parties are included in the design of policies that affect them. ILO also partnered with King Abdulaziz University to conduct a study on child labour and provide the evidence needed to develop policies aimed at ending child labour and all other forms of abuse against children. Once such initiatives on equality and child labour result in a sound policy framework with clear objectives and policy actions, this will help rationalize Government expenditures considerably on.

The KSA's Migration Network also provided policy support and technical guidance, and recommendations to the Government in line with its efforts to establish temporary accommodation facilities for migrant workers to decongest labour accommodations and camps during the COVID-19 pandemic. This step-by-step protocol document presented concrete checklists and acceptable practices based on international camp management guidelines. Furthermore, under the framework of UNNM, IOM led efforts for a joint proposal aimed at addressing the situation in the detention and transit centres and enhancing the Government's capacity to manage migration in a rights-based migrant-centred manner.

The establishment of UNNM was a significant advance towards forming strong and revitalized partnerships for sustainable development. It aims to ensure coordinated and comprehensive support by UNCT to the Government to improve migration governance and, particularly, implementation, follow-up, and review



of GCM. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNNM in the KSA led coordination meetings with UNNM offices in major migrant-sending countries, such as Bangladesh and Ethiopia, to promote the exchange of information and support.

UNNM in the KSA seeks to tailor its support to the Government towards mainstreaming migration in its efforts to achieve the SDGs, particularly SDG 10.7, to facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework vision, and Saudi Vision 2030. Finally, UNNM seeks to organize meetings to give stakeholders in the KSA an overview of the recent developments on migration governance at the global, regional, and national levels. These initiatives will further contribute to addressing risks associated with migrant workers.

UN Women worked with UN organizations and national partners towards advancing the implementation of SDG 5. Through collaborating with ESCWA, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNODC, UN Women provided technical support to the roll-out of training prioritized under the National Family and Safety Programme, contributing to SDG target 5.2, aiming at eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private spheres. Knowledge on international standards for service delivery, data collection and south-south exchanges were strengthened through this collaboration. UN Women's collaboration with Tadawul, the Saudi Stock Exchange, contributed to advancing visibility for women's participation and leadership, particularly in the private sector and on the job market. The collaboration with Tadawul led to seven companies listed with the Saudi Stock Exchange signing up to the Women's Empowerment Principles, which paves the way for the implementation of policies and programmes promoting women's leadership and decent employment opportunities, gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. The CEO's of these seven companies join the journey of global CEO's in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment within their companies. The signing of

the Principles also sets the stage for more businesses in KSA to follow suit, contributing to the achievement of national priorities related to advancing women's labour force participation as set out in the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

UNDP helped develop a tourism curriculum for schools, conducted several capacity-development activities, and developed the e-tourism visa system. The United Nations Saudi Arabia facilitated partnerships and synergies that were essential in attaining these results in support of Vision 2030 on improving cities. It also contributed to developing the National Spatial Strategy white paper in 2020 by providing experts to the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs. The white paper elaborated 28 policies that outlined contributions to Vision 2030 and integrated SDGs, human rights, and climate change into spatial planning. In support of a healthier society, the United Nations Saudi Arabia helped formulate and implement the second and third strategic plan of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority, including setting up new e-systems, working towards international certification, and building national capacities. Led by UNDP, the United Nations helped establish the Saudi Energy Efficiency Center and support implementing the Saudi Energy Efficiency Programme. Studies conducted by UNDP and its partners improved Government reporting and became drivers that influenced strategies and policies. These data improvements have positively affected reporting and decisions for future strategies and policies.

Another meaningful partnership was forged between the United Nations Saudi Arabia and the Ministry of Culture, facilitated by UNESCO, with a focus on preserving the country's heritage during the next five years, and with King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) to explore the challenges and opportunities faced by the cultural and creative sector as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through UNODC OGCCR, the United Nations delivered more than ten training activities and reached out to more than 1000 officers from various agencies associated with NCCHT.



