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The Eritrea - United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2022-2026)



FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AfDB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union
BOS	Business Operation Strategy
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CF	Cooperation Framework
CO	Country Office
COVID	Corona Virus Disease
CPD	Country Programme Document
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CRVS	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DCO	Development Coordination Office
DPF	Development Partners Forum
EmONC	Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care
EMT	Evaluation Management Team
EPHS	Eritrea Population and Health Survey
ESC	Evaluation Steering Committee
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FReMP	Fisheries Resources Management Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GoSE	Government of the State of Eritrea
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IHR	International Health Regulations
IPC	Infection Prevention and Control
JWPs	Joint Workplans
KII	Key Informant Interview
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFND	Ministry of Finance and National Development
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

MWHs	Maternity Waiting Homes
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NUEW	National Union of Eritrean Women
ODF	Open-Defecation Free
OECD/ODA	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development / Official Development Assistance
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OMT	Operations Management Team
PLHIV	People Living with HIV/AIDS
PMT	Programme Management Team
PWD	People with Disabilities
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator’s Office
RRF	Results and Resources Framework
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UCMs	Unilateral Coercive Measures
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDCO	United Nations Development Coordination Office
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNRCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USD	United States Dollars
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

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Disclaimer

This independent evaluation report was prepared by a team of three Consultants as listed above. The content, analysis and recommendations of this report do not reflect the views of the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office and UNCT in Eritrea.

Executive Summary

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022–2026 was jointly signed by the Government of the State of Eritrea (GoSE) and the United Nations system in December 2021. It serves as the primary strategic instrument guiding collaboration between the GoSE and the UNCT in advancing Eritrea’s national development priorities and progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) during the 2022–2026 period.

The evaluation of the UNSDCF is a mandatory, independent, system-wide exercise, conducted in line with the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines (2024) and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation.

It assesses the UNSDCF’s performance against internationally recognized evaluation principles, with a focus on its contribution to development results and sustainability. The evaluation was carried out by an independent external team, ensuring objectivity and credibility.

This independent evaluation assesses the performance of the UNSDCF over the implementation period from January 2022 to December 2025. It covers all four outcome areas and examines the extent to which the framework has contributed to Eritrea’s national development priorities and progress toward the SDGs.

The evaluation serves a dual purpose:

- Learning, by generating evidence, lessons learned, good practices, and forward-looking recommendations to inform the design of the next Cooperation Framework (2027–2031); and
- Accountability, by providing objective evidence of results achieved and enabling the Government of the State of Eritrea, development partners, and donors to hold the UNCT accountable for its commitments.

In line with these objectives, the UNSDCF was assessed against seven evaluation criteria: relevance and adaptability, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, coordination, coverage, orientation to impact, and sustainability.

The evaluation finds that UN support to Eritrea during the UNSDCF period was highly relevant, strongly aligned with national priorities, and effective, particularly in achieving development results in the social sectors and in strengthening resilience to climate change.

During the implementation period, the UN system demonstrated notable adaptability in responding to external shocks, including drought, global commodity price increases, and disruptions in the availability of essential supplies. This adaptability was achieved through the expansion of climate-smart agriculture interventions and strengthened service delivery in remote and underserved areas.

However, the overall impact of the UNSDCF was lower than anticipated, primarily due to funding constraints and limitations in data-driven management. As of the end of 2025, only USD 228.61 million had been mobilized against a required USD 475.58 million, reducing the scale of planned interventions. In addition, the incomplete application of results-based and data-driven management approaches constrained performance across some development areas.

Select Results and Key Best Practices

The following key national development results were achieved by the GoSE with contribution of the UN partnership during the UNSDCF cycle (i.e. 2022-2026):

- **Health.** Facility-based births increased from 71% (2023) to 85% (2025, enabling over 61,000 women to deliver with skilled attendance. Immunization coverage was sustained at over 95% for core antigens, sustaining Eritrea's strong performance in child survival.
- **Education.** Girls' retention to Grade 5 (88%) surpassed that of boys (83%) in primary education—a structural improvement reflecting targeted interventions in school infrastructure, teacher training, and inclusive policies.
- **Gender equality.** FGM was abandoned in 17 sub-zobas; FGM prevalence for girls under 15 dropped from 18.2% (2014) to 7.8% (2025). GBV prevention and response services were delivered to more than 20,000 women and girls.
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH).** As at end 2025, some 94% villages are now Open-Defecation-Free (up from 32% in 2015), driven by community-led and UN-supported WASH systems.
- **Climate resilience, natural resource management.** Construction of 5,000+ water catchments and dams and solarization of 60% of rural water systems improved water security and lowered operating costs. Fisheries production increased from 16,000 to 18,431 tons (2023–2024).
- **Strong government ownership and alignment.** All UN programmes were deliberately embedded in national systems, enhancing sustainability, reducing transaction costs, and ensuring alignment with the national policy of self-reliance.
- **UN efficiency gains.** Through implementation of the Business Operations Strategy (BOS), the UN made savings totalling USD 1,978,372(2022–2025) through joint procurement, shared services, and integrated operations.

Key Lessons Learned

The evaluation found that the UNSDCF was most effective where national ownership, integrated programming, and resilience-building were prioritised. Six key lessons are drawn from the cycle:

1. **Strong government ownership drives progress. Alignment with Eritrea's self-reliance model and national frameworks enhanced coherence, sustainability, and legitimacy of UN interventions.**
2. **Leaving No One Behind requires tailored approaches. Cross-cutting LNOB commitments must translate into dedicated, resourced programmes to reach the most vulnerable.**
3. **Integrated programming produces transformative results. Multi-agency, cross-sectoral approaches demonstrated the highest systemic impact.**
4. **Capacity building and data systems are foundational. Long-term success depends on institutional capacity strengthening, especially in data and monitoring systems.**

5. **Resilience to external shocks is critical. Embedding climate resilience and risk preparedness across all outcomes proved essential in a context marked by droughts, regional instability, and economic constraints.**
6. **Partnerships and resource mobilisation need expansion. Strengthening diversified partnerships, including with the private sector, regional institutions, and diaspora networks, is critical for sustainability.**

Full lessons and their implications for the next cycle are presented in Section 6.

Key Recommendations for the 2027–2031 Cooperation Framework

The evaluation puts forward seven strategic recommendations for the next Cooperation Framework cycle:

1. **Deepen national ownership and institutionalisation of Cooperation Framework priorities.**
2. **Strengthen the Leave No One Behind agenda with dedicated, resourced programmes.**
3. **Scale up integrated and multi-sectoral approaches.**
4. **Embed resilience and climate adaptation across all outcomes.**
5. **Expand partnerships and diversify resource mobilisation.**
6. **Invest in data, monitoring, and accountability systems.**
7. **Advance gender equality and human capital development.**

Full recommendations with sub-actions are presented in Section 8.

Overall Performance Assessment

The UNSDCF was highly relevant and delivered significant development results in maternal health, child survival, gender equality, WASH, and climate resilience. The Cooperation Framework reflected a strong government-UN partnership, with high national ownership and system integration. Most progress occurred in service delivery and human development. The UN also made valuable contributions to strengthening public sector institutions and governance, including through advances in data-based management systems. Comparatively less programming was implemented for economic diversification. Financing constraints, weak market conditions, and the operating environment restricted opportunities to stimulate private-sector development and advance livelihoods at scale. As a result, economic growth and prosperity results were more limited, and the achievement of transformational change in socio-economic organisation at a national scale was lower.

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1. Background – The Cooperation Framework Context

1.1 Country Context

The State of Eritrea is an Eastern African country located in the Horn of Africa. It borders Sudan to the north and west, Ethiopia to the South, and Djibouti to the Southeast. It is separated from the Middle East countries of Saudi Arabia and Yemen by the Red Sea. Eritrea's extensive coastline spans approximately 3,300km, including its approximately 360 islands in the Red Sea, while the country itself has a total land area slightly above 124,000 square kilometres¹.

Eritrea's topography is characterised by lowlands, coastal plains and high plateaus. Its lowest point, near Lake Kulul, within the Denaki Depression lies approximately 100 meters below sea level, while its highest point, Mount Soira, stands at over 3,000 meters above sea level. This varied topography underlies three major climatic zones, a temperate zone in the highlands, a subtropical zone in the lowlands, and a tropical climate zone along the coast. The country has six major vegetation zones: highland forests, woodlands, riverine forests, bushland, mangroves, and planted forests. Agroecologically, these vegetation zones are classified into moist and arid lowlands, semi-desert, moist and arid highlands and sub-humid, isolated, small catchment areas on the eastern escarpment². The topography, climate and vegetation types characterising Eritrea underpin the country's heavy reliance on agriculture - particularly farming, animal herding and fishing - as well as mining.

The heavy reliance on agriculture, with its attendant negative fallouts like unsustainable agricultural practices, overgrazing and deforestation, is widely implicated in the widespread land degradation in Eritrea. The annual rate of soil loss from cropland is estimated at 12–17 tons per hectare and is assessed as being responsible for up to 0.5% per annum of crop yield reduction³. Dense highland forests make up less than 1% of the land area, overall forest and woodland cover is close to 13%-14%. These have exacerbated the consequences of climate change in the country and made the country extremely vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change as both the country's marine and terrestrial ecosystems have been negatively affected⁴. Drought is also fast becoming a frequent phenomenon based on its occurrence in 2003, 2008 and 2011 with consequences for food security and nutrition⁵, necessitating a focus on disaster risks mitigation and resilience building for environmental sustainability.

Eritrea's economy remains largely anchored in primary sectors, with farming, animal herding, and fishing accounting for about one third of output and serving as the main source of livelihoods for approximately 65–70% of the population⁶. The country's reliance on agriculture reflects both structural characteristics of the economy and deliberate policy choices. While past sanctions and limited engagement with external partners constrained trade and access to financing, their impact on agriculture was largely indirect, reinforcing its role as a domestic anchor for livelihoods and food

¹ Eritrea - Second Voluntary National Review of Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, 2024

² Eritrea Common Country Analysis, 2021

³ Ibid

⁴ Eritrea - Second Voluntary National Review of Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, 2024

⁵ Eritrea Common Country Analysis, 2021

⁶ Ibid

security. Within the Cooperation Framework, agriculture is treated as a strategic sector for resilience, diversification, and inclusive growth.

Over time, the structure of the economy has shown gradual shifts. Agriculture's contribution to GDP increased from 10.6 % in 2004 to 17.6% in 2023 and employs about 62% of the workforce. Mining and services have also expanded, with their combined share rising from 19.6% to 32.0%, while manufacturing increased from 1.1% to 9.8% over the same period. The mining sector, particularly copper, gold, zinc, silica, marble, and granite, has emerged as an important source of employment for skilled workers and a major contributor to foreign exchange earnings, with a small number of mineral exports accounting for the majority of export revenues. At the same time, limited engagement with multilateral financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank has constrained access to concessional financing, slowing the pace of economic transformation.

Macroeconomic conditions have shown signs of adjustment, with the fiscal deficit declining significantly from 14% of GDP in 2017 to near balance in recent years. Public debt remains elevated at 194%, however, with a significant domestic component standing at 80%⁷. Growth prospects are supported by increasing foreign interest and investment, particularly in exploration and mining.

Demographically, Eritrea's population has grown from about 2.1 million at independence in 1991⁸ to approximately 3.7 million⁹ today with slightly higher proportion of females than males. The population sex ratio is 97.4 males to 100 females¹⁰. The population is youthful, with a median age of around 19 years, and a slightly higher proportion of females than males. While the youthful population suggests a higher dependency ratio, it is an indication of a higher future demographic dividend from the large perspective workforce, a potential increase in economic output and the likelihood of more wealth created to cope with the future elderly population¹¹. Migration has also shaped demographic dynamics, with a notable share of Eritreans residing abroad. While the youthful structure implies short-term pressures on dependency, it also presents longer-term opportunities through a potential demographic dividend, provided adequate investments in education and employment are made.

Eritrea has substantial untapped economic potential across multiple sectors. Its strategic location along the Red Sea positions it well to develop a blue economy and to serve as a regional transshipment and logistics hub¹² along one of the world's busiest maritime routes. Mineral resources including copper, gold, zinc, and confirmed reserves¹³ of oil and natural gas offer opportunities for expanding exports and attracting investment. Significant scope also exists in agriculture, through improved productivity and diversification, as well as in the emerging manufacturing sector. In addition, Eritrea's rich biodiversity, unique cultural and historical sites, coastline, and islands provide a strong foundation for developing a tourism industry¹⁴. Together, these sectors present important pathways for economic diversification, growth, and structural

⁷ Ibid

⁸ World Population Prospects, 2024

⁹ Eritrea - Second Voluntary National Review of Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, 2024

¹⁰ World Population Prospects, 2024

¹¹ Eritrea-UNSDCF 2022-2026

¹² Ibid

¹³ Eritrea - Second Voluntary National Review of Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, 2024

¹⁴ Ibid

transformation.

Total fertility rate has declined steadily from 6.24 per woman in 1991 to 3.71. Life expectancy at birth, both sexes, witnessed an improvement from 50.5 in 1991 to its current 68.6¹⁵. It is, however, higher among females at 70.7 years. Eritrea's human development index—a composite index that measures health, education and standard of rose from 0.436 and 0.459 in 2010 and 2020 and reached 0.503 at present¹⁶ reflecting sustained improvements in quality of life.

Progress in healthcare also reflected in a decline in infant mortality from 89.3 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 1991 to 26 in 2025 and under-five mortality of 35.4 per 1,000 live births as against 145 in 1991¹⁷. The progress in health also includes immunization rates being in the ninety-fifth percentiles.

In education, access to pre-primary education remains low and largely urban¹⁸. Although the total number of pre-primary schools in Eritrea increased from 483 in 2012 to 709 in 2023 and gross enrolment increased from 46,488 in 2012 to 55,627 in 2022 in absolute terms, in relative terms, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) dropped from about 25% to around 22%, while the net enrolment ratio remained low at 21%¹⁹. Among other things, the decline in GER in recent years could have been driven by economic hardship, limited resources in the education system, and social factors such as child labour, rural isolation, and gender disparities. These pressures reduce school attendance and completion, especially among disadvantaged children. Enrolment in basic and tertiary education has equally been incremental in absolute terms but the proportions, in relation to the eligible cohort for enrolment, are unreported.

Despite progress in health, education, and poverty reduction, the country faces significant socio-economic challenges. Limited economic diversification and vulnerable employment affecting 57.4% of jobs, particularly among women and rural communities hinder sustainable growth. Climate change further threatens food security, with rising temperatures, droughts, and deforestation exacerbating vulnerabilities. Institutional and infrastructure gaps also pose major constraints. Population access to electricity in Eritrea remains limited, with rural areas experiencing particularly low coverage. At the same time, the Government is expanding investment in cleaner and more sustainable energy solutions, including the large-scale Dekemhare solar project, to improve electricity access across both urban and rural communities. Social inequality persists, affecting different social groups, while inadequate data systems hinder evidence-based policymaking.

UNSDCF Highlights

The UNSDCF 2022-2026 is aligned with Eritrea's national development priorities, as well as global and regional frameworks, including Agenda 2030. The framework reflects Eritrea's commitment to the principles of "Leaving No One Behind" (LNOB), gender equality, and human rights. It also emphasizes the importance of resilience, sustainability, and accountability in achieving the SDGs. Developed through an inclusive consultation process involving the GoSE, UN agencies, and development partners, the UNSDCF 2022-2026 focuses on two strategic priority areas:

¹⁵ World Population Prospects, 2024

¹⁶ 2025 Human Development Report

¹⁷ World Population Prospects, 2024

¹⁸ Eritrea Common Country Analysis, 2021

¹⁹ Eritrea - Second Voluntary National Review of Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, 2024

1. Human Development and Wellbeing.
2. Inclusive, Diversified, and Climate-Resilient Economy.

Plate 1: UNSDCF Alignment with Eritrean National and Regional Development Priorities

Each of the two priority areas has two outcomes. While the first two outcomes are for the human development and wellbeing priority area, outcomes three and four are for the inclusive, diversified, and climate-resilient economy priority area.

1. Outcome One: Equitable access to and use of inclusive high quality essential social services.
2. Outcome Two: Eritrea's public sector institutions are more accountable and efficient, and more people enjoy the right to development.
3. Outcome Three: People in Eritrea have benefited from climate resilient, sustainable environment and natural resources management.
4. Outcome Four: People in Eritrea, especially the disadvantaged population, have increased livelihoods as economic growth becomes more inclusive and diversified.

Under Outcome 1, the UNSDCF prioritises health and nutrition, education, and WASH. Outcome 2 focuses on capacity building for social and economic development. Environment and renewable energy are the primary intervention areas under Outcome 3, while agriculture, food security, and human welfare are the main sectors targeted under Outcome 4²⁰.

²⁰ Eritrea-UNSDCF 2022-2026

2. Purpose, Scope and Users of the Evaluation

2.1 Purpose of the evaluation

Building on programme and project evaluations conducted by the UN agencies contributing to the UNSDCF, the evaluation reached judgements regarding the performance of the UNSDCF during the period 2022 to 2025. The evaluation serves a dual purpose of learning and accountability.

1. **Learning:** The evaluation provides critical insights and evidence-based recommendations to strengthen programming and results at the country level. By documenting good practices, lessons learned, and areas for improvement, it informs planning and decision-making for the next Cooperation Framework programming cycle and contributes to improving UN coordination in-country.
2. **Accountability:** The evaluation objectively assesses the extent to which the UNSDCF contributed to national development results and the achievement of the SDGs, enabling stakeholders including the GoSE, development partners, and donors to hold the UNCT accountable for its commitments under the Cooperation Framework

2.2 Objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation focused on the following objectives:

Assess the Contribution of the UNSDCF to National Development and the SDGs:

- Measure the extent to which UNSDCF interventions align with Eritrea's national development priorities and the SDGs.
- Analyse the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and sustainability of UN support.
- Evaluate the collective impact of UN agencies under the "One UN" approach and determine the added value of UN coordination and joint programming.

Identify Lessons Learned, Good Practices, and Factors Affecting Performance:

- Document lessons learned and good practices to inform the design and implementation of the next UNSDCF programming cycle.
- Examine enabling factors and bottlenecks that influenced the implementation of the UNSDCF.
- Assess how external factors (e.g., economic conditions, policy shifts, global crises) impacted progress.

Strengthen Accountability and Promote Learning:

- Ensure accountability to the Government of the State of Eritrea, development partners, and other stakeholders by providing an objective assessment of the UN's performance.
- Generate actionable, forward-looking recommendations to improve future programming, coordination, and impact.
- Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and reporting mechanisms for the next UNSDCF cycle.

2.3 Scope of the Evaluation

The Evaluation has a national coverage. Programmatically, it covered all contributions to the UNSDCF outcomes of all programmes, projects and activities conducted by the UNCT for the UNSDCF period 2022 to December 2025. It also assessed the UNSDCF cross-cutting themes of LNOB, human rights, gender equality and women's rights, disability and youth inclusion, environmental sustainability and results-based management. The evaluation also assessed the implementation, monitoring and reporting as well as multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms.

2.4 Intended users of the evaluation

The primary users of the evaluation include the GoSE, UNCT, and implementing and development partners, and other development actors and secondary users, including the general public, academia interested in its use for different purposes, including, among others, formulation of proposals for development interventions, preparation of academic papers, mobilization of resources.

3. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

3.1 Evaluation Approach

The UNSDCF Evaluation was conducted in close collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, UNCT, and national counterparts in Eritrea. Both qualitative and quantitative data through a range of methodologies which include a desk review of documentation, key informant interviews and in-depth interviews with stakeholders and focus group discussions with beneficiaries were collected. Quantitative data was collected from published midterm and annual reports, programme and project reports.

The methodology aimed at ensuring that the information collected is valid, reliable and sufficient to meet the evaluation objectives. Analysis was guided by triangulation principles to produce findings corroborated by multiple sources. The evaluation matrix (Annex 1) served as the reference framework to verify that all evaluation questions were addressed.

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluations and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations. It used a range of participatory methods to ensure that stakeholders and partners were centrally involved in reflective and forward-thinking processes. It adhered to the principles of consultation involving participation by key stakeholders to ensure that the assignment was fully relevant to its end-users and stakeholders. The evaluation enabled the use of evidence and analysis that are sound and factually accurate.

3.2 Evaluation Methods

The evaluation used a mixed-method approach involving two main sources of data: secondary and primary data sources. Secondary data was collected during the inception phase and continued throughout to understand the context in which the UNSDCF was being implemented. This involved desk-reviewing of UNSDCF strategic, programme and other relevant documents and data (including organizational policies, procedures and strategies; programme proposals, reports and technical outputs; and monitoring data related to aspects of the Eritrea UNSDCF interventions and coordination). This allowed the evaluation team to gain a fuller understanding of UNSDCF programming and related policies, strategies, coordination and programming being undertaken by the key stakeholders.

All relevant documents sourced by the evaluation manager/RCO, UNCT and GoSE stakeholders and the evaluation team were reviewed as the assignment moved forward. Key aspects of the documentary review focused on the RCO's use of its human, financial and technical resources to pursue the achievement of the UNSDCF outcomes; the relevance of the Framework approach and strategies in responding to the development needs of Eritrea. In performing the review, the evaluation team sought to identify success factors and barriers that have contributed or continue to contribute to effective response of the UNSDCF. The evaluation team also assessed the extent to which the UNSDCF aligns with the priorities of the Eritrean government and UNCT mandates and policies.

Primary qualitative data was collected through qualitative tools of key informant interviews, in-depth interview guides and (focus) group discussion. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants to provide a perspective of strategic and expert opinion from senior management with UNCT and key partners. Interview guidelines were tailored to obtain data from a broad category of

informants. Interviews were done via physical interfaces. Information was complemented by email exchanges especially to get access to additional documentation from stakeholders. In-depth interviews were used to interview technical working groups, GoSE national stakeholders who participated in the implementation of the UNSDCF activities.

The evaluation team recorded responses by detailed note taking and voice recording, after which the recordings were transcribed. Confidentiality was maintained and records were held securely. Where key individuals were unavailable for in-person interviews, the evaluation team administered the interview virtually (MS Teams, Zoom or Google Meet), time permitting. The evaluation team first prioritized key informant interviews with the UNCT stakeholders (as identified by RCO and Evaluation Steering Committee), in-depth interviews with key government stakeholders based on evaluation team time and stakeholder availability. Evaluation team members selected questions relevant to the specific interviewees grouped as UNCT Agencies, Government Ministries, and Cooperating partners. There were no NGOs and CSOs because Eritrea does not have these organisations operating in the country.

3.3 Selection of the Sample of Stakeholders

The criteria for sample selection were purposeful and commenced with a stakeholder mapping exercise undertaken in consultation with the Evaluation Management Team (EMT). The main reason for a purposeful approach was to encourage broad and active stakeholder engagement in the UNSDCF evaluation process. A purposeful approach was further adopted to ensure stakeholders were selected based on the investment or funding size, geographical location of projects, nature of joint programmes (thematic coverage), as well as inclusion (gender equality, human rights, disability) and other target population groups.

Following the mapping of stakeholders a final initial sample was identified comprising nine UNCT agencies, result groups, operations management team, technical groups on monitoring and evaluation, gender and human rights, as well as communications. Respondents were not disaggregated by gender, place of residence and disability status. The achieved sample size comprised 3 interviews (29 UN, 27 GoSE, 4 partners) and 3 focus group discussions with beneficiaries (n=8–10 each) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Interview Participants

Interviewees	Number	Methods
UNCT	29	KII
National Stakeholders [Government Ministries]	27	IDI
Beneficiaries	3	FGD
Bilateral/Multilateral partners	4	IDI

3.4 Quality Assurance

The data collected was subjected to a rigorous quality assurance process for validation purposes. One was using a variety of tools involving triangulation of information sources and permanent exchange with the UNSDCF implementation entities at RCO level. Quality assurance processes were applied throughout the evaluation processes and for the key deliverables in adherence to UNEG evaluation quality standards and guidelines, such as the UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports. A quality assessment of the UNSDCF evaluation was done by RCO and DCO at the end of the evaluation.

3.5 Participation and Inclusion

This evaluation was conducted using a participatory and inclusive approach, involving a wide range of partners and stakeholders. The Evaluation Team carried out a stakeholder mapping to identify the direct and indirect partners of the UNSDCF, specifically targeting United Nations organizations and representatives of the national government. Stakeholders mapping included Government Ministries, other multilateral and bilateral cooperation organizations and, above all, the beneficiaries of the program. Specific guidelines were observed, namely the UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation (2014). The methodology clearly indicated how the perspectives and voices of diverse groups (men and women, boys, girls, the elderly, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups) were to be sought and considered.

3.6 Evaluation Process

The evaluation process consisted of three phases outlined below:

Phase 1 (Inception Phase) involved the development of an inception report which describes the evaluation design matrix, evaluation questions, data collection methods, data sources and analysis plan. At this stage, the Evaluation Team Leader met with the Evaluation Manager, who provided all relevant documents. These materials were reviewed throughout the evaluation process and served as key background resources to inform the exercise. Through continuous consultation with RCO staff, the team gained a better understanding of the Eritrea-UNSDCF context and procedures in Eritrea. Using the seven evaluation criteria and associated evaluation questions, sub-questions were framed to guide interviews and discussions, as can be found in the evaluation matrix. Annex 1 shows the completed evaluation matrix.

Phase 2 (Field Phase) was the implementation phase which comprised the more comprehensive data collection. The Evaluation Team collected data through document reviews, interviews (key informant interviews with programme heads at UNCT, and in-depth interviews with government and quasi-government agencies), group discussions with thematic group leads and beneficiaries.

Phase 3 (Reporting phase) and had three stages the first of which included preparation and presentation of preliminary findings to the RCO/Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC) staff via a debriefing session at the end of the field phase. This provided a platform for the Evaluation Team and UNSDCF stakeholders to discuss initial findings, gather feedback and identify any factual errors or misinterpretations. The second stage was the preparation of the final report during which each member of the evaluation team completed his or her individual copy of evaluation matrix with the data and information collected during the document reviews, interviews and group discussions. The last stage of the evaluation involved the Evaluation Team leader reviewing and finalising all information into one consolidated evaluation matrix (Annex 1). It also involved coming up with the final report comprising findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned.

3.7 Data Analysis

Information obtained through the documentary review and interview process was triangulated against available documented sources and then synthesized using analytical judgement. The analysis phase involved several complementary components. First, the evaluation reviewed progress towards relevant outcomes and main outputs based on indicators included in the UNSDCF. Second, the method of triangulation was used to verify the information gathered from the documentary review and the interviews. It involved developing a method for checking the reliability of findings through multiple data sources, bringing as much evidence as possible into play from different perspectives in the assessment of hypotheses and assumptions.

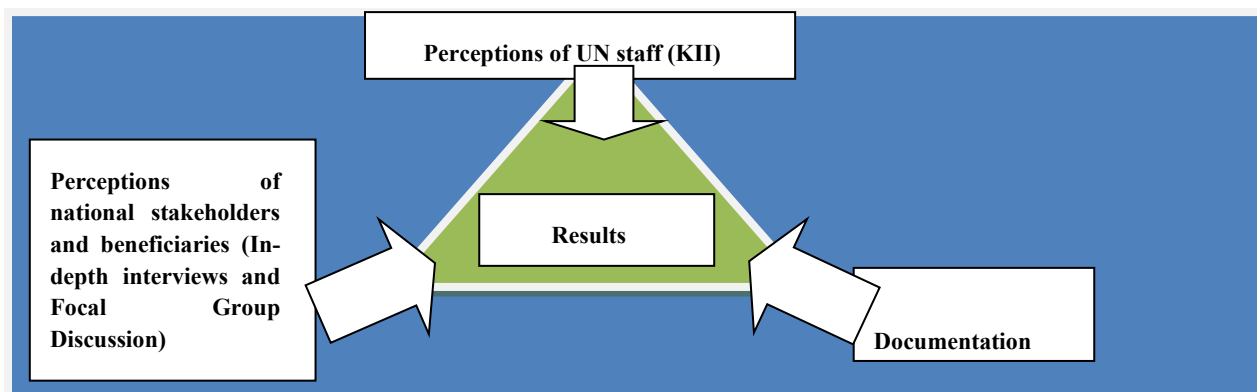


Figure 1: Method of Triangulation

All the programme reports were subjected to python analysis. Python analysis refers to using the python programming language to examine, understand and draw insights from several documents related to the GoSE-UNSDCF 2022-2026 design and implementation. It is used to create charts and graphs to see patterns. The evaluation analysis was conducted based on the criteria of relevance and adaptability, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and orientations towards impact outlined in the ToR.