2.4 Results of the UN Working More and Better Together: UN Coherence, Effectiveness, and Efficiency

In 2020, reform efforts of the United Nations Development System in the country continued with positive results and benefits for UNCT, the Government, and partners. The Resident Coordinator continued to pursue a strategy of external engagement and internal coherence to promote a more effective and efficient presence of the United Nations in the country.

To distinguish the Resident Coordinator (RC) as separate from the Resident Representative, the RC has undertaken concerted efforts to reach out to key parts of the Government, along with relevant agencies of the UNCT, to ensure that the shift of the UN Development system is visible and recognized.

This was supported by efforts of the communications team of the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) to establish a well-branded One UN presence online and across multiple platforms, including its website, now in both Arabic and English, and on Twitter. The results of this effort were evident in the number of responses to the UN75 Survey, which were more than 6,500. The United Nations Communications Group, supported by the RCO communications officer, developed a much more structured approach to communications. Even though the capacity of the United Nations Communications Group is not extensive, it was able to promote a more coherent picture of the United Nations system.

The Resident Coordinator spearheaded initiatives to raise the profile of the United Nations system and add value to the work of the United Nations and its support to the Government. In 2020, the KSA held the G20 Presidency. While the interaction with the G20 Secretariat was primarily managed by the United Nations Secretariat and headquarters of United Nations agencies, the Resident Coordinator Office was essential in facilitating contact between engagement groups and United Nations agencies. UN-Habitat, for instance, participated strongly in U20, C20, and Y20.

The Resident Coordinator, in collaboration with the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD), an arm of the Islamic Development Bank, and the UNDP Country Office, initiated research on the use of Awqaf, an element of Islamic finance, to support the achievement of the SDGs and the KSA's

Vision 2030. The Research Advisory Committee comprised several influential Saudis and helped strengthen the United Nations' credibility on strategic and evidence-based support to policy development. The research provides valuable guidance on how the Awqaf endowment can be mobilized to provide sustainable financing for the SDGs up to and beyond 2030.

In anticipation of developing the new Cooperation Framework in 2021, the Resident Coordinator embarked on efforts to promote stronger engagement of the United Nations system with the Ministry of Economy and Planning centred on strengthening the partnership to promote SDGs. The outcome of this process is the potential creation of a Joint Steering Committee, comprising the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economy and Planning, and the United Nations, which will ensure that the Cooperation Framework remains strongly aligned with the Government's SDG priorities throughout the Framework's timeframe.

In February 2020, the Office of the Resident Coordinator in the KSA hosted a regional workshop for partnerships and development finance officers. The aegis for this workshop was the realization that the United Nations' ability to develop and foster partnerships was increasingly fundamental to its work in the country. The workshop was the starting point for developing and refining the partnership strategy for the RCO and UNCT. A partnership working group was created to guide the work of the United Nations on partnerships for SDGs, which is expected to link closely to the work of the Ministry of Economy and Planning on the sustainability of progress.

UNCT has been meeting monthly to promote broad engagement and ensure that all agencies are fully aware of the key priorities of the United Nations Saudi Arabia and the initiatives to help deliver results. The Resident Coordinator also instituted regular bilateral meetings with all heads of agencies to discuss topics of importance to each agency and to the Resident Coordinator. The 'Management and Accountability Framework,' developed by the UN Sustainable Development Group and adopted in 2019, and the 'Transitional Performance Appraisal System,' developed by the UN Development Coordination office in 2020, formed the basis for these discussions.

This pattern will form the basis for the 2022 work plans of UNCT, the Resident Coordinator, and the Resident Coordinator's Office.

As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic began to show, UNCT established the Crisis Management Team, which is co-chaired by the Resident Coordinator/Designated Official and the WHO representative/COVID-19 coordinator and includes all heads of agencies. This Team met weekly for the first few months, ensuring that all agencies were fully up to date on the latest developments. The meetings were reduced in frequency to match the release of new information and action needs of UNCT. UNCT also established the Socioeconomic Framework Task Force to oversee the preparation of the capacity brief and the diagnostics paper. UNCT also created an ad-hoc working group under the Crisis Management Team to establish the criteria of safe return to full operations.

In the early stages of the pandemic, it was evident that its impact on migrant workers would be more significant than on other segments of society due to their inherent vulnerabilities. With the support of IOM, the Resident Coordinator's Office established UNNM for the KSA, consisting of 14 agencies and one observer, to provide coordinated and coherent policy and technical support on migration issues. As the effects of COVID-19 increased, the work of UNNM was critical in providing technical advice to the Government and facilitating support to vulnerable migrant households.

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The coordination patterns established throughout the year, further enhanced by the collaborative work of the Socioeconomic Framework Task Force, were

beneficial to shaping the UNCT approach towards the ongoing Common Country Analysis and the UNCT Country Results Report and will be fundamental to the development of the UN Cooperation Framework 2022–2026.

The increase in effective coordination was also evident in the challenging work done by the Operations Management Team. As the KSA is not a typical operational environment for the United Nations, it was difficult to engage a broad spectrum of agencies to explore opportunities for effective and efficient modalities to support programme delivery. Despite the challenges, and drawing on support from the Regional Office of the Digital Cooperation Organization for the Arab States as well as technical support from various agencies, the Operations Management Team was able to complete the business operations strategy and is now focusing on implementing and reshaping the strategy as the Cooperation Framework 2022–2026 is being developed.

In addition, in support of more effective coordination, the Resident Coordinator's Office tested an incubation model for coordination and collaboration. The National Family Safety Programme approached the United Nations through the Resident Coordinator's Office to organize and deliver online workshops on a range of topics in relation to the organization's mandate, namely, to provide support to victims of gender violence. In 2020, UN Volunteers assisted in project management and facilitated administrative tasks with the UNDP. Additionally, the UN Volunteers role in projects related to gender consisted of coordinating a series of webinars on gender and domestic-based violence within the context of COVID-19, done in partnership with the National Family Safety program and other UN agencies as well as the RCO. UN Volunteers were also involved in a gender balance project, helping the Gender Advisor work on a guidance manual to help train civil servants on various awareness aspects of gender bias. The Resident Coordinator's Office consulted with UNCT to gauge the capacity of agencies to respond to and engage in these topics. As the engagement, which involved seven United Nations agencies, took shape, the Resident Coordinator's Office sought an agency to take the lead, while the RCO would remain in a support role. This is the model that the RCO will use as UNCT expands its partnerships.





2.5 Evaluations and Lessons Learned

This section highlights some of the lessons learned and evaluations performed by various UNCT members. Key results achieved by the United Nations, led by ILO, included the development of the National Child Labour Policy and the National Policy on Equality in Employment and Occupation, both of which are in the process of being officially endorsed. Both policies were developed following in-depth analyses and assessments of the situation in the country and following discussions with various relevant stakeholders to ensure that the views of all relevant parties are properly reflected and helped increase policy ownership, accountability, and commitment to successful implementation. Furthermore, during this past year, and although ILO is not physically present in the KSA, a technical adviser on employment was positioned inside the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development to provide on-the-ground support. This has been particularly helpful and should be considered regularly by ILO, especially considering the various reforms that the Ministry has introduced.

In partnership with UNNM members, IOM is actively engaged with the migration focal point to support the country's contributions to the regional review process in preparation for the global review at IMRF. Furthermore, in response to the heightened needs of increasing migrants who have lost their jobs and cannot return to their countries of origin, the United Nations agencies with mandates relevant to human mobility in the KSA developed a briefing paper on safeguards in return management. While the paper acknowledges the State sovereignty in returning migrants, it analyses challenges in involuntary returns and proposes concrete steps for safeguarding migrants. The paper was presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, and the Human Rights Commission.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, new challenges have emerged for OHCHR when delivering activities. However, together with SHRC, the United Nations Saudi Arabia overcame the challenges by shifting to the virtual implementation of activities. The new strategy proved effective and enabled the delivery of several capacity-building activities. The virtual training increased learning flexibility, minimized costs, and enabled hosting diversified experts on a larger scale. In fact, and for the first time, the United Nations in the country was able to host non-Arabic speakers

by securing virtual interpretation. Moreover, virtual activities made it possible to approach participants beforehand for online surveys, which enabled the activities to be tailored according to their needs and align with OHCHR strategic plans. The success of virtual experiences resulted from good coordination and cooperation between SHRC and United Nations agencies.