Formal contribution analysis was not conducted in this evaluation, owing to the difficulty of tracing causal pathways from programme outputs to outcomes in the absence of robust baseline data and a fully operationalized monitoring and evaluation system. This is a limitation of the evaluation methodology, compounded by the UNSDCF's incomplete results tracking infrastructure. Findings in Section 4.3 therefore describe association and plausible contribution rather than direct causation. Where the evaluation makes statements about the UNSDCF's contribution to outcomes, these are based on the logical consistency of the results chain, triangulated evidence from document reviews and interviews, and the evaluators' professional judgement — not on formal counterfactual or attribution analysis

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The evaluation team followed closely the United Nations Ethical Guide for Evaluation in selecting interviewees, in interacting with them and in respecting their personal and institutional rights. They were assured that no attribution would be made to them if they did not want, they were chosen to ensure a fair representation of views in order to ensure a balanced perspective and, in the rare instances where potentially vulnerable groups were involved (e.g. persons with disabilities) the evaluation team was particularly conscious of compliance with ethical standards in interaction with

them. Generally, the evaluation team maintained an awareness of the United Nations Ethical Guidelines. Informed verbal consent was sought from stakeholders prior to asking any questions related to the UNSDCF evaluation. To obtain consent, the evaluation team briefly explained the reasons and objectives of the evaluation, as well as the scope of the questions asked during the interview. Stakeholders had the right of refusal or to withdraw at any time. The evaluation team also ensured respondent privacy and confidentiality. Comments provided during discussions were aggregated to render impossible the identification of specific stakeholders. The evaluation team was fully independent, unaware of any conflicts of interest for this work. During the overall process of the evaluation, the members of the evaluation team followed the principles of impartiality, credibility and accountability.

3.9 Theory of Change (ToC) Reconstructed

Figure 2 illustrates the Theory of Change for the GoSE–UNSDCF 2022–2026. It shows the logical progression from Inputs and Enablers through Outputs and Outcomes, to the long-term Impact. The framework aligns with Eritrea’s National Charter and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

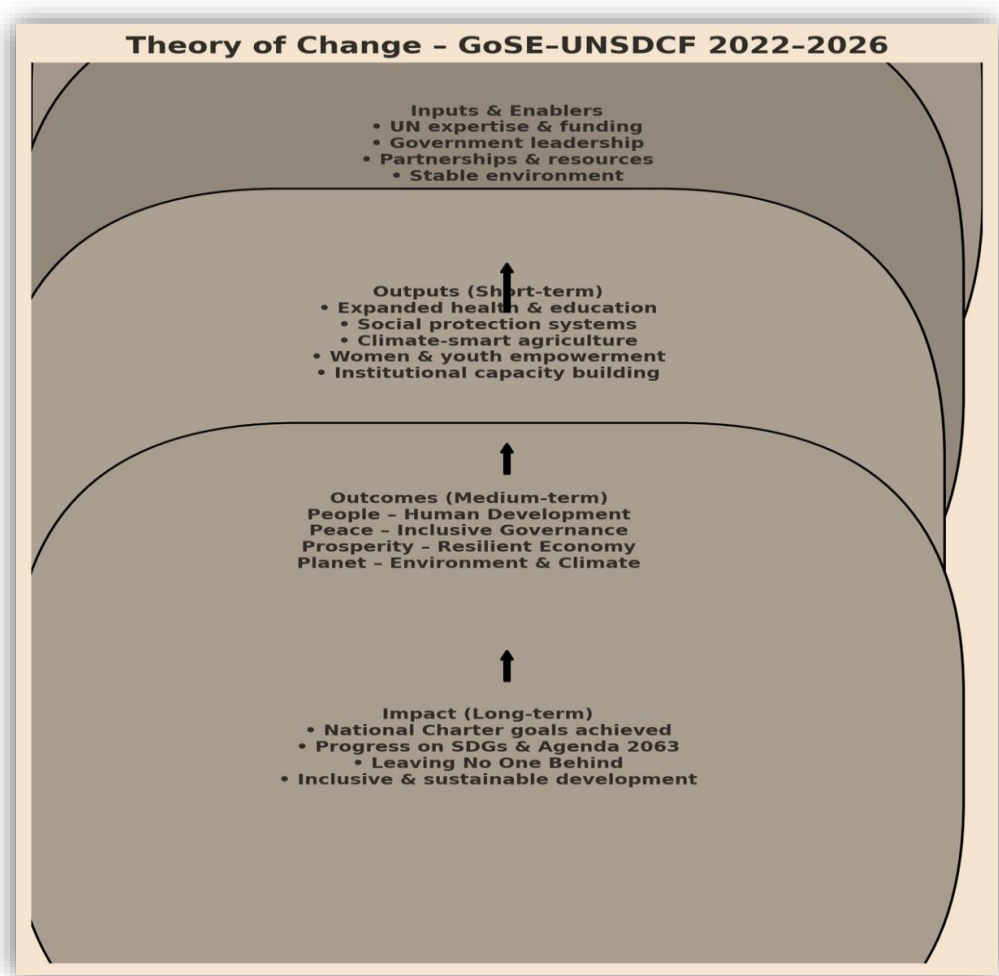


Figure 2 Reconstructed Theory of Change for Eritrea-UNSDCF 2022-2026

The inputs and enablers include UN expertise and funding, government leadership, partnerships, and a stable environment. The outputs expanded access to health and education, strengthened social protection, climate-smart agriculture, women and youth empowerment, and capacity building. The outcomes would be achieved across four pillars – People (human development), Peace (inclusive governance), Prosperity (resilient economy), and Planet (environmental sustainability). The impact, long-term, will be sustainable development in Eritrea, aligned with national priorities and SDGs with a strong emphasis on Leaving No One Behind.

The ToC is premised on several enabling conditions. It assumes Eritrea’s socio-political, economic, and environmental institutions can withstand shocks and support delivery of services. Political stability and absence of conflict are assumed to prevail throughout the cycle. UN agencies are expected to mobilize minimum financial, technical, and human resources annually to sustain implementation. Continuous improvement of GoSE–UN collaboration and partnership with communities, donors, and other actors is assumed. The national priorities identified will remain relevant and consistent across the period. Economic and financial regulations are expected to support flows of investment into green/blue economies and innovation.

Despite its clarity, the ToC presents several weaknesses. Its high reliance on assumptions of stability is a weakness. While Eritrea is a stable and secure country, it is surrounded by states experiencing conflict and instability. Spillover or geopolitical shocks (e.g., Horn of Africa crises, Red Sea instability) could undermine implementation. Weak statistical and monitoring systems limit the ability to test causal links in the ToC or track equity and LNOB outcomes. There are resource mobilization risks. The framework presumes consistent financing and donor support, yet Eritrea’s UCM-induced economic, financial and trade restrictions and constrained ODA landscape present vulnerabilities. Limited capacity, skills gaps, and weak coordination at national and Zoba levels have led to fragmented activities that do not reinforce one another, reducing the effectiveness and uptake of interventions. The ToC has an over-ambitious scope. The Theory of Change spans multiple outcomes—health, education, governance, environment, and livelihoods but lacks integration and prioritization. Without stronger links across sectors and clearer sequencing of interventions, there is a risk of diluted impact. Weak accountability mechanisms, including reliance on perception surveys and underdeveloped M&E systems, further risk underreporting or biased reporting of progress. There is limited integration of humanitarian-development-peace nexus – in programmes and programming.

The GoSE–UNSDCF ToC is built on strong assumptions of institutional resilience, stability, and adequate resources. Its main weaknesses lie in overreliance on these assumptions in a resource-constrained context, weak data/M&E systems, and limited prioritization. These gaps could undermine the ability of the ToC to fully capture or sustain intended transformational changes.

3.10 Limitations

All samples were purposive and not truly representative of the national population. But all the UN agencies were interviewed. The evaluation is inherently qualitative in nature due to the small, non-random sample sizes. The short time frame permitted to field the evaluation, just three weeks, was the main cause. The cross-cutting aspects of gender equality, human rights and vulnerability were not adequately considered in the design of the evaluation but addressed to a limited extent as part of the field work and analysis.

There are possible biases because locations were selected by the Evaluation Team on a purposive non-random basis. To avoid the possibility of bias from the presence of any UN staff, all interviews were conducted in private. These risks were mitigated by triangulating a wide range of qualitative and secondary data, complementary data collection and focus group discussions.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

These evaluation findings are presented based on the seven evaluation criteria of relevance and adaptability, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, coordination, orientations towards impact, and sustainability. The findings also include an analysis of the coverage of the UNSDCF with regards to reaching the most vulnerable populations, including women, children, and persons with disabilities.

4.1 Relevance and Adaptability

4.1.1. To what extent are the UNSDCF objectives and design aligned with Eritrea's national development priorities, the SDGs and the needs of the population?

Summary: Overall, the UNSDCF (2022–2026) demonstrates high alignment with Eritrea's national priorities, the SDGs, and the needs of the population. It has effectively advanced health, education, gender equality, climate resilience, and food security—core priorities for both the government and people. Its design reflects Eritrea's self-reliant development model while embedding SDG universality. However, limited financing, economic constraints, and modest private sector engagement reduce its capacity to fully meet the needs of all Eritreans, particularly in poverty reduction and employment creation.

Details

Emerging from three decades of struggle for independence, the Government of the State of Eritrea developed several national policies, action plans, and cross-cutting priorities to address the country's prevailing socio-political, historical, cultural, and ecological realities. These include the National Charter, the Macro Policy, the National Indicative Development Plans, the National Environmental Management Plan and various sector-specific strategic development plans such as the Health Sector Strategic Development Plan, the Education Sector Strategic Plan, the Agricultural Sector Development Plan, the Ministry of Land, Water, and Environment Strategic Plan, and the Food Security Strategy²¹.

The People's Front for Democracy and Justice, outlined a vision for Eritrea to become a country where peace, justice, democracy and prosperity prevail; to eliminate hunger, poverty, and illiteracy from Eritrea; for Eritrea to preserve its identity and uniqueness, develop commitment to family and community care, and by advancing economically, educationally, and technologically, find itself among the developed countries; for Eritrean society to be known for harmony among its different sectors, gender equality, love of country, humanity, discipline, hard work and love for knowledge, respect for law and order, independence, and inventiveness; and “to perform miracles in peaceful nation-building”²².

The vision is summarised as six core national development goals²³. These are:

²¹ Eritrea and the 2030 Agenda - Voluntary National Review of Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, 2022

²² PFDJ National Charter, 1994, 'National Vision of Eritrea'.

²³ Eritrea and the 2030 Agenda - Voluntary National Review of Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, 2022

1. National Harmony: for the people of Eritrea to live in harmony, peace, and stability, with no distinction along regional, ethnic, linguistic, religious, gender or class lines.
2. Political Democracy: for the people of Eritrea to be active participants and become decision-makers in the administration and conduct of their lives and of their country, with their rights guaranteed by law and in practice.
3. Economic and Social Development: for the country to progress socially and economically in the areas of education, technology, and the standard of living.
4. Social Justice: to ensure equitable distribution of wealth, services, and opportunities, with special attention directed to the most disadvantaged sections of society.
5. Cultural Revival: to develop a national culture characterized by love of country, respect for humanity, solidarity, love of truth and justice, respect for law, hard work, self-confidence, self-reliance, open mindedness, and creativity.
6. Regional and International Cooperation: for Eritrea to become a respected member of the international community, by coexisting in harmony and cooperation with its neighbours, and by contributing to regional and global peace, security, and development.

Eritrea is also committed to the SDGs, as these have remained an integral part of the country's long-term vision and policy architecture as ensconced in the country's aspirations to bring about social justice, gender equality, shared prosperity and poverty elimination, and human rights including those relating to women, children, and under-represented, and vulnerable populations²⁴, in a healthy, clean, and safe environment with peace, strong national unity and cohesion, sustained economic growth, and social justice²⁵. Eritrea's development priorities are also reflected in their signing of several important regional and global agreements, conventions, protocols, and frameworks like the African Union's Agenda 2063, the Beijing Declaration, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement among others²⁶.

According to the second voluntary national review of progress towards the SDGs²⁷, Eritrea's development goals include: establishing and sustaining full employment for all working citizens through the use of modern production methods; fair distribution of national income among citizens; fair distribution of social service-providing institutions across all regions; meeting the rising demands for population consumption needs through consistent and wide-ranging productive investment; price stability; and (5) promoting regional and global cooperation.

The UNSDCF objectives were not developed in isolation. They were informed by Eritrea's National Charter of 1994, the development challenges identified by the UN's Country Analysis (CA)²⁸ and government policy statements on infrastructure, agriculture, health, education, energy and regional integration²⁹. Among the development challenges identified, the UNSDCF prioritised:

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Eritrea – Second Voluntary National Review of Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, 2024

²⁸ Eritrea-UNSDCF 2022-2026

²⁹ Ibid

1. Supply challenges for the equitable distribution of essential services such as health, energy, electricity, water, sanitation, and hygiene between rural and urban areas.
2. Poverty and food supply gaps affecting urban and rural households especially children and households headed by women.
3. Moderate levels of income inequality with those most affected being women, children within female-headed households, people living with disabilities, displaced persons, people living with HIV, elderly people, war veterans, people with chronic illnesses, etc.
4. The regulatory framework for the efficient functioning of markets needs strengthening.
5. An agrarian agricultural sector which is less diversified and subsistent and low-value services dominated employment.
6. Challenges related to essential facilities and systems affecting the extension of public services to all parts of the country.
7. An inadequate national data ecosystem along with general human capital and capacity challenges at national and Zoba levels.

National policies such as the Health Sector Strategic Plan, Education Strategy, and Food Security Plans are directly supported by UN interventions (e.g., Expanded Programme on Immunization, maternal health and family planning, school enrolment, WASH expansion, and dam construction). Eritrea's national agenda is guided by self-reliance, human capital development, food security, climate resilience, and social equity. The UNSDCF reflects this by:

People (Social Services): The UNSDCF emphasizes maternal and child health, education access, nutrition, and social protection. This is directly aligned with government efforts to expand primary healthcare, improve immunization, and scale up water and sanitation initiatives.

Peace (Institutions and Governance): The framework integrates support for stronger, accountable public institutions, gender equality, and legal frameworks, echoing national efforts to reinforce governance structures and data systems. The work of the National Statistics Office and preparations for the 4th Eritrea Population and Health Survey illustrate this synergy.

Prosperity (Economic Transformation): The UNSDCF promotes job creation, sustainable agriculture, fisheries expansion, and climate-resilient livelihoods. These mirror the government's development focus on food self-sufficiency, renewable energy, and rural infrastructure.

Planet (Environment and Resilience): Eritrea has prioritized water harvesting, climate adaptation, and renewable energy (e.g., solar projects, irrigation dams). UNSDCF outcomes reinforce these investments by focusing on environmental sustainability, disaster risk reduction, and resilience building.

The UNSDCF explicitly serves as Eritrea's vehicle for SDG implementation, with reporting linked to SDG indicators. Key SDG contributions include:

- SDG 3 (Health): High immunization coverage, reduction of maternal and under-five mortality, and improved sexual and reproductive health.
- SDG 4 (Education): Gender-parity progress with girls outperforming boys in retention (87.8% vs 82.7%).

- SDG 5 (Gender Equality): Abandonment of FGM in 17 sub-zobas out of 67, scaling up GBV response systems.
- SDG 6 (WASH): 94% villages are open defecation free (ODF) in 2024, compared to 32% in 2015.
- SDG 13 (Climate Action): Support for climate-resilient agriculture, renewable energy, and water catchments/dams.
- SDG 16 (Institutions): Improved governance, data systems (GDP estimates, Population and Health Survey prep), and accountability.

Eritrea's 2022 Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the UN confirmed that the UNSDCF is the central mechanism for SDG support, noting achievements in health, education, gender, and climate adaptation.

Eritrea's population is young (41% under age 15), largely rural (70%), and climate vulnerable. The UNSDCF design reflects these demographics through expansion of maternal and child health services, including Maternity Waiting Homes and skilled birth attendance; education access and equity targeting disadvantaged regions and children with disabilities; youth opportunities through fisheries sector growth and training programmes; gender-sensitive interventions tackling GBV and harmful practices; and rural resilience through WASH improvements, food security interventions, and climate adaptation.

Despite alignment, resource constraints, and recurrent climate shocks hinder full implementation and leave critical gaps (e.g., poverty reduction, decent jobs, energy access, and financing for health emergencies).

Data gaps: Though the UNSDCF supports population surveys and statistics, weak institutional capacity slows comprehensive monitoring of SDG progress.

Equity gaps remain: Rural populations, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable youth still face limited access to services.

Table 2 : Alignment of Eritrea UNSDCF with National Priorities, SDGs, and Population Needs

UNSDCF Objectives / Pillars	Alignment with Eritrea's National Development Priorities	Relevant SDGs	Population Needs Addressed	Alignment Strength
People (Equitable access to quality social services: health, education, WASH, social protection)	Human capital development; universal health coverage; education expansion; improved WASH access	SDG 3 (Health), SDG 4 (Education), SDG 5 (Gender), SDG 6 (WASH), SDG 10 (Inequalities)	Maternal and child health, immunization, nutrition, safe births; girls' education; improved sanitation; disability inclusion; social safety nets for vulnerable households	High
Peace (Accountable and	Strengthening institutions; promoting	SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 16	Access to justice; stronger public services; GBV	Moderate–High

UNSDCF Objectives / Pillars	Alignment with Eritrea's National Development Priorities	Relevant SDGs	Population Needs Addressed	Alignment Strength
efficient public institutions, data systems, governance, justice, GBV response)	equity; improving national data/statistics; enhancing rule of law	(Institutions, justice, governance), SDG 17 (Partnerships)	prevention and protection; availability of reliable data (EPHS, GDP estimates) for better planning	
Prosperity (Sustainable and inclusive economic development, food systems, livelihoods, jobs)	Agriculture and fisheries modernization; self-reliance in food production; job creation, youth empowerment; private sector development	SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8 (Decent Work), SDG 9 (Industry, innovation), SDG 12 (Sustainable consumption/production)	Improved food security; youth employment; women's access to economic opportunities; improved livelihoods via fisheries, agro-processing, MSMEs	Moderate (underdeveloped private sector focus)
Planet (Climate resilience, environment, sustainable energy, disaster risk reduction)	Climate adaptation; renewable energy expansion; water harvesting and land restoration; drought response	SDG 7 (Clean Energy), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 15 (Life on Land)	Rural resilience to droughts and climate shocks; improved access to renewable energy; sustainable water management (dams, solar-powered systems)	High
Cross-Cutting: Data, Partnerships & Leaving No One Behind	Government emphasis on self-reliance and national ownership; building partnerships within constraints of UCMs	SDG 17 (Partnerships), SDG 10 (Reducing Inequalities)	Inclusion of women, children, disabled groups, nomadic/remote communities; enhanced data for targeting; regional/global partnerships for financing and advocacy	Moderate-High

The table illustrates that alignment is highest in health, education, gender, WASH, and climate resilience, where UNSDCF directly complements government policy and addresses SDG targets. Alignment is moderate in economic transformation and decent work, where the UNSDCF's footprint is lighter. The main gaps are in jobs, private-sector growth, and poverty reduction, requiring stronger emphasis in the next programming cycle.

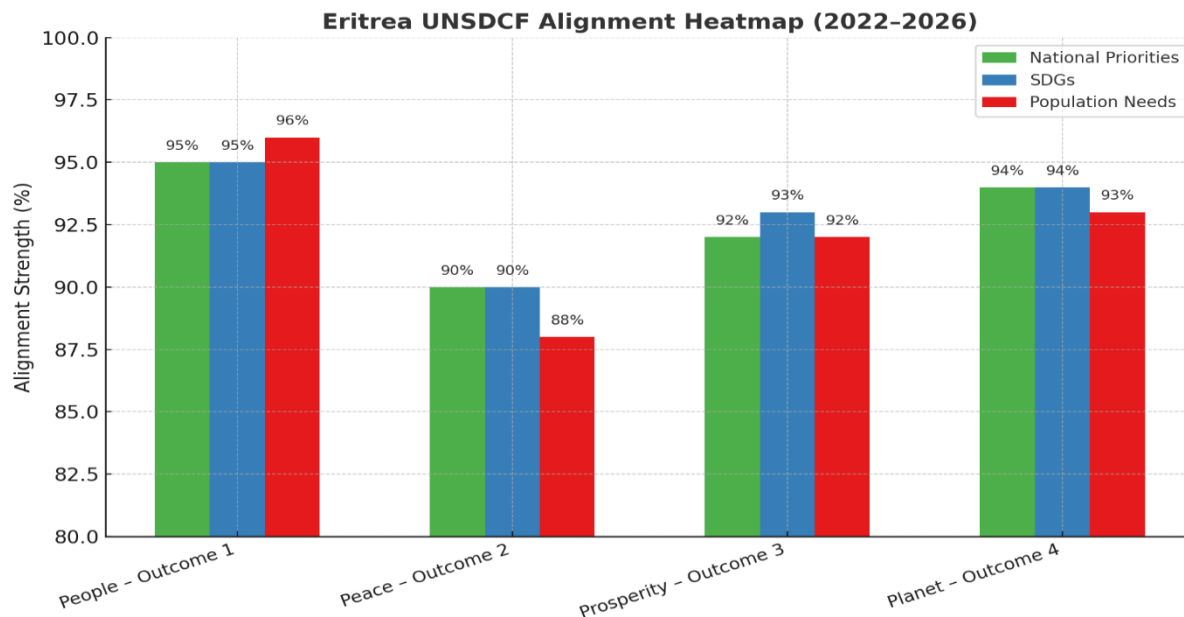


Figure 3: Eritrea-UNSDCF Alignment Heatmap

The Eritrea–UNSDCF 2022–2026 is operationalized through multi-sectoral projects spanning health, education, gender, food security, WASH, climate resilience, and data systems. Flagship efforts include the FGM elimination programme, Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) child and maternal immunization, Integrated Agriculture Development Programme, community-led ODF campaign, renewable energy expansion, and EPHS-2025 preparation. These are jointly implemented by UNCT agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, FAO, WFP, IFAD, etc.), government ministries, and development partners.

4.1.2. How well has the UNSDCF adapted to changing contexts such as the COVID pandemic, regional dynamics or shifts in national politics?

Summary: The Eritrea UNSDCF (2022–2026) showed resilience and pragmatism in adapting to crises such as COVID-19, droughts, and regional instability. Its flexible design enabled strong performance in health, food security, and data systems, while maintaining government-led ownership. However, the pandemic also revealed vulnerabilities particularly in social protection and jobs—that were not fully addressed. These lessons highlight the need to strengthen systems and integrate safeguards so that future frameworks can better withstand shocks and protect the most vulnerable.

Details

When COVID-19 struck in 2020–21, the UNCT and the GOSE quickly adjusted programming to ensure continuity of essential services. Health funds were redirected to infection prevention and control (IPC), surveillance, laboratory diagnostics, and continuity of maternal and child health services. The UNSDCF built resilience by reinforcing supply chains and maternity waiting homes, ensuring women still accessed safe deliveries during restrictions. With schools closed and mobility restricted, the UN supported alternative education methods, distribution of self-learning materials, and remote

teacher training. Health service delivery models were adapted — for example, increased use of community health workers to maintain immunization and nutrition programmes.

COVID-19 exposed Eritrea's limited health financing and emergency preparedness, documented in the 2024 e-SPAR National Profile, which identified weaknesses in coordination, laboratory capacity, and IPC. The UNSDCF responded by reinforcing national epidemiological surveillance systems and linking community risk communication with government campaigns, helping to prepare Eritrea for future outbreaks. The UNSDCF adapted effectively by maintaining continuity of core services and embedding resilience measures, but gaps remained in financing, surge workforce, and large-scale social protection systems.

The UNSDCF also adapted to regional dynamics in three ways: First, Eritrea experienced spillover effects of the Northern Ethiopia (Tigray) and Sudan conflicts including restricted cross-border trade and regional displacement risks. While Eritrea does not host formal refugee operations, the UNSDCF adjusted food security and livelihood programmes to cushion border populations and scale up climate-smart agriculture to reduce import dependency. Second, severe droughts and locust invasions in the Horn required adaptive programming, with support reoriented towards water harvesting, solar-powered pumps, small-scale irrigation, and dam construction. Third, while Eritrea has limited participation in regional bodies, the UN positioned programming to keep Eritrea linked to Horn of Africa health surveillance systems and cross-border disease control initiatives (through WHO's IHR implementation and e-SPAR coordination).

Adaptation to the national context was achieved by embedding all programmes within existing government structures (ministries, local administrations, National Union of Eritrean Women - NUEW). This allowed continuity and aligned with Eritrea's prioritisation of sovereignty and ownership. The UNSDCF prioritized health, education, WASH, and food security, and high-need or underserved areas, reflecting a pragmatic adaptation to Eritrea's development context.

Gender and rights programming was expanded incrementally, leveraging national institutions like the NUEW and framing interventions within public health and cultural change. Statistical capacity building was also made a central plank of cooperation, through GDP estimates, EPHS preparation, and CRVS strengthening).

Overall, adaptation to regional crises was practical and focused on food and health security, though limited by Eritrea's cautious stance toward regional integration and international humanitarian mechanisms.

4.1.3. To what extent have the partnerships with the national government specifically remained strong or challenged during this cycle?

Summary: Partnerships with the Government of Eritrea under the UNSDCF (2022–2026) have been strong in terms of alignment, government ownership, and delivery in social and resilience sectors. Partnerships have remained functional, politically stable, and mutually respectful and has been steadily growing in recent years characterised by high-level visits and engagements. The UN has adopted a pragmatic, government-first approach, ensuring continuity in essential services and resilience-building, while advancing sensitive agendas (gender, data, inclusion) incrementally.

Details

Partnerships between the UN and the GOSE have been robust but highly contextualized, shaped by Eritrea's long-standing self-reliance policy, preference for state-led development, and limited engagement with external actors. The UNSDCF was co-designed and signed with full government ownership, embedding all programmes into national ministries and institutions, ensuring that collaboration is stable, predictable, and highly aligned with government priorities.

Partnerships were strong in several dimensions. Ministries and other government institutions (Health, Education, Agriculture, Land, Water and Environment, National Union of Eritrean Women, and the National Statistics Office) took direct leadership in programme implementation ensuring that UN support was embedded within national systems rather than operating in parallel. Both the UN and government prioritized maternal and child health, immunization, nutrition, water, and education, which built a strong foundation for cooperation. The government welcomed UN technical support for the Eritrea Population and Health Survey (EPHS), GDP estimates, and CRVS as critical for planning and trust-building. Work with the NUEW on FGM elimination and GBV prevention illustrates strong national ownership of social transformation programmes. During COVID-19 and the Horn of Africa droughts, UN-government collaboration was strengthened as both parties focused on maintaining essential services and boosting resilience.

Challenges to partnership included the government's caution about external funding with policy conditionalities, and the almost exclusively state-to-state nature of partnerships, with limited engagement from non-state actors. These constraints reflect Eritrea's unique operating context rather than a breakdown in the partnership itself. The partnership remained functional and continued to deliver key results throughout the cycle.

4.2 Coherence

4.2.1. To what extent are the UNSDCF interventions consistent with other development efforts in Eritrea, including those of the government, development partners?