The United Nations Saudi Arabia has not conducted the UNCT-SWAP Gender Scorecard exercise. Critical to better supporting the KSA in advancing the UN system on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW) commitments, particularly those articulated in its Vision 2030, will be to better identify the collective work of UNCT in this area and the gaps that require the expertise of the United Nations, and that of UN Women in particular, as a non-resident agency, where policy advisory, outreach, and capacity services will need to be well defined and financially supported. The development of the CCA and the UNSDCF offer critical opportunities in this regard. It is also advised that UNCT carries out a UNCT-SWAP Gender Scorecard in 2021.

The role of UNDP as SDG integrator focuses on supporting the UNCT to develop cooperation frameworks that reflect a multidimensional approach to development and facilitate the engagement of non-resident United Nations entities to ensure delivery of results in such frameworks. In the context of the United Nations reform and the de-linking of the Resident Coordinator from UNDP, new opportunities are available in terms of capacities and joint projects. The COVID-19 pandemic presented an opportunity for the RCO to join efforts with UNDP, in partnership with Prince Sultan University, to produce a diagnostic paper on the pandemic's socio-economic impact.

UNODC benefited from the monthly UNCT meetings. Its mandate, expertise, and reach received intensified acknowledgment in supporting the achievement of SDGs and Vision 2030 prioritized through LNOB. UNODC provided valuable contributions, for instance, to the concept note proposal submitted by UNNM. Better alignment of the programmes of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework with agency-specific country programmes will remain a challenge, however, and will require coordination between headquarters and field offices more than ever.

In 2020, the United Nations Resident Coordinator initiated regular bilateral meetings, in addition to the monthly UNCT meetings, with the heads of agencies working in or with the KSA. The purpose of these meetings was to touch base on the progress of key initiatives and discuss opportunities for support and collaboration. While COVID-19 decreased the frequency of those meetings, they still provided the RC and the heads of agencies with a platform for more agency-focused discussions, which are not possible in a UNCT meeting. The five result categories of the transitional performance appraisal system; SDG implementation, strategic financing and partnerships, LNOB, business innovation, and operationalizing the vision of prevention of the Secretary-General, alongside the Management and Accountability Framework, were used to give structure to the meetings and to identify assessment and reporting mechanisms for the United Nations Saudi Arabia, both individually and as a team.

planned programmatic activities had to be postponed or even canceled and replaced by activities related to COVID-19. The pandemic also changed how the United Nations Saudi Arabia conducted its activities, meetings, and trainings, which all had to be offered virtually. The enormous efforts by WHO, Headquarters, and regional and country offices alike, in addition to intensive collaboration and sharing of information between WHO and many of its member countries, contributed to a rapid evidence-based response to the pandemic, which limited its devastating effects. In a quick and proactive manner, the KSA cooperated closely with WHO and aligned its responses with the guidelines and recommendations of WHO. It provided high-quality and equitable preventive, diagnostic, and curative services, participated in global research activities coordinated by WHO, and contributed to combating COVID-19 in other countries through donations.

The main challenge for WHO in 2020 was the COVID-19 pandemic, with the effect that many of the





2.6 Financial Overview and Resource Mobilization

UNCT	Required & Budgeted Resources	Received Resources	Total Expenditures
ESCWA ^b	-	-	-
FAO	6,000,000	-	4,830,000
ICAO ^b	-	-	-
IFAD	3,900,000	1,900,000	1,400,000
ILO	1,218,468	1,218,468	718,376
IOM	1,086,906	1,086,906	603,231
OHCHR	1,689,925	-	1,035,619
UN Women	-	-	30,000
UN-HABITAT	2,193,155	1,058,155	622,000
UNDP	130,000,000	131,380,000	111,780,000
UNEP	5,615,800	4,700,000	800,000
UNESCO ^b	-	25,000,000	-
UNFPA	60,000	-	10,000
UNHCR	358,000	358,000	358,000
UNICEF	2,795,293	2,216,125	1,894,218
UNODC	720,000	1,434,000	487,000
WHO	2,823,408	1,142,391	891,717
World Bank ^b	-	-	-
TOTAL	153,145,155	171,494,045	124,960,161

Table 2. Financial Overview, in 2020 (dollars)

Notes:

(a) OCHA and WFP activities are primarily focused on Yemen and, therefore, omitted from the table. RCO is entirely funded through the Special Purpose Trust Fund and not included in the table.