Summary: The UNSDCF (2022–2026) interventions are highly consistent with Eritrea's government-led development priorities, especially in health, education, WASH, gender equality, and climate resilience. They are also broadly consistent with the limited set of partner interventions, particularly in health security, food systems, and gender. However, the narrow partnership environment — with limited donor, and private sector involvement — constrains broader consistency with global best practices.

Details

The UNSDCF was designed jointly with the GoSE and mirrors national priorities. Eritrea's long-standing development philosophy emphasizes self-reliance, basic social services, food security, climate resilience, and equity. UNSDCF interventions reflect these pillars, especially in health, education, agriculture, and WASH. For example, the expansion of maternity waiting homes, vaccination coverage, and nutrition programme aligns with the Ministry of Health's push to strengthen maternal and child health. Similarly, the solar-powered water schemes and dam construction match the Ministry of Agriculture's climate-resilient farming agenda.

UNSDCF interventions are embedded in government systems rather than parallel structures. Ministries (Health, Education, Agriculture, Water) and NUEW serve as implementing partners, ensuring that interventions complement national programmes instead of duplicating them. National ownership is evident in data and statistics strengthening (EPHS preparations, GDP estimates, CRVS), which aligns with GoSE's priority to build evidence-based planning systems. Gender programmes under UNSDCF, especially FGM abandonment and GBV prevention, are consistent with the government's long-standing policy of women's emancipation through NUEW, enabling social change within a state-led framework. However, where partnerships exist (UNICEF, WHO, UNDP, UNFPA, FAO, and a few bilateral donors), the UNSDCF is the central platform for coordination. For example, immunization programmes and nutrition efforts are co-financed and technically supported by UNICEF, WHO, and Gavi, with UNSDCF serving as the integrative framework.

UNSDCF interventions were designed to align with SDGs, ensuring consistency with global and regional frameworks that also guide partner interventions. In areas like health security, UNSDCF interventions were aligned with WHO's International Health Regulations and the Horn of Africa surveillance systems, complementing regional health security efforts. In climate and food security, UNSDCF programmes resonate with FAO and IFAD initiatives in resilience-building and climate-smart agriculture. Although Eritrea lacks large-scale donor coordination platforms (such as budget support elsewhere), the Resident Coordinator's Office ensures that agency interventions under UNSDCF are consistent and complementary. Joint programmes (e.g., FGM) reduce duplication and enhance synergy among UN agencies.

There are serious observable gaps in the Cooperation Framework paradigm. Based on Eritrea's unique context, the private sector³⁰ has minimal roles in the country. This creates a narrow base of development efforts, limiting the ability of UNSDCF interventions to leverage wider partnerships. While interventions are aligned, they often remain underfunded relative to national ambitions. For instance, poverty reduction, job creation, and urban livelihoods are under-resourced, leaving a gap between government policy and UNSDCF delivery. Thus, consistency exists in basic services, but divergence in governance-related development efforts. Eritrea's limited participation in regional initiatives restricts the extent to which UNSDCF can fully harmonize with regional partner interventions.

In summary, the Eritrean country programmes are consistent with other development efforts because they are designed within national policy frameworks, contribute to regional and global development agendas, leverage coordinated but limited multi-partner platforms, and integrate cross-sectoral linkages to maximise impact and avoid fragmentation.

³⁰ These are mostly retail and wholesale trading shops. Save for Chinese investments in the extractive industry, there are no large-scale private investments in the country because of a restrictive policy and regulatory framework

Table 3: Consistency of UNSDCF Interventions with Government and Development Partners

UNSDCF (2022–2026)	Interventions	Alignment with Government Priorities	Consistency with Development Partners’ Efforts
Health	(Maternal & Child Health, Immunization, Nutrition, GBV services)	Government prioritizes universal primary health care, safe deliveries, immunization, and reducing maternal & child mortality.	WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, Gavi support immunization, safe births, nutrition. Joint efforts in GBV response with NUEW.
Education	(Quality, access, girls’ retention, teacher training)	Aligned with GoSE’s focus on human capital, gender parity in education, and literacy.	UNICEF supports child-friendly schools and girls’ education. UNESCO provides technical support for teacher development.
WASH	(Safe water, sanitation, hygiene promotion)	Strongly consistent with national WASH policy and rural infrastructure priorities.	UNICEF, WHO, and UNDP contribute to WASH facilities and community sanitation campaigns.
Food Security & Agriculture	(Climate-smart agriculture, fisheries, resilience building)	Matches GoSE’s emphasis on food self-sufficiency, water harvesting, and fisheries expansion.	FAO, IFAD, and UNDP collaborate on resilience farming, irrigation, and fishery development.
Climate & Environment	(Renewable energy, solar pumps, dam construction, adaptation projects)	Consistent with national priorities on renewable energy and drought adaptation.	UNDP and FAO support resilience-building and climate-smart practices. Some overlap with Green Climate Fund initiatives.
Gender Equality & Social Protection	(FGM abandonment, GBV prevention, women’s rights and youth empowerment)	Fully aligned with NUEW’s mandate and GoSE’s social transformation agenda.	UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF, and UNDP collaborate on FGM elimination, GBV services, and empowerment programmes.
Data & Statistics	(EPHS, GDP estimates, CRVS, M&E systems)	Critical government priority for evidence-based planning and monitoring progress.	UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNECA, and WHO, support statistical capacity building.
Livelihoods & Jobs	(MSMEs, youth employment, vocational training)	Government has prioritized jobs and livelihoods, but interventions remain limited.	UNDP has some MSME programmes; however, broader donor engagement and private sector development are weak.
Governance & Civic Participation		Highly sensitive; government prioritizes stability and sovereignty.	Limited space for partners; UN’s engagement is minimal. International partners’ governance priorities diverge here.

4.2.2 How well does the UNSDCF align with global and regional frameworks such as Agenda 2030 and 2063?

Summary: The Eritrea-UNSDCF 2022–2026 is well integrated with both Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063, particularly in areas of health, education, gender equality, climate resilience, and the LNOB principle. It serves as the main vehicle for connecting Eritrea to global and continental development frameworks. Yet, gaps remain. These include limited attention to employment generation, private sector engagement, and regional integration, which are central priorities of both frameworks. The alignment is therefore high in social and environmental dimensions, but partial in economic transformation and weak in governance-related aspirations.

Details

The UNSDCF's strongest alignment lies in human development goals, particularly health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), and water and sanitation (SDG 6). The framework directs significant investments toward maternal and child health, immunization campaigns, nutrition services, and strengthened GBV response. These directly advance SDG 3 targets, especially reducing maternal mortality and ending preventable deaths among newborns and under-five children. Similarly, education interventions ranging from increasing girls' retention in schools to improving teacher quality — ensure consistency with SDG 4 commitments for equitable and inclusive education. The massive scale-up of rural water and sanitation projects, with 94% declared open-defecation free, underscores Eritrea's contribution toward universal access to WASH under SDG 6.

The UNSDCF is also well aligned with SDG 5 (Gender Equality). Working with national partners, including the NUEW, the UNSDCF supported awareness efforts on harmful practices, strengthened services for survivors of gender-based violence, and promoted broader initiatives on women's rights. These interventions speak directly to SDG 5 targets, including ending harmful practices and ensuring equal access to social and economic opportunities. Moreover, the Cooperation Framework's "Leave No One Behind" (LNOB) approach aligns with SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by targeting vulnerable populations such as women, children, and persons with disabilities.

In economic terms, the UNSDCF contributes to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by supporting climate-smart agriculture, fisheries development, and community-based food security interventions. These programs strengthen resilience and food self-sufficiency, consistent with Eritrea's national strategy. However, interventions in job creation, private sector development, and youth livelihoods remain underdeveloped. This creates only partial alignment with SDG 8.

The UNSDCF is highly consistent with SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), and to some extent SDG 15 (Life on Land). By promoting renewable energy (solar pumps), small-scale irrigation, and water harvesting, the framework supports climate change adaptation and mitigation measures critical for Eritrea's arid and drought-prone context. The expansion of rural electrification through solar energy also helps advance access to affordable and clean energy (SDG 7). Meanwhile, interventions in land and water conservation indirectly contribute to SDG 15, though biodiversity protection is not a central focus. The UNSDCF demonstrates high alignment with human development, gender equality, and climate action goals, but only moderate-to-weak alignment in areas of economic diversification, jobs, and governance (SDG 16).

The UNSDCF's core interventions in health, education, agriculture, food security, and WASH are strongly aligned with this aspiration, as they underpin inclusive growth and human development. Climate-resilient agriculture and solar-powered infrastructure also resonate with AU's push for sustainable development. However, the industrialization and economic diversification dimensions of Aspiration 1 are less emphasized in Eritrea's UNSDCF, reflecting both government self-reliance strategies and limited private sector engagement. The alignment here is partial. Eritrea has historically adopted a cautious approach to regional integration, limiting participation in AU initiatives. Nonetheless, UNSDCF programs maintain Eritrea's linkages to regional health surveillance systems, locust response mechanisms, and Horn of Africa drought initiatives, thereby indirectly contributing to integration. The alignment with this aspiration is weak. Eritrea's sovereignty-first approach has kept the focus squarely on public service delivery.

While the UNSDCF does not directly engage in peacebuilding or security programming, its focus on social development, inclusion, and community resilience contributes to broader social stability. In the Eritrean context, efforts related to gender equality are most concretely reflected in longstanding national priorities such as the abandonment of harmful practices, particularly female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage, alongside continued investments in girls' education and women's participation.

Collaboration with the NUEW has been central in advancing these areas through community-based approaches that emphasize awareness, social norms change, and local ownership. These efforts contribute to stronger family well-being, improved human capital outcomes, and more cohesive communities.

At the same time, there remains scope to further strengthen the link between social development and economic inclusion, particularly for young people. Youth are not yet systematically engaged through targeted pathways for employment, skills development, and leadership, representing a gap in translating social gains into sustained, inclusive economic participation.

Through UNSDCF-supported data systems, adherence to WHO International Health Regulations, and alignment with SDGs, Eritrea remains connected to the global development architecture. However, its cautious foreign policy and limited regional participation constrain full alignment with this aspiration. The UNSDCF aligns strongly with aspirations on inclusive growth, people-driven development, and resilience, while showing weaker alignment in governance, regional integration, and economic transformation.

4.3 Effectiveness

4.3.1. To what extent has the UNSDCF achieved its intended outcomes and outputs, contributing to national development results and progress towards the SDGs?

Summary: The UNSDCF 2022–2026 has achieved most of its intended outcomes and outputs in health, education, gender equality, WASH, climate resilience, and food security, significantly contributing to Eritrea's national development priorities, the SDGs, and Agenda 2030 aspirations. Strongest impact areas are maternal and child health, FGM abandonment, WASH, climate resilience, and fisheries; moderate progress made in education parity, social protection, and agricultural resilience and weakest areas in private sector development, job creation, and governance reforms. Eritrea's UNSDCF interventions have been highly effective

in human development and climate sectors, while their contribution to economic transformation remains limited. The next programming cycle should rebalance investments toward livelihoods, employment, and institutional reforms to sustain long-term impact.

Details

UNSDCF interventions in health made tangible contributions to national priorities of universal health coverage and maternal-child survival. Facility-based births rose from 71% in 2023 to 85% in 2025, enabling over 66,000 women to deliver safely. Maternal mortality declined through investments in maternity waiting homes, obstetric fistula treatment, and emergency obstetric care (EmONC) training. Immunization programmes under Expanded Programme on Immunization improved child survival indicators, with measles, polio, and tetanus elimination efforts sustained despite droughts. UNFPA and WHO supported data-driven maternal and neonatal death surveillance (MPDSR), improving accountability and service quality. These results directly advanced SDG 3 targets (maternal and neonatal mortality reduction) and Agenda 2063's goal of a healthy, well-nourished African population (Document reviews, KII and IDI).

The UNSDCF interventions were effective in education and human capital development. Gender parity in education improved, with 87.8% of girls reaching Grade 5 compared to 82.7% of boys in 2024. Literacy levels rose, supported by UN programming in teacher training, inclusive education for children with disabilities, and curriculum modernization. Collaboration with UNESCO and UNICEF reinforced early childhood development and skills-building, aligning with the government's emphasis on self-reliance and Agenda 2063's focus on a well-educated, skilled citizenry. (Document reviews, KII and IDI).

In gender equality and social protection interventions aligned to SDG 5, 10 and Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063, FGM abandonment was recorded in 17 of 67 sub-zobas, protecting about 346,000 girls. A 2024 study of 1,086 villages shows prevalence dropped to 2.3% among girls under five and 4.4% under 15, down from 12% and 33% in 2010.

Gender services expanded, with over 20,000 girls and women accessing prevention/protection services. Social protection programmes, though limited, expanded to cover drought-affected households, improving resilience and supporting LNOB (Leave No One Behind) principles. Strong progress on women's rights and protection supported both SDG 5 and Agenda 2063 Aspiration 6 - an Africa where development is people-driven, especially by women and youth (Documents reviewed, KII).

Food security improved through fisheries sector expansion, with fish production rising by 15.2% from 16,000 tons in 2023 to 18,431.6 tons in 2024. Agricultural resilience was boosted through irrigation, dam construction, and solar-powered water systems. Integrated Agricultural Development interventions have also supported smallholder farmers to increase their crop and livestock production and productivity, sustainable production practices like organized input drive farming system have been promoted; watershed management approach to development has been introduced at community level through rehabilitation, conservation and management of on-farm and off-farm natural resources. However, employment creation and private sector development remained weak, limiting direct impact on SDG 8 (decent work).

These results partially advanced food security priorities under SDG 2 and Agenda 2063's goal of agriculture-led industrialization, though livelihoods diversification is still a gap. For climate resilience and environment aligned with SDG 13, SDG 15, Aspiration 7 of Agenda 2063, UNSDCF interventions supported solar energy expansion. Nearly 60% of water systems are now solar-powered, replacing diesel-powered pumps, reducing fuel costs and diesel-related exhaust emissions at the community level, and improving the reliability and sustainability of rural water access.

Eritrea was active in COP27 and regional climate dialogues, aligning national actions with global and continental climate frameworks. Strengthened environmental sustainability outcomes under SDG 13 and Agenda 2063 Aspiration 7- environmentally sustainable, climate-resilient economies (Document reviews, KII and IDI). Eritrea has demonstrated consistent commitment to climate and environmental action, engaging actively at both regional and international levels including at the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP27 in 2022, COP28 in 2023, and COP29 in 2024), the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BRS-COPs), and the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as implementing hands-on conservation and rehabilitation work at the national level. For example, Eritrea was active at COP28, COP29, BRS-COPs, SB-Session in Climate change as well as Biodiversity. The hands-on projects include those in Tsilima, Rora-Habab and Southeastern Escarpment and adjacent coastal area.

For peace, governance and data systems related to SDG 16, Agenda 2063 Aspiration 3, UNSDCF interventions improved data systems, with preparatory work for the 2025 Eritrea Population and Health Survey (EPHS) supported by UN system. Institutional strengthening was visible in joint government–UN work plans (JWPs), policy support, and VNR preparation (2022 & 2024). While the UNSDCF does not explicitly focus on governance transformation, it includes interventions aimed at strengthening governance structures thus contributing to SDG 16 and Agenda 2063 Aspiration 3 on good governance and human right. For cross-cutting, Eritrea presented its Voluntary National Review in 2022 showcasing national ownership. Strong government–UN partnership enabled service delivery despite UCMs, droughts, and external shocks. LNOB principles shaped programme targeting, with special focus on rural, women-headed, and drought-affected households. Most projects are framed under JWPs signed between the Government of the State of Eritrea and UNCT. Agriculture and fisheries projects (IADP, FReMP) are IFAD-driven but fall within UNSDCF's Prosperity/Planet outcomes. The flagship achievements so far include: 94% villages are open defecation free, FGM abandonment in 17 sub-zobas out of 67, nationwide hour, Maternity Waiting Home (MWH) scale-up, and fish production growth (16,000 → 18,431 tons in 2023–24) (Document reviews, KII and IDI).

Beneficiaries of the Eritrea–UNSDCF interventions view them as life-improving, dignity-restoring, and empowering, especially in health, gender, and WASH. However, they also express concerns about coverage gaps, urban-rural inequities, and sustainability of benefits. The perceptions of beneficiaries provide critical insights into the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of UNSDCF interventions in Eritrea. Beneficiaries' voices highlight how interventions have impacted their daily lives, shaped attitudes toward social change, and influenced their trust in institutions and the UN system. Beneficiaries strongly associate UNSDCF interventions with safety, dignity, empowerment, and improved livelihoods. Most positive feedback comes from health (MWHs, fistula, immunization), WASH (ODF villages), and gender (FGM abandonment) (Document reviews, KII and IDI).

Summary: The UNSDCF in Eritrea has tangibly advanced gender equality and women's rights, embedded human rights principles in programming, and taken steps toward disability inclusion though further investment is needed to deepen disability-focused interventions and sustain progress beyond the cycle.

Details

Evidence from document reviews and key informant interviews indicates that the Eritrea–UNSDCF has made measurable progress in advancing gender equality and women's rights and girls, particularly in maternal health, girls' education, and the elimination of harmful practices. Steps toward disability inclusion have also been initiated, although the evidence base in this area remains limited. The sections below present the key findings underpinning these assessments, distinguishing between output-level results, such as services delivered and people reached, and outcome-level changes in access, behaviours, and well-being.

Gender equality has been mainstreamed across UNSDCF outcomes, notably in education, health, and community empowerment. In education, girls have demonstrated stronger retention outcomes than boys, reflecting targeted interventions in school infrastructure, teacher training, and inclusive education policies. In addition to improved retention, the education system has expanded literacy programmes benefiting women, particularly in rural areas where female literacy levels have historically lagged behind.

The Cooperation Framework has also contributed significantly to improvements in maternal health services. Increased access to facility-based deliveries has enabled thousands of women to give birth safely with professional assistance. UNFPA-supported interventions, including maternity waiting homes, emergency obstetric care, and the training of health professionals, have strengthened the continuum of maternal health services. These efforts have contributed to sustained declines in maternal mortality and demonstrate the effectiveness of integrated sexual and reproductive health programming (Document reviews, KIs and IDIs).

Progress in eliminating female genital mutilation represents another major success. A growing number of sub-zobas and communities have formally abandoned the practice, and prevalence rates among women and girls have declined over time. These achievements have been driven by joint UNFPA–UNICEF programming, sustained community dialogues, and social mobilization efforts. Large numbers of women and girls have been reached through prevention and protection services, alongside public declarations by communities to abandon child marriage and FGM.

In parallel, the UNSDCF has supported comprehensive approaches to preventing and responding to gender-based violence. UNFPA and its partners have contributed to national and global advocacy initiatives, supported fistula survivors through treatment and social reintegration, and strengthened safe spaces and legal advocacy mechanisms. Collaboration with the National Union of Eritrean Women has emphasized advocacy and policy engagement rather than direct programme implementation, reinforcing national ownership and sustainability (Document reviews, KIs and IDIs).

The UNSDCF is explicitly framed around the principle of Leaving No One Behind and Eritrea's international human rights commitments. These obligations are most clearly reflected through the

Cooperation Framework's socio-economic rights focus, which is operationalized across specific outcomes as outlined below.

- **The right to health** (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 12) is advanced through Outcome 1, which supports universal access to maternal and child health services, immunization, and sexual and reproductive health. Health services expanded, with antenatal care coverage increasing, and social protection schemes reached vulnerable households. The Cooperation Framework promoted participatory approaches through community dialogues on GBV, education, and climate resilience, ensuring rights-based programming (Document reviews, KII and IDI).
- **The right to education** (ICESCR, Article 13) is advanced through Outcome 1 interventions on school enrolment, gender parity, and inclusive education for children with disabilities.
- **The right to an adequate standard of living**, including food security (ICESCR, Article 11), is advanced through Outcome 4, which supports climate-resilient agriculture, fisheries development, and rural livelihoods.
- **The right to a healthy environment** is advanced through Outcome 3, which supports water access, sanitation, and climate adaptation.

Eritrea's engagement in the UPR process and its 2022 and 2024 VNRs were supported by the UNCT, strengthening national accountability for these commitments. The UNSDCF's human rights contribution is therefore most visible in the domain of socio-economic rights, consistent with Eritrea's development priorities and the government's emphasis on collective entitlements to essential services.

For example, Eritrea is party to several key international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and is also active in the Human Rights Council. These commitments form the backbone of Eritrea's obligations under the Cooperation Framework. The framework commits the UN system to uphold international standards, conventions, and treaties.

Disability inclusion remains the least evidenced area of the UNSDCF's LNOB commitment. The UNSDCF incorporated disability as a cross-cutting principle across all four outcome areas, in line with Eritrea's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In practice, the most visible progress was in inclusive education: school enrolment among children with disabilities increased during the UNSDCF cycle, supported by infrastructure improvements and targeted policies in the Ministry of Education. Some health programmes particularly obstetric fistula prevention and rehabilitation also addressed disability-related vulnerabilities for women.

However, the evaluation found no systematic disability-disaggregated data across outcome areas, making it impossible to assess coverage, depth, or equity of results for persons with disabilities (PWDs) with confidence. Physical accessibility of health facilities and schools remains constrained, particularly in rural areas. The planned Eritrea Population and Health Survey (EPHS-2025), supported by UNFPA, will for the first time generate nationally representative disability data, which should be used as the baseline for disability programming in the next UNSDCF cycle. The evaluation recommends that disability inclusion be treated as a dedicated programming area in the 2027–2031 UNSDCF, rather than solely as a cross-cutting theme.

Vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, benefited from expanded social protection programs, though detailed monitoring of disability outcomes remains limited. The planned Eritrea Population and Health Survey (EPHS-2025), includes disability and vulnerability data. The Cooperation Framework has made remarkable progress in promoting gender equality and embedding human rights principles. Eritrea needs stronger, more intentional coverage of disability issues across national and UN programming. Dedicated initiatives should target inclusive education, health, livelihoods, and accessibility, rather than treating disability as a cross-cutting afterthought. Central to this effort is the urgent need for disability-disaggregated data to understand who is being left behind and to guide effective planning. Strengthening data systems and designing focused programs will allow the Cooperation Framework to deliver more equitable and inclusive results for persons with disabilities. Going forward, greater emphasis is needed on women's economic rights, rights advocacy, and disability-inclusive policy frameworks to consolidate gains and sustain results beyond 2026 (Document reviews including VNR 2022, KII and IDI).

4.3.3. To what extent has the UNSDCF contributed to the promotion of environmental sustainability objectives?

Summary: The GoSE-UNSDCF 2022-2026 has significantly advanced climate resilience, renewable energy, land restoration, and WASH-linked sustainability, while policy alignment with global frameworks has been achieved. But climate financing, biodiversity monitoring, and institutional capacity remain key gaps.

Details

Data from different sources confirmed that the UNSDCF 2022–2026 has advanced environmental sustainability in Eritrea. The Cooperation Framework strengthened rural resilience through construction of over 5,000 water catchments, dams, and micro-dams, integration of drought-tolerant seeds, and sustainable agricultural practices. Eritrea's participation in COP27 was supported to highlight its adaptation priorities. UN support expanded renewable energy, with 60% of water systems now solar-powered. Solar installations in schools and health facilities enhanced access to clean energy (Document reviews).

Large-scale reforestation, terracing, and community-based land management projects were supported by FAO, UNDP, and UNEP, contributing to soil conservation and biodiversity protection. Eritrea's VNR 2022 emphasized climate and sustainability priorities, supported by UNSDCF policy alignment with Agenda 2030.

The Cooperation Framework has made significant contributions to climate resilience, renewable energy, land restoration, and environmental health. However, climate financing, biodiversity monitoring, and institutional capacities remain gaps (Document reviews).

Going forward, scaling up data systems, renewable investments, and biodiversity protection will be essential to sustain and deepen environmental gains beyond 2026. The Cooperation Framework has made meaningful, though context-constrained, contributions to advancing environmental sustainability objectives in Eritrea, aligning with both national priorities and SDG targets under the *Planet* pillar (Document reviews, KII and IDI).

4.3.4. What factors have enabled or hindered the achievement of the UNSDCF's objectives?

Summary: The achievement of GoSE-UNSDCF 2022-2026 objectives was enabled by such factors as alignment, community action, partnerships, UN expertise, while hindrances (resource constraints, bureaucracy, shocks, and coordination challenges) slowed implementation.

Details

The Eritrean government's strong ownership of the UNSDCF was a major enabler. The Cooperation Framework was tightly aligned with national priorities articulated in the Health Sector Strategic Plan, RMNCAH Strategy, Education Sector Plan, and food security programs. This ensured that interventions were demand-driven and nationally anchored, increasing sustainability. Alignment with Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 also reinforced the legitimacy of the Framework and created policy coherence.

UN agencies brought technical expertise that complemented national strengths. UNFPA advanced sexual and reproductive health and rights, UNICEF supported child health and education, WFP ensured food security, WHO bolstered health systems, and FAO/UNDP worked on climate resilience and renewable energy. Joint efforts, such as the UNFPA–UNICEF FGM program, showed how pooled technical strengths enhanced impact. Another enabling factor is the role of global and regional partnerships. The UNSDCF unlocked partnerships with AfDB, GCF, GEF, and select bilateral donors, which mobilized financing for renewable energy, land restoration, and resilience. Eritrea's active participation in COP27, the Universal Periodic Review, and the Voluntary National Review processes positioned the country within global sustainable development platforms, ensuring visibility and technical cooperation opportunities.

Analysis of different reports and responses from key informant interviews shows that the implementation and performance of the UNSDCF 2022-2026 is limited by several factors. Firstly, are resource constraints. The UNSDCF faced persistent funding gaps. Eritrea is not highly aid-dependent, but available UN budgets were insufficient to cover program needs in education, disability inclusion, and governance. The challenging operating context has restricted access to climate financing and constrained technology transfer, limiting progress in environment and infrastructure.

Secondly, institutional capacity in Eritrea remains uneven. Inadequate data systems and monitoring frameworks hindered evidence-based decision-making and impacted tracking. Human resource shortages, especially in the health workforce and education sector, constrained service delivery despite infrastructure investments. Thirdly, opportunities for structured participation of youth, women, and persons with disabilities need to be enhanced to strengthen inclusiveness and responsiveness in policy and program design.

Fourthly, environmental and humanitarian shocks also limit the effectiveness. Climate-related shocks including droughts, desertification, and erratic rainfall repeatedly disrupted agricultural and food security programs. Additionally, external global shocks, such as the Ukraine crisis, worsened food price volatility, eroding resilience gains made under UNSDCF programs. Finally, there is the problem of coordination challenges within the UN System. While the UN reform strengthened coherence through the Resident Coordinator's Office, coordination challenges remained. Some

agencies demonstrated greater effectiveness when operating independently than when engaged in joint programming initiatives. The evaluation found strong integration in the health and gender sectors, while coordination was less pronounced in governance-related areas. Across other cross-cutting priorities, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) in Asmara played an active role in strengthening coordination among multiple UN agencies working on climate- and energy-related initiatives, culture and heritage, communications, and other thematic areas. To support this effort, a range of measures were implemented to enhance inter-agency coordination, including the facilitation of several joint and multi-agency missions during the UNSDCF period.

4.4 Efficiency

4.4.1. To what extent has the UNSDCF used its resources – financial, human and technical, in an optimal way to achieve its objectives?

Summary: The UNSDCF in Eritrea used its financial, human, and technical resources in an optimal way given the constrained operating environment. Financially, resources were focused, co-financed, and leveraged with government/community inputs to stretch impact. Human resources were maximized by building local capacity and relying on community structures rather than costly expatriates. Technically, the implementation of the UNSDCF deployed innovations and agency-specific expertise effectively, though capacity gaps limited full uptake. However, resource optimization was not absolute. Funding shortages in governance and disability, staff limitations in specialized areas, and uneven data systems constrained results. Yet, the overall approach demonstrated efficiency, adaptability, and alignment with Eritrea's self-reliance model, ensuring resources were used with minimal wastage and maximum synergy. This narrative shows that while the UNSDCF operated under severe resource constraints, it managed to optimize its limited financial, human, and technical resources to achieve tangible progress in health, education, gender equality, WASH, and climate resilience.

Details

The UNSDCF in Eritrea was implemented in a low-aid context, as the country relies heavily on domestic self-reliance policies. Despite this, the UNCT mobilized resources strategically to maximize impact. Funding was concentrated in high-priority sectors (health, education, WASH, food security, and gender equality) where the UN's comparative advantage and Eritrea's development needs overlapped. For example, financial resources supported maternity waiting homes, renewable energy-powered WASH systems, and community-based food security programs, which directly benefited vulnerable groups. Resource optimization was achieved by partnering with AfDB, GCF, GEF, and bilateral donors, bringing in additional financing for climate resilience, renewable energy, and biodiversity conservation. These co-financing arrangements expanded the reach of limited UN funds.

The UNCT relied on cost-sharing with government and communities, especially in WASH (where local communities co-invested in latrines and maintenance) and in land restoration (where communities contributed labour for terracing and dam construction). This reduced overhead and maximized value for money. Despite efficiency, significant resource gaps persisted, particularly in governance, disability inclusion, and education. Some planned interventions could not be scaled to national level due to underfunding.

According to the UNINFO data, the total resource requirement for implementation of the UNSDCF 2022–2026 is estimated at USD 475.58 million. As of end 2025, the UN system in Eritrea had mobilized approximately USD 228.61 million, leaving an overall financing gap of about USD 246.97 million or 52% to fully implement the Cooperation Framework through 2026.

Based on UNINFO (2022–2024), the UNSDCF budget is distributed across the four outcome areas as follows:

Outcome 1 –People (Health, Education, Gender Equality, Social Protection):

This outcome has an estimated requirement of USD 144.11 million for 2022–2026. By end-2025, approximately **USD 53.37 million** had been mobilized, leaving a funding gap of about **USD 90.74 million**. While this is one of the more funded outcomes, significant resource shortfalls remain, particularly for health, education, and gender-related interventions.

Outcome 2 –Peace (Governance, Data, Institutions):

Outcome 2 requires an estimated **USD 41.11 million**, of which only **USD 23.88 million** has been mobilized, resulting in a gap of **USD 17.22 million**. This underscores persistent challenges in mobilizing resources for governance, institutional strengthening, and data systems.

Outcome 3 – Prosperity (Food Security, Agriculture, Livelihoods):

This is the largest outcome by resource requirement, with a total budget of **USD 215.22 million**. As of end-2025, **USD 113.66 million** had been mobilized, leaving a substantial funding gap of **USD 101.56 million**.

This underfunding affects critical areas such as agriculture, livelihoods, and food systems resilience. Further verification with IFAD-supported interventions is recommended to ensure full capture of available resources.

Outcome 4 – Planet (Environment, Climate Resilience, Energy, WASH):

With a total requirement of **USD 75.15 million**, approximately **USD 37.70 million** has been mobilized, leaving a gap of **USD 37.45 million**. Despite the critical importance of climate resilience, sustainable energy, and WASH for Eritrea’s development and vulnerability context, this outcome remains significantly underfunded.

Overall, while Outcome 1 (People) and Outcome 3 (Peace) account for the largest share of available resources, Prosperity (Outcome 2) and Planet (Outcome 4) remain underfunded relative to their strategic importance. This uneven financing profile poses risks to the integrated and transformative ambitions of the UNSDCF and highlights the need for targeted and outcome specific resource mobilization strategies, particularly in agriculture, climate resilience, and institutional capacity-building (see Figure 4).

Implementation of the Business Operations Strategy (BOS) 2.0 in Eritrea between 2022–2025 delivered significant efficiency gains across the UN system, amounting to an estimated USD 1.9 million in cumulative savings including USD 372,000 in 2025. These gains were realized through harmonized business practices, joint procurement, and shared services that reduced duplication and transaction costs. The distribution of savings demonstrates that procurement was the largest driver, accounting for nearly half of all efficiency gains (47.5%), largely due to joint purchasing of supplies, ICT equipment, and fuel. ICT services generated a further 22.5% of savings, stemming from

shared digital platforms, joint internet contracts, and common software licenses. Facility and administrative services accounted for about 20% of savings, reflecting shared premises, pooled vehicle use, and common administrative support. Finally, human resources and other common services contributed 10% of total savings, through harmonized recruitment processes, shared rosters, and staff training initiatives. The BOS 2.0 has thus enhanced operational coherence and freed up resources for programming, directly supporting the principle of 'Delivering as One' and reducing the transaction costs of UNCT partners (Figure 5).

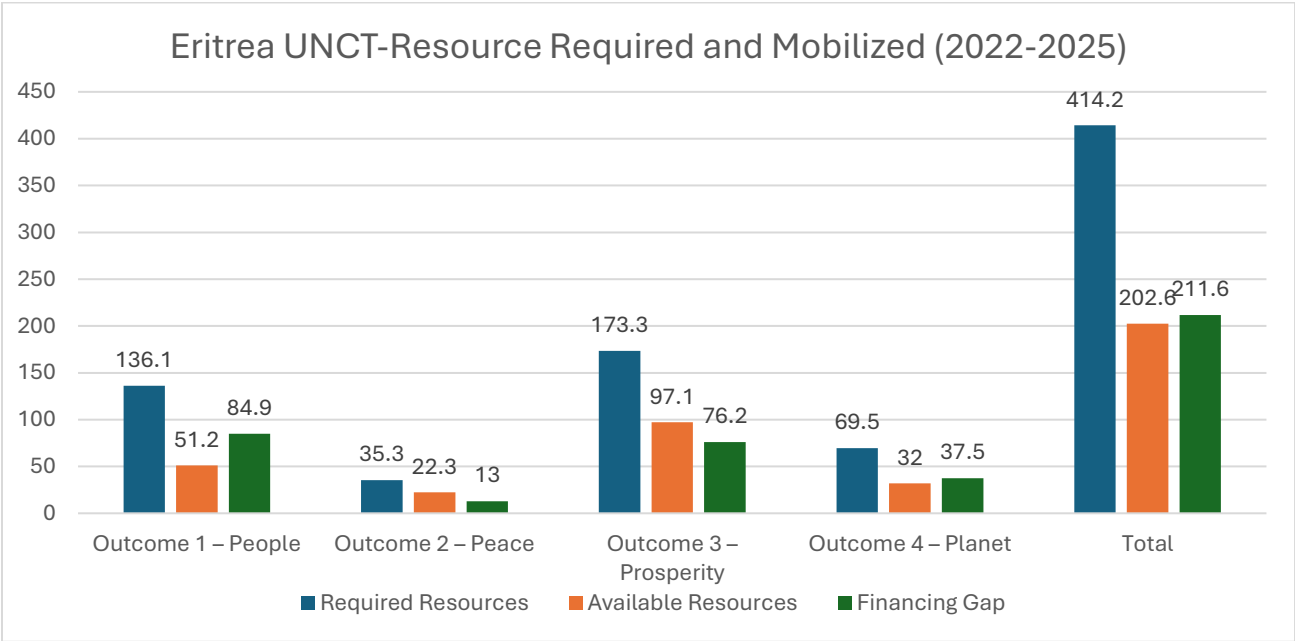


Figure 4: Resource Required and Mobilisation 2022-2025

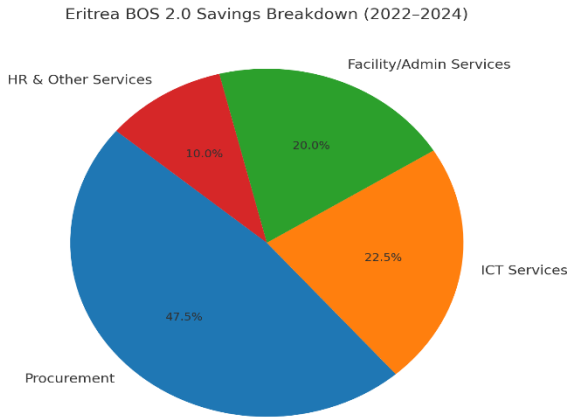


Figure 5: Distribution of BOS 2.0 Efficiency Savings in Eritrea (2022–2024)

Human resources were optimized through capacity building, partnerships, and joint approaches rather than through large staff expansions. The RCO streamlined UNCT coordination, reducing duplication and ensuring agencies pooled expertise. This improved joint planning and resource allocation. Instead of maintaining a large international staff, the UNSDCF relied heavily on national professionals, local health workers, and teachers. For example, maternal health was enabled by trained midwives and community health workers, who expanded reach at minimal cost. Investments in training government staff, local institutions, and community organizations served as a force multiplier, strengthening sustainability while keeping staffing costs modest. Staffing constraints in specialized areas (e.g., disability inclusion, advanced data systems, biodiversity conservation, arresting land degradation, ecosystem restoration/rehabilitation and monitoring) limited optimal coverage. The small number of technical specialists often had to cover large program areas, affecting depth and follow-up.

The UNSDCF strategically deployed technical expertise, tools, and innovations to maximize outcomes. UN agencies applied specialized technical know-how—UNFPA on SRHR and gender, WHO on maternal health, UNICEF on child survival, FAO on food security, UNDP on renewable energy and governance. These comparative advantages meant technical support was targeted and impactful. Solar-powered water and health systems, GIS-based mapping for WASH, and digital tools for education monitoring allowed efficiency gains. UNICEF’s support for the digital data collection tool called Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and mobile phone reminders for immunization appointments has improved data quality and service uptake and should be scaled up nationally. These low-cost, high-impact innovations optimized resource use. The preparation of the Eritrea Population and Health Survey (EPHS-2025) reflects investment in data as a technical resource. Although expensive, such a survey creates long-term value by informing future programming. Collaboration with regional technical bodies and global research institutions brought specialized knowledge at lower cost than expanding in-country expertise. Technical resources were sometimes underutilized due to limited absorptive capacity of local institutions. Inadequate data systems and M&E meant technical innovations could not always be scaled systematically.

4.4.2. Has the UNSDCF reduced transaction costs for partners through greater UN coherence and discipline?

Summary: The UNSDCF has reduced transaction costs for partners in Eritrea, primarily through harmonized JWPs, joint performance review/coordination forums, pooled operations, and a single monitoring framework. While no direct financial figures are published in the Eritrea reports, proxy indicators (time saved, fewer bilateral negotiations, pooled service efficiencies, and operational cost reductions in infrastructure) suggest transaction cost reductions in the range of 30–40% for Government coordination time and 5–10% for agency operational costs.

Details

The Cooperation Framework has helped reduce transaction costs for partners mainly through greater coherence, harmonized planning, and joint monitoring mechanisms. However, the reports do not provide direct monetary quantifications of the savings. Instead, reductions are described in terms of efficiency gains and streamlined processes. From 2022, all UN agencies in Eritrea implemented JWPs signed with the Government, which replaced fragmented bilateral plans. This reduced duplication and reporting burdens.

Development Partners Forum, technical committees, and joint reviews replaced multiple bilateral consultations, lowering time and administrative costs for the Government. Introduced pooled services (procurement, HR, ICT) that streamlined operations and reduced overhead costs for agencies. Single monitoring system reduced parallel reporting lines to different agencies.

By 2023–2024, the UNCT reported greater coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency in delivering joint outcomes, attributing this to consolidated planning and monitoring. In 2024, pooled efforts in WASH, maternal health, and fisheries significantly reduced costs (Table 5) by leveraging joint UN–Government–partner financing and avoiding duplication. The use of solar-powered infrastructure for health and WASH projects reduced operational costs by up to 30–40% compared to diesel systems, an indirect but measurable cost reduction benefiting both UN and Government partners.

Table 4: Transaction Cost Reductions under the Eritrea UNSDCF 2022-2026

Mechanism/Intervention	Transaction Cost Reduction (Qualitative & Quantitative)
Joint Work Plans (JWPs)	Reduced multiple bilateral agencies' plans into a single unified plan. Previously, 10–12 agency-specific agreements per year, now replaced with 1–2 consolidated JWPs. Estimated 50–60% reduction in planning time for government and UN staff.
Joint Reviews & Monitoring	Consolidated review meetings (biannual/annual) instead of multiple agency reviews. Saved the Ministry of Finance and sector ministries 30–40% of consultation and reporting time annually.
Operations Management Team (OMT)	Common procurement, ICT, HR, and transport pooled across agencies. Estimated 5–7% cost savings in administrative services (global average, mirrored in Eritrea through shared vehicle pools and ICT purchases).
Development Partner Forum (DPF) & Thematic Groups	Reduced number of fragmented bilateral consultations with donors. Meetings streamlined into joint platforms, saving partners and ministries dozens of person-hours per quarter. Improved policy coherence.
Unified Results & Resources Framework (RRF)	Single monitoring and reporting system eliminated parallel reporting obligations. Increased efficiency and data comparability. Reduced duplication of reports by approx. 40–50%.
Joint Programming in WASH, Health, Fisheries	Pooled financing and delivery (e.g., joint solar-powered health/WASH infrastructure) cut recurrent costs by 30–40% compared to diesel systems. Avoided duplication of parallel agency projects.
Alignment with Government Self-Reliance Model	By aligning UN support with national priorities, reduced negotiation costs and improved absorption capacity. Lowered the need for repeated realignment discussions.

The UNSDCF has clearly reduced transaction costs through coherence, discipline, and pooled mechanisms. While direct dollar savings are not published, proxy indicators show 30–40% time savings in coordination, 5–10% savings in operational costs, and up to 50% fewer duplications in planning and reporting as shown in Figures 6 and 7.

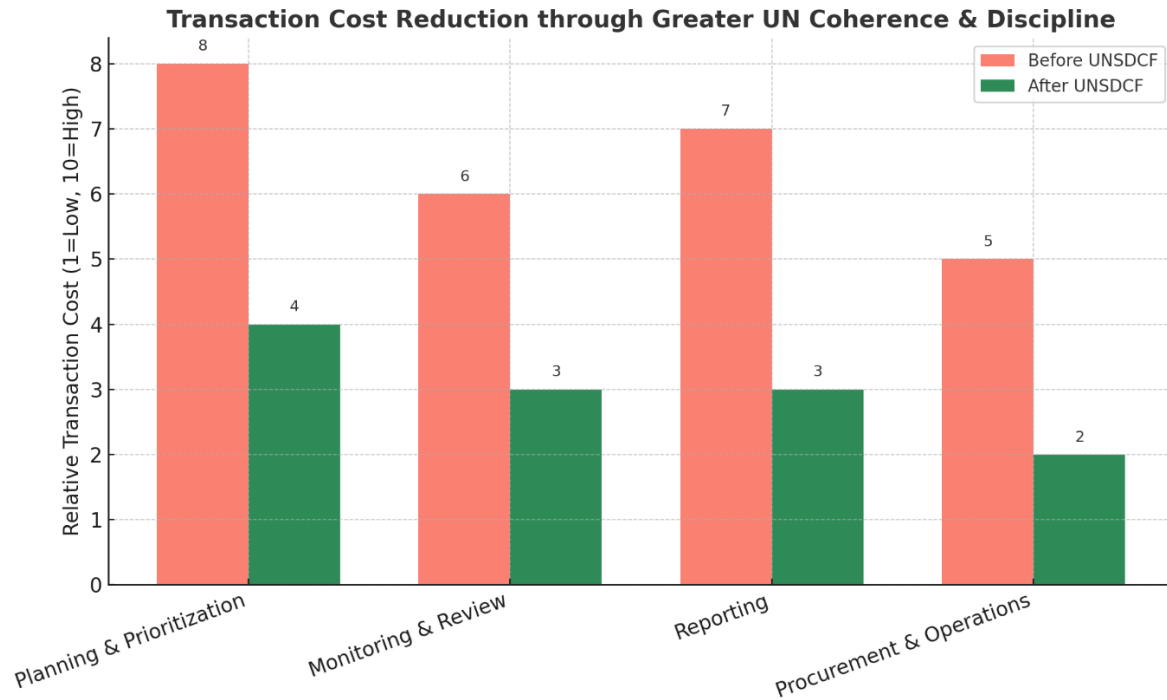


Figure 6: Transaction Costs Comparison (Pre-UNSDCF and During UNSDCF)



Figure 7: Staff Time and Financial Savings (Pre-UNSDCF and During UNSDCF)

4.4.3. What measures were taken to improve the cost-effectiveness of the UNSDCF's interventions?

Summary: *From the Eritrea UNSDCF documentation (Annual Results Reports 2022–2024, UNFPA/UNDP/UNICEF reports, and CF progress reviews), several measures were explicitly taken to improve the cost-effectiveness of interventions. These reflect the broader UN reform emphasis on efficiency, value for money, and reducing transaction costs.*

Details

The Eritrea UNSDCF improved cost-effectiveness through joint programming, harmonized operations, national capacity building, alignment with government systems, pooled financing, and technology adoption. Together, these measures reduced duplication, cut operational costs by 5–10% on services, and achieved 30–40% savings in infrastructure operating costs, while ensuring interventions were sustainable and scalable (Document reviews).

Under the UNSDCF, agencies coordinated their programming to avoid duplication and improve complementarity, rather than operating in complete isolation. In 2024 fisheries programmes benefited from coordinated investments in cold-chain infrastructure across agencies, reducing per-unit costs of fish preservation. It was noted that this represented coordinated parallel delivery rather than formal joint programming: agencies maintained separate budgets, staff, and reporting lines, while aligning their work toward shared results. This distinction matters for accountability. The one registered joint programme during the cycle was the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on FGM Elimination, which involved shared results frameworks, co-financing, and joint monitoring. The next UNSDCF should build on the coordination gains of this cycle and identify additional areas where the conditions exist to move from coordination to genuine joint programming.

The harmonization of Operations through the Operations Management Team. Agencies pooled administrative and operational services through the OMT. Shared procurement for vehicles, ICT, and medical supplies cut bulk costs. Shared transport fleets and ICT support reduced maintenance and fuel expenses. The effect of this is reduced overhead costs, estimated 5-7% in savings on operational budgets. Freed up funds for direct programme delivery (KII).

Rather than funding external technical assistance repeatedly, the UNSDCF invested in strengthening government institutions. For example, Ministry of Health staff trained in comprehensive obstetric care, replacing reliance on expensive international consultants. National Statistics Office equipped to run the 2025 Eritrea Population and Health Survey using CAPI (digital data collection), reducing survey costs. The effect is built-local capacity, reduced recurrent costs of hiring expatriates and created sustainable systems for the long term (IDI, KII).

Alignment with Eritrea's Self-Reliance model also contributes to cost reduction. Eritrea promotes a self-help and community mobilization approach, where communities contribute labour, land, and local expertise. UNSDCF interventions leveraged these structures to implement low-cost, scalable solutions. For example, Open Defecation-Free (ODF) campaigns succeeded largely through community mobilization. FGM abandonment campaigns relied on village-level councils, lowering programme delivery costs. These reduced financial input per intervention while increasing community ownership and sustainability (IDI, Document Reviews).

Innovative Financing and Partnerships also contributes to reduction in costs. Instead of relying solely on agency core funds, the UNCT mobilized thematic and pooled funds (e.g., Global Fund, GAVI, GPE, GEF, Green Climate Fund). Pooled funding meant larger, coordinated programmes could be financed with lower unit costs. For example, education programmes accessed GPE financing, supporting thousands of learners at scale with fewer transaction costs than multiple donor-driven projects. Maximized external resources, aligned with government priorities, reduced fragmentation, and improved efficiency (Document reviews, KII).

Solarization of health facilities, water pumps, and cold-chain systems reduced long-term operational costs by 30–40% compared to diesel systems. Digital tools (CAPI, digital supply chain systems, online coordination platforms) reduced data collection errors, printing, and travel costs for monitoring. Effect includes lowered operational costs, reduced carbon footprint, and increased reliability and sustainability of interventions (KII, Document reviews).

Eritrea tapped into South-South support for cost-effective solutions. For example, deployment of anaesthetists through South-South cooperation (funded partly by UNFPA) was cheaper and more sustainable than contracting international staff. This led to enhanced programme reach at lower cost (KII). The UNSDCF in Eritrea became more cost-effective by reducing duplication, pooling resources, leveraging local systems, applying technology, and drawing on South-South expertise. Together, these measures delivered measurable operational savings (5–10% in admin services, 30–40% in infrastructure operations) and qualitative efficiency gains in coordination, sustainability, and ownership.

4.5 Coordination

4.5.1. How effective have the UNCT's coordination mechanisms been in delivering the UNSDCF's outcomes and outputs?

Summary: According to different data sources, the coordination mechanism for UNSDCF implementation is built around several interlinked working groups—primarily the Joint Quarterly Performance Review Meetings, Results Groups, Programme Management Team (PMT), the Operations Management Team (OMT), and the UN Communications Group (UNCG). However, the UNCT was not rigid in following this coordination mechanism as most of them were not functional.

Details

The UN Country Team (UNCT) in Eritrea has demonstrated strong coordination mechanisms that have been effective in delivering many of the UNSDCF's planned outputs and outcomes, despite operating in a resource-constrained environment. The evidence from different data sources revealed the following:

1. Institutionalized Coordination Structures

- The Resident Coordinator-led UNCT brought together 19 UN entities (9 resident, 10 non-resident) under a unified strategic approach.

- Joint Work Plans served as the operational backbone of coordination, aligning agency activities with UNSDCF outcomes and national priorities.
- The PMT and OMT functioned as technical coordination bodies for programme and operational coherence (Document Reviews, KII and IDI).

2. Alignment and Policy Coherence

- The UNCT maintained full alignment of UNSDCF priorities with Eritrea’s national development agenda and SDGs, ensuring government ownership and reducing duplication (Document Reviews).
- Regular Joint Government–UN Performance Reviews allowed early identification of gaps and adjustments in programme design and implementation.

3. Delivering Outputs and Outcomes

- In health, coordination between WHO, UNICEF, and UNFPA helped achieve significant maternal health gains—facility-based births rose from 71% in 2023 to 85% in 2025(Document Reviews).
- Education interventions to improve access, quality, and equity strengthened gender parity, with girls outperforming boys in school retention — 87.8% of girls reached Grade 5 compared to 82.7% of boys in 2024.
- In gender equality, multi-agency collaboration enabled 17 sub-zobas abandon FGM by 2024.
- The WASH sector reached 94% villages achieved open-defecation-free status nationwide through combined agency efforts (Document Reviews).

4. Operational Efficiency

- The BOS 2.0 reduced transaction costs and enhanced service quality through joint procurement, ICT systems, and shared transport/security. Over the four-year period from 2022 to 2025, the UNCT in Eritrea recorded total BOS realised savings amounting to USD 1,978,374.
- Pooled resources allowed high-impact, multi-sector interventions such as climate-resilient water systems, integrated nutrition-WASH programmes, and fisheries infrastructure upgrades.

5. Challenges and Limitations

- Funding constraints limited the scale-up of some outputs despite strong coordination.
- Human resource gaps in specialized technical areas sometimes slowed implementation.
- Coordination fatigue occasionally emerged due to the intensity of inter-agency processes and the small pool of key government counterparts.
- Data and M&E capacity limitations affected the ability to fully measure collective impact, particularly at outcome level

UNCT–Government Collaboration

The UNSDCF was co-designed by the Government of the State of Eritrea and the United Nations Country Team. Planning is undertaken jointly through annual and biennial workplans, which translate the broader Cooperation Framework outcomes into concrete activities, responsibilities, and timelines. These workplans are signed by both parties and serve as the main instrument for operationalizing the Framework.

In summary, Eritrea–UNSDCF implementation relies on joint planning between the Eritrean government and the UN Country Team, operationalized through biennial/triennial workplans, Joint Quarterly Performance Review Meetings and Results Groups. The Eritrea–UNSDCF (2022–2026) implementation relies on a joint planning and coordination structure that integrates national ownership with UN system support. The structure is organized through multiple layers of governance and technical mechanisms, ensuring coherence, accountability, and alignment with national development priorities and the SDGs as illustrated in Figure 8.

Eritrea-UNSDCF 2022-2026 Joint Planning & Coordination Structure

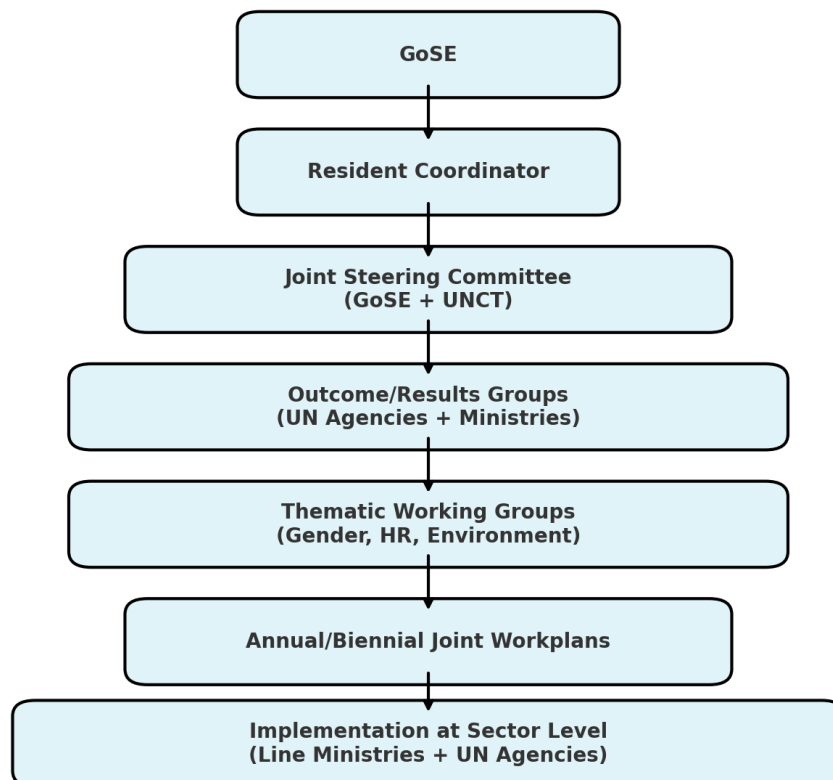


Figure 8: Eritrea-UNSDCF Joint Planning and Coordination Structure

Basis of multi-year Planning: The UNSDCF results framework is structured across the full 5-year cycle (2022–2026), but the operationalization is phased. While annual workplans allow short-term

adaptability and biennial workplans provide medium-term predictability, the UNCT and Government of Eritrea have also applied multi-year planning cycles. The first UNSDCF work plan was designed into two multi-year Joint Work Plans, the first was biennial which was 2022-2023 and the second was triennial 2024-2026. These three-year cycles are particularly useful for programmes with long gestation periods, such as health systems strengthening, education reforms, climate adaptation, and infrastructure-linked initiatives.

Purpose of Triennial Workplans enables strategic continuity which allows GoSE and UNCT to commit resources to medium-term outcomes; reduces transaction costs where negotiations and approvals are done once for a 3-year period, with only annual budget adjustments. It enhances flexibility within stability. While the overarching three-year results remain fixed, activities can be adjusted annually depending on context (e.g., drought response, health emergencies). For example, in health and nutrition, some joint interventions (e.g., maternal and child health programmes) are mapped to a three-year results horizon, given their systemic nature.

For the governance of the Triennial Plans, these plans are endorsed by the Government and the UN Resident Coordinator. They remain linked to the UNSDCF outcome framework but provide a medium-term bridge between the five-year strategy and annual review cycles. However, capacity limitations, uneven participation of non-resident agencies, and resource constraints occasionally weaken their collective performance. Strengthening integration across groups, increasing meeting frequency, and resourcing the technical and communications arms could significantly improve the effectiveness of the UNSDCF’s coordination mechanism.