(b) ICAO, ESCWA, UNESCO, and the World Bank chose to provide limited to no financial information for 2020.

Table 2 lists all 20 UNCT members in the KSA and breaks down the required and budgeted resources, received resources, and total expenditures for each UNCT member in 2020. Thirteen are present in the country, two of which, namely the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Food Programme (WFP), primarily work in Yemen. The remaining seven agencies assist the KSA remotely.

Figure 10. Required and Budgeted Resources Versus Total Expenditures, in 2020 (percentage)

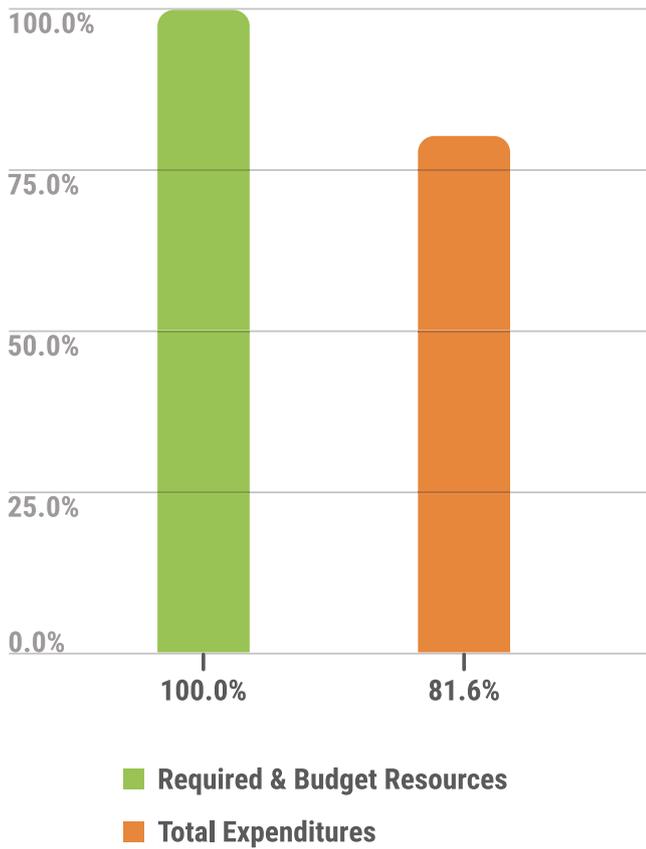


Figure 11. Allocation of Required and Budgeted Resources by SFPAs, in 2020 (percentage)

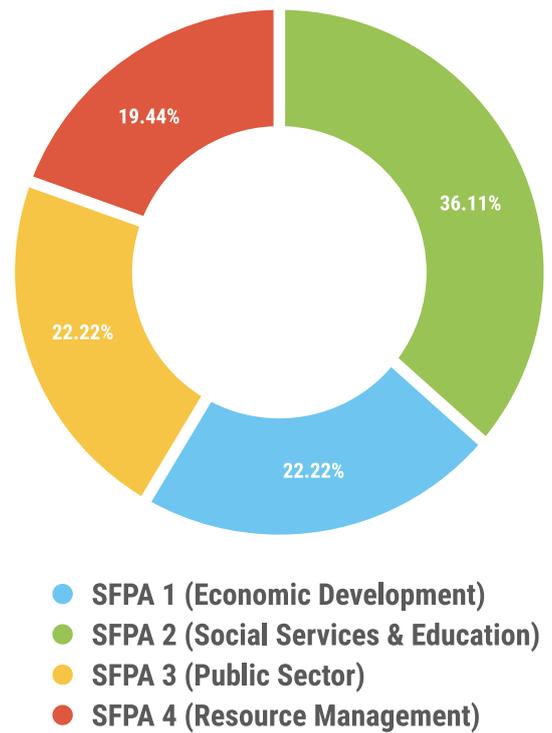


Figure 10 shows the expenditure of each agency listed in table 2 as a percentage of total expenditure in the KSA in 2020

Figure 11 compares the required and budgeted resources to the total expenditure for 2020 and uses numbers reported by 13 of the 20 UNCT members.