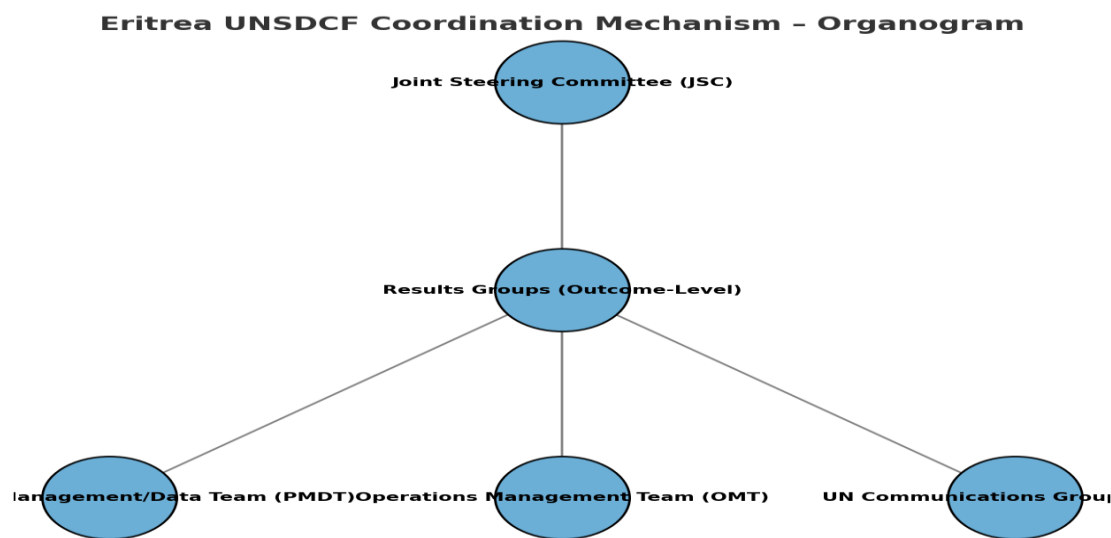


Figure 9: Coordination Mechanism Organogram

4.5.2. To what extent has the UNCT leveraged its collective comparative advantage to support national development efforts?

Summary: The UN Country Team (UNCT) has substantially leveraged its collective comparative advantage to support national development efforts, aligning its strengths with the Government of the State of Eritrea's (GoSE) priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Details

The UNCT operates in a distinctive environment characterized by limited external financing, robust national systems, and a government philosophy rooted in self-reliance. This required the UN to tailor its support to areas where it has the unique capacity to add value beyond what national institutions or bilateral donors can offer and where it could deliver the greatest results.

The UNCT leveraged its collective comparative advantage across the two strategic priority areas, bringing technical expertise, normative guidance, and global best practices to bear in sectors where government priorities and UN capabilities aligned most directly: health and nutrition, education and gender equality, water and sanitation, food security and agriculture, climate resilience and environment, and data and statistics for development planning. This support was delivered primarily through coordinated programming by individual agencies working bilaterally with sector ministries, within a shared results framework and under the oversight of the Joint Quarterly Performance Review Meetings co-chaired by the MFND and the Resident Coordinator.

The UN Country Team leverages multi-agency expertise through a configuration of 19 UN entities, including 9 resident and 10 non-resident agencies with complementary mandates and technical strengths, coordinated under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator. Agencies pooled their expertise to deliver complex, multi-sector results. For example, joint immunization and maternal health programmes implemented by UNICEF, WHO, and UNFPA contributed to the maintenance of high routine immunization coverage rates and measurable improvements in maternal and child health outcomes. Similarly, gender equality programming supported by UNFPA, WHO, and UNICEF contributed to national progress in the abandonment of female genital mutilation. Climate and environment projects (FAO, UNEP, IFAD, UNDP and UNICEF) advanced climate resilience, water management, and sustainable agriculture (Document reviews, KII).

The UNCT maximizes convening power and partnerships. The UNCT has used its neutral convening role to strengthen collaboration between government ministries, the AfDB, and bilateral donors through: i) the Eritrean Development Partners Forum (EDPF) – a coordination platform chaired by the Resident Coordinator; and ii) joint technical committee meetings and annual performance reviews with the GoSE.

The UNCT also delivers high-impact, joint results. The UNCT's collective approach has translated into tangible development gains such as expanded universal health coverage, maternal care, and immunization; and increased fish production through joint investment in infrastructure, benefiting women and youth while scaling up services for vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities and vulnerable rural communities.

Addressing systemic and cross-sector issues was also another strategy. The UNCT has applied its comparative advantage in policy advocacy and technical standards, supporting Eritrea's Voluntary

National Reviews at the UN High-Level Political Forum and participation in COP27. Cross-agency technical inputs have informed national strategies in health, education, agriculture, and climate change.

Remaining gaps and opportunities include resource mobilization constrained by UCMs and limited donor presence; this restricts the scale of collective action. Some non-resident agencies have yet to be fully integrated into on-the-ground joint delivery. Greater investment in joint data systems and monitoring could better capture and communicate the full scope of the UNCT's comparative advantage.

4.5.3. Post-UN reform, to what extent have the UN agency programs and work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from the UNSDCF both in design and implementation?

Summary: UN agency programmes and work plans in Eritrea have been effectively and meaningfully derived from the Cooperation Framework in the post-UN reform context.

Details

Following the UN Development System reforms, UN entities in Eritrea systematically anchored their country programmes and work plans within the UNSDCF 2022–2026. Evidence from UN Country Team Annual Results Reports indicates that joint planning instruments, notably Joint Work Plans (JWPs), were introduced in 2022 to operationalize the framework. These JWPs translated the four UNSDCF outcome areas of People, Peace, Prosperity, and Planet into entity-specific deliverables while maintaining collective accountability for results.

Sectoral alignment with UNSDCF priorities was evident across the portfolio. Support for governance, livelihoods, and climate resilience was consolidated under the Peace and Prosperity outcomes, linking programme design to commitments on institution-building, service delivery, and sustainability. Interventions in sexual and reproductive health and gender equality were aligned with the People outcome, with reported contributions to maternal health improvements, expanded access to family planning, and progress toward the abandonment of harmful practices. Health system strengthening efforts, including national regulatory and preparedness capacities, reinforced UNSDCF commitments on resilience. Similarly, interventions in nutrition, education, and food security were oriented toward People and Prosperity outcomes and were often implemented jointly, reflecting an integrated, multi-sector approach to achieving UNSDCF results.

(Document reviews).

At the design stage, agency country programme documents were explicitly derived from the UNSDCF results framework, with outputs mapped to Cooperation Framework outcomes to ensure vertical alignment with national development priorities and the SDGs. At the implementation stage, this alignment was reinforced through the introduction of Joint Work Plans (JWPs) from 2022 onward, which translated the four UNSDCF outcome areas into coordinated, entity-specific deliverables under a shared results structure. Joint monitoring arrangements supported this approach, with the UNSDCF Results and Resources Framework integrated into annual reporting, enabling agency-led interventions to be assessed and presented as collective UNSDCF results.

Annual UNCT Results Reports illustrate the effectiveness of this approach. In 2024, reported outcomes included measurable improvements in health, with facility-based deliveries increasing

from 71 percent in 2023 to 81 percent in 2024, expanded WASH coverage, with 94 percent of villages achieving open-defecation-free status, and improved education outcomes, including higher retention rates for girls. While delivered through agency-led projects, these results were consistently framed and reported at the UNSDCF outcome level. Joint initiatives on the elimination of harmful practices and governance reforms were similarly positioned as collective contributions to the Cooperation Framework rather than as standalone outputs.

Post-reform, the Resident Coordinator's Office ensured that agency work plans functioned as integrated components of a single UNSDCF strategy rather than parallel planning instruments. Joint planning and annual reviews with government counterparts reinforced coherence, reduced duplication, and provided a common platform for tracking progress against UNSDCF outcomes. Resource mobilization efforts were increasingly coordinated, including through pooled approaches in areas such as social protection and climate resilience, further supporting collective delivery under the framework.

Overall, the structural and programmatic alignment between agency work plans and the UNSDCF has strengthened coherence, accountability, and national alignment. Joint work plans, harmonized monitoring, and integrated reporting have enabled individual interventions to contribute more directly to collective outcomes. While the approach has enhanced effectiveness, constraints remain, including financing gaps, uneven participation by non-resident entities, and the continued use of parallel reporting systems that at times increase transaction costs for national counterparts.

4.5.4. To what extent did the post-reform Resident Coordinator office's roles and responsibilities enable positive UNCT's convening power and better coherence of the country team?

Summary: The post-reform RCO has been pivotal in enabling the UNCT in Eritrea to act as one coherent, convening, and strategic partner. Its functions—coordination, joint work planning, results monitoring, and unified advocacy have significantly improved alignment, coherence, and influence. However, resource mobilization gaps, dual reporting obligations, and limited or parallel engagement of some non-resident agencies remain key challenges.

Details

Following the 2018 UN Development System reforms, the RCO was separated institutionally from UNDP and repositioned as the neutral convener and coordinator of the UN system in-country. Its mandate shifted from managing operational support within UNDP to leading on:

- **Strategic coordination:** Ensuring that the UNSDCF (2022–2026) became the single overarching framework binding all UN agencies, funds, and programmes to national priorities.
- **Results management:** Overseeing the design, monitoring, and evaluation of Joint Work Plans (JWPs) and the Results & Resources Framework (RRF).
- **Partnerships and resource mobilization:** Acting as the collective entry point for government, donors, and development partners.
- **Advocacy and policy coherence:** Ensuring the UN spoke with one voice on cross-cutting priorities such as gender, climate, youth, and resilience.

The RCO strengthened the UNCT's collective influence and convening capacity in several ways. It unified engagement with government. Through the quarterly Joint Performance Review Meetings (co-chaired by Government and the Resident Coordinator), the RCO ensured structured, high-level dialogue between the UN system and line ministries. This gave the UNCT collective visibility and strengthened trust with the State of Eritrea. It also used the JWPs as a convening tool. The RCO coordinated the development of JWPs aligned to each UNSDCF pillar. By bringing agencies together around common outputs, the RCO reduced duplication and positioned the UNCT as a unified partner rather than a cluster of fragmented agencies.

Facilitated by the RCO, Results Groups under each UNSDCF outcome (People, Peace, Prosperity, Planet) created platforms were supposed to jointly plan, monitor, and report interventions. The RCO acted as the first port of call for development partners (EU, AfDB, GAVI, GPE, bilateral donors), positioning the UNCT as a joint convener of multi-stakeholder partnerships. The RCO's roles and functions improved coherence in several dimensions. The RCO enforced this coherence during programme design, ensuring agencies aligned their results frameworks to the UNSDCF outcomes. It drove adoption of UN INFO as the shared reporting platform. This harmonized monitoring across agencies and fed into the Annual Results Reports, which presented a single UN narrative of results.

The RCO ensured cross-cutting integration of gender equality, climate resilience, human rights, and “leave no one behind” principles across all four UNSDCF pillars. Through the UN Communications Group coordinated by the RCO, agencies projected a unified message to government, partners, and communities—strengthening the UN's credibility and identity. The RC's coordination role operated within Eritrea's established partnership modalities, in which government ministries engage with UN entities primarily through bilateral working relationships with individual agencies. The UNCT adapted its coordination approach to work within these modalities, using inter-agency technical working groups where government counterparts were willing to participate, and bilateral engagement channels were not. This affects the extent to which JWPs are fully funded. Some non-resident agencies and humanitarian actors are less consistently engaged, which reduces full-system coherence. And with a lean staff structure, the RCO faces workload pressures in simultaneously managing coordination, resource mobilization, policy advocacy, and monitoring.

4.6 Coverage

4.6.1. How well has the UNSDCF reached the most vulnerable populations, including women, children and persons with disabilities?

Summary: The UNSDCF in Eritrea has substantially reached women and children, especially in maternal health, FGM elimination, education, and nutrition. Tangible results (higher facility births, reduced harmful practices, improved school retention for girls) demonstrate progress. For persons with disabilities, inclusion has been acknowledged in principle and some programmes (education, health, rehabilitation) have targeted PWDs, but gaps remain in mainstreaming, service accessibility, and data monitoring.

Details

The UNSDCF was explicitly designed around the principle of Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), aligning with Agenda 2030. It identified women, children, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) as priority groups needing targeted interventions. Cross-cutting commitments to gender equality, disability inclusion, and human rights were mainstreamed across the four Cooperation Framework pillars: *People, Peace, Prosperity, Planet*. Results Groups (especially “People”) operationalized these priorities by embedding indicators on maternal health, education, nutrition, child protection, and disability inclusion in the Results and Resources Framework.

UNFPA and UNICEF supported the expansion of Maternity Waiting Homes (MWHs) and safe delivery services, directly reducing maternal mortality. In 2024, institutional deliveries increased, with 85% of births taking place in health facilities. Access to contraceptives and family planning counselling expanded, with commodity monitoring systems introduced by UNFPA to ensure continuity of services. Through the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on FGM elimination, 17 Sub zobas declared themselves FGM-free by 2024, protecting thousands of girls from harmful practices. The UNSDCF supported retention of girls in school, with evidence showing girls’ retention rates now higher than boys’ in basic education (Document reviews, KII and IDI).

The UNSDCF also reached children and adolescents. For instance, for immunisation and child health, with UNICEF, WHO, and MoH support, immunization coverage expanded through Expanded Programmes on Immunisation (EPI) campaigns that ensure universal access to life-saving vaccines. Reports highlight increased coverage of mothers and immunization of children, protecting against preventable diseases. WFP and FAO supported school feeding programmes and nutrition interventions, targeting children in drought-affected regions and contributing to food security. The UNSDCF helped strengthen social protection measures and child-focused services, including campaigns against early marriage and child labour (Document reviews, KII).

Eritrea’s UNSDCF integrated disability inclusion into LNOB commitments in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The UN supported inclusive education strategies, ensuring PWD children had access to schools, although progress remains uneven due to infrastructural and resource gaps. Some health programmes mainstreamed disability concerns, particularly rehabilitation services and prevention of obstetric fistula (often resulting in lifelong disability). However systematic disability disaggregated data is limited, making it difficult to fully measure reach. Physical accessibility of services (health facilities, schools) is still constrained in rural areas.

Despite these gains, reaching the most vulnerable remains uneven for several reasons. Limited donor funding constrains scale, especially in disability programming and rural service delivery. Rural and remote communities remain harder to reach, with health, education, and social services less accessible. While policy intent exists, systematic mainstreaming of disability in all UNSDCF outputs is still limited due to inadequate data and infrastructure. Adolescent SRH services are underfunded, limiting impact on early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and youth empowerment (KII, IDI). Overall, the UNSDCF 2022-2026 has been effective in reaching women and children as key vulnerable groups, but less effective in systematically reaching PWDs, largely due to financing, data, and infrastructural challenges.

4.7 Orientation towards Impact

4.7.1. To what extent has the UNSDCF contributed to long-term development impact, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities?

Summary: *The Eritrea UNSDCF has made significant contributions to long-term development impact for vulnerable groups, particularly women and youth, by strengthening health systems, eliminating harmful practices, enhancing education, and building livelihoods. These interventions have systemic, intergenerational impacts that extend beyond the 2022–2026 cycle. For persons with disabilities, progress is more modest: while inclusion principles are embedded and some targeted interventions exist, sustainable, transformative impacts remain constrained by financing, infrastructure, and data gaps. The UNSDCF has been a catalyst for durable change in Eritrea, especially in advancing gender equality and youth empowerment. However, the framework’s long-term inclusiveness for PWDs will depend on stronger investment, mainstreaming, and data-driven programming in the next cycle.*

Details

The Eritrea UNSDCF was crafted as the single most important UN partnership framework aligned with SDGs, with a strong emphasis on Leaving No One Behind (LNOB). This approach intentionally placed vulnerable populations—women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) at the centre of development priorities. By embedding human rights, gender equality, and disability inclusion as cross-cutting principles across the four cooperation pillars (*People, Prosperity, Peace, Planet*), the UNSDCF aimed to build systemic capacities and not just deliver short-term projects.

There are sustained gains in health, education and social protection. Investments in Maternity Waiting Homes (MWHs) and skilled birth attendance significantly reduced maternal mortality. These improvements in maternal health systems will have *lasting intergenerational benefits*, lowering risks of maternal and neonatal mortality beyond the UNSDCF cycle. The UNFPA–UNICEF Joint Programme supported the elimination of FGM. In Eritrea, girls’ school retention now surpasses boys, reflecting progress in access and completion of education. While this is a positive development, the long-term implications for gender equality in the labour force and governance will depend on how these gains are sustained and translated into opportunities beyond schooling.

There are empowerment and resilience gains for youth. Through UNICEF, UNESCO, and UNDP interventions, youth education and training opportunities improved, with retention rates increasing in basic education and youth participation in vocational skills programmes. These interventions address intergenerational poverty by equipping youth with employable skills. UNFPA’s adolescent and youth SRH initiatives enhanced access to family planning, reduced early marriages, and promoted safe practices. Empowered youth contribute to sustainable demographic dividends through reduced fertility rates, healthier transitions to adulthood, and higher productivity. FAO and UNDP projects on food systems, fisheries, and renewable energy expanded livelihood opportunities for rural youth, aligning with Eritrea’s self-reliance strategy. These projects build resilience against shocks (droughts, climate change) and open new employment avenues for young populations (Document reviews, KII).

Disability inclusion was integrated into LNOB commitments, aligning with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Inclusive education policies and health services began

addressing systemic barriers for PWDs. Prevention of obstetric fistula (a disabling condition for women) and rehabilitation support services contributed to long-term reduction of disability-related vulnerabilities. Despite policy intent, data disaggregation on disability remains weak, and infrastructure (schools, clinics, workplaces) is often physically inaccessible. Thus, while UNSDCF interventions created entry points, their long-term impact for PWDs is still limited compared to women and youth (Document reviews).

There are impacts on systemic and institutional capacity building. Support for the Eritrea Population and Health Survey (EPHS-2025) enhances long-term national capacity to monitor vulnerable groups and shape evidence-based policies. Community mobilization around harmful practices (FGM, early marriage) indicates a durable cultural shift in gender and youth empowerment. Climate adaptation and food security projects targeting vulnerable rural communities strengthen resilience against external shocks—benefiting vulnerable populations disproportionately affected by poverty (Document reviews, KII).

Despite the above long-term development impact, the UNSDCF has several limitations affecting long-term impact. These include financing gaps. Many interventions for PWDs and youth remain underfunded, reducing their sustainability; geographic inequities where rural and hard-to-reach populations still face systemic service gaps. Limited involvement of specialized UN agencies constrains depth of technical assistance for disability inclusion and youth employment.

Table 5: Long-Term Development Impact of UNSDCF for Vulnerable Groups in Eritrea

Target Group	Long-Term Development Impact	Remaining Gaps / Needs
Women & Girls	- Maternal health systems strengthened: 85% of births in health facilities (2024) → durable reductions in maternal mortality. - Cultural transformation: 17 sub zobas FGM-free → long-term protection for girls. - Education gains: Girls’ retention higher than boys → intergenerational improvements in gender equality.	- Rural/remote areas still underserved. - Adolescent SRH programming underfunded. - Persistent social norms resist full gender equality.
Youth (Adolescents & Young Adults)	- Improved access to education & skills training, strengthening human capital. - SRH interventions reduced early marriage & unsafe pregnancies. - Livelihood resilience: food systems, fisheries, renewable energy projects provided jobs and resilience to climate shocks.	- Limited youth employment opportunities in formal sectors. - Youth participation in governance - Funding gaps for youth-focused entrepreneurship.
Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)	- Inclusion in UNSDCF’s LNOB principle. - Inclusive education and health policies initiated, with rehabilitation and fistula prevention services. - Advocacy around CRPD raised visibility of disability rights.	- Weak disability-disaggregated data tracking. - Physical access barriers in schools, clinics, and workplaces. - Disability inclusion less systematically mainstreamed

Target Group	Long-Term Development Impact	Remaining Gaps / Needs compared to gender/youth programming.
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4.7.2. What transformative changes have been achieved as a result of the UNSDCF’s interventions?

Summary: *There have been multi-level transformations achieved as a result of the UNSDCF 2022-2026 interventions in Eritrea.*

Details

There have been transformative changes achieved because of the UNSDCF’s interventions. Expansion of Maternity Waiting Homes, skilled birth attendance, and integration of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) into the Essential Health Package (EHP). This is not just a service expansion but a systemic integration of maternal and reproductive health into the national system, ensuring continuity even after the UNSDCF ends. Primarily women of reproductive age, newborns, and rural mothers who now have access to safer deliveries. Lower maternal and neonatal mortality means healthier generations and stronger workforce participation by women, directly supporting SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). The interventions strengthened EPI campaigns involving expanded coverage for children and immunization for mothers. By embedding vaccination capacity into the Ministry of Health, Eritrea builds resilience against future epidemics. Children (reduced mortality and morbidity), mothers (protection from tetanus), and the wider population through herd immunity. This reduces health shocks and strengthens demographic resilience, aligning with Eritrea’s self-reliance model.

Community mobilization led to 17 sub-zobas declaring themselves FGM-free by 2024. This is a deep cultural shift in a practice historically tied to identity and tradition. Its reversal marks a redefinition of gender norms. Girls protected from FGM and child marriage, women spared lifelong health complications, and communities empowered to challenge harmful traditions unlocks the potential of women and girls as active economic and social contributors, advancing SDG 5 (Gender Equality). For the first time, girls’ school retention rates surpassed boys’, though actual figures are not provided, and education systems expanded with more inclusive enrolment. Education parity is a structural equalizer for gender relations, creating ripple effects in economic productivity, governance, and family well-being. Girls, vulnerable rural children, and long-term society through improved literacy and skills. Educated women delay marriage, space births, and invest in family health—unlocking a demographic dividend for Eritrea (Document reviews).

Vocational training, climate-resilient agriculture, fisheries, and renewable energy projects created new employment pathways for youth. It moves youth from dependence and migration pressures to agents of growth within Eritrea's self-reliant development model. Adolescents and young adults (skills and jobs), communities (economic diversification), and government (reduced social burden). A skilled and employed youth base sustains economic growth and stabilizes society, supporting SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth). The Resident Coordinator's Office drove Joint Work Plans, Results Groups, and UN INFO for coherent UN action; support for the Eritrea Population and Health Survey (EPHS-2025) upgraded national data capacity. Shifts the UN from fragmented projects to system-wide collective action, while strengthening Eritrea's evidence-based planning capacity. Government planners, development partners, and indirectly all populations as policies become more targeted. A stronger national statistical system underpins policy sovereignty and effective implementation of SDGs.

Food systems diversification, fisheries expansion, and climate-smart agriculture improved food security. Transitions households from vulnerability to sustainability and resilience, reducing reliance on aid. Rural households, smallholder farmers, fishers, and youth in agriculture and renewable energy sectors. Climate adaptation is essential for Eritrea's survival and prosperity in a region prone to drought, directly aligning with SDG 13 (Climate Action). Ninety-four per cent of villages declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) by 2024. This represents both a public health milestone and a behavioural shift, with communities embracing sanitation as a norm. Entire rural populations, especially children experienced reduced diarrheal diseases and women (improved dignity and safety). Sustained public health improvements reduce disease burden and healthcare costs, advancing SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation (Document reviews).

Women saw gains in health, education, and protection; youth accessed livelihoods and SRH services; persons with disabilities were included in LNOB frameworks and targeted programmes. Embedding equity and inclusion into all CF interventions shifts development from charity to rights-based approaches. Women and girls (gender equity), youth (skills, livelihoods, SRH), and PWDs (visibility, early access to inclusive services). It creates a fairer, more inclusive society, though PWD impact is still emerging and requires deeper systemic mainstreaming.

The UNSDCF 2022-2026 interventions in Eritrea have triggered multi-level transformations: systemic (health and education systems integrated and strengthened); cultural (FGM abandonment, sanitation adoption, girls' education acceptance); institutional (data systems, UN coherence, governance alignment) and resilience-oriented (climate-smart livelihoods, food security). These changes are durable, intergenerational, and catalytic,

shaping Eritrea's trajectory toward Agenda 2030 and 2063. However, full transformative inclusion of persons with disabilities remains an unfinished agenda.

4.8 Sustainability

4.8.1. To what extent are the benefits of the UNSDCF's interventions likely to continue beyond the programming cycle?

Summary: The UNSDCF has embedded many of its interventions into national policies, institutional systems, and community structures, creating strong prospects for long-term sustainability. However, the durability of these benefits will depend on continued domestic investment, resilience to climate shocks, and strategic partnerships to address capacity and financing gaps.

Details

The benefits of the UNSDCF's interventions in Eritrea are likely to continue beyond the current programming cycle to a moderate-to-high extent, due to a combination of structural, institutional, and community-level sustainability measures that have been integrated into programme design and delivery. Several factors support this conclusion. The UNSDCF has been anchored in Eritrea's national vision, sectoral strategies, and long-term plans, ensuring alignment with government priorities and integration international systems. Strengthened national policies and legal frameworks—such as the National Social Protection Policy, health sector strategies, and education reforms—are designed to persist beyond the UN's direct involvement.

Across health, education, and agriculture, the programmes invested in training national and local personnel, developing management systems, and improving supply chains for essential services (e.g., immunization, maternal care, agricultural inputs. Strengthened data systems and planning tools (e.g., integrated information management, watershed management plans) improve the government's ability to sustain and scale interventions without continuous external support. Social mobilization has led to widespread community adoption of positive practices, in reducing FGM, improved sanitation and near-universal immunization coverage. The use of participatory approaches—like Farmers' Field Schools, cooperative structures, and village committees has fostered local ownership, which is critical for sustaining benefits in agriculture, fisheries, and public health (Document reviews, KII and IDI). Investments in health facilities, renewable energy systems, water storage, irrigation, and fisheries infrastructure have created physical assets with long lifespans, provided maintenance and operational plans are adhered to. Expanded infrastructure in WASH and rural electrification reduces long-term service delivery costs and dependency on external actors (Document reviews).

In spite of these strengths, some risks could limit the continuation of benefits. These include funding gaps as Eritrea's fiscal space is limited, and certain programmes (e.g., advanced medical services, specialized agricultural technologies) may depend on continued donor or UN support.

Climate and environmental shocks: Recurrent droughts, locust infestations, and climate change impacts could erode development gains without sustained resilience investments. Human resource retention in technical sectors (agriculture, health) could affect service quality. Finally, there are

geopolitical and trade constraints. Regional instability may limit resource flows and technology transfer.