Figure 12. Expenditures of United Nations Agencies in the KSA, in 2020 (percentage)

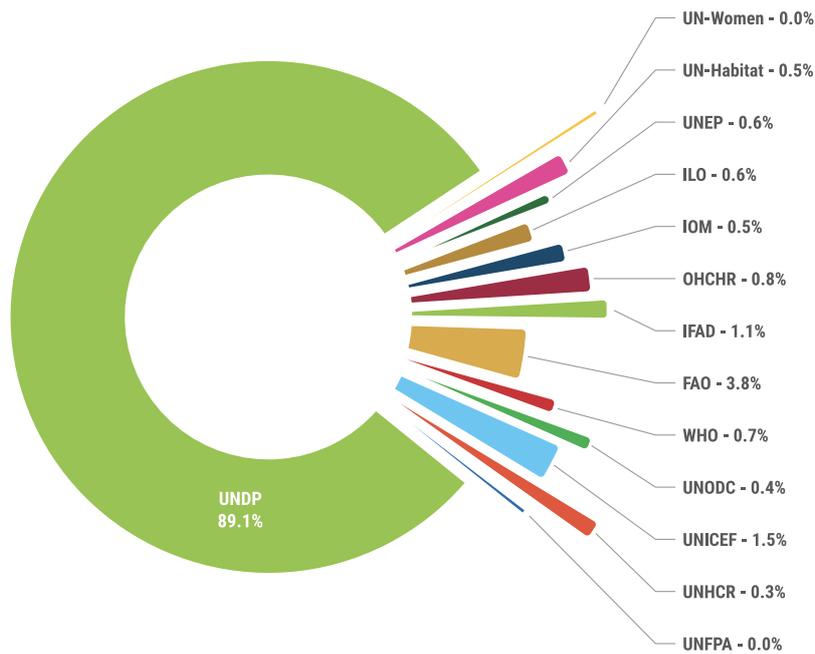


Figure 13. Total Historical Average Annual Expenditures by UNCT Members in the KSA, 2010-2018 (percentage)