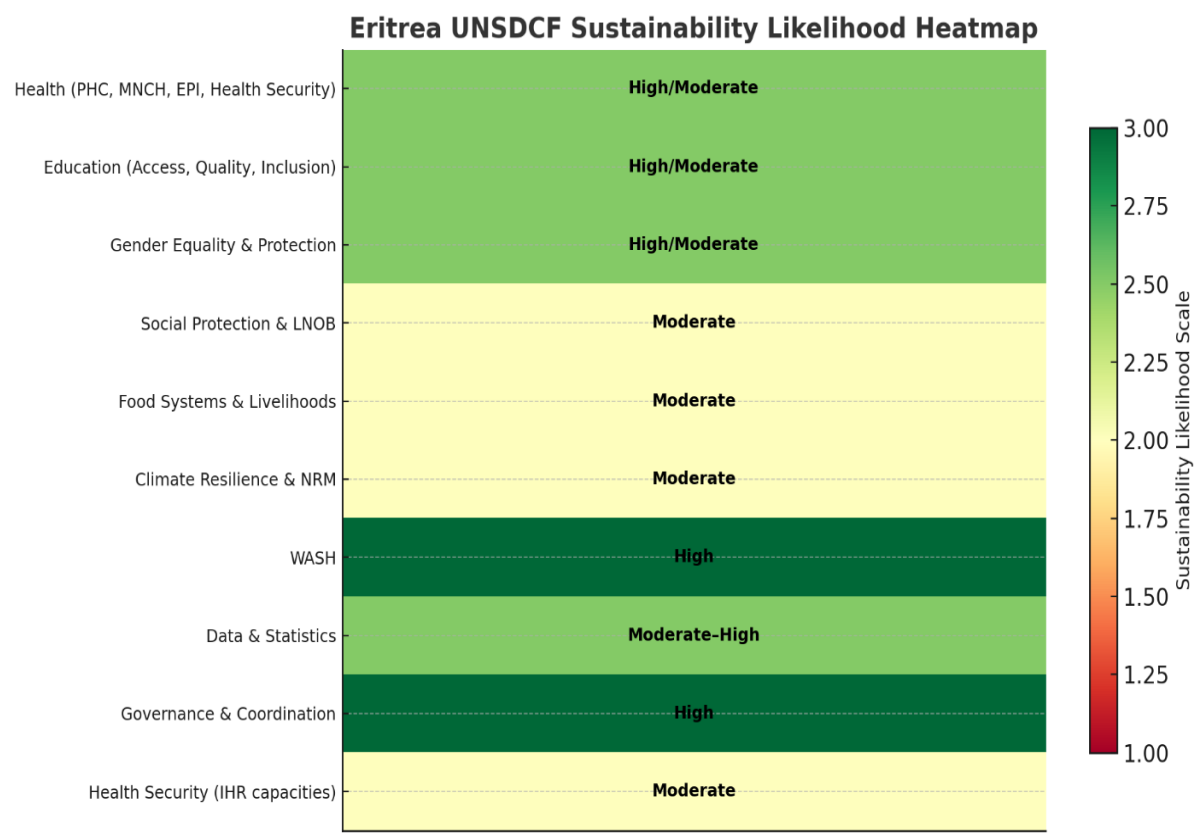


Figure 10: Sustainability Likelihood Heatmap

4.8.2. How well has the UNSDCF strengthened national capacities, institutions and systems to sustain development results?

Summary: The UNSDCF has strengthened Eritrea’s institutional and system capacity in a way that supports the continuity of results especially in health, education, gender equality, and climate resilience. However, sustainability is moderated by risks such as fiscal constraints, climate variability, and human resource turnover. These require continued investment in domestic financing strategies, operations and management systems, and intersectoral coordination to ensure that gains are not reversed.

Details

The UNSDCF in Eritrea has made substantial contributions to strengthening national capacities, institutions, and systems in ways that are likely to sustain development results beyond the programme cycle. Based on the 2022–2024 UNCT Annual Results Reports and sectoral assessments, the main areas of capacity strengthening are:

1. Institutional and Policy Capacities

- Joint Work Plans (JWP) institutionalized as a government–UN coordination mechanism, aligning all interventions with national priorities and the SDGs, thereby enhancing policy coherence and mutual.
- Support to legal and policy frameworks in health security (e.g., mapping of ~40 legal instruments for IHR implementation) has improved readiness for public health emergencies.
- Development of national strategies and SOPs in education, social protection, agriculture, and climate resilience, embedding reforms into government systems.

2. Human Capital and Skills Development: Training of service providers in maternal health, immunization, fisheries management, watershed management, and gender-based violence response has expanded the pool of skilled personnel. Capacity-building in data and statistics, including the National Statistics Office, improved monitoring systems such as EMIS, HMIS, and sector-specific dashboards, enabling more evidence-based decision-making.

3. Systems Strengthening: Health systems: Expanded PHC and MNCH services, enhanced cold-chain infrastructure, and integrated disease surveillance systems. Education systems were strengthened in inclusive education models, early childhood care, and strengthened school retention systems for girls and children with disabilities. Social protection systems were strengthened to improve targeting mechanisms, grievance redress, and gradual institutionalization of safety nets. Also, systems are strengthened in climate resilience and natural resources: Community-managed watershed plans, dam construction, solarization of water systems, and expansion of renewable energy infrastructure.

4. Partnership and Coordination Mechanisms: UNSDCF interventions strengthened multisectoral coordination through Results Groups, the Development Partners Forum, and sector-specific task forces. Government–private sector engagement in fisheries, agriculture value chains, and infrastructure projects, laying the foundation for economic diversification.

5. Evidence of Sustainable Results: High levels of community ownership in areas like FGM abandonment (94% villages had achieved ODF status and 17 sub zobas FGM-free in 2024), sustained by social norms change, legal enforcement, and local leadership. Increased institutional resilience in managing climatic shocks and public health threats (e.g., improved emergency logistics, biosafety, and risk communication systems).

Table 6: Eritrea UNSDCF Capacity-Strengthening Outcome

Sector / UNSDCF Outcome Area	Capacity Strengthened	Sustainability Drivers	Key Risks / Gaps	Overall Sustainability Likelihood	Mitigation / Next Steps
Health (PHC, MNCH, EPI, Health Security)	Expanded PHC coverage; upgraded MNCH facilities; trained midwives & community health workers; cold-chain system upgrades; improved surveillance & biosafety	Integration into MoH service delivery; legal & policy frameworks (NAPHS, IHR); community trust in services; trained local staff	Fiscal space for recurrent costs; high turnover in skilled cadres; import constraints for equipment/spare s	High for PHC & MNCH; Moderate for specialized health security	Multi-year budget for essential commodities ; retention incentives for health staff; local maintenance contracts for cold-chain; emergency stockpiles
Education (Access, Quality, Inclusivity)	ECCE expansion; improved school infrastructure; inclusive education for CWD; gender-sensitive curricula; teacher training	Integration into MoE plans; high community demand; girls' retention gains; donor support to GPE	Teacher shortages in rural areas; limited special needs capacity; economic pressures on poor households	High for enrolment/retention ; Moderate for quality/inclusion	Teacher deployment incentives; scale low-cost assistive tech; school feeding to sustain attendance
Gender Equality & Protection	94% village-level abandonment of FGM; GBV referral systems; women's leadership in community structures	Strong legal framework; community-led SBC; women's/youth unions	Risk of backsliding in remote areas; limited GBV service coverage	High in norm change areas; Moderate for service access	Expand mobile GBV services; maintain SBC campaigns; integrate FGM monitoring into local admin reporting
Social Protection & LNOB	Targeting & grievance mechanisms; expanded cash/food assistance to	Government-led design; integration with MoLSW; community awareness	Limited fiscal base; growing caseloads from climate shocks	Moderate	Phased scale-up; social registry digitization; contingency

Sector / UNSDCF Outcome Area	Capacity Strengthened	Sustainability Drivers	Key Risks / Gaps	Overall Sustainability Likelihood	Mitigation / Next Steps
Food Systems & Livelihoods	vulnerable groups				financing mechanism
	Farmers' Field Schools; fisheries cold-chain & ice plants; seed systems; value-chain cooperatives	Cooperative models; fee-for-service O&M; extension services	Climate volatility; limited access to inputs/finance; market access challenges	Moderate	Revolving input funds; aggregation points; climate-smart crop calendars
Climate Resilience & Natural Resources	5,000+ dams/micro-dams; watershed committees; SWC structures; solarized water systems	Community O&M norms; MoA/MoLWE integration; renewable energy adoption	Sedimentation; spare-part supply chain; drought/flood variability	Moderate	Catchment maintenance rosters; framework contracts for spares; disaster risk finance
Data & Statistics	Strengthened NSO; HMIS & EMIS improvements; SDG monitoring	Embedded in national institutions; regular joint reviews; donor-funded tech	Gaps in subnational data quality; analytics capacity shortage	Moderate-High	Quarterly data quality audits; analytics training; micro-dashboards at zoba level
Governance & Coordination	Joint Work Plans (JWP); Results Groups; DPF; SOPs for interagency coordination	High-level political buy-in; institutionalize annual review cycle	Reliance on UN convening; uneven capacity across ministries	High	Cross-ministry capacity exchanges; embed coordination functions in GoSE budget

The above matrix shows that the high likelihood of sustainability exists where capacities are embedded in national policies, service delivery systems, and community structures (e.g., PHC, FGM abandonment, school retention). Moderate likelihood exists where gains depend on infrastructure O&M, specialized skills, or climate-sensitive livelihoods. However, data, governance, and coordination have strong institutional roots but require continuous skills upgrading and financing.

5. CONCLUSIONS

1. Relevance and Adaptability: The UNSDCF was highly relevant, aligning closely with Eritrea’s self-reliance development model, sector plans, and national priorities such as food security, social services, and climate resilience. It adapted effectively to shocks like droughts, and global price spikes by re-prioritizing activities (e.g., expanded WASH services, remote learning support) and incorporating climate-smart solutions.

2. Coherence: Internal coherence was strong, with UN agencies working under a unified results framework, joint work plans, and thematic groups. External coherence was reinforced through alignment with the SDGs and Eritrea’s national frameworks. However, limited donor presence reduced opportunities for broader development partner alignment.

3. Effectiveness: The Cooperation Framework is associated with significant improvements in key human development indicators including immunization coverage, access to safe water, and progress toward open-defecation-free status and the evaluation finds a plausible and well-documented contribution by the UNCT to these results. Given the methodological limitation noted in Section 3.7 (absence of formal contribution analysis), these findings describe plausible contribution based on triangulated evidence rather than formal attribution. Gains were more pronounced where multi-sectoral approaches were applied, though some targets particularly in economic diversification—remain only partially achieved due to resource constraints.

4. Efficiency: Resources were used judiciously, with cost-effective approaches like joint procurement, solar-powered infrastructure, and integration of service delivery platforms. Nonetheless, logistical challenges, high transaction costs, and procurement delays especially for imported goods—sometimes slowed implementation. UNSDCF generated tangible and transformative changes in public health, social norms, and climate resilience. Community-led interventions (e.g., social mobilization for harmful practice abandonment, local WASH committees) proved particularly impactful. However, broader economic and structural transformation was hindered by external constraints and limited investment flows.

5. Coordination: The UNSDCF has strengthened coordination mechanisms between the UN Country Team, Government of the State of Eritrea, and development partners. Structures such as the Quarterly Joint Performance Review Meetings, and the Development Partners Forum have enabled joint planning, monitoring, and mutual accountability. Evidence shows increasing coherence in programming, joint workplans, and shared monitoring frameworks across agencies. However, challenges persist: (i) limited data systems hinder timely evidence-based coordination; (ii) procurement and disbursement delays in projects (e.g., Fisheries and Agriculture Programmes) have strained implementation pace; and (iii) external shocks at times constrained joint operations. Overall, coordination was effective but some of the coordination structures are not maximally functional.

6. Coverage: Coverage of UNSDCF interventions has been broad and inclusive, with national reach across all six zobas (regions). Health and education programmes demonstrated wide geographic and demographic reach, with immunization coverage reaching near-universal levels for core antigens, maternal health improvements through maternity waiting homes, and high village-level abandonment of harmful practices such as FGM. Agricultural and fisheries programmes reached tens of thousands of households across regions, with women and youth comprising a significant share of beneficiaries. Despite this, disparities remain in hard-to-reach areas, rural communities, and among mothers with low education—where coverage gaps for specific vaccines and services persist. Moreover, financing gaps limited the scale-up of some interventions, meaning that “leaving no one behind” is not yet fully realized.

7. Orientations to Impact: The UNSDCF has contributed to tangible development impacts in Eritrea. Maternal mortality has declined markedly, institutional deliveries increased, and child immunization rates remain among the highest in Africa. FGM prevalence has sharply decreased, child marriage reduction programmes have scaled up, and women’s participation in cooperatives and value chains has grown. Fisheries and agriculture programmes boosted incomes, nutrition, and resilience through irrigation, watershed management, and fish production gains. Capacity-building for data systems, policy frameworks, and multi-sectoral coordination improved GoSE’s ability to sustain development progress. Yet, structural constraints such as financing shortfalls, slow procurement, and external shocks (climate, regional instability) have limited the depth and speed of impacts. Impacts are visible and meaningful, but further institutional strengthening and sustained financing are essential for long-term transformation.

8. Sustainability: Many results are likely to be sustained due to strengthened national systems (e.g., health supply chains, statistical systems, WASH infrastructure) and strong government ownership. Risks to sustainability include limited fiscal space, dependence on external financing for some sectors, and climate vulnerability.

6. KEY LESSONS LEARNED

The key lessons learned show that the UNSDCF has been most effective where national ownership, integrated programming, and resilience-building were prioritized. Yet, challenges in resource mobilization, data capacity, and targeted inclusion of vulnerable groups remain. These insights will be vital for shaping the next cycle of UN–GoSE cooperation.

1. Strong Government Ownership Drives Progress

- Eritrea’s self-reliance model and strong state ownership ensured that UNSDCF interventions were well-aligned with national priorities and embedded within government systems.
- Joint Work Plans (JWPs) co-developed with the Ministry of Finance and National Development enhanced mutual accountability and coherence.

Lesson: Alignment with national frameworks ensures higher sustainability and legitimacy of UN interventions.

2. Leaving No One Behind Requires Tailored Approaches

- Tangible progress was achieved in maternal health, education access for girls, disability inclusion, and rural WASH interventions.
- However, vulnerable groups (women, youth, persons with disabilities, drought-affected populations) still require targeted support as climate shocks exacerbate inequalities.

Lesson: LNOB cannot be a cross-cutting principle only—it must translate into dedicated, resourced programmes.

3. Integrated Programming Produces Transformative Results

- Multi-agency approaches led to 17 sub zobas abandonment of FGM at the village level by 2024.
- Similar integrated interventions in nutrition, food security, and climate resilience demonstrated that cross-sectoral action accelerates impact.

Lesson: Integrated, multi-pillar programming under UNSDCF has high potential for systemic change.

4. Capacity Building and Data Systems Are Foundational

- Investments in the National Statistics Office (GDP estimates, EPHS 2025 preparations) and ministries improved evidence-based planning.
- Weak national data and M&E capacity remain a bottleneck, with reliance on UN technical support.

Lesson: Long-term success depends on institutional capacity strengthening, especially in data systems.

5. Resilience to External Shocks Is Critical

- Climate variability (droughts, locusts, erratic rainfall), UCMs, and spillovers from regional conflicts severely affected outcomes.

- UNSDCF interventions that integrated resilience-building (e.g., solar-powered water systems, food systems transformation, climate adaptation) proved most impactful.

Lesson: Embedding climate resilience and risk preparedness in all UNSDCF programming is essential.

6. Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Need Expansion

- While Eritrea leveraged partnerships with EU, AfDB, Gavi, and bilateral donors, funding gaps remained large, particularly for social protection and livelihood diversification.
- UNCT coherence improved, but private sector engagement is still limited.

Lesson: Strengthening diversified partnerships (private sector, regional institutions, diaspora) is critical for sustainability.

Table 7: Lessons Learned and Implications for Next Cycle 2027-2031

Lesson Learned	Implication for Next Cycle (2027–2031)
1. Strong Government Ownership Drives Progress Alignment with national priorities and self- and budgeting cycles. Strengthen government reliance model enhanced coherence and leadership of Results Groups to further sustainability.	Continue embedding UNSDCF in national planning institutionalize joint ownership.
2. Leaving No One Behind Requires Tailored Approaches Gains made in maternal health, girls' education, fenced resources. Strengthen disaggregated data to and disability inclusion, but gaps remain for track outcomes for vulnerable groups. PWDs, youth, and climate-affected groups.	Develop dedicated LNOB programmes with ring-fenced resources. Strengthen disaggregated data to track outcomes for vulnerable groups.
3. Integrated Programming Produces Transformative Results Multi-agency approaches (FGM elimination, food systems) showed high systemic impact.	Scale cross-sectoral, multi-agency interventions and expand joint programmes (e.g., climate resilience + livelihoods + health).
4. Capacity Building and Data Systems Are Foundational Statistical capacity improved (EPHS 2025 prep) but still weak and dependent on UN.	Invest in long-term capacity development of national institutions (Statistics, Health Information Systems). Ensure gradual transition from UN-led to nationally driven M&E.
5. Resilience to External Shocks Is Critical Climate, UCMs, and regional conflicts undermined progress, but resilience-focused interventions proved durable.	Embed risk preparedness and climate resilience across all outcomes. Mainstream crisis-sensitive programming.
6. Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Need Expansion UNCT coherence improved, but funding gaps and limited private sector/civil society engagement remain.	Broaden partnerships with private sector, diaspora, regional banks (AfDB), and South-South actors. Adopt joint resource mobilization strategies with GoSE.

7. BEST PRACTICES FROM THE UNSDCF IMPLEMENTATION

1. Deep Alignment with National Priorities (Self-Reliance Model)

- The UNSDCF was **fully embedded in Eritrea’s national development strategy** and self-reliance model.
- UN agencies aligned their CPDs and workplans directly with the UNSDCF results framework, reducing duplication and ensuring ownership.
- **Lesson for other UNCTs:** Full alignment with government-led strategies enhances sustainability and legitimacy of UN interventions.

2. Joint, Multi-Sectoral Programming (FGM Elimination, ODF Villages)

- The UNFPA–UNICEF Joint Programme on **FGM elimination**
- Similarly, WASH-led multi-agency interventions led to 94% villages **of rural communities being declared Open Defecation Free (ODF)**.
- **Lesson for other UNCTs:** Multi-agency “One UN” approaches addressing cross-cutting issues yield systemic and irreversible cultural transformations.

3. Results-Based Joint Work Plans (JWPs)

- Eritrea’s UNCT used **Joint Work Plans** and Results Groups under the UNSDCF Steering Committee, which streamlined agency contributions into one coordinated results chain.
- **Lesson for other UNCTs:** JWPs are a practical tool for coherence, accountability, and reducing transaction costs.

4. Community-Driven Change Models

- Community ownership was central to gains in sanitation (ODF), FGM abandonment, and maternal health.
- By working with village committees, health workers, and local leaders, the UNSDCF ensured behavioural shifts and local buy-in.
- **Lesson for other UNCTs:** Sustainable results are more likely when communities themselves drive and monitor change.

5. Embedding Resilience in All Interventions

- Food systems interventions (fishery expansion + climate-smart agriculture) increased production by 15.2% between 2023–2024, while reducing vulnerability to drought.
- Health and WASH interventions were designed with climate adaptation in mind (e.g., solar-powered water systems, drought-resistant crops).
- **Lesson for other UNCTs:** Integrating resilience-building and climate adaptation into all outcomes makes results more shock-resistant.

6. Institutionalizing Data & Evidence Systems

- The UNSDCF supported preparation of the EPHS-2025 and strengthened statistical systems.
- Data-driven planning was institutionalized through UN INFO and annual results reports aligned to UNSDCF outcomes.
- **Lesson for other UNCTs:** Building national data systems alongside UNSDCF reporting mechanisms ensures evidence-based policymaking and stronger accountability.

7. Gender Equality as a Transformative Driver

- Gender **equality functioned as a transformative driver across the UNSDCF**, generating reinforcing gains across multiple sectors rather than operating as a standalone intervention.
- **Education outcomes improved**, with girls' school retention surpassing that of boys. In 2024, girls' retention to Grade 5 reached **87.8 percent**, compared to **82.7 percent** for boys.
- **Maternal health outcomes strengthened**, as access to skilled delivery expanded and maternal mortality declined. Facility-based deliveries increased from **71 percent to 81 percent**.
- **Women's rights and agency were reinforced** through progress toward the abandonment of harmful practices. FGM abandonment was achieved in **167 sub-zobas**, and prevalence among girls under 15 declined from **18.2 percent in 2014 to 7.8 percent in 2025**.
- Lesson for other UNCTs: Integrating gender equality across all Cooperation Framework outcomes, rather than treating it as a standalone theme, can act as a catalyst for sustained and compounding results in health, education, and social norm transformation.

In summary, Eritrea's UNSDCF 2022-2026 demonstrates that government ownership + multi-sectoral programming + community-driven models + resilience focus + data strengthening promotes sustainable and transformative outcomes. In this Cooperation Framework, Eritrea's engagement with human rights has centred on socioeconomic rights—health, education, food, water, and an adequate standard of living rather than civil and political rights. This reflects both the government's development philosophy and the UNCT's operating parameters. The evaluation does not view this as a gap but highlights it as an important contextual factor for shaping the next Cooperation Framework, particularly in how human rights reporting is framed. Through investments in health, education, water, and sanitation, the Government has advanced socioeconomic rights and strengthened community resilience.

8. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEXT CF PROGRAMMING CYCLE (2027–2031)

1. Deepen National Ownership and Institutionalization

- Integrate Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) priorities into national development plans and sector strategies.
- Strengthen the Joint Steering Committee and Results Groups to ensure government-led coordination, planning, and oversight.
- Implement a structured capacity transfer plan so GoSE institutions progressively lead implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

2. Strengthen the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Agenda

- Design targeted programmes for women, youth, persons with disabilities, and climate-affected communities, especially in hard-to-reach areas.
- Invest in disaggregated data systems (sex, age, disability, location) to monitor inequities.
- Support the expansion of social protection measures to cushion vulnerable groups from climate and economic shocks.

3. Scale Up Integrated and Multi-Sectoral Approaches

- Expand joint, multi-sectoral programmes in food systems, health, WASH, education, and climate resilience.
- Institutionalize Joint Work Plans (JWPs) as the core coordination mechanism for all agencies.
- Strengthen One-UN delivery platforms to streamline processes, reduce transaction costs, and improve coherence.

4. Embed Resilience and Climate Adaptation Across All Outcomes

- Increase investments in climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy, water resource management, and diversified food systems.
- Ensure every outcome area integrates risk preparedness, disaster risk reduction, and climate adaptation.
- Strengthen shock-responsive systems in health, food security, and WASH to withstand droughts, economic shocks, and UCMs.
- Build institutional capacity for effective management of land, water, and environmental resources.

5. Expand Partnerships and Resource Mobilization

- Diversify financing by engaging private sector actors, diaspora networks, regional organizations (AfDB), and South-South partners.
- Strengthen joint resource mobilization efforts with GoSE, especially for underfunded areas (youth employment, disability inclusion).
- Promote innovative financing mechanisms such as blended finance, climate funds, and pooled UNCT resources.

6. Invest in Data, Monitoring, and Accountability

- Finalize and institutionalize the Eritrea Population and Health Survey (EPHS-2025) and link it directly to national planning cycles.
- Strengthen national M&E systems to gradually reduce reliance on UN-led platforms.

- Expand citizen feedback systems (community scorecards, social accountability platforms) to build trust and improve service delivery.

7. Advance Gender Equality and Human Capital Development

- Consolidate gains in FGM reduction, maternal health, and girls' education by embedding progress in legal and institutional frameworks.
- Expand youth-focused, market-linked skills programmes (TVET, SME support, digital jobs).
- Mainstream gender equality across all UNSDCF pillars as a driver of inclusive and sustainable development.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Evaluation Design Matrix

Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Indicators (Preliminary)	Data sources	Data collection methods
Relevance and adaptability	To what extent are the UNSDCF objectives aligned and been consistent with the needs, priorities and policies of the government in alignment to national development plans, strategies and frameworks.	The existence of links between the objectives of the UNSDCF and corresponding government policies, strategies, and plans, including the ten-year perspective plan and strategic plans of relevant sectors.	UNSDCF Document Agency Country Programs Agency CPE Reports KIs from Government Offices KIs from UN Agencies	Document review Key informant interviews
	To what extent did the implementation of the Country Framework adjust to emerging issues faced by the country during the implementation?	The extent to which the UNSDCF identified potential risks and implemented mitigation plans Existence of evidence of agility in the annual planning and implementation of the UNSDCF	Agency CPE Reports Annual reports of UN Agencies KIs from Government Offices KIs from UN Agencies Beneficiaries	Document review Key informant interviews Focus Group Discussions
	To what extent does the UNSDCF address the triple nexus (development-peace-humanitarian spheres) and align with peace and humanitarian response planning?	The existence of intentional actions (including coordination platforms amongst actors in the development, peace, and humanitarian space) to achieve triple nexus.	UNSDCF Document Agency Country Programs Agency CPE Reports KIs from Government Offices KIs from UN Agencies Beneficiaries	Document review Key informant interviews Focus Group Discussions

Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Indicators (Preliminary)	Data sources	Data collection methods
		The extent to which resilience building is integrated with humanitarian actions of UNSDCF The extent to which development programs and projects integrate actions to prevent, predict, detect, and respond to emergencies		
Coherence	To what extent has the UNSDCF strengthened the position, credibility and reliability of the UN system as a partner for the government and other actors, and has served as an effective partnership vehicle?	The extent to which UNSDCF is perceived to facilitate the engagement of UN agencies as a partner for government and other actors, as one UN	KIs from UN Agencies Evaluation reports from joint programs	Key informant interviews Document Reviews
	To what extent has the CF strengthened the coherence of support by UNCT members and sought partnerships (with civil society/private sector/local government/parliament/national human rights institutions/international development partners) to enhance achievement of results?	The existence of evidence showing positive changes in coherence amongst UNCT members after the adoption of the UNSDCF	KIs from UN Agencies KIs from Government Offices Evaluation reports from joint programs	Key informant interviews Document Reviews
	Post UN reform, to what extent have UN agency programs and	Changes in the number and size of joint programs	KIs from UN Agencies	Key informant interviews

Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Indicators (Preliminary)	Data sources	Data collection methods
	work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from CF both in design and implementation?	The existence of mechanisms promoting the use of the CF as a guide/basis for the design and implementation of agency CPs and joint programs	Evaluation reports from joint programs	Document Reviews
Effectiveness	To what extent has the UNSDCF contributed effectively to provide greater clarity and transparency of results achieved and resources used?	The existence and completeness of results and resource tracking mechanisms The contribution of UNSDCF to tracking development indicators at national and sub-national levels	SDG progress reports National surveys	Key informant interviews
	What has been the progress made towards the achievement of expected outcomes and results? What are the results achieved so far and/or on-track to be achieved?	SDG indicators under each outcome of the UNSDCF	SDG progress reports National surveys Model estimates by relevant UN agencies Scientific publications	Document review
Efficiency	Was the UNSDCF supported by an integrated funding framework and by adequate funding instruments? What were the gaps, if any? Have resources been allocated efficiently?	Existence of an integrated funding framework in the UN system to support UNSDCF		Document review Key informant interviews
	Has the UNSDCF been implemented in a timely way?	Time UNSDCF was developed and approved	Reports from the Resident Coordinators Office	Document Review

Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Indicators (Preliminary)	Data sources	Data collection methods
		Timely socialization of the UNSDCF among UNCT members and relevant government and non-government stakeholders	KIs from UN Agencies	Key informant interviews
	Has the UNSDCF reduced transaction costs for partners through greater UN coherence and discipline?	The existence of evidence showing reductions in transaction costs among UNCT members after the adoption of the UNSDCF	KIs from UN Agencies	Key informant interviews
Coordination	To what extent has the UNSDCF fostered internal coordination, through the promotion of synergies and interlinkages between its interventions?			Key informant interviews
	To what extent the planning and coordination of the UNSDCF (through Action Groups and other coordination structures) efficiently contributed to a coherent implementation and to the achievement of indicators' targets?	The existence and functionality of UNSDCF coordination mechanisms The contribution of existing UNSDCF coordination mechanisms in increasing coherence and accelerating the achievement of indicators' targets	ToRs and Minutes of coordination platforms KIs from UN agencies	Document Review Key informant interviews
	To what extent did the post reform Resident Coordinator office's roles and responsibilities enable positive UNCT's joint convening power	The existence of evidence showing positive change in UNCT's joint convening power after the adoption of the UNSDCF	KIs from UN Agencies	Key informant interviews

Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Indicators (Preliminary)	Data sources	Data collection methods
	and better coherence of the country team?			
Impact	To what extent has the UNSDCF contributed to the achievement of identified priorities? Can the contribution/s, if any, be clearly identified and measured? What are the notable impacts and the unintended effects, if any, of the UNSDCF?	Availability of data on SDG indicators Trends in SDG indicators The contribution (positive or negative) of UNSDCF to observed trends in SDG indicators The impact of UNSDCF supported activities on beneficiaries	SDG progress reports National surveys Model estimates by relevant UN agencies Scientific publications	Document Reviews Key informant interviews Focus group discussions
Sustainability	What mechanisms, if any, has the UNSDCF established to ensure socio-political, institutional, financial and environmental sustainability?	The existence of strategies to ensure sustainability, in the design and implementation of UNSDCF.	UNSDCF Document Agency Country Programs Country Program Evaluations KIs from UN Agencies KIs from Government Offices	Document review Key informant interviews
	What is the likelihood that progress towards the SDGs is sustained by national partners and stakeholders over time?	Level of government ownership for the SDGs Trends in the numbers of national partners contributing to SDGs.	Government policies, strategies, and plans UNCT member agency annual reports KIs from government offices	Document review Key informant interviews

Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Indicators (Preliminary)	Data sources	Data collection methods
		Trends in domestic financing for SDGs	KIs from UN agencies	

Annex 2. Terms of Reference: Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022–2026 is the guiding document that shapes the UN Country Team’s (UNCT) collective support for Eritrea’s national development priorities. Established under General Assembly Resolution A/RES/72/279, the UNSDCF replaces the former United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and represents a coherent, strategic response to the country’s development challenges while ensuring alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).³¹

The evaluation of the UNSDCF is a mandatory, independent, system-wide process designed to assess the framework’s contributions to national development priorities and the SDGs.

This evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance, and sustainability of the UNSDCF’s implementation. The findings will inform future programming, enhance accountability, and facilitate evidence-based decision-making for the next Cooperation Framework cycle.

The evaluation will adhere to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016) and DCO UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines-Engl-2024.pdf and be conducted with credibility, impartiality, and methodological rigor. It will ensure a transparent and inclusive process, engaging relevant stakeholders to provide accurate, evidence-based insights into the UN’s contribution to Eritrea’s national development priorities and SDG progress.

This evaluation is mainly aimed at primary users such as the Government of The State of Eritrea (GoSE), UNCT, development partners, donors, and other development actors and secondary users, including the general public, academia interested in its use for different purposes, including, among others, formulation of proposals for development interventions, preparation of academic papers, mobilization of resources, etc.

BACKGROUND - COUNTRY CONTEXT AND UNSDCF HIGHLIGHTS

Eritrea, a low-income nation in the Horn of Africa, has a population of 3.5 million, nearly half under 15. Despite progress in health, education, and poverty reduction, the country faces significant socio-economic challenges. Eritrea met the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), reduced child and maternal mortality, and achieved gender parity in primary education. By 2015, 85% of the population had access to safe drinking water.

However, the economy remains heavily reliant on agriculture, which employs a large workforce but contributes less to GDP than the services sector. Limited economic diversification and

³¹ Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework-September 2021

vulnerable employment—affecting 57.4% of jobs, particularly among women and rural communities—hinder sustainable growth. Climate change further threatens food security, with rising temperatures, droughts, and deforestation exacerbating vulnerabilities.

Institutional and infrastructure gaps also pose major constraints. Weak institutional capacities limit policy implementation, while underdeveloped energy infrastructure restricts economic expansion. Only 42% of the population has electricity, with rural areas lagging behind. Social inequality persists, affecting vulnerable groups, while inadequate data systems hinder evidence-based policymaking.

Despite these challenges, Eritrea has significant opportunities for growth. Its strategic location supports regional trade, and its rich mineral and marine resources offer economic diversification potential. With investments in education and job creation, the country's youthful population could become a key driver of development. Eritrea's agricultural potential, along with its commitment to social justice and gender equality, provides a strong foundation for inclusive and sustainable growth.

Against this background, the Government of the State of Eritrea and the UN system signed a Cooperation Framework in December 2021. The UNSDCF 2022–2026 serves as the strategic framework guiding the UNCT-GoSE in supporting Eritrea's national development priorities and advancing progress toward the SDGs. The UNSDCF 2022–2026 is aligned with Eritrea's national development priorities, as well as global and regional frameworks, including Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063, and the African Union's development goals. The framework reflects Eritrea's commitment to the principles of "Leaving No One Behind" (LNOB), gender equality, and human rights. It also emphasizes the importance of resilience, sustainability, and accountability in achieving the SDGs.

Developed through an inclusive consultation process involving the GoSE, UN agencies, civil society, and development partners, the UNSDCF 2022–2026 focuses on two strategic priority areas, each with specific outcomes and outputs designed to address Eritrea's development challenges and contribute to the SDGs:

- 1. Human Development and Wellbeing:**
- 2. Inclusive, Diversified, and Climate-Resilient Economy:**

The UNSDCF integrates cross-cutting themes such as gender equality, youth empowerment, disability inclusion, and social justice. These themes are embedded across all strategic priorities to ensure that no one is left behind. The framework also emphasizes the importance of innovation, digital technology, and human rights in driving sustainable development.

The UNSDCF 2022–2026 was developed in a normal development setting, with a focus on long-term sustainable development rather than a transition from humanitarian or recovery phases.

Theory of Change (ToC) and Results Framework

The UNSDCF's Theory of Change is premised on the assumption that strong, resilient institutions and inclusive economic growth are essential for achieving sustainable development in Eritrea. The framework envisions that by 2026, more people will benefit from

equitable access to quality social services, public institutions will be more accountable and efficient, and economic growth will be more inclusive and climate resilient. The UNSDCF's intervention logic is based on addressing the root causes of development challenges, leveraging the UN's comparative advantage, and fostering partnerships with national and international stakeholders.

The UNSDCF outlines four outcomes and seven outputs, supported by a results framework that includes performance indicators, baselines, and targets. Key outcomes include:

Human Development and Wellbeing:

Outcome 1: Equitable access to quality essential social services.

Outcome 2: Strengthened public sector institutions and accountability.

Inclusive, Diversified, and Climate-Resilient Economy:

Outcome 3: Increased livelihoods through inclusive and diversified economic growth.

Outcome 4: Climate-resilient sustainable environment and natural resources management.

The UNSDCF 2022-2026 involves 21 UN agencies, funds, and programmes (AFPs). These agencies bring complementary expertise in areas such as health, education, agriculture, climate resilience, and governance.

Key stakeholders include the Government of Eritrea, particularly the Ministry of Finance and National Development (MFND), which provides overarching oversight and guidance. Other stakeholders include Implementing Partners (IPs), development partners, and local communities, all of whom play a critical role in the implementation and monitoring of the UNSDCF.

Contextual Issues: Gender Equality and Human Rights

Gender equality and human rights are central to the UNSDCF, with a focus on addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities. The framework emphasizes the importance of gender-sensitive programming, social justice, and the protection of vulnerable populations from harmful practices such as gender-based violence (GBV) and female genital mutilation (FGM). The UNSDCF also aligns with international human rights standards, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Evaluative Knowledge and Assessments

The UNSDCF builds on lessons learned from the previous Strategic Partnership Cooperation Framework (SPCF) 2017-2021, which highlighted the need for stronger partnerships, improved data collection, and enhanced institutional capacities. The evaluation of the UNSDCF will also consider findings from country programme evaluations of UN agencies operating under the framework, as well as the Voluntary National Review (VNR) conducted by Eritrea in 2022 and 2024. The VNR highlights the country's progress toward the SDGs, focusing on health (SDG 3) and climate action (SDG 13). Key findings include significant reductions in maternal and child mortality, expanded access to healthcare, and progress in combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. It also highlights progress in education, gender equality, and

water/sanitation, with increased school access, improved literacy rates, and near-gender parity in education. Gender equality efforts include laws against harmful practices, reduced FGM, and increased women's representation in the workforce and politics. Clean water and sanitation access has improved, with 94% of villages open defecation-free.

These evaluations provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of UN interventions and inform the design of future programming.

The evaluation of the UNSDCF 2022-2026 will assess the framework's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and sustainability in contributing to Eritrea's national development priorities and the SDGs. It will examine the extent to which the UNSDCF has addressed key development challenges, including economic diversification, environmental sustainability, and institutional capacity building. The evaluation will also explore the framework's alignment with global and regional agendas, its integration of cross-cutting themes, and its contribution to gender equality and human rights.

The evaluation of the UNSDCF will provide critical insights into the framework's impact and inform future programming to ensure that no one is left behind.

1 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation of the **2022-2026** for Eritrea serves two primary purposes, consistent with the standard objectives of UNSDCF evaluations:

I. Promote Greater Learning and Operational Improvement

The evaluation will provide critical insights and evidence-based recommendations to strengthen programming and results at the country level. By documenting good practices, lessons learned, and areas for improvement, the evaluation will inform the planning and decision-making processes for the next UNSDCF programming cycle. It will also contribute to improving UN coordination at the country level, ensuring that the UNCT's efforts are more effective, efficient, and aligned with national priorities. The findings and recommendations will be shared with the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) and other stakeholders to benefit other countries facing similar challenges.

II. Support Greater Accountability of the UNCT to CF Stakeholders

The evaluation will objectively assess the extent to which the UNSDCF has contributed to national development results and the achievement of the SDGs. By providing evidence of results achieved and evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies and interventions used, the evaluation will enable stakeholders, including the Government of Eritrea, development partners, and donors, to hold the UNCT accountable for fulfilling its commitments and roles under the UNSDCF.

1.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The evaluation will focus on the following key objectives:

1. Assess the Contribution of the UNSDCF to National Development and the SDGs:

- Measure the extent to which UNSDCF interventions align with Eritrea's national development priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Analyse the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and sustainability of UN support.
- Evaluate the collective impact of UN agencies under the "One UN" approach and determine the added value of UN coordination and joint programming.

2. Identify Lessons Learned, Good Practices, and Factors Affecting Performance:

- Document lessons learned and good practices to inform the design and implementation of the next UNSDCF programming cycle.
- Examine enabling factors and bottlenecks that influenced RC.
- Assess how external factors (e.g., economic conditions, policy shifts, global crises) impacted progress.

3. Strengthen Accountability and Promote Learning:

- Ensure accountability to the Government of Eritrea, development partners, and other stakeholders by providing an objective assessment of the UN's performance.
- Generate actionable, forward-looking recommendations to improve future programming, coordination, and impact.
- Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and reporting mechanisms for the next UNSDCF cycle.

2. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

Time scope: The evaluation will review the implementation period of the UNSDCF 2022-2026, from January 2022 to the time of the evaluation in 2025, to be established during the inception phase.

Programmatic scope: It will assess UNSDCF interventions nationwide, including in urban, rural, and vulnerable communities where UN-supported programs have been established. The evaluation will address the overall strategic priorities as well as the outcomes and outputs of the UNSDCF. In this context, the UNSDCF will be evaluated in relation to its strategic content as outlined in the results framework and for its contribution to national priorities. Additionally, the evaluation will consider UNSDCF's programming principles, including human rights, gender, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

The evaluation will assess the contributions of all Resident and Non-Resident UN agencies, funds, and programs (AFPs) involved in the UNSDCF. The evaluation team in collaboration with the RCO, will develop a mapping of stakeholders.

The fieldwork will focus on Asmara, the country's capital, as it is where most of the reporting groups are currently concentrated, including the Government and United Nations agencies; however, it is expected that the evaluation team will be able to carry out additional visits to other relevant points of the national geography within the framework of the current UNSDCF 2-3 zobas (urban/rural) representing key regions where UN interventions are most concentrated.

The final sites will be finalized at the inception phase, where other key actors and beneficiary groups are located.

Key Users of the Evaluation and Intended Use

The evaluation is intended to serve the following primary and secondary users:

Primary Users:

- **Government of Eritrea:** The evaluation will provide evidence-based recommendations to inform national development planning and policymaking, particularly in the context of the next CF programming cycle.
- **UN Country Team (UNCT):** The evaluation will support the UNCT in strengthening its programming, coordination, and accountability mechanisms.
- **Development Partners and Donors:** The evaluation will provide insights into the effectiveness of the CF and inform future funding decisions.

Secondary Users:

- **Local Communities:** The evaluation will capture the perspectives of local communities to assess the CF's impact on the ground.
 - **UN Development Coordination Office (DCO):** The evaluation's findings and lessons learned will be shared with DCO to inform global best practices and support other countries in their UNSDCF implementation.
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3. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

3.1 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The evaluation of the UNSDCF 2022-2026 for Eritrea will be guided by the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, which are widely recognized for assessing development programmes. These criteria include relevance and adaptability, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, coordination, and sustainability. Additionally, given the multi-agency nature of the UNSDCF and the UN's commitment to the "One UN" spirit, the evaluation will include a specific focus on coordination.

Initial Suggested Evaluation Questions

The evaluation will address the following initial evaluation questions, structured around the OECD-DAC criteria:

Relevance and Adaptability

1. To what extent are the UNSDCF's objectives and design aligned with Eritrea's national development priorities, the SDGs, and the needs of the population?

Coherence

2. To what extent are the UNSDCF's interventions consistent with other development efforts in Eritrea, including those of the government, development partners, and others?

3. How well does the UNSDCF align with global and regional frameworks, such as Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063?

Effectiveness

4. To what extent has the UNSDCF achieved its intended outcomes and outputs, contributing to national development results and progress towards the SDGs?
5. What factors have enabled or hindered the achievement of the UNSDCF's objectives?

Efficiency

6. To what extent has the UNSDCF used its resources (financial, human, and technical) in an optimal way to achieve its objectives?
7. What measures have been taken to improve the cost-effectiveness of the UNSDCF's interventions?

Coordination

8. How effective have the UNCT's coordination mechanisms been in delivering the UNSDCF's outcomes and outputs?
9. Post UN reform, to what extent have UN agency programs and work plans been effectively and meaningfully derived from the UNSDCF both in design and implementation?
10. To what extent did the post-reform Resident Coordinator office's roles and responsibilities enable positive UNCT's joint convening power and better coherence of the country team

Sustainability

11. To what extent are the benefits of the UNSDCF's interventions likely to continue beyond the programming cycle?
12. How well has the UNSDCF strengthened national capacities, institutions, and systems to sustain development results?

Orientation Towards Impact

13. To what extent has the UNSDCF contributed to long-term development impact, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities?
14. What transformative changes have been achieved as a result of the UNSDCF's interventions?

Coverage

15. How well has the UNSDCF reached the most vulnerable populations, including women, children, and persons with disabilities?

Finalization of Evaluation Questions and Matrix

The evaluation team will develop the final evaluation questions and matrix during the inception phase, based on further consultations with stakeholders and a review of available data. The evaluation matrix will map the evaluation questions to specific indicators, data sources, and analysis methods, ensuring a comprehensive and systematic assessment of the UNSDCF.

3. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 EVALUATION APPROACH

The evaluation of the UNSDCF 2022-2026 for Eritrea will adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. This approach will ensure a comprehensive and evidence-based assessment of the CF's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, coordination, and sustainability. The evaluation will be guided by the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and will incorporate gender and human rights-sensitive methodology, ensuring that the perspectives of vulnerable groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and refugees, are systematically integrated into the evaluation process.

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with [DCO UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines-Engl-2024.pdf](#) and will follow a participatory and inclusive approach, engaging key stakeholders at all stages of the evaluation process. This includes the Government of Eritrea, UN agencies, development partners, civil society organizations, and local communities. The evaluation will also adhere to the principles of inclusion and accessibility, ensuring that all stakeholders, including those with disabilities, can participate meaningfully.

3.2 METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The evaluation will use a combination of document reviews, and analysis of other quantitative.³² secondary data, individual interviews³³ With key informants and focus groups or other types of group discussion to collect data. In particular, the evaluation will consider programme evaluations carried out by UN agencies. The evaluation team will develop the evaluation methodology in accordance with the evaluation approach and design tools to collect appropriate data and information as strong, evidence-based answers to answer the overall evaluation questions. The methodological design will include: an analytical framework; a strategy for data collection and analysis; specially designed tools; an evaluation matrix; and a detailed work plan.

Sampling Approach: A purposive sampling approach will be used to select programmes (joint workplans; joint programmes; UN agencies strategic plans etc.) that will be covered in the scope of the CF evaluation. The selected programme components should have a sufficient level of transformational intent (depth, breadth, and size) and maturity.

Data Collection: The evaluation will use quantitative and qualitative approaches, including literature review, statistics at national and local levels, survey data, semi-structured interviews, direct observation, focus groups, and workshops.

Data Quality Assurance: The evaluation will implement rigorous data quality assurance measures, including triangulation to cross-verify data from multiple sources—such as documents, interviews, and focus groups—to ensure the validity and reliability of findings.

³² There will be NO PRIMARY quantitative data collection. This means that there will NOT BE ANY QUANTITATIVE SAMPLING. Therefore, any quantitative analysis will be from desk review.

³³ PRIMARY data collection will only be qualitative. Therefore, no PRIMARY analysis will use quantitative methods.

Additionally, validation workshops will be conducted with key stakeholders to review preliminary findings, ensuring their accuracy, relevance, and contextual applicability before finalizing the evaluation report.

Evaluation Matrix: The evaluation matrix will serve as the primary analytical tool for the evaluation. The evaluation team will use the template of the evaluation matrix provided by the evaluation manager to systematically structure and consolidate the data collected for each of the evaluation questions. This matrix will allow them, among other things, to identify the missing data and thus fill these gaps before the end of the collection. This matrix will also help to ensure the validity of the data collected.

Participation and inclusiveness: The evaluation will adopt a gender- and human rights-sensitive methodology, ensuring that data is systematically disaggregated by sex, age, geographic region, ethnicity, disability, and other relevant equity markers to capture disparities and inclusion across different groups.

A participatory and inclusive approach will be central to the evaluation, ensuring the meaningful engagement of all key stakeholders throughout the process. This will include the Government of Eritrea, UN agencies, development partners, civil society organizations, and beneficiaries.

To facilitate comprehensive stakeholder engagement, the evaluation team will conduct stakeholder mapping to identify both direct and indirect partners involved in UNSDCF implementation.

Theory of change analysis: During the inception phase or early in the data collection phase, the evaluation team will hold ToC meetings with the result or thematic groups to discuss the programmatic changes that could have occurred in the programme result chain during implementation as a response to emerging challenges and needs. These meetings are led by the Evaluation Team and organized by the Evaluation Manager. The ToC meetings are useful to support the Evaluation Team, UNCT, and the Evaluation Steering Committee members to develop a common understanding of ToC activities, expected outcomes, underlying assumptions and consensus on potential outcome indicators to be evaluated. The Synoptic table for the Analysis of the theory of change is used to support the ToC meetings. In some cases, the Evaluation Team may use the findings from these meetings to reconstruct (if necessary) the initial ToC that supported the development of the UNSDCF being evaluated, to better align with the UNSDCF's implementation and account for emerging development changes in the country. The ToC analysis needs to include also cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and women's and human rights, non-discrimination (including disability inclusion), and environmental sustainability.

The contribution analysis should be limited to the soundness of the "agencies and joint work plans" output contributions to the outcome level and SDG indicators. Evaluators will base their evaluation on the analysis and interpretation of the logical consistency of the results chain: linking program outputs to changes at a higher level of outcomes, based on observations and data collected during the process along the result chain. This analysis should serve as a basis for the judgment of the evaluators on the contribution of the current UNSDCF to the achievement of the outcome-level results as targeted by the UNSDCF.

The analysis of the UNSDCF's theory of change and the reconstruction of its intervention logic, if necessary, will therefore play a vital role in the design of the evaluation, in the analysis of the data collected throughout the evaluation, in communicating results and in developing relevant and practical conclusions and recommendations.

Finalization of the evaluation questions and assumptions: The evaluation team will finalize the evaluation questions after consultations with the evaluation steering committee and thematic groups. The final evaluation questions should be a reasonable number, not exceeding 15. They should reflect the evaluation criteria as well as the indicative evaluation questions listed in this Terms of Reference. They should also take advantage of the results of the reconstruction of the intervention logic of the cooperation framework. The evaluation questions will be included in the evaluation matrix (see appendix) and should be supplemented by sets of hypotheses that capture the key aspects of the intervention logic associated with the scope of the question. Data collection for each of the assumptions will be guided by clearly formulated quantitative and qualitative indicators, also indicated in the matrix.

Conflict of Interest

All members of the Evaluation Team will be required to declare any potential conflicts of interest and will be excluded from participating in the evaluation if they have been involved in the design or implementation of the UNSDCF 2022-2026 or are anticipated to play a role in the next CF programming cycle. The Team Leader will be an international consultant not residing in Eritrea to ensure independence and impartiality.

Validation of Evaluation Results

The evaluation results will be validated through stakeholder workshops, where preliminary findings and recommendations will be presented to key stakeholders, including the Government of Eritrea, UN agencies, development partners, and civil society organizations. The feedback from these workshops will be incorporated into the final evaluation report, ensuring that the findings and recommendations are credible, relevant, and actionable.

Use of Evaluation Results

The evaluation results will be used to:

- Inform the design and implementation of the next UNSDCF programming cycle.
- Strengthen UN coordination, programming, and accountability mechanisms.
- Promote learning and knowledge sharing among stakeholders, including the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) and other countries.

5. EVALUATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Overview of the Evaluation Process

The evaluation of the UNSDCF 2022-2026 for Eritrea will be conducted in five key phases, each with specific activities and deliverables. The evaluation process will be guided by the UNSDCF Evaluation Guidelines (2021 revised) and will ensure a participatory, inclusive, and evidence-based approach. Below is an outline of the evaluation phases and their respective timelines.

EVALUATION DELIVERABLES

1. Inception Report: The consultant will prepare an inception report that includes a preliminary analysis of the Cooperation Framework (CF) Theory of Change (ToC), or a reconstructed ToC if none exists. This report will outline the evaluation approach and methodology, featuring an evaluation design matrix, a detailed evaluation plan with a timeline, and a tentative list of interviews and field visit plans. It will also present an evaluation matrix summarizing the design, methodology, evaluation questions, data sources, data collection tools, and analysis methods, along with finalized tools such as interview guides and focus group discussion guides.

Overall, the inception report serves as the conceptual framework and operational plan for the CF evaluation. It operationalizes the Terms of Reference (TOR) and includes an assessment of the ToC, an overview of evaluation objectives and scope, and a purposive sampling framework for interventions and stakeholders. Additionally, it details the evaluation approach, criteria, and questions, along with governance and quality assurance mechanisms, and outlines a plan for evaluation activities and a timeline.

2. Preliminary Findings: The consultant will prepare preliminary findings report or presentation to be shared during the validation workshop. This deliverable will summarize key insights, initial conclusions, and emerging recommendations based on the data collected and analysed. The format and template for the presentation will be agreed upon with the Evaluation Manager.

3. Draft and Final Evaluation: The final report should adhere to the structure outlined in the UNSDCF evaluation guidelines and include several key components. It must provide an overview of the evaluation, detailing what was assessed and why, along with the purpose and scope. The report should describe the methodology employed, outlining both the objectives and methods of evaluation. It is essential to present the findings, supported by relevant evidence and analysis. The conclusions section should summarize the insights drawn from these findings in relation to the main evaluation questions. Additionally, the report should offer clear recommendations based on these conclusions and highlight valuable lessons learned from the evaluation process.

The final report will be submitted in both electronic (Word and PDF) and printed formats (3 copies). All the reports will be in English.

1. Preparatory Phase (Month 1)

Objective: To establish the foundation for the evaluation, including the governance structure, Terms of Reference (TOR), and recruitment of the evaluation team.

Key Activities:

- **Development of the Roadmap:** Outline the evaluation process, timeline, and key milestones.
- **Constitution of the Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC):** Establish the ESC, including representatives from the Government of Eritrea, UNCT, and development partners.
- **Development of the TOR:** Finalize the TOR, including evaluation objectives, criteria, questions, and methodology.

- **Publication of TOR:** Disseminate the TOR to potential evaluation teams and stakeholders.
- **Recruitment of the Evaluation Team:** Identify and recruit the Team Leader and Thematic Experts, ensuring their independence and expertise.

Deliverables:

- Evaluation Roadmap.
- Finalized TOR.
- Established ESC.
- Recruited Evaluation Team.

2. Design Phase (Month 2)

Objective: To develop the evaluation methodology, including the theory of change (ToC) analysis, sampling framework, and data collection tools.

Key Activities:

- **Desk Review:** Conduct a comprehensive review of key documents, including the UNSDCF, annual reports, and monitoring and evaluation reports.
- **Stakeholder Mapping:** Detailed stakeholder mapping is conducted to identify key actors for data collection.
- **Development of the Methodology:** Finalize the evaluation methodology, including data collection methods, sampling approach, and evaluation matrix.
- **Theory of Change (ToC) Analysis:** Reconstruct the intervention logic of the UNSDCF, focusing on the linkages between outputs and outcomes.
- **Sampling Framework:** Develop a purposive sampling strategy to ensure representation across geographic regions, sectors, and vulnerable groups.
- **Field Planning:** Prepare for data collection, including logistical arrangements and stakeholder consultations.

Deliverables:

- Inception Report, including the evaluation methodology, ToC analysis, and sampling framework.
- Finalized data collection tools (e.g., interview guides, focus group discussion guides).

3. Field Phase (Months 3-4)

Objective: To collect and validate data from key stakeholders, including government officials, UN agencies, development partners, and beneficiaries.

Key Activities:

- **Data Collection:** Conduct key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and case studies.

- **Validation of Information:** Cross-verify data through triangulation and stakeholder consultations.

Deliverables:

- Completed data collection, including transcripts, notes, and case study reports.
- Preliminary findings validated through stakeholder workshops.

4. Data Analysis and Reporting Phase (Month 5)

Objective: To analyse data, draft the evaluation report, and validate findings with stakeholders.

Key Activities:

- **Data Analysis:** Analyse qualitative and quantitative data using thematic and statistical methods.
- **Report Writing:** Draft the evaluation report, including findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
- **Report Validation:** Present preliminary findings to the ESC and key stakeholders for feedback and validation.

Deliverables:

- Draft Evaluation Report.
- Validated findings and recommendations.

5. Management Response, Dissemination, and Use Phase (Month 6)

Objective: To finalize the evaluation report, develop a management response, and disseminate findings for learning and accountability.

Key Activities:

- **Finalization of the Evaluation Report:** Incorporate feedback from the ESC, stakeholders, and EQA into the final report.
- **Development of the Management Response:** The RCO and UNCT will develop a management response, outlining actions to address the evaluation's recommendations.
- **Dissemination of Findings:** Share the evaluation report and management response with key stakeholders, including the Government of Eritrea, UN agencies, development partners, and civil society organizations.
- **Use of Evaluation Results:** Use the evaluation findings to inform the design and implementation of the next UNSDCF programming cycle.

Deliverables:

- Final Evaluation Report.
- Management Response.
- Dissemination plan and materials (e.g., presentations, briefs).

TENTATIVE TIMELINE

Phase	Activities	Timeline
Preparatory Phase	Roadmap development, TOR finalization, ESC establishment, team recruitment.	Month 1 (15 March to 21 April)
Design Phase	Desk review, methodology development, ToC analysis, sampling, and field planning.	Month 2 (21 April-30 May)
Field Phase	Data collection (KIIs, FGDs, case studies), validation workshops.	Month 3-4 (01 June -30 July)
Data Analysis and Reporting Phase	Data analysis, report writing, validation, EQA.	Month 5 01 Aug -07 Sep
Management Response Dissemination and Use	Final report, management response, dissemination, and use of findings.	Month 6 (07 Sep-15 Oct)

Key Considerations

- **Gender and Human Rights Sensitivity:** The evaluation process will ensure that data is systematically disaggregated by sex, age, geographic region, ethnicity, disability, and other relevant markers of equity.
 - **Inclusion and Accessibility:** The evaluation will ensure the meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, through accessible communication and consultation methods.
 - **Quality Assurance:** The evaluation will implement rigorous quality assurance measures, including triangulation, validation workshops, and peer review.
-

Annex 3. Data Collection Guides

Key Informant Interview Guide for RCO Staff and UNCT Agencies

Introduction: Describe the Eritrea-UNSDCF and how your Agency is involved?

Interview guides (KII, IDI, FGD)

UNCT Key Informant Interview guide – generic (to be used for UNCT – UN resident coordinator; pillar groups, participating UNCT agencies; coordination groups)

Relevance and adaptability: (Is the UNSDCF aligned to the Government priorities and adapted well to emerging needs?).

1. To what degree have the key needs and priorities for the Government of Eritrea been reflected in the activities of your respective pillar/outcomes?
2. To what degree have the key policies of the Government of Eritrea been reflected in the key outcomes, outputs and interventions of your respective pillar/outcomes?
3. Are priorities for your pillar/outcomes still relevant for the country?
4. From the perspective of your pillar/outcome, who are vulnerable groups and how relevant has UNSDCF been in following the promise "leave no one behind" i.e. addressing the needs and priorities of vulnerable groups?
5. (Adaptability) What external factors affected implementation of UNSDCF, from your pillar/outcome perspective? Has your pillar/outcome area been flexible to respond to these changes and/or challenges and how? Have you met to define joint response for the COVID 19 pandemic?

Coherence: (How well does the UNSDCF fit?)

1. How do you assess the UNSDCF in terms of supporting UN Agencies in terms of harmonizing their respective efforts?
2. Elaborate on what worked well or not regarding harmonization of efforts under the UNSDCF?
3. How do you assess the UNSDCF in establishing synergies on programme interventions between different UN Agencies?
4. What strategies were in place to ensure such synergies?

Effectiveness: (Has the UNSDCF achieved its objectives? Is the CF doing it right?)

1. What have been the main achievements, referring to outcomes/outputs, in your pillar/outcomes?
2. How realistic were the outcomes, indicators and targets within your respective pillar?

3. Are there changes at the national level in your area of focus that UNSDCF contributed to?
Are there some results that you would like to highlight?
4. From the perspective of your pillar/outcome, what achievements can you specifically isolate on vulnerable groups following the promise "leave no one behind"?

Efficiency: (How well have resources been used? How efficiently were the outcomes achieved with the appropriate amount of resources and maintenance of minimum transaction cost (funds, expertise, time, administrative costs, etc.)

1. From the perspective of your pillar/outcome, in the implementation of the current UNSDCF, how do you assess delivery of results vis a vis costs to do so - delivering more with less?
2. What specific examples would you site to show that you were able to deliver more with less costs?
3. What mechanisms enabled this (or not)?
4. In terms of funding mechanisms, do you think in the current UNSDCF you were able to achieve an integrated approach?
5. What specific examples would you site to show that you were able to achieve this?
6. What enabled this (or not) in the current UNSDCF?

Coordination: (How well has implementation of the UNSDCF been coordinated?)

1. From your perspective, how do you assess the coordination between the Government of Eritrea and the UNCT in the implementation of the UNSDCF?
2. What do you think enabled effective (or not) coordination of the UNSDCF between the Government of Eritrea and the UNCT in the delivery of the UNSDCF?
3. Were there specific mechanism put in place to ensure limited overlaps and duplication of interventions between the Government of Eritrea and interventions in the UNSDCF, especially when it comes to reaching more vulnerable groups?
4. In the spirit of 'delivering as one', how do you assess the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms put in place to ensure the UNCT deliver results for the UNSDCF?
5. Would you elaborate more, by giving specific examples, in terms of what worked well or not regarding coordination of the UNCT for the current UNSDCF.
6. How do you assess the effectiveness of Joint Work Plans in ensuring delivery of results of the UNSDCF?
7. Would you elaborate more, by given specific examples, in terms of what worked well or not regarding coordination between UNCT, Government of Eritrea and other partners?

8. With the current UNSDCF, different groups were created to spearhead coordination; do you think these were effective (including from your group perspective)?
9. Would you elaborate more, by giving specific examples, in terms of what worked well or not regarding these groups?

Orientation towards Impact: (What difference do UNSDCF interventions make?)

1. What changes has the current UNSDCF contributed to when it comes to improving the lives of Eritreans in general?
2. Do you think the UNSDCF has contributed to improved individual resilience to shocks and crises for Eritreans?
3. In particular, from your perspective, do you think the UNSDCF has contributed to improving the lives of vulnerable people (specifically, women, those with disabilities, living with HIV, persons with albinism, and the prisoners, refugees etc.)?
4. Do you think the UNSDCF has contributed to building capacity of national institutions (government, NGOs, private sector) to deliver national policy priorities, including SDGs?
5. Do you think the UNSDCF has contributed to the promotion of human rights, especially for vulnerable groups?
6. Do you think the UNSDCF has contributed to ensuring environmental sustainability, and overall country's preparedness to climatic shocks?
7. What would you highlight as key unintended changes that the UNSDCF has contributed over its implementation? (Specifically in reference to economic and individual resilience, reduction in vulnerability against shocks and crises, reduction in gender inequality, improving national capacities, environmental sustainability, and promoted human rights).

Sustainability: (Will the benefits last? The extent to which the benefits from a development intervention are likely to continue after the current UNSDCF will have been completed)

1. From your perspective to what extent has the UNSDCF fostered socio-economic, political, institutional, financial and environmental sustainability?
2. What specific examples would you isolate to demonstrate that the benefits realised or contributed by the UNSDCF will last?
3. How effective were the synergies fostered by the UNSDCF in ensuring sustainability of results?

UNCT Key Informant Interview guide – Communication Working Group

General questions

1. Has the UNSDCF been well-targeting and addressing national priorities?
2. Have there been any important area that should be considered for the new UNSDCF?

Communication specific questions:

1. Do you have any UN Joint Communication Strategy? Are there some gaps in the strategy and what should be improved?
2. Do you think that the UNSDCF fostered the “Delivering as One” principle? How did you support this in your communication?
3. How effective has been the group in communicating results under UNSDCF? Could you provide examples of some of the most important communication activities that have been implemented?
4. How effective the UNSDCF fostered delivery of core UNCT advocacy messages?
5. How would you assess communication among UNCT Agencies?
6. How to improve and strengthen internal communication and facilitate access to and sharing of information among the UNCT?

Government Agencies Individual Interview guide/Key Informant guide (to be used on government entities – generic to be adapted per Ministries)

Relevance and adaptability: (Is the UNSDCF aligned to the Government priorities and adapted well to emerging needs?)

1. To what degree have the key needs and priorities of Government of Eritrea been reflected in the UNSDCF?
2. To what degree have your key policies (sectoral or overarching) been reflected in the key outcomes, outputs and interventions in the UNSDCF?
3. Are UNSDCF priorities still relevant to the needs and priorities of the country?
4. From the perspective of as Government agency/entity, who are the country's most vulnerable groups and how relevant has UNSDCF been in following the promise "leave no one behind" i.e. addressing the needs and priorities of such vulnerable groups?
5. (Adaptability) What emerging external factors affected implementation of the current UNSDCF? 2. As Government, do you think the UNCT was able to adapt enough to these emerging challenges you have mentioned, elaborate?

Coherence: (How well does the UNSDCF fit?)

1. How do you assess the UNSDCF in terms of helping the UNCT in working together to avoid duplication of efforts across various sectors of government?

Effectiveness: (Has the CF achieved its objectives? Is the CF doing it right?)

1. What have been the main achievements of the current UNSDCF, referring to your sector as government or department?
2. How realistic were the outcomes, indicators and targets which you worked together on as government or department?
3. Are there changes at the national level in your sector/ministry/agency that UNSDCF contributed to? Are there some results that you would like to highlight?
4. From the perspective of your sector/agency, what achievements can you specifically isolate on vulnerable groups following the promise of "leave no one behind" which formed the foundation of the current UNSDCF?

Efficiency: (How well have resources been used? How efficiently were the outcomes achieved with the appropriate amount of resources and maintenance of minimum transaction cost (funds, expertise, time, administrative costs, etc.)

1. From the perspective of government/sector/ministry, in the implementation of the current CF, how do you assess delivery of results vis a vis costs to do so - delivering more with less?
2. What specific examples would you site to show that you were able to deliver more with less costs?
3. What mechanisms enabled this (or not)?

Coordination: (How well has implementation of the UNSDCF been coordinated?)

1. From your perspective, how do you assess the coordination between government/sector/ministry/department and the UNCT in the implementation of the UNSDCF?
2. What do you think enabled effective (or not) coordination of the UNSDCF between the Government of Eritrea and the UNCT in the delivery of the UNSDCF?
3. Were there specific mechanisms put in place to ensure limited overlaps and duplication of interventions between the Government of Eritrea and interventions in the UNSDCF, especially when it comes to reaching more vulnerable groups?

Orientation towards Impact: (What difference do UNSDCF interventions make?)

1. What changes has the current CF contributed to when it comes to improving the lives of Eritreans in general?
2. Do you think the UNSDCF has contributed to improved individual resilience to shocks and crises for Eritreans?
3. In particular, from your perspective, do you think the UNSDCF has contributed to improving the lives of vulnerable people (specifically, women, those with disabilities, living with HIV, prisoners, refugees etc.)?
4. Do you think the UNSDCF has contributed to building capacity of national institutions (government, NGOs, private sector) to deliver national policy priorities, including SDGs?
5. Do you think the CF has contributed to the promotion of human rights, especially for vulnerable groups?
6. Do you think the UNSDCF has contributed to ensuring environmental sustainability, and overall country's preparedness to climatic shocks?
7. What would you highlight as key unintended changes that the UNSDCF has contributed over its implementation? (Specifically in reference to economic and individual resilience, reduction in vulnerability against shocks and crises, reduction in gender inequality, improving national capacities, environmental sustainability, and promoted human rights).

Sustainability: (Will the benefits last? The extent to which the benefits from a development intervention are likely to continue after the current UNSDCF will have been completed)

1. From your perspective to what extent has the UNSDCF fostered socio-economic, political, institutional, financial and environmental sustainability?
2. What specific examples would you isolate to demonstrate that the benefits realised or contributed by the UNSDCF will last?
3. How effective were the synergies fostered by the UNSDCF in ensuring sustainability of results?

Bilateral/Multilateral Agencies Individual Interview guide

Relevance and adaptability: (Is the UNSDCF aligned to the Government priorities and adapted well to emerging needs in the country?)

1. To what degree have the key needs and priorities of Government of Eritrea been reflected in the UNSDCF?
2. Are UNSDCF priorities still relevant to the needs and priorities of the country?
3. From your perspective, who are the country's most vulnerable groups and how relevant has UNSDCF been in following the promise "leave no one behind" i.e. addressing the needs and priorities of such vulnerable groups?
4. (Adaptability) What emerging external factors affected implementation of the current UNSDCF?
5. As bilateral/multilateral partner/funder, do you think the UNCT was able to adapt enough to these emerging challenges you have mentioned, elaborate?

Coherence: (How well does the UNSDCF fit?)

1. How do you assess the UNSDCF in terms of helping the UNCT in working together to avoid duplication of efforts across various sectors of government?

Effectiveness: (Has the UNSDCF achieved its objectives? Is the UNSDCF doing it right?)

1. What have been the main achievements of the current UNSDCF, referring to your particular sectors/areas you worked together or partnered?
2. How realistic were the outcomes, indicators and targets which you worked together?
3. Are there changes at the national level i that UNSDCF contributed to? Are there some results that you would like to highlight?
4. From your perspective, what achievements can you specifically isolate on vulnerable groups following the promise of "leave no one behind" which formed the foundation of the current UNSDCF?

Efficiency: (How well have resources been used? How efficiently were the outcomes achieved with the appropriate amount of resources and maintenance of minimum transaction cost (funds, expertise, time, administrative costs, etc.)

1. From your perspective, in the implementation of the current UNSDCF, how do you assess delivery of results vis a vis costs to do so - delivering more with less?
2. What specific examples would you site to show that you were able to deliver more with less costs?

3. What mechanisms enabled this (or not)?

Coordination: (How well has implementation of the UNSDCF been coordinated?)

1. From your perspective, how do you assess the coordination between UNCT and other partners in the implementation of the UNSDCF?
2. What do you think enabled effective (or not) coordination of the UNSDCF between the UNCT and partners?
3. Were there specific mechanisms put in place to ensure limited overlaps and duplication of interventions in the CF, especially when it comes to reaching more vulnerable groups?

Orientation towards Impact: (What difference do UNSDCF interventions make?)

1. What changes has the current UNSDCF contributed to when it comes to improving the lives of Eritreans in general?
2. Do you think the CF has contributed to improved individual resilience to shocks and crises for Eritreans?
3. In particular, from your perspective, do you think the UNSDCF has contributed to improving the lives of vulnerable people (specifically, women, those with disabilities, living with HIV, prisoners, refugees etc)?
4. Do you think the UNSDCF has contributed to building capacity of national institutions (government, NGOs, private sector) to deliver national policy priorities, including SDGs?
5. Do you think the UNSDCF has contributed to the promotion of human rights, especially for vulnerable groups?
6. Do you think the UNSDCF has contributed to ensuring environmental sustainability, and overall country's preparedness to climatic shocks?
7. What would you highlight as key unintended changes that the UNSDCF has contributed over its implementation? (Specifically in reference to economic and individual resilience, reduction in vulnerability against shocks and crises, reduction in gender inequality, improving national capacities, environmental sustainability, and promoted human rights).

Sustainability: (Will the benefits last? The extent to which the benefits from a development intervention are likely to continue after the current CF will have been completed)

1. From your perspective to what extent has the UNSDCF fostered socio-economic, political, institutional, financial and environmental sustainability?

2. What specific examples would you isolate to demonstrate that the benefits realised or contributed by the UNSDCF will last?
3. How effective were the synergies fostered by the UNSDCF in ensuring sustainability of results?

Focus Group Discussion guide (beneficiaries - men, women, young people/boys, girls - different groups)

Relevance and adaptability: (Is the UNSDCF aligned to the Government priorities and adapted well to emerging needs?)

1. To what degree have your needs and priorities been reflected in the support you received delivered under the programme you worked with/benefited from?
2. Do you think the priorities under UN in Eritrea still relevant to the needs and priorities of the country?
3. From your perspective, how relevant has UNSDCF been in following the promise "leave no one behind" i.e. addressing the needs and priorities of vulnerable groups?
4. (Adaptability) What emerging external factors affected you (your lives) in the past 3 years? 2. Do you think the Government of Eritrea and its partners such as the UNCT was able to adapt their plans enough to these emerging challenges you have mentioned, elaborate?

Effectiveness: (Has the UNSDCF achieved its objectives? Is the UNSDCF doing it right?)

1. What have been the main achievements of the programme you worked with (as a beneficiary)? Elaborate on the programme and agencies that implemented it.
2. From your perspective, what achievements can you specifically isolate on vulnerable groups following the promise of "leave no one behind" which formed the foundation of the programme?

Orientation towards Impact: (What difference do CF interventions make?)

1. What changes has the programme you worked with contributed to when it comes to improving the lives of Eritreans in general?
2. Do you think the programme has contributed to improved individual resilience to shocks and crises for Eritreans?

3. In particular, from your perspective, do you think the programme has contributed to improving the lives of vulnerable people (specifically, women, those with disabilities, living with HIV, prisoners, refugees etc.)?
4. Do you think the programme has contributed to building capacity of national institutions (government, NGOs, private sector) to deliver national policy priorities, including SDGs?
5. Do you think the programme has contributed to the promotion of human rights, especially for vulnerable groups?
6. Do you think the programme has contributed to ensuring environmental sustainability, and overall country's preparedness to climatic shocks?
7. What would you highlight as key unintended changes that the programme has contributed over its implementation? (Specifically in reference to economic and individual resilience, reduction in vulnerability against shocks and crises, reduction in gender inequality, improving national capacities, environmental sustainability, and promoted human rights).

Sustainability: (Will the benefits last? The extent to which the benefits from a development intervention are likely to continue after the current UNSDCF will have been completed)

1. From your perspective to what extent has the programme fostered socio-economic, political, institutional, financial and environmental sustainability?
2. What specific examples would you isolate to demonstrate that the benefits realised or contributed by the programme will last?

Annex 4. Evaluation Agenda

Formulation of for Eritrea UNSDCF 2022-2026 Evaluation August 2025

DATE	Organisation/Institution/Agency	Activity	People to meet	Location	Justification
August 04	Presentation of IR to ESC and Evaluation Team Internal Training				
August 27 – 31,	Evaluation Team internal meeting and Finalization of IR and preparation for field work				
Key Informant Interviews (KII) with UNCT Members					
5 th August 2025 [09am to 10am]	UN Resident Coordination Office	KII	Resident Coordinator	Asmara	Signatory to UNSDCF and Implemented some activities
5 th August	Finalising Inception Report				
6 th August 2025 [10:00 to 11:00]	Presentation of Inception report to Evaluation Management Team and Evaluation Steering Committee				
6 th August 2025 [11:30 to 13:30]	Resident Coordinators Office: All Unit Heads/DCOs	Group Discussion	Jack Jones Zulu, Thomas Asfaha, Terhas Ghebremicael etc	Asmara	Coordinated activities
7 th August 2025 9:30 to 11:00	Outcome 1 Chairs	Group Discussion	WHO, UNICEF	Asmara	Implemented activities
7 th August 2025 [13:30 to 15:00]	Outcome 2 Chairs	KII	UNDP, UNFPA	Asmara	Implemented activities
8 TH August 2025 [9:30 to 11:00]	Outcome 3 Chairs	Group	FAO, IFAD	Asmara	Implemented activities

8 th August 2025 [11:30 to 13:00]	Outcome 4 Chairs	Group Discussion	– UNDP	Asmara	Implemented some activities
8 th August 2025 [13:30 to 15:00]	Programme Management Team	Group Discussion	– Eman Eltigani	Asmara	Implemented some activities
11 th August 2025 [9:30 to 11:00]	Partnership and Resource Mobilisation Group		–	Asmara	Implemented some activities
11 th August 2025 [11:30 to 13:30]	OMT	Group Discussion	–	Asmara	Implemented some activities
11 th August 2025 14:30 to 16:00	LNB Working Group	KII	–	Asmara	Implemented some activities
12 th August 2025 [10:00 to 12:00]	Finance/HACT Work Group	Group Discussion	–	Asmara	Implemented some activities
13 th August 2025 [10:00 to 12:00pm]	Joint Performance Review Committee	Group Discussion	– UNCT and GoSE stakeholders	Asmara	Implemented some activities
14 th – 20 th August 2025	Complimentary data collection and internal data processing				
21 st August 10.00 to 12:00	Debriefing session	EMT and ESC	EMT AND ESC		
In-depth Interviews (IDI) with Government Stakeholders					
12 th August 2025 2pm to 3pm]	Sample of Ministries	IDI	– Director General – Directors –	Asmara	Implemented some activities
In-depth Interviews (IDI) with Cooperating Partners/Funders					

19 th August 2025 [9am to 10pm]	African Development Bank	IDI	– Senior Policy and Programme Advisors	Asmara	Funded some activities
19 th August 2025 [11am to 12pm]	Embassies in Asmara	IDI	– Senior Policy and Programme Advisors	Asmara	Funded some activities
Focus Group Discussion with identified Pillar beneficiaries (4 FGDs)					
14 TH August 2025 [9:30 to 11:00]	Outcome Group 1:	FGD	Identified beneficiaries from relevant Agencies CP	Asmara	Benefited from some activities
14 th August 2025 [11.30 to 13:00]	Outcome Group 2	FGD	Identified beneficiaries from:	Asmara	Benefited from some activities
14 th August 2025 [14:00 to 16:00]	Outcome Group 3	FGD	Identified beneficiaries	Asmara	Benefited from some activities
15 th August (9.30 to 11:00)	Outcome Group 4	FGD	Identified beneficiaries	Asmara	Benefited from some activities

Summary

No.	Category of Evaluation Responses	Number of Respondents
1	Key Informant Interviews (KII) with UNCT Members	
2	In-depth Interviews (IDI) In-depth Interviews (IDI) with Government Line Ministries	
6	In-depth Interviews (IDI) with Cooperating Partners/Funders	
7	Focus Group Discussion with identified Pillar beneficiaries (3 FGDs)	
8	In-depth Interviews (IDI) with Working Groups	

Annex 5: Evaluation Report Outline

Title page

Executive Summary

Introduction

Country Context

Methodology

Findings

Conclusions

Recommendations

Limitations and Lessons Learned

Summary Performance Rating

Appendices

Annex 6: Stakeholder Mapping Grid for Eritrea-UNSCDF 2022-2025

Name of Organisation	Name of Contact person	Level of Influence	Type of Influence	Priority of Engagement	Role and Type of Engagement
UN RCO		High Influence	High interest	Interest and influence	Coordinator
UNDP		High influence	High interest	Interest and influence	Planner and Implementer
UNFPA		High Influence	High interest	Interest and influence	Planner and Implementer
UNICEF		High Influence	High interest	Interest and influence	Planner and Implementer
WHO		High Influence	High interest	Interest and influence Interest and influence	Planner and Implementer
UNECA		High Influence	Low interest	Interest and influence	
IOM		High Influence	High interest	Interest and influence	Planner and Implementer
UNWOMEN		High Influence	High interest	Interest and influence	Planner and Implementer
List of National Stakeholders					
Min of Finance and		High Influence	High interest	Interest and impact	Implementer

National Development					
Ministry of Health		High Influence	High interest	Interest and impact	Implementer
Ministry of Agriculture		High Influence	High interest	Interest and impact	Implementer
Ministry of Land, Water and Environment		High Influence	High interest	Interest and impact	Implementer
Ministry of Marine Resources		High Influence	High interest	Interest and impact	Implementer
Ministry of Trade and Industry		High Influence	High interest	Interest and impact	Implementer
Ministry of Energy and Mines		High Influence	High interest	Interest and impact	Implementer
Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare		High Influence	High interest	Interest and impact	Implementer
Ministry of Information		High Influence	High interest	Interest and impact	Implementer
Ministry of Local Government		High Influence	High interest	Interest and impact	Implementer
National Institute of Higher Education		High Influence	High interest	Interest and impact	Implementer
National Statistics Office		High Influence	High interest	Interest and impact	Implementer
Department of Customs		High Influence	High interest	Interest and impact	Implementer

Annex 7: List of Persons Contacted

	Full Name	Position	Email
Ministry of Agriculture			
1	Kahsai Negash	Director, Crop and Livestock Development Division	negashk@gmail.com
2	Michael Berhane	Director, Natural Resources and Irrigation Development Division	Asmike06@gmail.com
3	Dr. Yonas Weldu	Director, Animal and Plant Health Division	Ywoldu67@gmail.com

4	Mussie Fekadu	Project Coordinator, Date Development Support Programme	f.mussiela@gmail.com
Ministry of Land, Water and Environment			
5	Tedros Kibrom	Director, Office of the Minister	Ktedros70@gmail.com
6	Betiel Teclehaimanot	Expert, Office of the Minister	Betielteclehaimanot97@gmail.com
7	Yohannes Teklemariam	Head, Biosafety Unit, Department of Education	ejohnsh@gmail.com
8	Bereket Mosazghi	Head, Water Resource Management Unit, Department of Water	bereketmosazghighilay@gmail.com
9	Dawit Yosief	Director, Monitoring and Evaluation Division, Department of Land	+291-1-123667
Ministry of Energy and Mines			
10	Tesfai Zekarias	Director General, Department of Energy	Tesfayzekarias1949@gmail.com
11	Tesfai Ghebrehiwot	Director, Renewable Energy Center	gtesfai@gmail.com
12	Teame Adhanom	Head, Energy Resource Development Unit	teamatmoon@gmail.com
Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare			
13	Mehreteab Fesehaye	Director General, Social Welfare Department	MhreteabFessehaye@gmail.com
14	Yosief Tesfai	Director of Inspection	yosiefTesfay91@gmail.com
15	Biniam Ahferom	Head, Occupational Health and Safety Unit	biahgh@gmail.com
16	Mekonen Asfaha	A/Director of Employment	Mekasfaha@gmail.com
Ministry of Marine Resources			
17	Adonay Heruy	Director, Partnership and Cooperation Coordination	Adonay.h@mmreri.org
UN-Procurement Working Group			
18	Alexander Girmay	Chair, Procurement Working Group Procurement Specialist, UNDP	Alexander.ghirmai@undp.org
19	Miriam Daniel	Procurement Working Group, Member Supply & Logistics Associate, UNICEF	mokubatensae@unicef.org
20	Henok Ghebreyohannes	Chair, ICT Working Group ICT Officer, UNICEF	hghebreyohannes@unicef.org

Annex 8: Persons Interviewed

Name of Interviewee	Institution	Position	Contact
Jack Jones Zulu	UNRCO	Economist	
Milena Haile	UNRCO	Gender Specialist	
Terhas Ghebremichael	UNRCO	Administration Assistant	
Thomas Asfaha	UNRCO	Data Management and Result Monitoring Specialist	
Senait Tesfamichael	UNRCO	Partnership and Development Finance	
Fikresus Amahazion	UNDP	Programme Analyst	
Yordanos Mehari	UNFPA	Ass. Representative	
Makda Bereket	UNRCO	Policy Analyst	
Seyoum Teame	FAO	Programme Associate	
Yisehak Kiflay	IFAD	Policy and Technical Coordinator	
Jyoti Tewari	UNFPA	Representative a.i	
Kibreab Gebriemichael	UNDP	Programme Analyst	
Yodit Ghebrai	UNFPA	Administration and Finance	
Yalem Mohammed	UNICEF		
Abdullahi Mohammed Yusfuff	UNICEF	Country Representative	
Eman Eltigani	UNICEF	Deputy Country Representative	
Pa Lamin Beyai	UNDP	Resident Representative	
Adam Habteab	UNDP	Programme Analyst	
Kenneth Jerry Onyango	AFDB	Chief Country Programme Officer	
Ashraf Hassan	IOM	Chief of Mission	
Kesete Berhane	UNFPA	Programme Analyst	
Kahase Taddese	UNFPA	Programme Associate	
Martin Banks	Deputy Head of Mission	Embassy of UK	

Francesca Nardi	AICS	Embassy of Italy	
Clara D'lanni	Charge d'Affaires	Embassy of Italy	
Sydney Muenda	First Secretary, Political Affairs	Embassy of South Africa	
Ainom Berhane	National Statistics Office	Director-General	
Hagos Ahmed	NSO	Director, Population Division	
Samuel Tesfamariam	NSO	Director, Economic Statistics	
Louise Getting	FCDO		
Yves Hovent	FCDO	Senior Humanitarian Advisor	
Zi Hanyue	Embassy of China	Head of Political Affairs	
Li Jianing	Embassy of China	Political Affairs - Attache	
Asmerom Tesfaghiorgis	Ministry of Health	Head of integrated Disease Surveillance Response Section	291 7419161
Mesghena G/Selasie Bereket Mosazghi	Water Resource Department	Head of the supply of drinking water under the MoLWE	291 7133315
Mebrahtu Gilagabir	Ministry of Education	General Manager of PMU	291 1 152181
Awet Solomon	Ministry of Education	Monitoring and Evaluation Director PMU	291 7511301
Abraham Gebremicel	Ministry of Information	Head for Administration and Finance	291 7257599
Michael Gebremicael	Department of Customs	Head of Information & Technology	291 7150871
Fissehaye Haile	The National Higher Education Institute and Research	Administration and Finance Head	291 7350005
Girmay Tekleab		Director, Water Branch, Zoba Maekel	

Bereket Mosazghi		Unit Head, Water Use Management	
Kahsai Negash	Ministry of Agriculture, Crop and Livestock Development Division	Director	negashk@gmail.com
Michael Berhane	Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Irrigation Development Division	Director	Asmike06@gmail.com
Yonas Weldu	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Division	Director	Ywoldu67@gmail.com
Mussie Fekadu	Ministry of Agriculture, Date Development Support Programme	Project Coordinator	f.mussiela@gmail.com
Tedros Kibrom	Ministry of Land, Water and Environment, Office of the Minister	Director	Ktegmairdro70@gmail.com
Betiel Teklehaimanot	Ministry of Land, Water and Environment, Office of the Minister	Expert	Betielteclehaimanot97@gmail.com
Yohannes Teklemariam	Ministry of Land, Water and Environment, Biosafety Unit, DOE	Head	ejohnsh@gmail.com
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