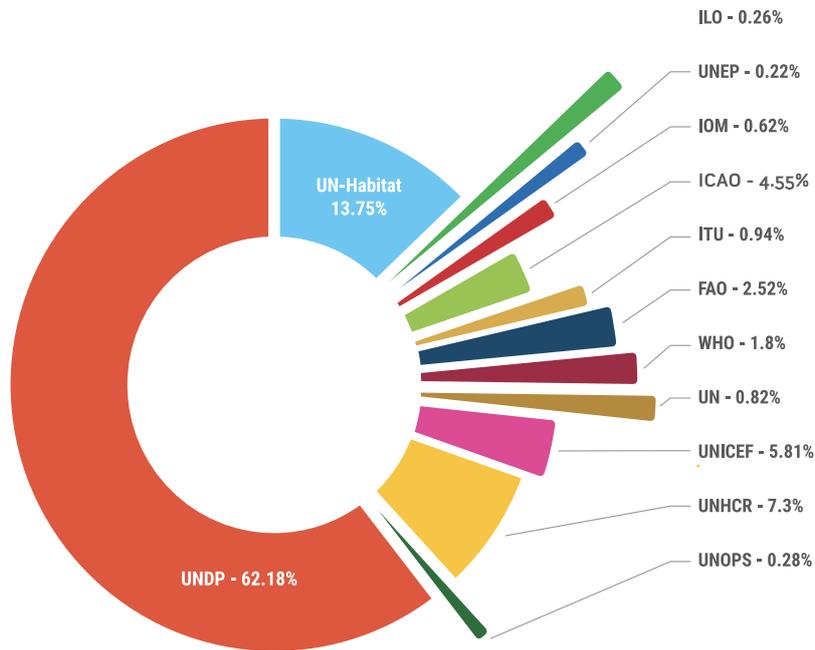


Figure 12 displays the required and budgeted resources allocated to the four SFPAs and was generated by using self-reported numbers from seven of the twenty-one UNCT members. Allocations for SFPAs 2 were notably lower than for the other priority areas, which is primarily due to the fact that required and budgeted resources for UNDP make up 84.5 percent of the entire budget, and UNDP focused its efforts on SFPAs 1, 3, and 4.

Figure 13 illustrates the historical trend in total expenditures experienced by UNCT in the KSA during 2010-2018. The most significant change was the considerable increase in the share of UNDP.



CHAPTER THREE





The year 2020 saw a shift in the mindset of UNCT and the Government's perception of the United Nations. Considerable attention has been devoted to the United Nations reform and operationalizing the core aspects of the revamped United Nations development system. While no regular UNCT and Security Management Team (SMT) meetings were held in 2018, deliberate efforts were made to institutionalize monthly UNCT meetings, welcoming and facilitating the participation of both non-resident agencies and ESCWA. Discussions were conducted around the Management and Accountability Framework, and the Resident Coordinator held regular bilateral meetings with all United Nations Agencies, Funds, and Programmes (AFPs). Significant effort and time were devoted to engaging with the Government, in particular with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy and Planning, and increasingly with other line ministries, to explain the reform of the United Nations and its impact in the country.

The specific context of the KSA, which is a high-income country in which the Government is funding all United Nations activities, previously contributed to a silo approach. However, the Saudi reform agenda encompassed into the Vision 2030, adopted in 2015, and its subsequent implementation has tremendously improved cooperation between the United Nations and the KSA. 2020 marked the second-before-last year of the 2017-2021 UNCCSF. This framework was developed alongside the Saudi Vision 2030 but was never revised to fully account for the Government's new priorities, which prioritized Vision 2030, holding, for the first time, the G20 Presidency and hosting the G20 Summit in Riyadh at the end of November 2020. In 2020, UNCT started working on the new CCA and UNSDCF. The new UNSDCF was designed to adjust the mismatch of priorities. Throughout the year, the United Nations Saudi Arabia supported the Development Working Group of the G20 into a successful experience despite the pandemic.

The year 2020 marked a change of mindset, introducing the approach of a consolidated United Nations joining efforts to increase agility and strength. Consequently, the way the United Nations is perceived in the KSA has changed, now with partnership at the center. The United Nations Saudi Arabia established a COVID-19 taskforce operating across the entire UNCT to produce a social and economic response plan in line with the United Nations capacity brief.

Together with Prince Sultan University, the United Nations Saudi Arabia released a diagnostic paper on the impact of COVID-19. It also established a partnership working group with the aim to reach out to civil society, the private sector, and academia. It strengthened the communications working group and significantly increased its online presence in both English and Arabic. It published two monthly reports, one on COVID-19 and another one on economic matters, both focusing on national issues. It established UNNM, including 14 United Nations agencies, to support the Government in improving the governance of migration issues in the country, shared several policy papers with the Government, and provided technical support to promote the effective engagement of the country in the GCM regional review process in preparation for the 2022 IMRF global review. The United Nations Saudi Arabia launched a joint study with ICD and the Islamic Development Bank on how Awqaf (endowments) can provide sustainable support to the achievement of SDGs and Vision 2030, triggering the interest of financial institutions and of the religious establishment, with which the United Nations previously had little engagement. The United Nations Saudi Arabia prepared the launch of a local network of the United Nations Global Compact in the country, established a working group including some leading private-sector companies, and engaged with the Ministry of Commerce and the Council of Saudi Chambers.

While the year 2020 witnessed considerable progress in different areas, challenges remain. Strategic documents of various agencies, developed mostly in line with ministry requirements, need to be aligned with the process of CCA and the UNSDCF while remaining conform to the Government's strategic priorities. UNCT members need to continue to align with the requirements of the CF in sync with their internal processes and bilateral relationships. The new CCA and UNSDCF processes, which started in December 2020, will be essential in addressing these challenges. However, some challenges are rooted in the very nature of high-income countries, and a special approach tailored to the needs of these countries will need to be discussed in order to optimize and expedite transformational change to the fullest extent.

The implementation of the United Nations programmes in 2021 might be affected by various factors that

could have adverse effects on the attainability of the expected results. The issues to keep an eye on in the coming year are related to both national and international contexts. The attacks against foreign interests in the country, including the two incidents in Jeddah in October and November 2020, remind us of the country's vulnerability to violent extremism despite its efforts to prevent radicalization in society. Regarding socio-economic issues, efforts to reduce the budget deficit might negatively affect society's most fragile segments. Combined with the significant increase of the value-added tax in June 2020, the reduction of public spending reflects a gradual shift from a welfare State approach to more liberal policies that usually impact the most vulnerable categories, including migrants and foreign workers established in the country. The COVID-19 pandemic also affected the well-being of many of the foreign workers, migrants, and refugees from various countries, including Asia, the Horn of Africa, and other conflict-affected areas, who reside in the KSA. Many of them lost their jobs and became residents with irregular legal status unless they return to their home countries. In addition, Yemen continues to be a major transit point on the irregular migration route from the Horn of Africa to the Arabian Gulf, and migrants face severe protection risks. The number of refugees and migrants desiring to enter the KSA might increase in the context of the war in Yemen and instability in Ethiopia. Lastly, the conditions of detention of immigrants remain a challenge in the KSA, in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to prevent any possible outbreaks or

amplification of the virus within and beyond detention centres, detained migrants should be included in the COVID-19 vaccination process as well. Moreover, by using the detention of immigrants only as a measure of last resort, the KSA would strengthen its commitment to implement GCM, notably Objective 13.

Despite efforts to end the war in Yemen, the continuation of the war might continue to impact the KSA. The Houthi group regularly launches weaponized drones and ballistic missiles against Saudi territory. These attacks mainly target border areas, economic infrastructure, and sometimes even the capital. Regarding GCC matters, the Al-Ula summit succeeded in ending the diplomatic crisis with Qatar and represents an essential milestone towards strengthening the Council's unity and building common foreign and defense policies. However, a relapse is possible if pending issues to overcome the challenges facing the member countries and solve potential disagreements in the future are not adequately addressed.

On the whole, the United Nations Saudi Arabia is optimistic about the year 2021. The country has made substantial progress in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. With a more integrated UNCCSF going forward and a robust "One United Nations" mindset, the United Nations Saudi Arabia is expecting that it is better positioned to support transformative change and growth in the country and in the region.



Endnotes

1. Daily Europe Brent Spot Price free on board (FOB).
2. <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/UN-framework-for-the-immediate-socio-economic-response-to-COVID-19.pdf>.
3. https://saudiarabia.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/SAU_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan_2020.pdf.
4. <https://saudiarabia.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Socio-Economic%20Impact%20of%20COVID-19%20in%20the%20Kingdom%20of%20Saudi%20Arabia%20and%20how%20to%20Build%20Back%20Better%2C%20Diagnostics%20paper%2C%20UN%20in%20KSA%2C%20November%202020.pdf>.
5. https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/sites/default/files/report/Saudi_Vision2030_EN_2017.pdf.
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7. <https://theconversation.com/which-countries-have-the-most-immigrants-113074>.
8. <http://arabsdgmonitor.unescwa.org/country-profile-new/tab.aspx?country=Saudi%20Arabia>.
9. https://saudiarabia.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/SAU_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan_2020.pdf.
10. <https://saudiarabia.un.org/index.php/en/105031-diagnostics-paper-socio-economic-impact-covid-19-kingdom-saudi-arabia>.
11. <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/UN-framework-for-the-immediate-socio-economic-response-to-COVID-19.pdf>.

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COUNTRY RESULTS REPORT

2020

